



Yukon Legislative Assembly

3rd Session

34th Legislature

Index to HANSARD

October 1, 2020 to December 22, 2020

NOTE

The 2020 Fall Sitting of the Third Session of the Thirty-Fourth Legislature occupies three volumes.
The 2021 Spring Sitting (Issue Numbers 85 - 89) of the Third Session of the Thirty-Fourth Legislature is included in the third volume.

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YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

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Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 74

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Friday, December 4, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
 DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
 DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

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Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Pauline Frost	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; Women's Directorate

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Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
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Yukon Party

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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Friday, December 4, 2019 — 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: Mr. Speaker, can we please welcome several people who are here today, with more listening online, for the tribute regarding École Polytechnique and the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

We have: Émilie Dory, directrice de Les EssentiElles; Camille Lebeau, assistante de direction de Les EssentiElles; Ketsia Houde-McLennan, executive director for the women's transition home; and Kirsten Hogan, the vice-president and 30 by 30 champion for Engineers Yukon.

We also have the ministerial advisors for the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate's and me, Edwine Veniat and Moira Lassen.

We also have Mr. Chris Dixon, who is the president of Engineers Yukon, and past running mate and past MP for the Yukon, Mr. Ryan Leef — if we could please welcome them all.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today to commemorate December 6, Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, on behalf of the Liberal government.

I remember with great sadness that dreadful day, December 6, 1989. At the time, I was a grad student and a lecturer in engineering at the University of New Brunswick. We were in a class that I was teaching when we heard the news — the tragic news of École Polytechnique — the massacre at École Polytechnique. We were all shaken, all shocked. The women in the course were scared and angry. The men were ashamed and dismayed.

Since that day, I have sought to challenge gender-based violence in all men, including myself. I pledge to never commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women and girls. That is the white ribbon pledge, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank all of the male MLAs of this Legislature from all sides of the House. All of us have taken that pledge.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to acts of violence, nine times out of 10, men are the perpetrators. For all the women in our lives, the ones we know, the ones we used to know, the ones we don't know yet, and mostly for all the women who are victims of violence or who were lost, we must pledge to condemn gender-based violence. I hope that we will all live to see the day when all boys and men will make that commitment and put tangible action behind it.

From the little injustices that we all witness every day to serious acts of violence — every single action has an impact. Even our silences — especially our silences — have an impact.

Today I ask all Yukoners to be part of the change that we wish to see in the world. A simple action is to speak up when we witness unfairness. There should never be an excuse for enabling gender-based violence. We can help curb the tragedy of violence by calling out the patterns of violence.

Another simple action is to educate ourselves. There are so many great initiatives out there. One example is the Engineers Yukon 30 by 30 campaign. Engineers Yukon is working with Engineers Canada to increase the representation of women in engineering to 30 percent by the year 2030. So far, we're at 17 percent here in the Yukon.

A simple action, such as reminding our peers when we witness the small injustices, can go a long way. The sum of all our small steps will make for a greater future and will allow us to be proud of the world we live in.

To everyone, please do your part for that systemic change against the unacceptable violence to end right there and then.

Tous les ans, nous nous souvenons des 14 jeunes étudiantes de l'École Polytechnique de Montréal qui ont été assassinées juste parce qu'elles étaient des femmes.

Every year, we remember the 14 young women studying at École Polytechnique in Montréal who were murdered simply because of their gender.

Aujourd'hui nous honorons leur mémoire: Anne-Marie Lemay, Anne-Marie Edward, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte, Barbara Daigneault, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Maud Haviernick, Michèle Richard, Nathalie Croteau, et Sonia Pelletier.

Mr. Speaker, this year and every year on December 6, we remember these women who were killed in order to remember ourselves that gender-based violence should not be allowed in our lives, it is not acceptable in our communities, and it is not welcome in our world. I ask all Yukoners to take action to end it.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada, which takes place annually on December 6.

Established in 1996 by Parliament, this day marks the day that 14 women lost their lives in an attack at École Polytechnique in Montréal.

Twelve of these young women were training to be engineers, a profession that was once dominated by men. One

was a nursing student, another a faculty member, and 14 other men and women were injured. Today, we work so hard to promote women in trades. We acknowledge and respect the talents and skills of women and the incredible contributions that they bring to all education streams, all trades, and all careers.

No person should fear following their dreams because their sex or gender does not fit someone's ideals or a particular career, and no person should have to fear for their life.

December 6 allows Canadians the opportunity to not only remember these 14 women but to reflect on the issue of gender-based violence and how it affects people across our country. We consider actions that we take to eliminate violence against women and girls because there is still so much work to be done. There are still women and girls who face acts of violence, discrimination, and harassment in schools, in the workplace, and at home and still women and girls who are afraid to follow their dreams to pursue careers in male-dominated fields.

But that has been changing. Women and girls are becoming the norm in STEM programming and careers. They are welcome and respected, and I am proud to see this, Mr. Speaker; I am proud to see this change.

I would like to thank the many community organizations and their staff and volunteers who work with victims of violence every day. We need to continue to find solutions to violence in order to encourage healthy and happy families and communities. It requires continued collective action and the continued shift in attitudes from all members of society.

The White Ribbon campaign began in 1991 to promote gender equity and healthy relationships, representing a pledge by men to never commit, condone, or remain silent about the violence against women and girls. Each year, we wear the white ribbon on this day to signify our support to the end of gender-based violence. This morning, the men within our caucus took the white ribbon pledge, and as the minister spoke to earlier, all male members of this House did that to reaffirm their support for this movement. So, with our continued collective action, we move closer to the ultimate goal of ending violence against women and girls.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to honour Sunday, December 6 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. We remember the lives of the 14 young women who, in 1989, lost their lives to an act of gender-based violence. We remember and share in the grief of the families who faced unimaginable loss and continue to feel that loss today.

As we remember the shock and sadness that we felt as a country that something so awful could happen here, we pause to consider that, in Canada, violence continues to be a daily reality for women and girls from coast to coast to coast.

We remember all of those who have died as a result of gender-based violence. We stand with all of those whose lives have been forever altered by acts of gender-based violence. We mourn the lost of our missing and murdered aboriginal sisters. We feel the loss of missing mothers, daughters, sisters, and

aunts. We take this time as an opportunity to reflect as a society on the ongoing disgrace of violence against women and girls.

We acknowledge that, despite our advances, women in this country still suffer physically, emotionally, and economically.

Thirty-one years later, we still struggle to understand why there is sometimes such strong resistance to the full integration of women in today's world. We ask ourselves why that frustration is so often displayed in acts of violence, disregard, and aggression toward women.

As a country, it is right that we mark this event, for we must not forget the tragedies of our past if we wish to not have them repeated in our future. We must stand united as a nation to say both with our words and our actions that we do not condone violence of any kind against women and girls.

We must never stop our fight against the parts of society that continue to teach women how not to be victims instead of teaching men not to victimize. Gender-based acts of violence will continue if we do not face this reality individually and as a society and say that enough is enough. We must continue our efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls until our streets, our campuses, and our homes are safe.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a legislative return responding to a question from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin on November 23 during Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I have for tabling today three legislative returns. The first is in response to questions asked on November 23, 2019, from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin regarding the purchase of semi-automatic rifles for conservation officers. The second is in response to questions that arose during Committee of the Whole on November 24, 2019, from the Member for Kluane regarding bison harvest data. The third legislative return is in response to questions that arose during Committee of the Whole on November 24, 2019, from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King regarding the Yukon water strategy five-year report.

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

Reports of committees.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports eliminating the restriction of travel to medical travel destinations in current medical travel regulations under the *Travel for Medical Treatment Act*.

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

THAT this House urges the Member for Copperbelt North, in his capacity as chair of the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, to:

(1) convene a meeting of this committee before December 22, 2019;

(2) review all ministerial orders introduced associated with the current state of emergency; and

(3) report back to the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the first day of the 2021 Spring Sitting.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fortymile caribou harvest management plan

Hon. Ms. Frost: Drin hozo. I rise today to speak to the Fortymile caribou harvest management plan. We have been working with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in since 2013 to develop this important plan. Now, together, we are moving forward in a manner that honours the spirit of cooperation and the rights and responsibilities laid out in the *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement*.

Management of the Fortymile herd has tested the strengths and flexibility of wildlife management for a number of years. It has taken significant efforts for the Yukon government, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council, and the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, in collaboration with Alaska, to see this herd come back to life.

For 25 years, recovery efforts were aimed at seeing this herd return to their habitat in the interior of Yukon. Now we have just announced the third licensed harvest. At its lowest point, the herd was at a population of only 6,500 animals. Its recent population was estimated at 84,000. This herd size allows for a sustainable, managed harvest that is in line with long-term conservation efforts, which is where the harvest management plan placed its crucial function.

The plan will guide licensed and subsistence harvest as well as overall herd management into the future. It has three main goals: promote a robust, sustainable population that will maximize the herd's use of habitats within historical Yukon ranges; provide a phased approach to implementing harvest, given the long history of no-harvest of this herd; and increase knowledge and use of the herd through education and engagement. These goals are informed by the years of technical and local input that support the herd's recovery.

Long-term recovery will continue as it goes hand in hand with effective management. This is not just gathering population estimates. It includes surveying how many adults and calves survive each year, the number of calves born, and paying attention to the herd's habitat. This monitoring will identify indicators to guide future harvest management decisions by all parties. When we talk about adaptive co-management, this is what we're talking about: working together to keep informed and respond in real time to what is actually

happening on the land. This is responsible, sustainable, and effective wildlife management.

Over the past year, these indicators are telling us that the herd has entered a state of natural decline that may be associated with a herd density that is too high for their existing summer range. While we hope that this would mean that the herd would expand to summer ranges in Yukon, this has not yet occurred. Declines in large migratory caribou herds are normal and natural; however, they require continued monitoring, together with our partners, to ensure that any harvest opportunities continue to reflect the joint objectives that we have for this herd. This takes hard work and efforts on the land that would not be possible without the local leadership of regional biologists and technicians, the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council, and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in — both the government and its citizens.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all those here, and especially in the Dawson region, who have put in countless hours — and, in some cases, years — into the responsible and collaborative management of this herd. Unfortunately, conflicting schedules and weather haven't allowed us to sign off formally on this agreement.

I want to just extend a congratulations to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and its citizens.

Mr. Istchenko: I'm happy to respond to this ministerial statement, although the statement that we received this morning and the minister's comments today in the House are a little bit different.

We're happy to see this work to develop a new management plan for the Fortymile caribou herd signed and completed. In particular, we are happy to see the announcement of another licensed hunt of the herd.

This is important for many reasons. First of all, it is an indication of the health of the herd today and how far it has come over the years, but we are also pleased because it represents a new hunting opportunity for licensed hunters in the territory.

We have been pushing for increased or new opportunities for hunting in the Yukon, and we think that it is a step in the right direction. It is also a positive step that this hunt will allow for the collection of data and knowledge about the herd.

So, again, I do want to thank the Government of Yukon, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council, and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board for their 25 years of hard work with their partners in the State of Alaska — a job well done.

Ms. White: The story of the Fortymile caribou herd is a story of the resiliency of caribou and the personal and communal sacrifice of the people whose culture is intertwined with them. Over the course of the past year, we saw the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation government raise concerns over Yukon government's initial opening to permit hunting of the Fortymile herd in advance of the completion of a joint management plan.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government publicly expressed concerns that the Yukon government was acting as if an agreement had already been reached. For more than 25 years, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in made a huge sacrifice by volunteering not to harvest the Fortymile caribou. As a result of the incursion of settler society — be it the gold rush or what came after — Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens lost their traditional engagement and relationship with the Fortymile caribou. A whole generation of their community had not experienced that relationship and lost that traditional knowledge.

This summer, the community made the decision that the time was right for a community hunt. The subsistence hunt was a collaboration between elders, youth, and community hunters that intended to bring the community together to reconnect and strengthen their relationship with the Fortymile caribou herd.

So, we are pleased now to hear that the Yukon government has lived up to its obligation to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and their final agreement in the creation of a caribou harvest management plan for the Fortymile caribou herd. It would have been helpful if the minister had shown respect for the Members of the Legislative Assembly by tabling the plan prior to its public release today at 12:15 p.m.

Similar concerns have been raised by other First Nation governments about the way that this government is making decisions that have the potential to negatively impact the ability for governments to reach agreements on important commitments set out in the Yukon treaties on key matters like land use planning. We hope that this government has learned that you can only have an agreement if all partners are onside as equals.

Mr. Speaker, getting to this agreement has been a difficult journey. We ask the minister to explain to this House what the key issues were that moved the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation government from a very public disagreement with the government's actions regarding hunting of the Fortymile herd to the statement that she has made today. There is a benefit for all in this Assembly to learn from potential missteps by government as we all jointly navigate the road to reconciliation offered by living up to the spirit and intent of all Yukon First Nation final agreements.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I thank the members opposite for their comments. I want to acknowledge Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council, and of course the citizens of Dawson City and all those who participated in this monumental announcement today.

It has taken a lot of years to get here. I want to say that the signatures were — we just signed off on the agreement. In fact, we took the time that was needed with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. It would not have been appropriate for us to do a tabling without that happening. The work certainly was well-respected. It is just another example of how things are done — it's done in collaboration. We know working collaboratively with our First Nations is not something that the Yukon Party did very effectively, Mr. Speaker. My colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, just recently touched on some work that we are doing on this side of the House with our

collaboration and discussions with the resource projects, for example.

We are looking at moving forward on further implementation and monitoring on this project. It is one that is certainly close to the hearts of the citizens of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. We've collaborated; we've worked with them; we've designed an implementation approach with them. On numerous occasions, we've met with them and we took the time that they required to get this right — unlike the Yukon Party government that was simply unwilling to work with First Nation governments.

We saw how we worked on land planning and land initiatives. We've moved many files forward. That means that, in fact, that we are continuing to do just that, and that's to implement the Fortymile plan, like we did Ddhaw Ghro. I want to say that we have not seen a very good track record from the Official Opposition in the relationship with Yukon First Nations when it comes to collaboration. In fact, the recently elected party leader, Currie Dixon, architected the Peel plan and implemented the plan. That's not a relationship around effective co-management and co-relationship as defined under the self-government agreements.

I can say very succinctly today that we have cooperation and we have cooperated. We have implemented a plan. It's a time to celebrate with the First Nations. It's a time for us to honour the legacy of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. It's time to honour the legacy of systemic barriers that have been put up in front of the First Nations as we looked at resource development and initiatives in that traditional territory. This was an effort with their input — truly a moment that we need to celebrate.

It takes hard work and effort on the land. This would not have been possible without leadership, without the regional biologists and technicians, the Dawson District Regional Resources Council, and the citizens of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. I would like to again acknowledge those who put 25 years into the planning to make this a reality. It is a reality that we will celebrate, honour, and hold up with pride.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

Mr. Hassard: The relief program that the Liberals have announced for bars and restaurants does not make any sense for this industry. The Liberals arbitrarily set the eligibility threshold to be that a business must demonstrate that 60 percent of their revenue comes from tourism visitation.

Can the Minister of Tourism and Culture explain how a bar or restaurant is supposed to demonstrate that 60 percent of their business came from tourism last year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to rise today to speak about the programs that we released this last week in response to the needs of our tourism sector. The questions that are being asked today are regarding the threshold. Again, I have said at least three or four times since the release of this, in responding to questions in the House, that we worked with our partners.

We worked with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon to set the criteria and the eligibility requirements. These are in line with other programs that are being administered directly by that association, such as the Elevate program.

The previous threshold was 80 percent. We have reduced it to 60 percent, which actually captures more fully the bars and restaurants. In terms of how you measure it — the Yukon business survey is one way. This will look back at the revenues for these businesses for 2019. It would be very doubtful if any business would not be able to demonstrate that they had this type of revenue.

Mr. Hassard: So, that is three or four times that we haven't gotten a clear answer from this minister.

The question was: How does a bar or a restaurant prove that 60 percent of their business came from tourists? We are just asking about the policy that the minister claimed is supposed to help bars and restaurants, and we would hope that she could explain her policy.

According to yukon.ca, the eligibility criteria states that a bar or restaurant must — and I quote: "... demonstrate that they attributed at least 60 percent of their 2019 revenue to tourism visitation." So, can the minister explain how a bar or restaurant is supposed to actually prove that?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we worked with our partners to determine this level of threshold. These are tourism programs. These are supplementary programs, again, to the Yukon business relief program that is still in place for all businesses in Yukon. That makes them eligible for a very high percentage of their fixed costs. This has been in place since March — that remains in place. These supplementary programs are for businesses that are tourism-related and that have maxed out their eligibility on all of the other programs. By reducing the threshold from 80 percent to 60 percent, it actually will better capture bars and restaurants.

Now, I would encourage folks to get a hold of the Department of Tourism and Culture if they are needing any kind of assistance to figure out that eligibility threshold. We are willing to work with all businesses that will fit within this program. Again, this is a supplementary program; it is meant for tourism relief. This is something that we have been talking about for a very long time. I look forward to further questions.

Mr. Hassard: It is clear that this policy does not make sense for bars and restaurants. It is also clear that the minister doesn't understand the policy if she can't explain why they chose 60 percent and if she can't even explain how a bar or a restaurant is supposed to even prove that 60 percent of their business came from tourists.

Bars and restaurants are suffering for a whole lot of reasons other than a lack of tourism. They have done their part to protect the community by adhering to public health guidelines, but this came at a cost. Now it is time for the government to do its part, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister just get rid of the 60-percent threshold so that this program can actually help all bars and restaurants that are suffering today?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am quite sure that the member opposite is not hearing me. This is a tourism supplementary

program. We have the Yukon business relief program. We have had it in place since March. The majority of the recipients of that program right now are related to the tourism, visitation, and travel industry.

There are definitely ways that businesses can make their case in terms of their eligibility around the 60-percent threshold. We work with the Yukon business survey, and that is where we get our statistics. There are other measures that we can assist businesses with. Again, this is for businesses that have maxed out the current relief programs.

If there are businesses — and I'm speaking to Yukoners right now — that are having any issues with accessing these programs or think that they may be eligible, please contact the Department of Tourism and Culture, and yukon.ca has all of the numbers to get in touch with both Tourism and Culture and Economic Development. We will work with every single business individually to make sure that they have the right supports.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic public health measures for hospitality industry

Mr. Kent: Earlier this week, restaurants and bars received an e-mail from the Yukon government informing them that, starting Monday, December 7, they will be required to keep a sign-in sheet to record anyone who enters their establishment, including how long they stayed there. This is a new requirement placed on restaurants and bars in the Yukon.

Can the minister please explain how they are going to enforce this new policy requirement on our hospitality sector?

Hon. Ms. Frost: As we continue to adapt and respond to COVID-19, we are identifying new ways to keep our community safe. Businesses, including bars and restaurants, were required to submit operational plans prior to reopening to ensure the health and safety of staff and customers. These plans were approved by the Health Emergency Operations Centre and followed the guidelines of the chief medical officer of health.

Bars and restaurants were notified this week that, beginning December 7, customers will be required to sign in upon entry. Owners will be required to keep a log of this contact information for 30 days. A call is being set up for bars and restaurants on Monday so that they can speak with the environmental health officers about this requirement. We recognize the importance of keeping our partners informed of the new requirements and developments and providing bars and restaurants opportunities. We have given advance notice that will allow the owners time to make the adjustments and have opportunities to respond to any questions that they might have with departmental officials.

With this introduction of this new requirement, we are creating an additional tool that will help owners, staff, and customers to access food and drink service premises while staying safe and providing safe measures.

Mr. Kent: I'm not sure if I heard an answer to that question, which was: How is the government going to enforce this new policy requirement on our hospitality sector?

This new measure is another tool for our contact tracers to use in their work, and we understand how important that work

is. But we do worry about further burdening our restaurant and bar industry that is already struggling.

Can the minister tell us if there will be any further supports or assistance provided to these businesses to help them implement this new public health measure?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We have been reaching out to those bars and restaurants to work with them through this. It's not so much about enforcement as it is about working with them. It is a new guideline that the chief medical officer of health brought forward, and it's about trying to keep folks safe.

Most of the bars and restaurants have a system where, as people come in, they have the ability to clean their hands, to be greeted, and to be seated. There is already typically a way where there can be a sign-in book, just like we have right now at our community centres and at dentist offices and other places. It's a pretty straightforward thing. We will work with bars and restaurants to make sure that they are able to get it up and running.

It's for the safety of those bars and restaurants, for the safety of our customers, and for the safety of the Yukon, and I think it's a small step. It's just there to try to make sure that, if there is a problem, we can reach Yukoners right away to alert them. It's about keeping Yukoners safe.

Mr. Kent: As I mentioned, we understand that this is another tool for our contact tracers to use in their work to keep Yukoners safe. We understand how important that work is, but it does come with a cost. It does come with a cost for those small businesses — those bars and restaurants.

Several other jurisdictions have implemented similar measures to assist with contact tracing; however, in many places, governments have offered support by providing programs or apps that use quick response — or QR — codes to reduce the amount of work on restaurants and bars. This means that instead of forcing every business to manually keep a sign-in and sign-out sheet, someone could just quickly scan a code.

Has the Yukon government considered using a QR code system or having one developed to reduce the burden on these small businesses that are having yet another requirement put on their plate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will have to check back on the specifics of the question. I thank the member opposite for that suggestion. I will say that we have worked to introduce technologies wherever possible — such as automatic texts, a call centre — all of this is to help build confidence with Yukoners in our businesses so that they know that they will be safe — or safer — when they go. So, I am happy to check on that.

What I can say is that all those people who have been doing this work — whether it is communicating to the businesses, getting the programs in place, or environmental health officers — everybody is working hard to work with those businesses to help them to make sure that it will be as safe as possible for Yukoners. I appreciate the suggestion and we will find out what work is being done. Whenever we can do something that is simple, we will work to try to get that in place, because we all want it to be simpler so that it's safer as well.

Question re: Yukon First Nation education

Ms. White: The Yukon First Nation Education Directorate was announced by the Council of Yukon First Nations in August of this year. The mission of the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate is to exert unified control over First Nation education. The education directorate will work toward the creation of a Yukon First Nation school board, providing a First Nation with more authority over the education of its citizens, and envisions a Yukon First Nation school here in Whitehorse. This was endorsed by the Minister of Education, who committed her department to working with First Nations to create an independent school board.

Can the minister tell us what steps this government has taken toward the creation of a Yukon First Nation school board?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am extremely proud of the work that is being done between the Department of Education, the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, the Yukon First Nation governments across the territory, and their education directors. There has been much work with respect to the concept of a First Nation school board. A framework is being built and I expect to be able to speak more about that in the very near future.

I should note that it is the result of the collaboration and the coming together of the partners in education in relation to responding to the needs of First Nation students and First Nation governments and education directorates across the territory. The work is going very well and I expect very soon to be able to speak more about it. I certainly don't want to infringe on any of the work that is being done at that table, so I won't say much more, other than to say that the work has been very positive and we're excited to be able to move forward with what we hope is a First Nation school board in the very near future.

Ms. White: We look forward to that update.

In 2019, the Auditor General found that the Yukon Department of Education did not know whether its programs met the needs of Yukon First Nation students. This finding was a repeat from a previous Auditor General's education report 10 years earlier. When a public hearing for the education audit was announced, the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education requested that they be given an opportunity to participate in the public hearing of the Auditor General's report on education, recognizing the report's focus on First Nation students. This request was denied.

What is this government doing to collect the concerns of First Nation students, parents, families, and governments in the delivery of education to their citizens?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sorry, I'm looking for a note and I'm reading a note from one of my colleagues that says that I should not be standing, but here I am.

The Auditor General's report — just to be clear — in 2019 did not build on the Auditor General's report from 2009. It specifically says that it did not do so. Nonetheless, it did have extremely important information in it regarding how the Department of Education should learn and respond to the needs of special educated students, inclusive education for students and in particular those with respect to First Nation students. As

a result, the work began almost immediately. Actually, it had begun before the Auditor General's report came out.

There are a number of ways in which we're responding to the Auditor General's report, not the least of which is the review of inclusive and special education which was announced prior to that report coming out from the Auditor General. It is a critical part of the work of the Department of Education going forward.

We are mindful of the fact that students' needs have not been responded to in the way that we want them to be. Going forward, the review will work with families, students, educators, and others to determine who will do that work best.

Ms. White: I would note that the Auditor General's report said that we risked repeating mistakes of the past and leaving an entire generation of students behind.

The Department of Education's 2019 annual report shows that First Nation students experience significant difficulties in the early years. The report notes that First Nation students had lower graduation rates in comparison to 2018. When considering the closure of schools in March and the mix of in-school and virtual learning, we can expect this year's rate to be even lower.

What is this minister doing today to ensure improved graduation rates for First Nation students, especially during these pandemic times?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: That is certainly an answer that will take longer than a minute and 30 seconds to review. The Department of Education and this government take extremely seriously the lack of attention that has been given to the success of First Nation students in many ways over the years — a review of inclusive and special education, working with our partners; the support and cooperation with the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate; the work that we have been doing for the last four years with the Chiefs Committee on Education; and individual funding provided to individual First Nations and their education directorates for the purposes of achieving their priorities in their home communities — I could go on and on. There are many more.

I should note that the Department of Education accepted all of the recommendations in the Auditor General's report. We have been working extensively on how to provide real responses to the recommendations. They are real, meaningful responses that will achieve and support our students across the territory.

Question re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates

Ms. Hanson: The 2015 *Auditor General's Report on Corrections* said that Yukon's correctional system does not adequately prepare offenders for successful reintegration into the community. No doubt this is tied to another finding in the report that the Whitehorse Correctional Centre does not meet its obligation to incorporate the cultural heritage needs of Yukon First Nations into its program and services.

Last April, the Salvation Army's Adult Resource Centre closed its doors. The minister announced that the transition program formerly offered at the ARC would be moved to a unit

at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. At the time, we were told that residential program participants at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre would take part in community-based activities to facilitate rehabilitation and/or reintegration into the community.

What evidence can the minister provide to this House that the residential program operating within the Whitehorse Correctional Centre is facilitating rehabilitation and reintegration?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to address this question on the floor of the House today.

The John Howard Society began operating a 24/7 supervised community housing program for justice-involved men on May 1, 2019. The Department of Justice chose to co-locate the supervised community housing program in a separate and distinct area of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. This decision was made to maintain the program capacity, to appropriately use an underutilized safe and stable bed space, and to allow for program integration predicated on the individualized continuum of care model.

That model has been implemented by the John Howard Society. They are experts in this field of reintegration and assisting justice-involved men. I am extremely pleased that the John Howard Society chose to come and work on this project and set up a presence here in the territory. We will all benefit from their expertise in this area. The program has decidedly and reportedly been very successful. The men who have been in the program and the supervisors with respect to the John Howard Society are doing an extremely good job there. The programs are continuing, and I look forward to further questions.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, let me remind this House that it was with little public or targeted stakeholder discussion that this government contracted the Vancouver-based John Howard Society to deliver a residential program within the walls of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. When questioned, Department of Justice officials admitted that nowhere else in Canada is a jail used to transition inmates from the correctional institution to the community.

The department boasted that this was an innovative pilot project. To date, the minister has not indicated the criteria to be used to evaluate whether or not this pilot project is a success. Any pilot project with the potential to negatively impact an individual's successful community reintegration demands an active, timely, and independent assessment of its delivery by the government department funding it.

Can the minister tell us who is responsible for assessing the John Howard residential program?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Unfortunately, the question makes it sound like there is no community involvement in this process, and there certainly is community involvement with respect to the Council of Yukon First Nations and with respect to our other justice partners throughout this process.

The short time frames associated with finding an alternative and continuing this process and these programs without

a break in service was critical.

It should also be clear that, while the John Howard Society is having this work done in a portion of what was the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, it is certainly a separate entrance. It is certainly available for justice-involved men to come and go as they please. The programming is intense. It is working within the community, and it is being supervised and reviewed by not only Corrections officials but the Department of Justice to make sure that we are providing services to these individuals so that there is no break in service.

It is an incredibly important program. It does not exist everywhere in Canada, and it is heralded by many departments of justice because this is an innovative way for justice-involved men to be reintegrated into the community.

Ms. Hanson: The government is funding this unusual approach to community reintegration that is housing people in the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. From the outset, this project has had no objective criteria to determine if it is working or not. Without a framework to evaluate the John Howard program, there can be no certainty that it is actually achieving the goals of successful rehabilitation and community reintegration.

The government says that they base their decisions on evidence. As the minister prepares next year's budget, we have yet to see any descriptions of the objective independent evidence that will be used to determine whether the John Howard program is the most cost-effective, culturally appropriate approach to achieving successful community integration.

What objective, evidence-based criteria will the minister use to determine whether inmates who are supposed to be transitioning to life outside of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre have received the support necessary to succeed while housed in that same Correctional Centre?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Unfortunately, the Member for Whitehorse Centre is clearly misunderstanding some of the goals and is offended by the location of this program. I can assure her that the experts in reintegrating individuals into the community are not offended by that location. The John Howard Society came to the Yukon. I think it has been called "Vancouver-based", but certainly, they have individuals here now and are making a presence in the territory to assist our justice-involved men here in the territory — and hopefully, very soon, justice-involved women as well.

I can indicate that the budget presented to the John Howard Society is slightly less than the budget that was provided to the Salvation Army when they were running what was known as the ARC and that the costs of retrofitting that location were under \$30,000. The Department of Justice supports the 24/7 non-custodial supervised community housing that enables justice-involved individuals to gradually reintegrate or remain supervised in the community. Supervised community housing is a critical component of the criminal justice system and contributes to a safer and healthier Yukon.

Question re: School busing

Ms. Van Bibber: Student transportation continues to be a challenge for many Whitehorse-area families during the

pandemic. The minister has told us that approximately 250 students who had spots on the bus last year no longer have those spots available to them.

On November 10, the Minister of Education told this House — and I quote: "With respect to busing, the three new school buses have arrived in the territory and they are going through the required safety testing now. Bus drivers have been hired and we anticipate the buses being able to be used within the next two weeks once the safety work has been completed. They will be put into service in the best interests of the students."

Can the government confirm for us that those additional units are in operation?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm always happy when the opposition quotes what I have said previously, because it was the case then and it is the case now. It is the work of the Department of Education with respect to busing to now try to provide additional buses for students who are not eligible under the criteria of either the act or the regulations to ride a school bus, but nonetheless, the history here in the territory has been to do our very best to provide extra services where we can.

The health and safety of students and staff is our first priority. The buses are here. The experts in determining how those buses should be used, both at the Department of Education and with Standard Bus, are doing their work. I expect news on this any day on how those additional students can be best accommodated. It is a complex situation — a complex matter. I can assure the members opposite that I have been asking as to when that work will be completed, as have the senior officials at the department, and we will provide Yukoners with that information as soon as possible.

Ms. Van Bibber: There are a number of split families that have concerns with student transportation this year. Their children are spending time in two different residences and require pickup and drop-off at different spots throughout the week. In many cases, this situation has not been accommodated by the government.

Why is the Liberal government unwilling to recognize the situation that these families find themselves in and accommodate their unique needs for student transportation?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am sure that members opposite and Yukoners have heard me say, prior to today, that we work with every family individually. You can imagine that over 2,000 students require quite a detailed combination of the busing department and the officials who do that work, working with parents — sometimes from split families, sometimes not, sometimes from families who wish to have a child picked up and taken to school but then later taken to an after-school program or to a daycare. That is a complex series of conversations and a complex series of information in a complex web of making determinations about how students get from point A to point B and back maybe to C and D. As a result, every family is worked with individually, and the adjustments are made, the plans are made, and the school bus schedules are made as a result of accommodating Yukon students as best we can.

Ms. Van Bibber: Some families we heard from have said that their children's school bus service was cancelled a week before the start of school in August. This left them in a tough spot of rearranging work schedules or finding alternative transportation for their children to get to school.

Does the Liberal government believe that providing seven days' notice to a family that they no longer have school bus service is sufficient?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think everyone knows that we are in the middle of a world pandemic. I don't say that lightly; I don't say it tritely; I don't say it — but to remind the members of this Legislative Assembly that Yukoners know that; they know that very well. They know how hard their government and government departments are working to respond to things that change day by day. We have had, for many months now, all eligible students assigned to a school bus. What we are working on now is individuals who are not eligible under the *Education Act* or under the education regulations for school bus service, but nonetheless, we are working diligently to provide that service to them and we will do so as soon as we are able.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 359

Clerk: Motion No. 359, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Speaker: It is moved by the Minister of Community Services:

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the current state of emergency, established under the *Civil Emergency Measure Act* and expiring on December 8, 2019, should be extended.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being back in the Legislature today to debate the state of emergency. I will say from the outset that what I'm looking for is to hear from all members of this House whether they agree that we should extend the state of emergency.

Our goals all along have been to protect the wellness of Yukoners, the health and safety of Yukoners, and it is hard to imagine a higher goal for us as elected representatives. I will just review briefly the pertinent facts leading up to the decision that is coming on or before December 8.

The first one is with regard to the epidemiology. We know that COVID is not slowing down; it is in fact increasing. We can see light at the end of the tunnel with vaccines, but we are not there yet, and we have to be so careful. We first declared a state of emergency, I believe, on March 27. I think we extended it on June 12 and we extended it again on September 9. As noted in the motion itself, that will need to be extended on December 8 if we wish to maintain the state of emergency.

What is the situation with the pandemic? Globally, on September 9, there were nearly 28 million cases. Today, there are over 65 million cases, which means that is has more than

doubled in the past three months, since we last declared the state of emergency. In the US, the situation went from 6.4 million on September 9 to today, when there is over 14 million.

Alaska has gone from 6,800 around September 9 to today, when the count is nearly 35,000. That is a five-fold increase over the past three months — 90 days.

Canada has gone from 136,000 cases to right around 400,000 cases. In the Yukon, we have gone from 15 to just over 50. Again, it is a significant increase, and we are in the middle of a wave here in the Yukon, here in Canada, here in North America, and here in the world.

The other one I will mention is Nunavut. Nunavut went from having zero cases on September 9 — in fact, zero cases up until a month ago — and in one short month, they went from zero to 198 cases. This just shows us how quickly COVID can spread when we're not putting in place the safety measures to protect our citizens.

That is the situation with the epidemiology. I think it's worth it to also just acknowledge some of the human reality of that, Mr. Speaker. I have been in many conversations lately with communities. I will just mention some really great conversations with the community of Watson Lake, with the Liard First Nation and the Town of Watson Lake, talking about how to protect against burnout, how to communicate with the public, how to shore up their capacity, and how to work with them. There was a period of time over the past month to month and a half where there were some cases in Watson Lake. One of the really heartfelt stories that I heard was about some of the stigma that was attached to COVID with that community and how it was affected as it came into other communities. I was hearing about some of the prejudice that was shown toward citizens of Watson Lake. It was tough. There is a lot of fear and anxiety out there.

I will share one more small story here today. I was on a conference call and there was a staff member who was working from home. He is one of those staff members who was brought across from another department. I don't even actually know which department, but he is working on the COVID situation, working from home, and suddenly, in the background, I heard his daughter asking about getting her dance clothes on because there was a dance video on TV or something. She really wanted to dance, and it was a real moment. Her dad, our public servant, was saying, "Yes, your dance clothes are in the laundry" — because apparently, she has been dancing a lot — so, reality there, Mr. Speaker.

That is what is going on in terms of the numbers and in terms of the stories.

But why do we need to declare a state of emergency? I think that we all understand the challenges in front of us, but why go through the trouble of declaring a state of emergency? As I have said many times — as I said recently to the media — it is basically about three things. There are quite a few more that are important as well, but the main three things, as I understand it, are: to put in place isolation requirements; to put in place border controls; and to put in place enforcement to support those. That's it. If we don't have the state of emergency, those things must go, and then we would be

navigating through COVID without some of those really important measures.

We wouldn't lose the "safe six" because they are just recommendations. They are just us talking with Yukoners.

Again, thank you to all Yukoners for doing their part, because we are in this together. I still use the term "Team Yukon."

That is the why. Let me also — because I think that members of this Legislative Assembly, in thinking about their positions on this motion in front of us today, will want to know what we are hearing from our communities. Of course, we are just one order of government. I have indeed spoken with First Nations and municipalities. I spoke — I think it was last week — with them, but time always blurs a little bit. I will be speaking again this weekend with municipalities, but what I have heard has been unanimous. Our First Nation governments and our municipal governments are saying, "Yes, please. Extend the state of emergency." So, I share that with all members of this Legislature.

Let me move for a moment, Mr. Speaker, to talk about some things that I have heard in this session. I think that we are now on day 35, if my count is correct, of this Sitting. Let's just go back to the beginning of the Sitting and just talk about questions or comments that I have heard here in this Legislature.

Up until today, I thought that there had been a shift, although I will note a question that came today that made think, "Okay, hold on."

I'm just referencing back through Hansard, Mr. Speaker. On October 1, the first day we sat, the Member for Kluane asked if we would be expanding the travel bubble — just saying, BC, but what about Alberta? We stood up and we said that, no, what we need to do is to watch the epidemiology and to protect the health and safety and the wellness of Yukoners.

On October 5, our next sitting day, the MLA for Whitehorse Centre asked why we don't get high schools back full time. I recalled the Minister of Education standing up and saying that it's all about the safety of those schools. It's about making sure that there is enough space for those students so that we can keep them safe and that we have most of our students back full time but, for the three high schools here in the Yukon, grades 10 to 12, we don't have enough space. It was about keeping those kids safe.

Then the next day, on October 6, the MLA for Copperbelt North asked the same question: When are we going to get all of those high school kids back in full time? I heard the Minister of Education say the same thing again — it's about the safety of the kids.

Later on, in the same Question Period on October 6, the MLA for Watson Lake asked about opening up to Alberta. Again, we gave the same response.

Just after that, the MLA for Porter Creek North asked when we were going to get more kids on the school buses. Again, the Minister for Education said that it's about safety on the school buses. That's what we have to look at. We have to make sure that there is enough space for those kids on the school buses, and that's what we have to prioritize because, if we put more

kids on the school buses, what we would be doing — yes, we would be getting more kids on school buses, but we would be elevating the risk.

On October 7, the MLA for Kluane asked again about expanding the travel bubble.

On October 8, the MLA for Lake Laberge asked about a detail on how the education funding would be used to get the high schools back to full time, but of course, what we said was that it's not just about the funding; it's about the safety of those kids.

Again, on October 14, the MLA for Lake Laberge argued about the situation here in the Yukon, saying that it's not a black-and-white situation and that some of the people whom he was talking with would like to open up the travel bubble to Alberta.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think we've all heard that. I think that all members of this Legislature hear from the range of perspectives of Yukoners. It's always diverse, and there are always criticisms about the choices, as there should be.

I stopped noting on — two sitting days later, on October 19, the MLA for Kluane wanted to get information on when we could relax these rules. He was asking questions about timing. Well, when are we going to know about relaxing the rules so that we could expand travel to other jurisdictions? Again, as in all the times we stood here, it was to say that it's about the safety of Yukoners.

In the interim, from when our Sitting started until today, I think that everyone started to say, "Hey, you know what — hold on, hold on. It's not safe yet. We do need to put in place some more measures." I would like to acknowledge that all members of this Legislature did vote to say that the state of emergency was still important to have.

I'll talk a little bit about that, but I just want to note before I move on to that — I was surprised today to hear again from the Member for Porter Creek North the same question: When are we going to get more kids on school buses? What I have heard the Minister of Education say is, "When it's safe." I even heard her say that this is not meant to be a trite response. It means that the priority has to be about the safety of the kids. We appreciate and we understand that there are blended families and that moving kids around through those blended families is complex. I think that the Minister of Education even acknowledged that — that trying to schedule school buses is complex.

I'm sure that all of us as MLAs have dealt with constituents' concerns regarding that situation. I appreciate how problematic it is. However, the priority is — and remains — the safety and wellness of Yukoners. I don't think that any government would ever work to rush to get kids back on if we thought that it was not safe. We take that advice always from the chief medical officer of health — meaning that we are talking with him often and asking for his advice.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity speak briefly with Dr. Hanley yesterday and asked him very directly about us and the state of emergency. I asked for his perspective on our situation. He said to me — and I will paraphrase here —

that this is still a worrisome time for us because of the surge in Canada. He still has concerns here in the Yukon. I heard him speaking on the radio again this morning about those concerns.

What about that last motion that we had — similar to this one? This one is about extending the state of emergency. I will note, Mr. Speaker, that we didn't put some sort of timeline on it. That is not how the act works; it is not how it is set up. It just basically says that you declare a state of emergency and you can undeclare it whenever that state of emergency ends. If you have not undeclared it by 90 days, it ceases to exist. That is why we need to make this decision by December 8.

I just want to note that, when we brought forward this motion previously — or a similar motion — it was a private member's motion. The Member for Copperbelt North brought it forward. He actually had to bring it back three times in a row. That took us five weeks. There were five weeks of debate in this Legislature. I went through all of that debate and counted all the times that each member of the Legislature stood to speak. I will leave out all of the points of order. I will just talk about those times when members stood to speak. Of course, there were several proposed amendments, so that meant that people could get up many times. The record goes to the Member for Lake Laberge, who stood to speak to the motion five times. The Official Opposition spoke over that five-week period — three days of debate — for 85 percent of the time on the floor of this House. That's how much time it took. In particular, the Member for Lake Laberge stood and spoke for a long period of time. One of the things that I recall him saying — and I will have to look it up in Hansard — was that he had a lot to say.

I appreciate that, but I also think that we need to get to decisions in a timely fashion when we're talking about emergencies. So, the Member for Lake Laberge spoke for 35 percent of the time of everybody in this House — one third of the time of this House was for one member to speak. I certainly listened to what he had to say. I certainly appreciate that the problem is complex. I also understand that, as people elected to this Legislature — and, on our side, as people in the role to run the government — we have to take decisions.

Okay. I will finish off by referencing yesterday's tributes in this House. I just would like to acknowledge that every member from all parties who rose to speak yesterday in those tributes talked about and acknowledged the amazing work of Yukoners. I think it started with the public service, but it extended beyond to all Yukoners and the work that they were doing collectively to keep us safe in this time. That is why I think of it as Team Yukon. That's what I think we're doing here. I think that, as a territory, we are working together to protect the health and safety — the wellness — of all Yukoners.

I acknowledge that there is a range of perspectives out there. I have never been surprised by that. In the end, though, we need to take decisions. So that is why I brought this motion forward. It is to allow all members of this Legislature to voice their opinions on this motion and then to vote on it. I look forward to that vote.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise to speak to this motion. I want to note that, as the Yukon Party critic for democratic institutions, I will be the only speaker to the motion and I will be relatively brief in speaking to it so that we can return to debate on the government's budget.

The principle behind this motion is exactly what we have been asking for since the spring of this year — that important principle is democracy. The opportunity for elected Members of the Legislative Assembly to vote on the extension of extraordinary powers of the government is an essential requirement for a proper, working democracy. We finally had that opportunity — although months after it should have happened.

Fundamentally, we believe that the use of emergency powers should be subject to democratic oversight. As Members of the Legislative Assembly know, the spring legislative Sitting ended abruptly in March. At the time, we supported government's request to end the Sitting to allow them to focus on responding to what was, at the time, a quickly evolving situation. COVID-19 was a new, emerging threat and Yukoners watched as countries like Italy and Spain struggled to cope. They watched as jurisdictions like New York and Québec faced serious outbreaks.

So, in light of that situation, we agreed to allow rapid passage of the government's budget and adjournment of the Legislature. In the weeks following that decision, as we began to get a better sense of how the virus was moving and how we needed to respond to it, as well as with the government bringing in sweeping changes to existing laws without oversight, we began pressing the government to allow for proper legislative oversight of its actions.

Ultimately, what we were seeking was a return of the Legislature in some form. Jurisdictions around the world were finding ways to allow for their parliaments and legislatures to work because of the importance of maintaining a democracy, even in a pandemic. Some jurisdictions even made the statement that democracy is an essential service. In contrast, here in the Yukon, the Premier was quoted on the radio as saying that we are — and I quote: "... not in a situation where we need legislative oversight for any of the actions that we've done so far."

In almost every other province and territory in Canada, legislatures were meeting to allow democracies to function. In almost every other jurisdiction in the country, elected representatives were debating the use of emergency powers and providing legislative oversight on government actions. That is how our system of government is intended to work.

So, we began to write the Liberal government about meeting with the opposition to negotiate terms of the return of democratic oversight in the Yukon. We wrote letters on May 4, May 7, May 11, May 14, and June 1. The NDP also wrote letters to the same effect. While the Liberals are correct that they responded to our letters, they never agreed — or even acknowledged — our request to meet to discuss the return of the Legislature or the allowance of democratic oversight. So, it is quite disingenuous when the government pretends that they did.

Similarly, the Liberals also denied our request to have the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments meet to review the many ministerial orders that the government was issuing under their emergency powers. As we have discussed at length, these ministerial orders were broad and sweeping. They included granting the ability to the Yukon government to alter contracts, deal with the way Yukoners are taxed, and limit mobility rights for Canadians. We know that at least one of their ministerial orders is being challenged by Yukoners in court on the grounds that it was an unconstitutional infringement on their Charter rights.

We have said all along that the government should not be casual or flippant about its use of these powers. We all know that the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* was never intended to be used in this way or for this long. Even the minister responsible for it has admitted this.

Earlier this week in debate about the use of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, the minister said that he didn't understand our position. He wondered aloud why we would insist on providing democratic oversight of the government's actions by saying — and I quote: "I'm not sure if it's a point of principle..." Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, yes, it is a point of principle. That important principle is democracy. That's one of the most important principles there is. We are proud to have stood up for it even as the Liberals fought against it.

In our system of democracy, the executive branch — the government — is accountable to the legislative branch — the Legislature — and we are all accountable to the people of the Yukon. That incredibly important foundational principle is exactly what we've been fighting for through this year and throughout this legislative Sitting.

We have proposed motions, amendments to motions, and even actual private members' legislation during this Sitting. All of those are proposed with the intent of respecting that important principle of democracy. The executive branch should not be able to unilaterally grant itself sweeping and broad new powers and exercise those powers without any sort of democratic oversight indefinitely. We have said all along that the extension of the state of emergency should be done by a vote in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Finally, after many months, the Liberals have given us that ability with today's motion. It is too bad that the Liberal government had to be dragged kicking and screaming to allow for this basic respect of democratic principles and a shame that it took so many months.

It is also unfortunate that this requirement is not set out in legislation. The private member's bill that I tabled last month, Bill No. 302, would make this requirement law. We are glad that the Liberal government has finally come around to this important principle and brought forward the motion today.

I know that they view it as an afterthought and that they have already extended the state of emergency multiple times since declaring it back in March, but for us, this is an important matter of principle.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will be voting in favour of this motion, but we will continue to identify how things can be done better. We understand that many of government's support

measures for keeping Yukoners safe during the pandemic flow from the state of emergency. So, we do agree that the state of emergency should be extended. Despite what the government has said — and seems to think still — we have not opposed their ability to exercise ministerial orders, but we have said — and we will continue to say — that bringing forward time-limited legislation for debate and passage in the Legislative Assembly instead of using a ministerial order, which only Cabinet is involved in passing, would be a better approach, a more open approach, and a more democratic approach, and that is the approach we will continue to advocate.

That being said, we have not opposed the content of some of the ministerial orders themselves. In fact, in some cases, we think that they were premature in revoking some of those ministerial orders that created advantages for business and would note that, just as they imposed them without public consultation, they also revoked them without public consultation.

However, we do believe that public consultation should occur. That should preferably occur before rules are put in place, but if it is not possible to do that because of the urgency of the situation, that consultation should still occur after the order is in place and provide a simple opportunity to ask affected stakeholders and the public simple questions such as: What is working? What isn't? What should we change?

All along, we have opposed the lack of democracy in the Liberal approach and we have opposed that their actions have occurred without proper legislative oversight. The details matter, and we respect that, but in a democracy, public input matters as well.

As I noted, when possible, public input should be sought before rules are put in place, but when the urgency of the situation does not allow it, it is still possible to ask people afterward what is working, what isn't, and what we can do better.

I would also like to take the opportunity to note that our arguments have also included the need for ministerial orders to be reviewed by a legislative committee. So, I hope that the government will take this suggestion seriously and that the minister will ask his colleagues to reconvene the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments or some other legislative committee to review any future ministerial orders issued under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* as well as to provide an opportunity to seek public input on the ones that are in place and to ask questions as basic as: What is working, what isn't working, and what can we do better?

I would note as well that it was somewhat odd — the minister complained about how much time we spent debating these measures. I would note that talking about the civil emergency that has been affecting the lives of 40,000 Yukoners for about nine months — the minister complained that we spent three days talking about it here in this Assembly. I think that the minister should recognize that, when we spend time bringing forward the issues and concerns of Yukoners — including the fundamentally undemocratic approach taken by this government — the fact that he and his colleagues had to spend three days in this House working on this issue seems to

be pretty small to the Yukoners whose lives have been affected for months and who have been very upset when they have seen sweeping impacts to their lives without the opportunity for input — and the minister dismisses the importance of their views so casually as to suggest that three days was too long to talk about it.

When the minister spent time counting how much time members had spent in debate and how much time the Official Opposition had spent — at one time, I even heard that he counted the number of words — I would suggest to the minister that a far better use of his time during a pandemic would be consulting with the public on the rules that are affecting their lives, rather than counting the number of words in Hansard or figuring out the percentage of the amount of time that the Official Opposition spent versus how much time the government spent. That is not a good use of his time. That is doing nothing to improve public input and public accountability during a pandemic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would note as well that we want to talk about collaboration. We have, on a number of occasions throughout this pandemic, suggested collaborative approaches. We proposed working with the government. That includes the fact that — earlier in the pandemic and on several occasions since — we proposed all-party legislative committees aimed at working together and supporting the government's and the territory's response to the pandemic. On multiple occasions, we proposed these all-party legislative committees, and every single time, our offer was met with partisan attacks from the Liberals and rejection.

As recently as yesterday, we proposed a collaborative motion that would have supported exactly what the Premier has said that his government is pushing for with regard to vaccine distribution, which is the argument that Yukon and any other territory should receive a more than per capita share because of the unique situation in our territory. Once again, this offer — an offer to work with them and have a position that was shared across party lines — was met with partisan attacks from the Premier and his colleagues.

I hope that, going forward, the government will reconsider its partisan approach of not working collaboratively with both opposition parties. We are all elected to represent Yukoners and we are all hearing from people who have legitimate concerns, questions, and suggestions regarding how government could improve its response to the pandemic. We will continue to listen to Yukoners. We will continue to provide constructive input to the government as well as identify how we think that government can do things better, including through the various proposals that we have made — such as the private member's bill that I tabled last month identifying how we would propose improving the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* to improve that public accountability and the accountability of government to the Legislative Assembly.

By bringing forward this motion and allowing us to debate it before they make a declaration unilaterally, I believe that the Liberals are finally slowly beginning to grudgingly demonstrate that they understand the principle of democracy we've been fighting for.

In recognizing this — before I conclude and before we vote — I want to note as well that today's motion does not indicate how long the government will extend the state of emergency for. That, of course, is not open or transparent.

The government has also said that they expect to continue to extend the state of emergency until there has been a vaccine made available to Yukoners. This suggests that this will not be the last time that they extend the state of emergency. We don't want to end up in the situation again where the government continues to make unilateral decisions to extend its own powers without any democratic oversight or scrutiny. With that in mind, I will move an amendment.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Cathers: I move:

THAT Motion No. 359 be amended by inserting the phrase “and that the Legislative Assembly should consider any future extensions before the extensions are implemented” after the word “extended”.

Speaker: I have reviewed the proposed amendment with the Clerks-at-the-Table and can advise that it is procedurally in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT Motion No. 359 be amended by inserting the phrase “and that the Legislative Assembly should consider any future extensions before the extensions are implemented” after the word “extended”.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: The Minister of Community Services, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am just wondering if we could ask for a small recess to allow us to consider the amendment, as per the new COVID rules that we have been working under.

Speaker: Are members in agreement with a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: In order to comply with COVID-19 physical-distancing measures in order to allow members to confer and to review their positions with respect to the proposed amendment, the House will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge, on the proposed amendment.

Mr. Cathers: I will not take that much time because the amendment itself is extremely simple. As noted — but just to recap, since we did take a recess — it proposes that the Legislative Assembly would have the opportunity to weigh in on any future extensions on the state of emergency before that state of emergency is extended. This is about ensuring that we never get in a position again where the Liberal government refuses to allow for democratic oversight and scrutiny of its

actions — as we saw throughout the months of 2020 — and we want to ensure that our democracy continues to function and that the Legislature is extended the same opportunity to consider debate and ultimately vote before a state of emergency is extended again.

Mr. Speaker, the minister said in his remarks that we are all on Team Yukon. I would note that the government's response to this friendly amendment is an opportunity to show whether there is any sincerity to that remark or if the Liberal government intends to continue their perfect record of rejecting every single constructive amendment and proposal that we made during the pandemic.

Ms. Hanson: I am happy to stand and speak in support of this proposed amendment to the motion put forward by the Minister of Community Services — the minister responsible for the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* — because, in fact, I was really, really pleased that — and it links, so I am speaking to the motion to amend — when I heard that the minister was bringing his motion forward, I thought, “Well, this is great” — because actually, he is seeking the sanction of the Legislative Assembly — the democratically elected representatives of the citizens of Yukon — to extend the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* — because, as we all recall, we didn't — we weren't here on March 27 as Members of the Legislative Assembly when the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* was enacted for the first time and subsequent extensions were made.

So, I actually thought that, by bringing it forward today, he was in fact setting a precedent — that he was indicating to this Legislative Assembly — and through us, the citizens of Yukon — that he would be working with all members of this Legislative Assembly in the future should there be a requirement to extend the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*.

So, I anticipated that we would, in fact, be seeing an extension — given what we are seeing in terms of epidemiology and the various forecasts that are out there about the duration of this pandemic — that we would be, in fact, having an opportunity to re-engage on this very matter in the Spring Sitting.

So, I do support the amendment. I think it just reinforces the democratic nature of the work that we do, that the government does, as the executive arm on behalf of the Legislative Assembly. So, I thank the Member for Lake Laberge for bringing it forward.

Speaker: The Minister of Justice, on the proposed amendment.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the members of the Chamber who have spoken to this matter, and thank you to my colleague for bringing forward this motion today. I think the amendment proposes to change the current legislation, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this Chamber is a place in which laws are made —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

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

Point of order

Mr. Cathers: I think that the minister is confused. She said that the proposed amendment to the motion seeks to amend legislation. The amendment is an amendment to the motion, and I was just hoping that you could clarify that for the minister — that she is speaking to a proposed amendment to a motion, not a proposed legislative amendment.

Speaker: The Minister of Community Services, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am not even sure — I just feel that the member opposite didn't like what the minister said and so is somehow entering debate. There is no point of order that he has listed.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The Minister of Justice might be incorrect. I don't know, really, whether she is, and I don't think the Chair really cares whether she is correct or not. This Chamber is not a truth-seeking Chamber. It is a Chamber where you are providing competing narratives. So, in any event, I will listen — but what I would say is that it is, of course, open to the Chamber to adopt certain motions and it may very well be that — and I would seek guidance from the Clerks — that this motion is completely orderly. If that were an issue, that would have to be a point of order — that the amendment was somehow not orderly. I have been provided with advice so far that it is orderly.

The Minister of Justice has a narrative that she believes to be correct. What we might just be dealing with is competing narratives, but I will continue to listen.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am not sure how half a sentence could be objected to, because I am not really sure what I was going to say, so I am sure that the member opposite doesn't know what I was going to say.

The Yukon Party conservatives have repeatedly characterized the use of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* as being undemocratic. This approach is —

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker: The Minister of Justice has the floor.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The Minister of Justice can sit down — and can continue to sit, certainly, if she wishes — but there is a difference — and we have talked about this in the Fall Sitting — there is a difference between providing the occasional off-mic comment and criticism versus — for both sides — engaging in active call-and-response conversation.

So, obviously, it takes two parties to engage in a call-and-response conversation. As I have said before, if members wish to have valuable conversations on matters that I am sure are important and that matter deeply to all Yukoners, then they can take their conversations outside of the Chamber, engage in those conversations and hopefully meaningfully bridge differences and do valuable work on behalf of Yukoners. However, it's not acceptable in the Chamber to have these four,

five, or six call-and-response conversations on the floor of the Chamber.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm happy to stand today to speak on the amendment to Motion No. 359 as proposed by the Member for Lake Laberge. The Yukon Party conservatives — and, in fact, the Member for Lake Laberge — in their presentation with respect to introducing this amendment and then speaking on the amendment have repeatedly characterized the use of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* as undemocratic. This approach does a disservice to Yukoners.

They have endlessly complained that the actions of this government have been without accountability. This simply is not accurate.

They have, on many occasions, stated that the use of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* has not been transparent. Again, the approach and that information being conveyed to Yukoners by the Yukon Party opposition is not accurate.

Let's be clear about the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. CEMA is a Yukon law. It became a Yukon law after due consideration by a duly elected governing body. They made policy. They drafted, they introduced, they considered, they debated, and ultimately they passed this piece of legislation and it became Yukon law. Mr. Speaker, what I have just described is, in fact, the democratic process and a true democratic process.

The Member for Lake Laberge has said that CEMA was not intended to be used this way or for this long. He said that today on the House floor. I may be misquoting; I'm not doing it verbatim.

This process of giving this kind of information to Yukoners can't possibly be known to the member opposite. Even any research that we were able to do with respect to this piece of legislation and when the act became law, as far back as 1966, could not be reviewed with respect to what the intention of the lawmakers was at the time. In fact, there is much evidence in the act and the legislation itself that contradicts that point of view.

One example might be that there are provisions for extensions of the state of emergency. The act grants authority — let me just go back for a second to say that the provision for the ability to extend the state of emergency leads one to believe that they contemplated the fact that the state of emergency might, in fact, be extended past 90 days. That is common sense. The act grants authority to the minister responsible to make certain decisions to keep Yukoners safe. That is the motivation and the requirement of the law.

Other Members of the Legislative Assembly in opposition, particularly the Member for Lake Laberge, have commented about how this government is somehow giving itself sweeping new powers — again, misinformation and incorrect approach. It's not accurate. There are no sweeping new powers given by anyone to anyone for anything. The CEMA act is the law that governs the state of emergency and provides authority to the sitting government —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Minister of Community Services, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Speaking from the other side, the Member for Lake Laberge just said loud enough for me to hear all the way over here, "Out and out lying".

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If I hear it, sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is what I heard.

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

Mr. Cathers: On the point of order — I don't believe that there is a point of order. I was not speaking or recognized at the time. Whatever the member thinks he heard that may contravene a Standing Order was not a comment made on record. We can debate the accuracy of those points if we wish, but it's not a point of order.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: In this instance, I would just caution the Member of Lake Laberge. I may have heard something that was very close to being clearly unparliamentary language. At that point, the Chair would likely intervene by himself or herself.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Members of the opposition — and, in particular, the Member for Lake Laberge — clearly said earlier today that the government has given itself sweeping new powers in the approach that it has taken with respect to the CEMA. That is not accurate information, despite what the Member for Lake Laberge thinks.

The authority is in the law for the minister to make the kinds of decisions that have been made and included in the CEMA orders in this period of a state of emergency here in the territory, which nobody has asked for and nobody has wanted, and the CEMA has permitted response by the government to protect Yukoners.

As a matter of fact, with respect to each and every one of the decisions made by the Minister of Community Services — in every situation, he has taken each and every one of those decisions — he has brought them before Cabinet — an additional check and balance on the authorities that are contained in the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. Could he have made these orders directly with respect to respecting that law and abiding by that law? Absolutely. Did he do so? No.

We have a one-government approach with respect to how all decisions are made — and certainly with respect to how these decisions are made — and they have all been made with the purpose of protecting Yukoners.

The misinformation with respect to the operation of the CEMA, I think, has been a great disservice to Yukoners. I appreciate that members opposite might have an opinion about certain decisions made, and they are well required and able to express those opinions. But to bring into question the operation of the current law itself, I think, is disrespectful to Yukoners and, in fact —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Whitehorse Centre, on a point of order.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I do believe that the member opposite is speaking on matters other than those that are contained in the proposed amendment to the motion, which is the subject to be discussed at this moment, as I understand it. Perhaps I'm incorrect.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I tend to agree with the Member for Whitehorse Centre. The only caveat I have is that this is now a debate in that the Minister of Justice is responding directly to some of the comments that the Member for Lake Laberge made.

The problem that the Chair is having now is trying to remember what portions of the Member for Lake Laberge's submissions were made in his contributions to the House in his speaking to the main motion and trying to separate out the additional comments that he was making with respect specifically to the amendment. I would just admit that this represents a challenge. The Minister of Justice certainly could respond to the substantive comments that the Member for Lake Laberge made on the main motion.

I agree with the Member for Whitehorse Centre that, specific to this amendment, the Minister of Justice is likely straying, but I understand that she is responding to the content in totality that the Member for Lake Laberge was providing in his contributions.

If the Minister of Justice could perhaps focus on the amendment.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will — certainly striking a few nerves here — speak more directly to the amendment if appropriate and as directed.

My submission to this Legislative Assembly is, in fact, that CEMA is the law of the land. CEMA has been abided by, to the letter of the law, by this government for the purposes of protecting Yukoners. The insertion of the phrase as suggested by the Member for Lake Laberge — requiring that the Legislative Assembly should consider any future extensions — is not currently the requirement of the law.

Today we are happy to have brought this motion for the purposes of discussing that, but as we all know — certainly some of us more than others — the response to the emergency situations that arise on a daily basis with respect to CEMA and the protection of Yukoners is well served at this point by the current piece of legislation. I won't be supporting an amendment to the motion that is here because it is specific to the purposes of extending the current state of emergency, pursuant to the law of CEMA and pursuant to the protection of Yukoners here in the territory. Things will change. We have brought forward a motion with respect to striking a committee for the purposes of looking at the CEMA piece of legislation and determining if and how it could be done better. We look forward to that future discussion. It is not — in my submission

to this House — something that should be done by way of this particular amendment.

The motion that is on the floor here today and before this House on behalf of Yukoners is that we extend the current state of emergency because the evidence supports it, the world pandemic facts and figures support it, the epidemiology supports it, and the protections that are permitted by that act to protect Yukoners are continuing to be required.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the proposed amendment to Motion No. 359?

Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Mr. Adel: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Mr. Gallina: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are seven yea, nine nay.

Speaker: The nays have it. I declare the motion defeated.

Amendment to Motion No. 359 negatived

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion?

Ms. Hanson: I had initially intended to stand to speak in support of the motion from Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — the Minister of Community Services, the minister responsible for the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* — and had felt — as I had said earlier — that the proposed amendment from the Member for Lake Laberge only enhanced it.

But I thought I would indicate my support for the motion because, unlike the previous motions that we had from the government backbenchers or government — whatever — that basically said in a blanket statement — asking this House to agree to a state of emergency — nobody would give that kind of a blind endorsement. But what we have here today in fact is recognizing that the Government of Yukon has invoked the

Civil Emergency Measures Act in response to the COVID pandemic. That implication occurred after the Legislative Assembly rose. We rose on March 19; it occurred on March 27.

I thought it was a good indication from the Government of Yukon, the executive branch, that they would actually come back to this Legislative Assembly and say that we all recognize and join in recognizing that this pandemic is not over — that in fact — at least in Canada — we're in the midst of a second wave — and who knows what's coming? They've indicated to us that they're seeking the approbation of this Legislative Assembly. I think that's the democratic thing to do. I applaud the minister for doing that, and that is why I said earlier that I thought that this was a good sign and that it did set a welcome — welcome — indication that it was the intention of this government to work with Members of the Legislative Assembly as we go through this pandemic.

You know, the recognition and the understanding of the impact of COVID-19 is not solely understood by members of Cabinet. All of us get it, and all of us in this room were elected to represent Yukoners. We have a duty and a responsibility not simply to say that whatever government says is correct.

The minister, at the outset, said that there are three purposes for the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* — those were isolation, border controls, and enforcement. But we all know that, in addition to those three critical functions during a pandemic, the government has issued a number of other orders that have had significant impacts on the lives of all Yukoners, and it is our duty and our responsibility to engage and discuss them.

Over the course of the last few weeks, my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King has identified where there may in fact be opportunities for some of the measures that this government has put in place pursuant to CEMA to be improved. For example, when the initial structuring of how we look at how we support front-line and essential workers who are making less than \$20 an hour — the government structured the program in a certain way. Well, we have found — and we found it again today, based on feedback coming into our offices — that there are significantly more than this government has recognized — a significant number of people who have not been able to access that program because the way that the government structured it required the employers to seek out that support, but there are employees who are suffering as a result of that.

As the minister has said — and I have heard it repeatedly on the other side — this pandemic is not over, so the need to address the needs of those essential workers who are doing the work in our grocery stores and on the front line everywhere in the territory — not just in Whitehorse — needs to be dealt with.

We have also heard about the situation that has arisen — and not just because of the pandemic — the issue around rent increases in this territory — which is quite legitimate — the increase of rent by whatever amount somebody wants to once a year. When we brought forth the suggestion that perhaps the government may want to consider putting a freeze on rent evictions — because effectively what we are getting are de facto evictions — which you are not supposed to do during a

pandemic, but people are going to achieve that by increasing rents by 30 percent or 50 percent.

There are opportunities to have that kind of conversation in this Legislative Assembly as ministers contemplate, based on other consultations — because not all consultation occurs here. But there is a legitimate role for each one of us to be able to engage and not to be excluded from that, because otherwise, you are denying the whole democratic institution of what we are supposedly representing in this Westminster model that we are supposed to be a part of.

So, yes, I support the motion that the minister brought forward in seeking the approval of this Legislative Assembly for the extension of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* for another 90 days, effective, as he said, December 8. He said that he wanted that, and I am happy to agree with him, but I also think that it is imperative that there be opportunities for all of us, as elected members of this Legislative Assembly, to not only bring forward ideas but to actually be heard and not be met with already pat answers that just say, “Nope, that's not how we did it. That's not the program as we designed it.” Well, you know what? There are other points of view.

We represent 60 percent of the people who did not vote for the government in power. There are 60 percent of Yukoners who did not vote for them. Out there among that great 60 percent, there may be one or two ideas that are not totally sympathetic to the views. Maybe there might be a little bit of humility exercised by the Yukon government to admit that, once in a while, there may be ideas out there that they didn't think about at the time. Perhaps it wasn't in the range of considerations that were put forward in the Cabinet submission that they were reviewing at the time. New evidence and new ideas come forward.

If the minister is serious when he says that he still likes using the term “Team Yukon” — well, if you don't like playing all your players and if you force players to sit on the benches all the time and say, “Nope, you can't play and I don't want to hear from you”, that's not much of a team. That's not what I signed up for. I signed up to represent Yukon citizens and I am going to continue to do so.

I thank the minister for bringing forward his motion. I thank him for finally recognizing that the Legislative Assembly has a role, and I am happy to vote in support of the necessary extension of CEMA.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am very glad to speak to this motion this afternoon. In the face of the second wave of this pandemic, the extension of the measures that we have put in place thus far is more important than ever. By now, I think that most people see dawn on the horizon. Vaccines are now running through their final trials worldwide, and I believe that the UK has just given one of them a green light. This is absolutely welcome news, but there is also a hidden danger in all of this optimism and optimistic news. People everywhere, including here in the Yukon, are more eager than they have ever likely been to return to a normal life full of close social interactions. It is human nature, Mr. Speaker. Frankly, I feel it too.

However, a tangible society-wide resistance to this virus is still many months away, in my opinion. Vaccinations will start with the most vulnerable. Vaccinations may take two doses, depending on which version of the vaccine becomes available first. So, jabbing all of our arms across the country and around the world is going to take some time, and therein lies the danger. Many people will likely let their guard down and start taking more risks. They feel the danger has passed. The virus, however, will be just as active and dangerous as it was at the beginning of the pandemic. So, we let our guard down at our peril, and I implore people to make sure that they continue the sacrifices they have made: Limit your social circles; please respect the “safe six”; wear a mask; plan your grocery runs. Do all of the things that you are doing until the vaccine has actually taken root in our society. So, Mr. Speaker, this ain’t over until it is over, and we must remember that.

That is what CEMA is all about. As my good colleague, the member for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, has said, CEMA allows three things. It allows a few other things, but the main three are: isolation measures, border control, and enforcement.

Over the last month, I have been talking to constituents and to other Yukoners outside of Whitehorse West, and they are comfortable with the rules that we have put in place. They support the protections that we have had in place for their safety, and they want them to continue. I have heard that message loud and clear. Many people whom I have talked to throughout this community and around the territory are very comfortable with the protections that we have put in place in the face of this global pandemic. This is why I think that it is important to extend the CEMA order.

I was surprised that the members of the conservative Yukon Party filibustered for five weeks over a very simple question recently. That question, Mr. Speaker, was whether they support the state of emergency. It is a simple question: Do you support it or not? What we were subjected to, Mr. Speaker, was hours and hours of filibustering, amendments, weaving and dodging and delays. After all of those various filibustering techniques — amendments, hours of talk — the conservative Yukon Party supported that motion. I was very glad that they supported it because we know that a significant portion of their base does not, which is why I suspect they stalled the vote.

Now members have put forward a new sparse CEMA bill. I want to remind the members opposite that, while the bill and motions refer to legislative oversight of emergency measures and while that sounds virtuous and straightforward, there are very serious pitfalls within them — the most serious, in my opinion, being the delays which would be created during a societal emergency when time is absolutely critical.

As I said, a perfect example, as mentioned by my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, is the fact that this House took five weeks simply to agree that we were in an emergency situation and that they supported the state of emergency — five weeks, Mr. Speaker, on one simple and, to most people, obvious fact.

So, I cringe to imagine going through endless points of order, amendments, and speakers while the pandemic spreads

or a fire burns or some other type of threat to our territory grows perhaps out of control. Of course, there will be accountability in the Legislature, but that can come when the threat has been somewhat mitigated and we’re out of whatever crisis that we find ourselves in, much like we would during a normal fire season when an emergency presents itself. The Government of Yukon should never find itself in a situation of paralysis by analysis when a disaster is looming or unfolding in real time in this territory.

On the topic of accountability, I know that the members opposite love to assert falsely that we have denied their democratic rights — not allowing the Legislature to sit, et cetera. Let me put the facts before the false. Mr. Speaker, the opposition has asserted that we are sitting less than other jurisdictions. This is wrong — absolutely and fundamentally not true. The Yukon Legislature this year will be sitting for 54 days — 54 days, Mr. Speaker.

That is more than the legislatures of British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, the Northwest Territories, PEI, and Saskatchewan. We are sitting longer than all of those legislative assemblies this year during the pandemic. So, they are wrong, Mr. Speaker, and they have continuously asserted otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, we are democratic and we are sitting in a democratic Chamber at the moment debating the state of emergency in public view, live on the radio, chronicled by Hansard and the media. We abided by the unanimous will of the House to do so following a full debate of the budget in the spring, with us agreeing to forego our legislative agenda and sit until all opposition questions were answered — which they were at the time. The budget was passed by this House and we ended the session. The budget passed in public view, live on the radio, chronicled by Hansard and the media in this Chamber.

We ended that session with a promise to the people of the Yukon. Let me remind the opposition what that promise was — on that last day of that session, late at night, we were here in this Chamber and we unanimously agreed to return to this Chamber — the Legislative Assembly — on October 1. We unanimously agreed to come back on that date. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? We fulfilled that promise. We came back here on October 1 during the pandemic, as promised and unanimously agreed to in public in this Chamber, on the radio, in full public view, and under media scrutiny.

It wasn’t just that, though, Mr. Speaker. Over the summer, we made the opposition five offers to meet and discuss the budget and CEMA orders — five offers. They could ask these questions publicly, with Hansard support, and they refused. They refused five times. I wondered then, as I wonder now, where their democratic principles were this summer. So, please forgive us if we express scepticism of the so-called olive branch motions being extended by the Yukon Party in this House this week. Perhaps if they come clean with Yukoners on the real reasons why they turned their back on democracy this summer, we might be more likely to accept their olive branches in the future.

I want to know — it was interesting to hear Currie Dixon, leader of the conservative Yukon Party, telling local media how he now supports extending the state of emergency. This is certainly a change from early in the summer when the Yukon Party was telling anyone who would listen how they disagreed with the restrictions that had been put in place for their safety. They were opposed to it.

Let's go back to the early days of this pandemic when the federal Conservative candidate in the last election made a comment in the *Whitehorse Star* on May 1, 2019, about where they stood. It sounded remarkably like the approach currently playing out in Alberta under Jason Kenney — another individual whom the conservative Yukon Party admires so much that they have used him as a fundraising draw here in Whitehorse. Let me quote the Yukon conservative candidate's comments last May. "... humanity has not faced a challenge like this pandemic in generations, so politicians are taking direction from medical experts — ordinary professionals, in extraordinary circumstances, doing the best they can — but public confidence wavers when their advice changes daily. While doctors may be experts in health, they are not experts in financial or cultural health..."

I would like to point out that this individual remained on the Yukon Party payroll throughout the summer.

The first reaction — both locally and federally — from conservatives to the governing party's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was to discredit the chief medical officers of health across our nation. At the same time, prominent members of the Yukon Party were busy financially supporting a court action against the measures put in place to protect Yukoners. I am glad to see that the Yukon Party has changed its mind and it now thinks that those measures are a good idea.

This afternoon, a few moments ago, we heard the Member for Whitehorse Centre speak about the CEMA orders beyond the three that we mentioned earlier — border controls, enforcement, and isolation — and wanting to discuss them. Yet, this summer, that member too turned down that opportunity — not once, but twice. Twice she was offered opportunities to discuss those CEMA orders in this Legislature, with Hansard support, and the member turned it down.

So, please excuse my scepticism of her moral outrage this afternoon. It rings hollow. This summer, when she could have represented her constituents and when the member opposite could have come off the bench, she refused.

I will, of course, be supporting this motion and I sincerely hope that the Official Opposition and the Third Party do the same. I have heard them express that they will. I am glad for that, because it is no exaggeration when I say that the CEMA orders we are now contemplating are going to save lives.

Mr. Kent: Although I hadn't intended to speak, I do just want to offer a few comments to what I've heard here today and perhaps offer a bit of experience from my time in this Legislature. I'm hoping for perhaps some better days ahead as we close out this Fall Sitting here in the next — I believe there are 10 days left after today.

I just want to comment — I know the Minister of Highways and Public Works just mentioned — I believe it was the Member for Copperbelt North's original motion to support the state of emergency. He said that it took five weeks to get it passed, but I think it's important for Yukoners to know that government private members — their private members' day is once every other week. So, we spent three days talking about this motion. There were amendments brought forward that we felt would have improved the democratic oversight, that would have improved information sharing, and that would have improved timeliness.

Obviously, the government — which they have the ability to do — voted against those amendments. But three days — and after we get through the Daily Routine there was, I would say, at most, three and a half hours left in the day — so 10.5 hours to debate a motion around a state of emergency that has affected over 40,000 Yukoners. It has essentially affected every individual who lives on this planet.

To hear the government talk about filibustering and complaining that we took three days or 10.5 hours of debate to go through something so important — I think what all of us in this House have to think about is the impact of the state of emergency on all Yukoners. Small business owners — some have closed their doors, some had to close their doors for the summer in the tourism industry, and some are hanging on by a thread. Some bar owners have told me that their business is down by 80 percent this year over last year.

Obviously, the measures that were brought in were brought in for health and safety reasons, but I really hope that the government members think about their statements about how difficult it was spending 10 and a half hours talking about something that has affected over 40,000 Yukoners for months and months on end. I think that the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and I, in listening to the Premier complain about how long we spent in general debate — I think it was eight or 10 hours at the time that we were in general debate, and that is a normal work day for most people. That is a bit of a long shift for a construction worker. When complaints like that are being lodged by individuals in here who are fortunate enough to still be employed and receiving a wage, it's pretty tough for some of those workers or business owners who are struggling to hear complaints about 10 and a half hours of debate on something, or eight or 10 hours of debate on something else, or 15 hours — those certainly aren't very long hours when it comes to what Yukoners out in the private sector have to deal with on a regular basis when working. For many Yukoners, those complaints will certainly ring hollow.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I heard partisan remarks and political attacks. We are in a House where that happens, but I think that it is important to put on the record some of things that we have offered since the start of the pandemic that were in the spirit of cooperation and collaboration. Members will remember that what would have normally been a 30-day Spring Sitting was shrunk down to nine days because of the pandemic. We agreed at the time to expedite debate on the budget so that we could pass it. Obviously, a number of bills stayed on the Order Paper that we

didn't get to and would normally have been business in that 30 days, so to once again hear the Minister of Highways and Public Works say that somehow, in those nine days of debate in the spring, there was fulsome debate on the budget — again, Yukoners who follow this Legislature would not call nine days of debate on the budget fulsome debate on the budget.

As I mentioned, we did offer, back in the spring, an all-party committee to look at some of the responses and to assist with responses on the crisis and the impact on businesses. That was voted down at the time by the government members.

Some further examples — we have been asking matter-of-fact questions on the health response in preparation for vaccination, and what we get is partisan and personal attacks inside and outside the House. We bring forward all-party committee proposals — once again, partisan and personal attacks inside and outside of the House. We bring forward a motion supporting the Liberals' position on vaccine negotiations — once again, what do we get? We get partisan and personal attacks, not only on the floor of the House but out in the media.

Even on the ministerial statement that was brought forward today on the Fortymile caribou herd — my colleague, the Member for Kluane, gave kudos to the government on a job well done. What do we get at the end of that? A partisan attack from the Minister of Environment against the Yukon Party.

We saw it again in response to what should have been a simple amendment to support democracy during a state of emergency. Again, what we got from the Minister of Justice was partisan name-calling and attacks on the Yukon Party.

So, unfortunately for Yukoners, it appears that the current Yukon Liberal government doesn't understand or respect the principles of democracy and collaboration.

I get it — we have been elected for over four years. There will obviously be an election before this time next year. There will be an election. Some of us may be here and some of us won't be here after that election. Who knows which party is going to be on which side of the House? The jockeying has begun and tempers are short. We're on day 35, as I mentioned, of the current Sitting. Even though it's a little cooler outside, the temperature in here gets heated during Question Period and other times.

You know, there are times when I drive home after work and I'm not proud of some of the things that I've said or done in here or some of the behaviours that I have exhibited, but I think that probably goes for all members of this Legislative Assembly. There are some things that are said in the heat of the moment, and there are some things that are written down, unfortunately, by staff that are said — such as the ministerial statement response today that really didn't recognize the kudos that the Member for Kluane was giving the government on that ministerial statement.

I think it's disappointing, because I know that every member of this Legislature, when we started this work four years ago, came in here and wanted to — everybody who puts their name on the ballot or on a lawn sign, I guess, wants to make a difference. The 19 of us who were fortunate enough to be elected to come in here — I think that we all wanted to make

a difference. This is my third term in this Chamber and in government and the first one where I have served in opposition, but it still doesn't mean that we don't want to make a difference for the people whom we represent and for all Yukoners.

A promise that appears in almost every political party's platform is to restore order and decorum to the House. Everybody talks about it, and unfortunately, we're at a point in the mandate, perhaps, where that order and decorum has gone out the window.

It's to a point — and again, this is my opinion and speaking from my experience — that it's the worst I have ever seen it. This is nine years since I was first re-elected in 2011, and there were two and a half years before that, and this is the worst I have ever seen the Legislative Assembly as far as order and decorum, the way that we treat each other in this Legislature, and the way that we talk about each other outside of it.

We will be supporting this motion. Obviously, we're in a challenging time with respect to the pandemic and the second wave. I'm sure we all have friends and family in provinces down south where this is extremely challenging, and we're seeing challenges up here in the Yukon as well.

Obviously, we're going to support this, but we felt that there could have been a little bit more democratic oversight with respect to the amendment brought forward by the Member for Lake Laberge, which was subsequently voted down. That said, I'm hopeful that, as we finish out the next 10 days — or 10 days and a couple of hours before Christmas — and as we head into a potential Spring Sitting and then an election, we can perhaps all refocus and dispense with personal attacks, dispense with partisan attacks, and focus for the remainder of our time in here as an Assembly on what we were elected to do, and that is to represent the interests of Yukoners, no matter how they voted in the last election.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard on Motion No. 359?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am going to build off a few of the comments that the Member for Copperbelt South just spoke about. I have noted, in all of the meetings where I have gone to talk to communities around this territory — whether that is in person or via Zoom or via calls or however it is — there has been a real anxiety in the territory, and that is because we are in this big pandemic. It is really tough on people, and I think that is true here as well. I think that I always do my best to come here and speak with respect to — in fact, to try to be kind — and it's tough, I agree. I expect criticism. I think that is the whole set-up of this system — if there is a majority of people elected, they form the government and then the opposition's job is to criticize. When it is done respectfully, I completely believe in it.

I think that it should also be obvious — but I will say it — that we will also criticize. We will criticize past records — but I think that our job is to do that respectfully, without personalizing it — but to hold to account the record, to say to

Yukoners: “This is what we believe was the history” — that we draw comparisons. I think that should happen, and I don’t think that it should be surprising — and it’s not incorrect. It is when we do it in a disrespectful way or without decorum — that is the time when it is not right — and I think that it’s not right for Yukon because our job here is to represent Yukoners. I think that everyone deserves that respect, having been elected. If I have been disrespectful, I will apologize. I do watch for it.

In fact, I will just make a small comment about counting. It’s one of the things I do, Mr. Speaker. I said earlier in the tribute today that I am an engineer and it is in my nature to count. I look at all times — I try to count because one of the things about counting is that you can be more objective. When you are trying to decide whether you are doing something in a way that’s different or worse, I look for ways other than subjective ways to decide that. I count all the time.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker — I think I have said this — that when the pandemic hit, my workload doubled. I have been working hard. I have watched colleagues work hard. I don’t always know about the members of the opposition, because for me — I saw their offices closed. I didn’t see them in the places where I normally see them, but I assumed that they were working hard because Yukoners were asking for help. Yukoners were concerned; Yukoners were anxious.

Let me just follow up on that notion ever so slightly. I do think that it’s important that we have humility as people in this Legislature and that we take the time to listen more than to speak. I do think that good ideas come from many quarters. I don’t agree that somehow we have only listened to the people who elected us here. That is not even close to what I believe to be the situation.

I started off, as I opened this debate, talking about meetings — which I really appreciated — with the Town of Watson Lake and the Liard First Nation. I went there with the Premier to give out an award around language and education to some community members and elders who had been working to hold up the language. We then went for those meetings. I don’t think that we are not talking to all Yukoners in the same way that I believe that the members opposite are certainly talking to folks in my riding. Why wouldn’t they? I hope that they are, because I want them to be doing that. There is nothing wrong with that.

But it’s not correct to say that the government isn’t trying or working at all times to listen to the whole of the Yukon. This piece of legislation that we’re using — somehow there’s a suggestion that, “Man, we should be here in the Legislature to bring forward these motions all the time.” Really? Which other acts should I be using? Which other ones aren’t democratic for the members opposite? Is it the *Dental Profession Act* that we passed early on? How about *Workers’ Compensation Act*? We brought that one in; we don’t meet to talk about it. How about *Missing Persons Act*? How about the cannabis act? How about the *Liquor Act*? How about the *Societies Act*? How about *Coroners Act*? How about *Employment Standards Act*? Which one is right to bring back here?

You know, I think that the members opposite have brought forward a reasonable suggestion — one worth looking at — as we look at this act to try to understand how to improve it in the

future. I see a couple of other provinces that do this. So, I think that it is a worth a look. I see many that don’t do this — maybe that’s the better model. I don’t want to debate that here. What I want to debate is whether or not Yukoners are safe. That’s the debate that I’m here for. That’s the thing that I’m trying to focus on with all of us.

When I say “Team Yukon”, I don’t expect all the members of my team to agree with me. Trust me, Mr. Speaker — I know that I’m often in the minority in my thinking. I learned that long ago. I learned that when I was a municipal councillor. I know that as a representative in this Legislature; I know that as a minister. I don’t always agree with people. I think that there is strength in the diversity of our views, but I don’t think that it’s always just MLAs who have the ideas.

For example, no one yet in talking about the CEMA legislation mentioned First Nations. Aren’t they elected too? Don’t they have valid perspectives that we need to listen to? Isn’t that important to check in on? You know what — I do talk to them, and they haven’t yet said to me, “Okay, hold on. Let’s change this legislation first.” No, what they’ve said to me — in fact, I have a letter. I’m sure that, somewhere in this pile of stuff, I have a letter —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: The minister is on an odd sidetrack. I think he has forgotten to speak to the matter under discussion — which would be Standing Order 19(b). He is making some rather outlandish claims considering that they voted against public consultation; to suggest that no one proposed it is quite odd.

I think, though, that he does appear to be off track and in contravention of Standing Order 19(b).

Speaker’s ruling

Speaker: For all members — I guess the Minister of Community Services is the only remaining person, so he’s probably the only member who needs guidance right now.

“THAT it is the opinion of this House that the current state of emergency, established under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and expiring on December 8, 2019, should be extended.” If the Minister of Community Services could loop back to that subject matter, although some of the analogies — I can see where you were going, but I’ll listen.

Minister of Community Services, please.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Here’s where I was going: I have a letter here from the Council of Yukon First Nations — having met with all the First Nations — recommending that we extend the state of emergency, so I’ll table that.

I’m just saying, Mr. Speaker — because we’re talking about extending the current state of emergency, and we’re talking about talking to Yukoners — maybe elected officials — and to get their perspectives on this — and I think that this is about extending the state of emergency.

It's not just other elected officials. We go and talk — it's also municipalities, but it's beyond that — we have a business advisory council that we talk to about their concerns, which includes about whether we should be in the state of emergency or not — whether we should extend it — a tourism advisory group. We have the not-for-profit advisory group. There are a lot.

So, as a government, we will listen to all those groups. There is anxiety and tension in this room — partly because of COVID-19 and partly because of the partisan nature of this place — but I say that I am happy to hear ideas from the members opposite. Earlier in his debate on the original motion, the Member for Lake Laberge quoted me — well, referenced me — and I would like to just pull that up more fully and put it into context.

So, here I am, and I will now quote from Hansard: "Let's deal with the pandemic first, because I really want us to focus on the health and safety of Yukoners right now, and then we can get to these processes to improve them." Some of my language is not good, but I will come back to it. "I'm trying to put in front of them questions or debate around the issues that they've expressed concern about, but I'm only receiving this general notion that ministerial orders are not democratic enough, in their perspective. Why not just tell me, Yukoners, or you, Mr. Deputy Chair, which ones are the problem? Let's see if they have some suggestions. Let's see if we can work to improve them. Let's do it right now. I have no problem having that dialogue and conversation." That is what I said here.

Mr. Speaker, what I will just finish off on is that my approach to this question all along has been: How do we help Yukoners navigate this challenging situation? I think that the state of emergency gives us the tools to do that. I look forward, at some later date, to amending that legislation. I actually think that, when you go to amend legislation, what you ought to do is engage Yukoners — right? Isn't that what I have heard? Isn't that what we have said? Yet the members opposite said, "No, no, no — here it is; here's the amendment. What is that amendment? Oh, it is about us" — "us" meaning them.

So, great — but I think that there are some other things that would be important too, and I think that all of that has to be taken into context.

The last point that I will make is that none of us here complain about the length of debate on this side. We're not concerned about the length of debate. Ten and a half hours — no worries. What I am concerned about and what we were concerned about is the five weeks — because when you are talking about an emergency, if I had thought to myself that I will bring this up today, and if it took us five weeks from now to decide whether this House agrees that there is an extension to the state of emergency —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: The minister seems to be forgetting that calling a private member's motion back every two weeks was the government's choice.

It was actually only three days of debate. The government can call business anytime it wishes to as a government motion. The minister seems to be forgetting that point. Again, he seems to be speaking to matters other than the item under discussion.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Just as a refresher — everyone can sit down. First, even if the honourable members disagree with the point of order raised, once the member has stood to state a point of order, he or she is entitled to be heard on the point of order.

It's not going to work very well for a Speaker, a Chair, or a Deputy Chair to make any determination of points of order if there is an instant back comment when the member is trying to state their point of order. That is an untenable situation for a Speaker, Chair, or Deputy Chair — whether it is on the opposition side or the government side, whether you like it or not. I have to be able to listen to what the point of order is, however meritorious or non-meritorious it is ultimately determined to be.

But I think I have listened to most of what the Member for Lake Laberge said. In my view, it is a dispute among members and it is about alternate narratives.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If you want to extend the state of emergency — and having brought this motion today — if it took us five weeks to get there, we would end up with four or four and a half weeks without the ability to have border control, isolation requirements, enforcement, and all of the other things that we have done to try to help Yukoners. It isn't that we are concerned to hear people speak about this for a long time. There is some concern that I have that it should be spread out among the members of the Legislature and that the opportunity to speak should be more balanced, but the rules allow it, so that's fine. I can live with my concern. What we have always been saying here is that it took five weeks to get to that vote here in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, this motion that we're talking about — we brought forward. The motion that came to talk about whether we were in a state of emergency — we brought forward.

I have heard the members opposite talk about how they needed to have the Legislature in session to do this, and yet I have not seen them bring these types of motions forward, and the criticism is that we are not interested in their perspectives. I believe that we are. I look forward to hearing their perspective today. Once this is done, we will see how the vote goes — terrific — and I look forward to working with them, whether it's through a select committee or in other ways, to address potential changes to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. I look forward to that.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on Motion No. 359?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 359 agreed to

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

Speaker: It has been moved by the Acting 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 (Mr. Adel): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 205: Second Appropriation Act 2020-21 — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Good afternoon, Mr. Deputy Chair. This afternoon, I just want to welcome, once again, my officials, the Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works, Mr. Paul McConnell, and his colleague, Mr. Gorczyca. They're here to help me this afternoon, and I really appreciate them coming out on a Friday afternoon to provide their excellent advice to me as we work through the supplementary budget of this year.

As the members opposite know, in our supplementary budget, we have small capital and O&M items. I believe we have about \$11.5 million in O&M spending that we have come forward with, and we also have in the neighbourhood of about \$20 million on the capital side. I am looking forward to questions on those items.

In the spirit of openness, transparency, and democracy, I'm open to any other questions the members opposite may have. I think that, since we started this, we have been fielding questions from 16 years ago, right back to specific page references in flight documents dating back to February 2017 — I think page 74. We're running the gamut, and I'm open to answering these questions. I will throw it open to debate or questions from my good colleagues opposite.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Deputy Chair, it's the first time today that I have been called "good".

When we left off on November 25, the minister had ended off by indicating to me that he thought that I was pessimistic and that he was a much more optimistic individual when it came to his abilities and the Premier's abilities to convince the federal government to change its mind with respect to decisions around the disposition or outcome with respect to the operations of Nav Canada at the Whitehorse airport.

I just want to ask him — I'm sure everyone read the *Whitehorse Star* article on Wednesday, December 2 where we saw former Yukon Liberal Premier Pat Duncan, now senator, questioning Transport Canada at the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance. I am hoping that the minister has more recent information. This was a standing committee that met last Thursday. I am quoting what the senator said at that committee meeting: "Transport Canada is asking for nearly \$116 million to provide essential air services to remote communities," she said... "And we have recently learned in the Yukon, that Nav Canada is giving consideration to potentially closing down control towers at seven regional airports, including the international airport at Whitehorse, Yukon."

She also then went on to say: "Are any of the funds requested by Transport Canada being put towards ensuring that these control towers stay operational to maintain safety in Canadian airspace, and if not, what does Transport Canada propose to do to keep the regional airport towers operational?" the former Yukon premier asked."

In his response, the Transport Canada official told the committee that, of the \$116 million pledged for essential services in remote areas, no funds will be given to Nav Canada

to help them maintain continued control over operations at the Whitehorse airport or elsewhere.

Can the minister update this House as to — subsequent to that hearing last Thursday, have any additional entreaties been made of the federal government, and what success can the minister report to this Legislative Assembly with respect to ensuring that Nav Canada's essential services at Whitehorse airport are maintained? We have heard the need and concerns for this repeatedly expressed by the aviation industry in Yukon. I am hopeful. Contrary to what the minister said on November 25, I can be an optimistic person, and I am hoping that this optimism is rewarded today with some positive news from the minister.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to see the optimism from the member opposite this afternoon. Checking the notes from our conversation on November 25, I expressed that the member opposite was characterizing the decision as a decision — as a fait accompli — and that this was going to happen. I don't think it is.

I think that Nav Canada, which is an independent agency — a corporation unto itself under the federal government — is examining its plans in the face of this global pandemic because it's hemorrhaging money like most aviation industry players who have seen precipitous drops in aviation traffic.

The member opposite is right — we did see the Yukon senator discussing this in Ottawa recently and talking to Transport Canada. Nav Canada is autonomous from Transport Canada, and it relies on its own revenue specifics. The money that Ottawa has generously provided so far to this territory to support our aviation industry has not gone to Nav Canada. Frankly, I think the industry itself is benefitting from that largesse and I think that's the way it should be.

If I check my notes on aviation, I will find the most recent information. I just don't want to go off the top of my head. I've had a briefing, but I want to go from this. Currently, the control tower at Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport is operated by Nav Canada and continues to operate normally. There are no losses of jobs or services at the airport currently. Nav Canada has contacted the department announcing that an aeronautical studies review is underway at locations across the country, including Whitehorse. We are working with Nav Canada to support the review and remain committed to supporting Yukon's critical aviation industry.

Personally, I can assure this House that I am not in favour of any staffing or service cuts to the control tower at the Erik Nielsen airport. We know that the aviation industry has been one of the hardest hit by COVID, as I've just said.

We do know that the Nav Canada team is actually starting consultations in the Yukon starting in January. They are going to be reaching out as part of their review, as part of the decision-making process. They're going to be talking to stakeholders in the territory starting in January.

I am including the Yukon aviation advisory committee that we struck, so they will be looking to that group for guidance as well. I have no doubt that they will hear from local industry players that service cuts or staffing cuts at the Whitehorse International Airport are not supported. That is certainly the

message that I will be delivering. From talking to some of the aviation players, I am sure that a lot of them will be saying the same thing.

Ms. Hanson: The point is that NavCan can say as much as it wants and plead its case as much as it wants. It is a non-governmental agency privatized by a previous federal government — so those services, those essential functions to a thriving aeronautics industry. We go through this in periodic phases, as you know, Mr. Deputy Chair. The governments elect to privatize government services, including this government here.

My question really wasn't whether or not he supports Nav Canada or likes the idea that they are doing consultations. Of course, Nav Canada is doing consultations, but they depend on the fees for their services because of the privatized model. As he has said, there is no aviation industry right now. So, they have made a plea to the federal government.

What I said to the minister was, in reading the testimony from the Senate committee, if he doesn't believe the testimony and the response made by Transport Canada to the Senator for the Yukon, then who does he believe? The response was — and I will repeat it: "...told the committee that of the \$116 million pledged for essential air services in remote areas, no funds will be given to Nav Canada to help them maintain continued control tower operations at the Whitehorse airport or elsewhere."

So, if they don't have air traffic controllers, as we have discussed, then there is the option of continuing as a flight service specialist centre, and then there are incumbent costs associated with that. If nothing else, if the government is unable to impress upon the federal government — its colleagues, its friends in Ottawa, the Liberal friends — the importance of maintaining this essential service at the air traffic controller level, has it done costing scenarios of the cost to Yukon of putting in, say, the specialized light services that would be required to install safer, for example, automatic runway lights that would be triggered by pilots? These are a cost to the Yukon government, should the federal government fail to support the continued services that Nav Canada is seeking.

I'm simply asking what kind of preparatory work, what kind of scenario work, in preparation — as I assume this minister across from me is doing now in preparation for the spring budget. This is the time of year when those should be done, ramping up — probably, hopefully, almost complete. This is a factor for that budget.

What information has the minister considered, and what cost implications does he anticipate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: During the last few days that I have been up here talking to my good colleagues across the way, we have gone back in time a little bit, from four years to 16 years. I'm going to go back a little bit further to former Premier Penikett, whom I had the good opportunity to know and speak with and sometimes spar with. Mr. Penikett had an expression that he used with me: "We don't discuss hypotheticals". That's a good lesson for the member opposite that, when you're in the midst of negotiations — when you're facing a negotiation, a potential negotiation — with a federal agency that is

independent of the federal government, you don't start throwing numbers on the table and saying that we're prepared to spend this or that or the other thing. I'm certainly not going to do that on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I'm certainly not going to start discussing a hypothetical budget that we're in the process of pulling together on the floor of the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

That's just not the way government works. I'm surprised the member opposite thinks that it's the way government works. But I'm happy to say that we're going to participate in the exploratory talks that are happening in January and probably will go on that way. If, in fact, there are any — and certainly I know that the Premier and I have expressed to the federal government that we do not support any cuts to Nav Canada, and we will continue to fight for jobs in the territory and for retention of services in the territory, as I have said for two days running. We will see where these discussions go in January.

But I'm not going to preface those discussions by saying, "Yes, we're prepared to spend X million dollars or X hundreds of thousands of dollars doing XYZ and anticipate..." No, that's not how it works.

I'm happy to take the next question from the member opposite.

Ms. Hanson: It is unfortunate that a minister doesn't understand the importance of actually doing environmental scanning and considering all potential implications and impacts to his budget area. If that's how he does it — ad hoc and sort of as situations arise, and then you try a reactive budget approach — that's one approach. I guess that may explain some of the ad hocery that we see in this government's budgeting.

The other day when we asked questions in this Legislative Assembly with respect to the Highways and Public Works project to continue the Yukon Party's project to expand and widen the Alaska Highway from the Carcross Corner over to the Mayo Road Cut-off — it's funny that it is being touted as: We weren't doing what the Yukon Party did — but then it turns out that exactly what we're doing is what the Yukon Party proposed.

One of the ones that I had raised the other day had to do with the continued concerns being expressed by folks who live in Hillcrest, Granger, and Valleyview in terms of safety and getting across that now widened road where we see light standards, but we don't see any street lights. I understand and wholly appreciate the safety concerns during the time of pandemic with respect to the reluctance of Outside contractors coming to the territory to do whatever magic is necessary to operationalize the street lights near Hillcrest Drive.

My question for the minister is: What options, what alternatives — I hate to offer to the minister that there might be alternatives to what he has already not done — to having those highly technical requirements achieved — to have the lights turned on? If that's not possible now, in the interim and given that this pandemic may stretch on for some time, as we keep hearing, has the minister considered alternative measures to ensure the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists as they attempt to make their way across that highway, such as perhaps the

street lights that are used at construction sites, street lights that we see on highways at bridge approaches and others?

I'm just simply asking the minister what alternative ideas he has out there, or does he anticipate that there will be no street lights until after the pandemic is actually finished, whenever that is? Because we don't know, he doesn't know, and we can't possibly know with any certainty when this time of uncertainty is going to be finished.

What alternatives are there in terms of providing certainty? Has he followed up on the concerns — because tonight, all of us received a little alert on our phones that there's a snow warning in effect for Whitehorse tonight — 20 centimetres. The rain may have washed a bunch of stuff and now left us ice underneath. Tonight we will get the 20 centimetres, and anybody attempting to cross at that intersection will find it very difficult because the signs are obliterated. The way in which that road is plowed makes it impossible for pedestrians to get across.

I look forward to hearing from the minister how this is being addressed.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There is so much to unpack there; there really is. I am really glad to be engaging with my good colleague, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, this afternoon. We always have such great talks.

She alluded to the federal government support to critical air services. I take exception to any suggestion that the federal government doesn't support our critical air services. The federal government has actually come forward in this territory alone — and they have done this throughout the north — with millions for critical air services in the north. They have been very generous. I know that they have done a very good job keeping our aviation industry aloft during an absolutely catastrophic drop in air services. The pandemic has blocked travel, really, so the aviation industry is seeing a catastrophic loss in revenue. The federal government has stepped up and we have stepped up with some money to make sure that Air North, Alkan Air, Tintina Air, our rotary folks, our fixed-wing aviation companies — those services critical to the territory and this way of life — are sustained throughout this pandemic. I really do thank the federal government for that investment — an absolutely critical investment in our essential air services.

I don't even know how you could make the case that they don't support our critical air services. These are certainly specific to the Yukon.

Nav Canada is a federal agency, and I'm sure, just like they're working with federal aviation companies like Air Canada and WestJet, they will be dealing with those in a different manner.

Ad hoc — I think they mentioned ad hoc budgeting. We brought in a five-year capital plan. It had never been done before, so we're not ad hoc — we're actually planning and moving to a five-year horizon with projects put in there. We plan ahead, and we have a whole list of capital projects, and they're planned, they're delineated, and we execute on them. It's a plan that, if something extraordinary comes up, we can adjust.

I take exception, as well, to the suggestion from the member opposite that we were ad hoc. We were anything but that. We brought a level of planning and thoughtfulness to the budget process that, frankly, has not been seen here before.

Another error that a good colleague has made across the way is talking about how dark it is up there. It actually isn't very dark. This last week, I got texts from people saying, "Why are people saying it's dark up here?" The place is illuminated with street lights. We have more street lights up there than we've had before. It's very well-lit with street lights up in the Hillcrest area.

What we are missing is a traffic light. Now, as I said in the House during Question Period and during our discussions, the company from BC — it's a national company based in BC, or it has a BC office — is unwilling, or was unwilling, to come up here because we closed the bubble. They were scheduled to come up, and then the bubble burst on our porous border with BC, and when that happened, the company said that they are not coming and they don't feel safe.

My officials have been working with that company since that scheduled work was abandoned because of safety concerns — we have been working with them, and we'll see. I'm optimistic that we'll be able to get a technician up here to work on those lights and get them operational. The company reacted. We didn't think that it was necessary to totally scotch the whole program. We're working with them, and we will see what happens with those negotiations. They are talking with us, and things are going well.

In the absence of that, we have an alternative crosswalk that we are looking at — the plan is there. We also have additional lane delineation that we are putting up there as well. We are working with our sign shop within the department to make sure that we have signage up there — in the absence of that — and that work has been going on since the contractor pulled out of that scheduled work.

We are working on this. My colleague, the Member for Mountainview, and I know of the concerns of the Hillcrest community. We are working diligently to address the issue of the missing crosswalk, and we will continue to do that. I don't think that it is going to be put off because of the ongoing pandemic. We are working with the company, and I have every confidence that we will be able to convince them to come up when they feel safe.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. I do look forward to seeing what alternative approaches he is going to put in place to ensure the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists as they attempt to cross at that intersection.

The minister is responsible, as the Minister of Highways and Public Works, for the operations of ATIPP — *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* — and I suppose that I should ask the minister first, but I won't. I am just going to assume that the minister has, in good conscience, read the annual report of the ATIPP commissioner. I am hoping that he will be able to respond with some ease and alacrity to the questions that I raise with respect to the comments that she made in that report that identify some issues and some concerns about the operations of ATIPP within the Government of

Yukon. Since it is part of the Highways and Public Works mandate, the minister is ultimately responsible and accountable for how it is being done.

If I may, Mr. Deputy Chair, I will just read a couple of excerpts from the commissioner's report that was tabled in this Legislative Assembly.

It is the view of the office of the commissioner that "... the need to involve the records manager at the Yukon government in processing access to information requests is problematic and should be changed. The role of the records manager is set out in the ATIPP Act, and the position, along with the central ATIPP Office, is housed within the Department of Highways and Public Works. The records manager serves as the gatekeeper for access requests. All requests go through that position and are then passed to the public body in question..."

Then she goes on to identify a number of examples where the position, with its intermediary role, led to "... applicants receiving information about their access requests that was inaccurate."

She goes on to say: "The use of a records manager in the access to information process is unique to Yukon. As the Information and Privacy Commissioner has stated numerous times, having the records manager as an intermediary between applicants and public bodies can cause confusion. It can make it difficult to assess which party is responsible for what, and when, especially when steps are missed..." The commissioner has identified and uses case examples throughout her annual report to exemplify the real challenges that citizens have faced and face due to this unfortunate challenge that has been established. She has made some recommendations.

The commissioner pointed out further that: "In discussing the delays in processing access to information requests with one department, we were informed that non-compliance with the timelines in the ATIPP Act is a risk it is willing to carry." That is troubling, but do you know what? The commissioner says that it is not surprising because there are "no real consequences". There is no authority for the Information and Privacy Commissioner "... to require a public body or custodian to respond within a specific timeframe and there are no substantive penalties for failure to respond in time."

Does the minister think that it is in line with this government's commitment to openness, transparency, and accountability that government departments have determined or deemed that they cannot be compliant with the ATIPP act? Is that a risk that he is willing to carry as minister responsible for ATIPP — that non-compliance with the act is okay?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, we're back to ATIPP. It just recalls our great debate over ATIPP that the member opposite and I had at the time. I'm going to talk about that in a second, but I am going to address another incorrect statement by the member opposite that she sort of shoehorned in on the sly a few minutes ago. I'm going to take issue with it, respectfully.

The Member for Whitehorse Centre mentioned that we had just resurrected the old Yukon Party plan to fix the highway, and I have to take issue with that, Mr. Deputy Chair. The program that we have going is \$10 million in front of Hillcrest and Valleyview to fix identified safety problems there. We

spent \$5 million on the south Klondike Highway; we spent \$5 million on the north Klondike Highway — the total spend so far has been about \$20 million. That's less than one-tenth of the original plan that was proposed by the Yukon Party to widen and expand the highway.

The other difference is that we're actually doing it. We have actually done work up there that was necessary — safety improvements — that should have been done a long time ago, and we have actually identified those needs and done them. It's not the mega-highway that was proposed by previous governments. These are spot safety improvements to the tune so far of \$20 million to fix identified safety problems to make sure that the citizens of Hillcrest and Valleyview are better served and that they can get across and down the highway a lot safer than they did before.

Okay, so, now that that bit of erroneous information has been corrected, I'm also now going to go to ATIPP. Now, the member opposite is referring to the report from the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Of course, she has the report right in front of her. Of course, there were two complaint letters from the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner given on November 15 and November 20. The issue stemmed from administrative errors by the ATIPP office under the old act, including not forwarding an estimate of cost in a timely manner and misdirecting responses to the wrong individual, which resulted in an applicant receiving their ATIPP request late.

The office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the ATIPP office worked together and settled the complaint through the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner's informal case resolution process in January.

The problem with annual reports is that they are sources of information, but they're grossly out of date, and both those complaints were addressed through working with the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the ATIPP office.

Now, again, I want to just say that those complaints came under the old act. The new act has not yet been proclaimed because the regulations have not yet come before Cabinet. But that is going to happen, and when it does, we will have a brand new and much more robust ATIPP act that the member opposite and I spoke about in this very Chamber not so long ago. This modernized *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* will provide better service and meet the changing needs of Yukoners as the Government of Yukon continues to move toward being a digital government.

I also want to say that, really, I have to put out the public service announcement that all the information that the government holds is the public's information. I have said this before: The approach in the access to information office should be a last resort; you shouldn't go there first. You should approach the department itself and ask for the information you're seeking. In most cases, that department should provide that information to you. It's only in the case where a department or an official refuses to provide that information that you start to go to the information and privacy office.

The whole culture is one of provision of information, not restriction of information. The Access to Information and

Protection of Privacy office should be an office of last resort, not first contact. So, the new legislation that we brought in improves the existing act by enhancing client-focused services to Yukoners while protecting their privacy. It ensures that personal information held by public bodies is well-protected, and it makes government more transparent and accountable to the public.

We also have an incredibly robust training program that we're going to institute across the Yukon government to make sure that errors such as the one that was reflected in the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner's annual report are addressed so that they don't happen.

Under the old structure, we have had problems, and I am sure that, as the new structure comes into play, there will be problems too, but we will work with the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I have met with her. We will continue to talk through our differences and work to make sure that we provide more information more quickly to the citizens of the territory, because the information that this government holds is their information. We also want to make sure that we do a very good job of protecting their privacy. That too is the second component of that act, and that is another very vitally important part of our information and privacy rules and legislation.

Ms. Hanson: Unfortunately, the minister did not answer my question. He did explain that, until the new legislation comes into effect, we are still operating under the existing act. That is not new. We have a number of pieces of legislation that we have debated in this Legislative Assembly over the last four years, and we are still operating under the old legislation until the act comes into effect and regulations are done. I don't know how long it takes, but it seems to take a very long time for regulations to get done by the government.

Be that as it may, I did ask the minister if he agreed with the finding of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, as reported in her report, where she said: "We were informed that non-compliance..." — because this was "discussing the delays in processing access to information requests". They were informed that "... non-compliance with the timelines in the ATIPP Act..." — the current act. They haven't gotten trained yet; fine. Is this what the minister says is okay? I want to know the culture that he promotes. Does he support this? If not, then what action is he taking to ensure that it's not there? She says: "We were informed that non-compliance with the timelines in the ATIPP Act is a risk..." — that the government — "... is willing to carry." That is my question. He did not answer it. In absence of his answer, he sounds like he is condoning that, which means that we will continue to see confusion and delays and the ATIPP act being used as a barrier to access to information as opposed to a tool to provide that necessary access for the public and public servants.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have to, once again — I'm sorry, but I must take exception to the member opposite's attempt to put words in my mouth and say that I condone what is essentially a breach of an existing law of this government. I don't condone that, and I don't think any of my colleagues on this side of the House would ever condone breaking the law.

To the contrary — and in total opposition to what my colleague in the opposition has said this afternoon — I believe that the information contained in this institution is the public's information. I have said that during our debate, I have said that in private life, and I have said it on the floor of this Legislature many times, including just a few minutes ago.

The information contained and collected by this government is the public's information, except where excepted by the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, which means that, if a citizen of the territory comes up and says, "I would like X document/report/piece of information", they should go to the relevant department and ask for that information. I would say that, in most circumstances, that information should be provided to that citizen — except in extraordinary cases, as defined by the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

We are currently in a transition phase between an old act — which the member opposite and I believe is woefully lacking — which is one of the reasons why we have brought in the new piece of legislation which is supposed to bring more clarity, a more robust provision of information, and more protection of people's personal information.

So, contrary to what the member opposite has said this afternoon, I do not condone breaches of Yukon law by the department or anybody else. I also am supportive of avoiding the type of mistakes that were made in 2019, as outlined in the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner's annual report. That's one of the reasons why one of my earlier actions in this role was to start drafting a new piece of access to information and protection of privacy law. It's why I'm insisting — or have asked the department to make sure — that the training that we provide our civil servants in this new law is robust and complete.

The new law is much more modern. It is much more robust and, I believe, is clearer and is a law for this time. When we have so many new assaults on our privacy, it does a very good job of protecting people's privacy, and it also reinforces the tenet that the information that this government collects and generates is the people's data — except in specific cases, as defined by the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

So, to answer the member opposite's question for a second time, I do not condone breaches of Yukon law, and I believe that my statements, in both cases, have said that I support better training and avoiding the type of mistakes that happened in this case — which, by the way, were fixed through the work of the department through a process with the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I'm very glad that they were able to sort out that error that was done by the two departments that resulted in the complaints.

Ms. Hanson: I think that the minister finds it too easy to focus on the case examples being used by the Information and Privacy Commissioner in her annual report. In fact, what she has identified in her report are systemic issues — whether or not it's using a case example, or several, to talk about the delays or to talk about refusals to provide information or the issues around records management and improper searches. We have

one department saying, "No, no, no, it's not us" — and then finding out that, really, it is them. It's like she has identified — by using case examples. I think the minister does a disservice to the Information and Privacy Commissioner by trying to dismiss this as: We solved that one and it's not a problem. In fact, if he would respect the fact that the commissioner is attempting to assist both the minister and the Members of the Legislative Assembly and the public — and understand the range of issues and options for resolution —

The minister has said that he — and I'm happy to hear that he supports and endorses additional training. I'm curious to know the role of Highways and Public Works in terms of its role with respect to records management and what direction has been given to creating some modern and uniform records management systems that include everything from the text messages and e-mails of members of Cabinet to other data. One of the systemic issues that the Information and Privacy Commissioner found was that — so often the failure of the ATIPP searches was that they relied upon the memory of individuals in departments. Anybody who has worked in government for any length of time knows what happens when you have records management systems that rely on one person. So, you need a systemic approach. What kinds of efforts have been made in the last while? What's the cost of modernizing our records management system in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Far from disrespecting the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, I have a great deal of respect for that office and the individual and the recommendations coming out of her office. As a matter of fact, we have worked very closely with that office in the drafting of a new law and in the application of the regulations. We have sat down with the individual and we have worked with that office to make sure that we have a very robust act that, for the most part, meets a lot of her concerns.

On the other question on records management, that is a huge topic. As somebody who has worked in the trenches of the civil service and worked with the absolutely archaic systems that we have for document management, the frustration is real. That is an item that this government is going to have to tackle in the future, because relying on people's memories about which filing cabinet such-and-such document is contained or in which report or which version of which report is absolutely frustrating work.

This government, as an institution, is going to have to do a better job. It is work that we have been doing since day one here. There is more work to do, absolutely. We are chipping away at it, and this new piece of legislation is one way in which we're doing it. This new piece of legislation is going to enable e-services and other refinements to the way the government handles information that were hitherto not possible because of the nature of the old act and how it failed to address many of these concerns.

I have, once again, enjoyed my conversation on information with the member opposite. I lament the fact that her initial optimism may have been whittled away during the course of the last hour, but seeing the time, Mr. Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Mostyn that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following legislative returns were tabled December 4, 2019:

34-3-49

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — regional economic development exceptions (Mostyn)

34-3-50

Response to oral question from Mr. Hassard re: Semi-automatic AR-10 rifles purchase (Frost)

34-3-51

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — bison harvest (Frost)

34-3-52

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — water strategy (Frost)

The following document was filed December 4, 2020:

34-3-39

State of Emergency Extension, letter re (dated November 24, 2020) from Peter Johnston, Grand Chief, Council of Yukon First Nations, to Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Community Services (Streicker)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 75

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, December 7, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
 DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
 DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

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Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, December 7, 2020 — 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: Online we have folks from Sport Yukon because we are doing a tribute on the volunteers for the Arctic Winter Games. I made sure to wear my Sport Yukon mask today for that.

Also, we have two of the nearly 2,000 volunteers who were there for the Arctic Winter Games. We have with us today Ms. Lucy Coulthard and Ms. Moira Lassen — the treasurer and the general manager of the games — if we could please welcome them here today.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Volunteer Day

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Saturday, December 5 marked the 35th anniversary of International Volunteer Day, a celebration of the pivotal role that volunteers play in our world, first established by the United Nations in 1985. I am honoured to rise today on behalf of all members of this Legislature to pay tribute to this day and the many Yukoners who donate their time, skills, and passion to supporting the well-being and vibrancy of our communities and to acknowledge one specific group of volunteers that has been honoured with a prestigious award for their dedicated volunteering.

The theme of this year's campaign was: "Together we can through volunteering". Its focus was on the contributions of volunteers around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. More than half of all Yukoners volunteer in some capacity every year. On average, they volunteer an amazing 131 hours each year. They play a pivotal role in so many of our local organizations — from sports to the arts and to charities.

From the earliest days of the pandemic, our Yukon volunteers faced many challenges. From the first, they have shown incredible spirit in facing those challenges head-on. Many have adapted in how they deliver programs — some providing more offerings online. Some, like Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon, have worked to connect the volunteer community, to share information, and to provide mutual support.

One of the most public examples of rising to the challenges of COVID-19, and one that I witnessed first-hand, came after

the crushing decision was made to cancel the 2020 Arctic Winter Games. This decision came only a week before these games were set to start. We were all devastated — athletes, coaches, team leaders, Members of the Legislative Assembly — though we recognized the necessity of the decision, given our growing understanding of COVID-19 and its devastating potential.

The decision was also incredibly difficult for the host society's volunteers and staff, who had been gearing up to welcome contingents to Whitehorse from around the world for the games, marking 50 years since their inception in 1970. Instead of opening the games, these awesome volunteers were faced with the task of decommissioning the games before they had even begun. Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud of this wonderful group who, sometimes through tears, accepted this task with grace.

I'm also pleased to let you know that the Arctic Winter Games International Committee recognized their efforts by awarding them the 2020 Hodgson Trophy. Typically, this trophy is presented after each games to the contingent that best exemplifies the ideals of fair play and team spirit. However, this year, the Arctic Winter Games International Committee awarded the trophy to the Arctic Winter Games Host Society volunteers and staff after observations of how the host society assisted with this difficult work. If you want to check it out, Mr. Speaker, the trophy is up in the Canada Games Centre, and it is a beauty.

As Doris Landry, operations coordinator of the Arctic Winter Games International Committee, shared with us — and I quote: "The sadness and disappointment was felt throughout the circumpolar north; your Host Society Volunteers and Staff carried on with the work that needed to be done, all the while supporting each other. I believe that the bridges built in your community during the planning of these 2020 Games will serve you well."

On behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly, we thank them and all Yukon volunteers who continue to find ways to support our community, especially during this challenging time. Thank you, merci, mahsi' cho to Team Yukon. Together we can.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide Yukoners with a COVID-19 vaccination distribution and communication plan to reassure them of availability and access to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State of emergency in Yukon

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The state of emergency in the Yukon will be extended, under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, starting tomorrow, December 8, 2020. This extension follows the recommendation by the Yukon's chief medical officer of health.

The state of emergency was initially declared in the territory on March 27, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the state of emergency, we have been able to expedite a number of measures to mitigate the risk of importation and transmission of the virus and support the health, safety, and economic well-being of Yukoners. Without the state of emergency, the ministerial orders that have been issued would expire. This would mean, for instance, that we would no longer have border controls, we would no longer have the self-isolation requirements for those entering the territory, and we would no longer have enforcement of the health and safety measures in place to protect Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, in order to ensure that we can continue to protect all Yukoners from the impacts of the ongoing pandemic, it is necessary to maintain the state of emergency. Extending the state of emergency also ensures that, on top of public health measures, all orders that we put in place to support businesses and individuals impacted by COVID-19 will continue — for example, the pharmacists authorization COVID-19 order, which allows pharmacists to extend prescriptions. Another order that would end in the absence of a state of emergency authorizes the extension of timelines under the *Societies Act*, which provides flexibility for societies and businesses to meet filing and compliance requirements, including the holding of annual general meetings when legislated timelines may be difficult to meet.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that extending the state of emergency does not indicate any change in the risk of COVID-19 to Yukoners. The state of emergency may be cancelled at any time, though our government believes it may be required so long as the pandemic continues to pose a risk to the health, safety, and livelihoods of Yukoners. We evaluate the need for the state of emergency on a monthly basis. We also regularly evaluate the ministerial orders issued under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and will repeal any that are no longer necessary to the current pandemic situation. For example, we repealed the property tax relief order after the extended due date had passed. As long as the state of emergency is active, we can adapt and react quickly as a government to the impacts of the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, these measures remain important while we wait for an effective treatment or vaccine for COVID-19. It is equally important that Yukoners continue to diligently practise the “safe six” plus one — wearing a mask. We're asking all Yukoners to come together to protect their community during this pandemic and encourage each other to keep everyone's safety at the top of mind.

Like I said last week, while we continue to see cases rise, it is important that we all remain prepared. Our health care system is well-prepared to deal with the second wave of cases and, as noted last week, we have a terrific team of contact tracers with the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit that is doing excellent work to keep Yukoners safe and informed.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that Yukoners are ready and willing to protect themselves and their communities. I would like to give a big shout-out and thanks to all Yukoners for doing their part as we continue to keep our territory safe and healthy.

Mr. Cathers: After nine months of the Liberals undermining our democracy by bypassing the Legislative Assembly, we finally have the opportunity for the first time to vote on extending the state of emergency. The principle behind having that vote in the Legislative Assembly is what we've been asking for since the spring. That important principle is democracy.

The opportunity for MLAs to vote on the extension of extraordinary powers to government is an essential requirement in a democracy. Following early adjournment of the Legislature in the spring, we began to get a better sense of how the virus was moving. With government bringing in sweeping changes to existing laws, we began pressing them to allow for proper legislative oversight of their actions. Jurisdictions around the world were finding ways to allow parliaments and legislatures to work because of the importance of maintaining democracy, even in a pandemic. In contrast, here in the Yukon, the Premier was quoted on the radio as saying that we're “... not in a situation where we need legislative oversight for any of the actions that we've done so far.”

In almost every other part of Canada, elected representatives were debating the use of emergency powers and providing legislative oversight. We began to write letters to the Liberal government about needing to negotiate terms of the return of democratic oversight. They responded but never even acknowledged our request to meet to discuss democratic oversight. In debate recently, the minister said that he didn't understand our position. He wondered why we would insist on providing democratic oversight of the government's actions by saying — and I quote: “I am not sure if it's just a point of principle...” Yes, it is a point of principle; that important principle is democracy.

It is incredibly important and foundational as a principle, and that is what we've been fighting for since the spring. We proposed motions, amendments, and legislation this Sitting with the intention of respecting that principle. Government should not be able to unilaterally grant itself sweeping new powers and exercise those powers without democratic oversight. Unfortunately, the Liberals continue to show a lack of respect for our democracy. Last week, when we proposed an amendment to their motion that would have seen future extensions to a state of emergency voted on in the Legislature, the Liberals used their majority to vote it down.

Multiple times — starting in March — we have proposed all-party committees aimed at working together in response to

the pandemic. Every time, we have been met with partisan attacks or told, “We’ve got this.” Last week, we proposed a motion that supported the government’s negotiations on the vaccine asking for a greater than per capita share. We were again met with partisan attacks from the Premier. Today, CBC reported that the Yukon is not even getting a per capita share of the first vaccine deliveries. We are getting nothing — zero, none. We hope that the government will reconsider their top-down, go-it-alone approach and start actually respecting MLAs and Yukon citizens by working together.

Ms. White: I have a few thoughts in reply to today’s statement. I believe that we can all agree that we are indeed in the middle of a world pandemic and that these times are indeed unprecedented. It’s also true that no playbook exists for what the human family is currently facing.

We are hopeful that the minister’s decision to call Motion No. 359 for debate in the Legislative Assembly last week is the Liberal government signalling a willingness to work more closely with all elected MLAs on matters related to our collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I note that motion debate resulted in agreement by all members of this Assembly to extend the state of emergency.

We are hopeful that, in providing an opportunity for all MLAs to debate the extension of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, the government has highlighted a precedent that we can expect in the future — one that will allow all elected members of this Assembly to voice their thoughts on an issue as grave as a state of emergency while in an authentic legislative Sitting. We will continue to support more opportunities for all elected members of this Assembly to be part of the decision-making process at a time when no Yukoner has been left unscathed by the impact of COVID-19.

To be clear, we believe that if you want to be democratic about a decision as complicated and as far-reaching as actions taken during a state of emergency, all members of this Assembly should have an opportunity to participate. The Liberals hold a majority. Even if we disagree in this House, they hold the balance of power, so why not hear from voices that are not their own?

We heard a lot from the minister last week about how, over the summer, this government had repeatedly invited members of the opposition into this Chamber to discuss relevant issues. However, he did not note that, if we had accepted the invitation, we wouldn’t be participating in an authentic legislative Sitting, but its hybrid cousin — one that would share similarities in appearance, but with glaring omissions such as the lack of any formal record of the discussions and the protection of elected MLAs’ ability to speak freely.

Mr. Speaker, the minister likes to use a sports analogy a fair amount when he describes the Yukon government as “team Yukon”. I appreciate that, as I played on a fair number of teams as a younger person, so I like to think that I understood team dynamics and the importance of leadership within those teams.

So, if I were to build on his idea of being on a team, I would suggest that each of us as elected members — all 19 of us — participated in the tryouts. We made the cut and were named to

the team. Each one of us has both the privilege and the responsibility to represent Yukoners while playing on this team. Teams practise together and work toward common goals, but coaching is critical. If a coach decides that eight out of the 19 players will be benched for the entire season without ever getting time to contribute to that common goal and to put valuable skills to work, I’m left to wonder if this is the kind of team that the minister wants to play on. More importantly, is this the type of team that Yukon citizens want representing them in the most serious battle that we have ever faced?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: You know, Mr. Speaker, our Legislature has already sat longer than most provincial legislatures for this past year, but somehow that is not enough. I tabled all of the correspondence that went back and forth. I disagree with the Member for Lake Laberge; we actually did correspond with the members opposite. We did say, “Let’s bring Hansard in so that we could have Hansard here, if we wanted to record this information.”

I disagree with the Leader of the Third Party that we wouldn’t have the ability to make it accountable or public.

Look, the act that we have doesn’t have this part about it — about engaging with other MLAs — but we have shown an openness and a willingness to do that. On the other hand, the act also doesn’t talk about our First Nation governments and our municipal governments, but you know what? We go and talk with those First Nation governments and municipal governments — that team — while First Nation governments probably in the neighbourhood of 80 chiefs and councillors, and municipal governments here in the territory have over 40 mayors and councillors — and we talked to them. None of them say to us, “Hey, that’s not good enough; you need to have it in a formal Sitting of the Legislative Assembly.”

What I am trying to say is that our focus can and should remain the health and safety of Yukoners. The members opposite want us to amend an act — no problem — but the way we normally go about amending an act is not on the fly; it is through an engagement with Yukoners to ask what they think. So, I look forward to having that type of engagement with Yukoners about what they believe would be the right type of act to support them during an emergency, because this Legislative Assembly is for them. Our focus will remain the health of Yukoners until such time as we are able to amend that act.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 vaccine

Mr. Hassard: So, this morning, the Prime Minister announced that several hundred thousand doses of the COVID-19 vaccine will be available in Canada before the end of the year. We also learned that the vaccines will be distributed to jurisdictions on a per capita basis, meaning that each province will receive vaccine doses in numbers proportionate to their share of the population. The Prime Minister also announced that the vaccine will not be sent to the territories for

the time being. The reason for this is because the territories don't have the storage and distribution infrastructure ready to go.

So, for the past several weeks, we have repeatedly asked the Minister of Health and Social Services specifically about this issue. So, today, the question is simple: Why was the Yukon Liberal government not ready to go?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Where to start with that?

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is correct in one thing in that, in this year, all Canadians will have access to vaccines. The per capita thing that the member opposite is speaking to — again, it's not as he is saying it. There is an original small amount of the Pfizer vaccine that's available right now that is going to be distributed to 16 or so individual sites — especially just to test the system. But the great news that we heard from the Prime Minister today was that those several thousands of doses will be available for Canadians before the end of this year, which is great. We're very happy to hear that this vaccine is rolling out and moving forward.

We're going to continue to work with the federal government and the provinces and territories. We have had conversations with the federal government this week, including the Prime Minister. While no vaccines have been approved yet by Health Canada, we expect to have information on vaccines for Yukoners and the distribution for Yukoners as early as this week.

The member opposite is correct that we are not on the list that are getting the December rollout of a particular vaccine, but we are still very confident on the timelines directly after Health Canada's approval that Yukon citizens will be provided with vaccinations.

Mr. Hassard: So, the Prime Minister, as I said, has announced several hundred thousand doses of the vaccine, but the Premier says that none of those are for the Yukon.

Last week, the Premier promised Yukoners that we were ready. He is quoted in the December 4 edition of the *Yukon News* saying — and I'll quote: "We can tell Yukoners confidently that we are absolutely ready for the distribution..." — however, this morning we found out from the Prime Minister that Yukon is not actually ready for distribution.

Mr. Speaker, when will the Yukon be ready, and when will vaccines be arriving in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, only the Yukon Party could be disappointed with the announcement from the federal government today. Again, Mr. Speaker, we've been working on procurement; we've been working on distribution; we have been working with our federal counterparts, provinces, and territories. Depending on which vaccine gets approved at what time, we are ready for all options.

Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing right now with the prioritization is that national discussions about allocation of the first shipments of vaccines are identified and which key populations will be prioritized, and that is happening. This includes conversations with other territories, the public, and the health agencies across Canada to discuss the distribution and priority populations, specific to a northern context.

Mr. Speaker, nobody on this side of the Legislative Assembly or in Ottawa is saying that we're not ready. The only people who are spreading this misinformation is the Yukon Party.

Mr. Hassard: They weren't my words that the Yukon wasn't ready — they were the Prime Minister's words, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, we offered the Liberal government our support for the negotiating position with the federal government. We offered to pass a unanimous motion that would support exactly what they have been saying — that per capita distribution will not work for the north or for the Yukon. Yet this morning, we learned that it is exactly what the federal Liberal government is going to do. They are going to distribute this vaccine on a per capita basis. So, we know that the Premier failed to convince the Prime Minister. Rather than being prioritized as the Premier wanted, we have been bumped to the back of the line.

Can the Premier tell us why he let this happen to Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Unbelievable, Mr. Speaker — absolutely unbelievable. What I heard this morning from the Prime Minister is that they are testing an actual system on one particular vaccine that has very unique circumstances, and they're doing that to test the system.

The Yukon Party is trying to make it seem, because of this very strategic initiative that is being done by the federal government, that somehow that means that Yukoners are somehow put at the bottom of the list or they didn't get what they wanted. This is absolutely unbelievable, Mr. Speaker.

If the members opposite will listen to the responses, we are very confident that we will have information about distribution and vaccines for Yukoners available this week, and we will give that information as soon as we get it. We have been pushing very, very hard on the national basis to push for a vaccine that makes sense for Yukon's unique circumstances. We have been making the case as well for early advanced shipment of all of our vaccines.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, time will tell.

Question re: Early learning and childcare programs

Mr. Kent: On July 15, the Premier announced that the Liberal government is developing a universal affordable early learning and childcare program modelled after the Québec system.

At that time, the Premier committed that he would release the details of this program in the fall. Well, Mr. Speaker, Christmas is just over two weeks away, and Yukoners have yet to see any details from the Yukon Liberals.

So, when can we expect the Premier to live up to his promise of providing details on the rollout of a Québec-style childcare program in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm happy to speak about the extended childcare program and the universal childcare program. The Yukon government and, of course, the Department of Health and Social Services are working very closely with our partners. We in fact have a meeting this week with our federal

counterpart to have a discussion about the approach that we're taking. I would be happy to notify Yukoners that we are working on the universal childcare plan, as we've indicated, and we will make that known once we have the finalized plan in place, and, of course, we do that with our partners. I'm very pleased to say that we are on track to make that announcement shortly.

Mr. Kent: The Premier promised us details this fall and, as I mentioned, there are only a couple weeks left until Christmas — just a little bit over.

In mid-October, the department released an engagement report on early learning and childcare. That report states that the Liberal government is only at a very early phase of development of this program. Yet, as I mentioned, on July 15, the Premier said that there would be details released in the fall.

When can we expect to see the details of this new program?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We recognize the importance of childcare for Yukoners and the need to improve child learning outcomes and opportunities. The *Putting People First* report recommended that we work toward fully funded universal childcare education for all Yukon children, and we're doing just that. Our government has initiated steps to address this recommendation, and we are looking at options to improve affordable and accessible care that supports Yukon families. We are pleased to hear that Minister Freeland indicated that she is looking forward to continuing to work with Yukoners on this front. We will have that meeting this week with the federal minister with respect to universal childcare, and we will work toward universal childcare.

There are other initiatives underway that continue to support young families and young children in the Yukon. We have recently signed off on an extension on the early learning childcare bilateral agreement, with an extension of \$2.4 million to support Yukon families and childcare providers. This includes a significant increase in the direct operating grants for licensed childcare providers to stabilize the costs so that childcare centres are well-supported and families are supported. We will continue to work toward the implementation of universal childcare. Meanwhile, we are providing the resources to support our families.

Mr. Kent: Last week, the federal government announced a commitment to design a new national system modelled on the one already in place in Québec. It's hard to look at this timing and not wonder if, in fact, what the Premier really meant this past summer was that the Yukon Liberals were, once again, just waiting for direction from Ottawa.

Yukoners are looking for a government that leads, not one that follows.

The Premier has said that childcare is a priority for recovering from the pandemic.

So, again: When can Yukoners expect to see the universal, affordable childcare program that the Liberals promised would be available in detail this fall?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am very pleased and proud of the work of the Family and Children's Services unit, Health and Social Services, for advancing and moving as quickly as we have on the universal childcare initiative. The member opposite

has noted the model in Québec. We are looking at models and looking at Québec as the model of principle in Canada. Other governments have made this commitment and have not followed through on it. We are committed to following through on this initiative, as we have indicated to Yukoners.

I want Yukoners to know that we will deliver on the objective, as the Speech from the Throne has made known and the *Putting People First* report has identified. We will deliver universal childcare to Yukoners.

I am very excited about that. Once that is available, we will certainly roll it out to Yukoners and make them aware of it as quickly as we have it finalized.

Question re: COVID-19 vaccine

Ms. White: This morning, the Prime Minister announced that vaccination against COVID-19 could start as early as next week, pending Health Canada approval. This first vaccine delivery will not reach the territories because of the extreme cold storage required for the Pfizer vaccine. Other vaccines that are expected to be available shortly will be easier to distribute to northern and remote communities.

When asked about the plan for vaccine distribution, the Premier has touted the success of the recent flu vaccination campaign, which saw roughly 14,000 Yukoners get their flu shot. There is no doubt that the most recent flu vaccination campaign was a success, and we thank the staff who made it possible, as well as Yukoners who did get their flu shot.

That being said, for the COVID-19 vaccine to be effective, many more than 14,000 Yukoners will need to get vaccinated. How is this government planning to ensure that even more Yukoners get the COVID-19 vaccine than this year's flu shot?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The message that we heard today from the Prime Minister is that we all do need to work together. I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

This effort for distribution on the federal side is through the national centre for operations. The Pfizer vaccine has an ultra-low temperature consideration — as the member opposite referenced — and they are in the early stages of developing a small batch of this particular vaccine. The federal government strategically picked 14 distribution centres. We have communicated with Ottawa that we are ready, willing, and able for all vaccines, and we have made our preference known for Moderna. The small batch of Pfizer is more of an attempt to test the system for vaccination.

With that being said, though, based upon information and timelines shared by Health Canada, we are working toward initial vaccine rollouts that could arrive as early as January 2021. The member opposite did correctly state 14,000 for the flu vaccine. This is very helpful for us in figuring out our vaccine system, but again, if we get the vaccines that we need, certainly we will need much more than 14,000.

Ms. White: The Premier indicated last week to the press that it was his preference that Yukon receive all of the vaccine doses necessary at once. While this would certainly make determining priorities easier, it could present logistical challenges as well. The recent flu vaccination campaign ran for nearly two months and reached roughly one in three Yukoners,

so it's fair to assume that the uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine has the potential of being much greater. This could create logistical challenges, especially if the vaccine that Yukon receives requires two doses.

Is the government planning to expand vaccine capacity of the COVID-19 vaccine in comparison to the recent flu vaccination campaign?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think that requiring all doses quickly presents us with less logistical challenges than being in a situation where we didn't have enough for what we need. I also know that, during the flu vaccine, there were times when there were not a lot of lineups, which is really good, based on the new availabilities of that vaccine through pharmacists as well. It seemed like that system was very well-coordinated.

If we get the volumes of doses that we are looking for, we will be properly prepared. Preparations in the territory are already underway and this includes identifying storage space, the number of required doses, staffing requirements, and operational plans for distribution in Whitehorse and the rural communities as well.

There have been an awful lot of conversations on the federal level and on the provincial and territorial level with me, the Minister for Health and Social Services, the Minister of Community Services, and the Minister of Justice. We know that this will present some challenges, but at the same time, we know that Yukon government is ready, willing, and able to distribute vaccinations to Yukoners.

Ms. White: The success of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign depends not only on logistics, but on the participation of Yukoners. We know that Health Canada has a rigorous approval process that will ensure vaccines that are approved are safe for Canadians. Despite this, I am sure that the government is aware that misinformation around vaccines in general — and specifically about COVID-19 — exists.

Does this government have any plans to tackle vaccine misinformation and ensure that Yukoners get reliable, scientific information about the upcoming vaccination campaign?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, we have already seen a federal Conservative MP penning a petition that calls on COVID-19 vaccines that actually do need to go through the health standards that the member opposite spoke about as being unsafe. We have seen Yukon Party staffers, as well, pen an article in the *Whitehorse Star* about how the public confidence is wavering on our medical experts' advice. I think that this is dangerous. One of the messages that we have discussed nationally is that — whether it's public declarations, new research, or the distribution of a vaccine — we need to have constant coordinated communication. We have an obligation as MLAs to get on board on this campaign and to also have faith in Health Canada's gold standard — as was mentioned today by the Prime Minister.

Ottawa also must provide clear information about the safety and effectiveness of every vaccine that gets approval in Canada. I encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly to share tested and reliable sources of information with their constituents. That's what we all can do together — talk about team Yukon. That's an extremely important piece right now —

because I don't disagree with the member opposite that misinformation is going to be our biggest hurdle moving forward with the distribution of the vaccine.

Question re: Legal aid funding

Ms. Hanson: Access to legal representation is at the basis of a fair justice system and legal aid can be an important component of that. Legal Aid provides access to lawyers for those who wouldn't be able to afford or find one. But while this service is necessary, we haven't seen it treated as a necessity. Legal aid in Yukon has been systematically underfunded for years. This causes delays in justice and limits the number of hours allotted to those who need legal aid. This isn't fair to Yukoners who can't afford lawyers. It undermines the fundamental principle that everyone is equal in the eyes of the law.

Does the minister believe that a just legal system relies on the ability of those before the courts to be fairly represented regardless of their ability to afford a lawyer?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I know that anyone who knows anything about me knows that legal aid is something that I have supported in the almost 30 years of my career here in the territory. I find it to be an extremely important service and my work, since coming to the honour of having this job, has been to support legal aid as best we can in increased funding throughout our time here. Legal aid funding is cost-shared, Mr. Speaker — something you also know about — by the governments of the Yukon and Government of Canada. The Government of Yukon has increased its funding each year to boost operational stability and to solidify the accessibility of this vital service here for Yukoners.

Ms. Hanson: Legal Aid was indeed given additional funding in the 2018-19 budget, but that doesn't help those whose legal cases require more time than what can be afforded by Legal Aid in terms of hours. Many cases take hundreds of hours to get through, and just the preliminary inquiry can take over 100 hours of work. This was a central issue toward finding legal representation for a case this past October. When lawyers working for Legal Aid aren't allotted enough time to work on cases, our justice system fails all Yukoners, not just the accused.

Has the minister reviewed the budget with a view to providing the Legal Services Society with the resources required to meet the demand for legal aid in both civil and criminal cases?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is an important question from the member opposite, but there is a bit of a misunderstanding about how the funding works. Legal aid funding for the Yukon Legal Services Society is designed to provide stable core funding, or a core budget, for its regular operations. Of course, as noted in the preamble to the question, occasionally certain cases require legal services to be contracted due to either conflicts with Legal Aid staff or the complexity of these cases. These cases fall outside of the Yukon Legal Services Society's core budget and require the society and the Department of Justice to ensure that contract fees may be provided appropriately for either these

complex cases or cases where there is a conflict between the lawyers who work with Legal Aid and provide those services to Yukoners and those who might be otherwise brought in to do so on an occasional basis.

Ms. Hanson: Unfortunately, the operative words there were “may” and “may be”.

The fact is simple: Legal Aid is overworked. It can’t deliver the full extent of the necessary service that it provides when it’s understaffed and underfunded. The Legal Services Society was, until recently, splitting 600 or so cases among nine lawyers. While they have been able to now employ 11 lawyers, the number of complex cases has also been on the rise, and Legal Aid’s resources continue to be stretched as thin as ever.

A fair system requires fair representation. Lawyers need to be able to spend time on their cases. Without this, there can be no true justice in Yukon.

Will the minister commit to ensuring that lack of funding for Legal Aid does not prevent eligible Yukoners from receiving equal treatment before the law?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don’t disagree with any of the assertions by the member opposite about the importance of legal aid, the importance of legal representation, and the importance of fair and equitable distribution and the opportunity to make a case before a court of law. I have, in fact, spent my life doing that work and upholding those values.

Legal aid funding, as I’ve noted, is cost-shared between the Yukon territorial government and the Government of Canada. Total funding to Legal Aid has increased during our tenure here and my responsibilities with the Department of Justice from a little over \$2 million in 2016-17 to \$2.6 million in 2021. Every year, we look at the budget for Legal Aid; every year, the department asks itself and I ask the department: “Is this sufficient for Legal Aid as their core base funding? Is this what they need to provide services to Yukoners?” Every year, we make the decision to support Legal Aid.

Question re: School busing

Ms. Van Bibber: On November 10, the Minister of Education told this House that three new school buses had arrived in the territory and that they would be in service in two weeks. Her exact quote was: “... we anticipate the buses being able to be used within the next two weeks...” That was nearly four weeks ago.

So, why did the minister share incorrect information? What is the delay? What routes will these buses service?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Let’s be clear: When I gave the information — as I do on any given day — to the Members of the Legislative Assembly — or frankly, more importantly, to Yukoners — I give them the information that I have that is correct. It was correct at the time. The information that I had at the time was that it would take approximately two to three weeks to do so.

I should also say that I think I just answered this question on Friday, so I don’t have any information that is new over the weekend, but I can indicate that we have heard the concerns from families and we are working to accommodate as many students as possible on the additional buses.

I too am frustrated that they have taken longer than initially thought to get on the roads and to provide service to students. What I can say is that we have some 1,907 students assigned to school buses as of November 9, some weeks ago, and that we are working to assign the additional students who are — as I noted on Friday — not necessarily eligible under the *Education Act* or under the regulations to ride a school bus. Nonetheless, we are trying to provide that service to those students and coordinating with those families individually.

Question re: COVID-19 testing

Ms. McLeod: In late September, the Yukon government announced that it was working with BC to offer either a mouth rinse or gargle test for children ages four to 19. Our understanding is that this test has been available for children in British Columbia since mid-September.

On November 19, we asked the Minister of Health and Social Services to let us know if these were available for Yukon children and, if not, when we might expect them. In response, the minister said that she didn’t know but would look into it.

Can the minister let us know today if these are available here now?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Throughout our response to COVID-19, we have taken an evidence-based approach to testing. After receiving tests at the lab in British Columbia for communicable diseases, which is the gold standard for testing, we have moved very quickly to look at the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health in terms of our testing options here in the Yukon — in fact, to determine which testing options are best suited. The rapid-testing device is one way that we proceeded here in Yukon.

We have also looked at the swab tests and are reviewing the policies of implementing the saline swish-and-spit test currently in use in British Columbia, and we anticipate an update being made available by the CMOH. We are relying on his expertise. These tests are not yet available here, but we are committed to working with the chief medical officer of health and looking at the feasibility while BC continues its pilot project on that front.

Ms. McLeod: Now, of course, we did ask the minister this question about the testing on November 19, and the minister didn’t know the answer but would look into it.

Can the minister tell us — of the options that they looked at — what direction they are going with testing? If they are going to look favourably upon the gargle test or the swish test, when might we expect to hear something in that regard?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Well, the member opposite knows that, on November 19, I indicated that we didn’t know because it’s a pilot project in British Columbia. We are waiting for the results and certainly working with the chief medical officer of health to address the best solution and the best option here in Yukon.

I just wanted to make that note, because it’s not as if we’re just ignoring the requests. The chief medical officer and the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit are looking at this and the feasibility of it in collaboration with British Columbia — which, by the way, is doing a pilot project. I want to say that

we certainly take Yukoners' health as a top priority. We want to ensure that we have the best tests available and the best solutions available to Yukoners. We do that in collaboration with the experts. We use the gold standard as processed through the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control — and we do that in collaboration with our Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit as well. It is important to make that note in terms of working together with our partners to better understand the utility of these new tests and the options available here in Yukon.

Ms. McLeod: With the recent increase in COVID-19 cases around the country, many jurisdictions are exploring ways to increase testing frequency and capacity. The government has taken a policy against asymptomatic testing, but last week, the government announced that it was starting what it called “focused asymptomatic testing” — meaning that they would target certain people who do not have COVID-19 symptoms for testing.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services explain why the government has changed from the original policy of no asymptomatic testing to focused asymptomatic testing? Will they consider expanding it further?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to take this opportunity just to highlight the impeccable job that the communicable disease folks are doing. Of course, the chief medical officer of health leads that team and they have recently targeted asymptomatic folks in terms of testing in key areas. This advisement is done with the guidance of the experts in the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit, with the response to the recommendations to look at the contact tracing strategy throughout the Yukon — always looking for the guidance of the chief medical officer of health as we look forward to further testing in the Yukon.

I want to just acknowledge also that Yukoners are following through and doing their very best to follow the protocols to eliminate the spread of COVID. That's the best practice: Follow the “safe six”, wear your mask, and follow the protocols as they are set out for us. I think we will weather this storm until we get the vaccine in place here in the Yukon — which is going to be announced very shortly. I'm looking forward to making that announcement with the Premier to Yukoners.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Speaker: It has been moved by the Acting 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 (Mr. Adel): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 205: *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Economic Development — *continued*

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to welcome our officials from the Department of Economic Development here this afternoon, Deputy Minister Justin Ferbey, and our Director of Finance, Beth Fricke, who is here with us today. I'm going to share a few updated statistics and then we'll cede the floor to the Member for Whitehorse Centre, I believe, to continue questions.

Last week, just reflecting on some of the comments I made, I wanted to take an opportunity to thank the folks in Economic Development in the communications shop because I sort of reflected on a whole bunch of different areas last week — most of the folks who are running programs and doing policy work and making sure our finances are in good shape — but whether it's preparing for the budget debate or it is the work they've done to communicate to Yukoners over the last number of months, whatever we get completed or put together within the department, it inevitably gets packaged up and presented to the rest of the world by the communications folks. I want to thank them for the work they've done. We've asked them on occasion to do even more over the last while, and they have risen to the occasion time and time again.

A couple of notes to share with you, Mr. Deputy Chair and members. As I rise today to speak to the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for 2020-21, I would take this opportunity to provide some updates on the amounts that we have paid out to date in our various programs: the Yukon business relief program — \$5.9 million has been paid out to date; the Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program — \$1.92 million to date; paid sick leave program — \$335,997; and our temporary support for events — \$1.87 million.

Our government's Yukon business relief program is helping local businesses survive the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that they are in a position to restart and to recover. We have been working closely with our partners in the federal government to ensure that our businesses have access to the most comprehensive support as easily and efficiently as possible. We are regularly monitoring additions, changes to the federal economic support programs, and we are currently reviewing the recently announced Canada emergency rent subsidy and lockdown support that will review the Yukon business relief program to ensure maximum coordination.

We spoke a little bit about that last week. There were some really good questions from the NDP concerning the essential workers program. During that, we just shared the fact that we have had the opportunity to stack both — the territorial program was built first, and then we used that in conjunction with the federal program.

Our government's economic response has been timely and continues to meet the needs of Yukon businesses and Yukoners. The Yukon funding programs were a model for other Canadian jurisdictions as well as we were developing approaches to address the impacts of COVID-19.

We are maintaining contact with Yukon businesses, industries, and partners as we continue to monitor and address COVID-19 impacts, working closely with our federal counterparts to ensure that Yukon businesses continue to have comprehensive and efficient access to supports they need.

Again, I would like to thank CanNor. They have been really incredible to work with. I think that our team would say that they have been absolutely great partners, and I want to thank them and Sierra Van Der Meer. I know that their work and their understanding — although they are federal employees, they are so passionate about ensuring that we have the right supports here in the Yukon, as that is their home.

Staff in Economic Development have worked tirelessly to develop, implement, and deliver these programs, and they continue to monitor, adapt, and respond — which is really the way that we have tried to address things. When you try to build innovative programs, you try to move them quickly and you know that there are going to be times when you might have some problems or challenges with your programs — you want to tweak your programs, and that is truly innovation. The tough part when you're doing public policy is that people don't make a lot of space for you to make mistakes. When you are in the private sector and you are dealing with innovation, you try new things and then you learn from those mistakes. It is different for everybody in this Legislative Assembly. Every one of us is held to a little bit of a different standard. The people — the constituents whom we represent — have certain expectations of us.

In these cases, what I can say is that the teams have done a really good job of putting them out quickly with innovative approaches, but at the same time, we have had some tweaks and we will continue to pivot and do that.

What I would like to share, just quickly and before we cede the floor, are a couple of things that I think are really important to share with Yukoners. First of all, what we are seeing is a real

stabilization for business closure. We saw in the springtime — April — big anomalies. Business closure statistically is really focused on closing altogether or closing partially.

What we watched throughout the summer was that we had some businesses close in the spring — we talked about that here in the Assembly — but what we did see was that bounce back where businesses began to open again. I think that this has been really key. We are still in this situation. When you want to quantify where the pressures have been — we have had some businesses that have closed, many businesses that have opened, and at the same time in the tourism sector, you probably have about 150 businesses that are either directly supported by the tourism sector or on the sidelines, so the work by my colleague, Minister McLean, will really focus on that.

What I do want to share with folks today is that when you take a look and compare apples to apples — what I mean by this is that, when you look at our employment situation in the Yukon — the Bureau of Statistics has come out and said, "This is where we were, and this is how many people were in our workforce in February before COVID." We always put out that statistic based on benchmarking ourselves back then. Then we show statistically that, when we compare ourselves, though — from province to province and territory to territory — there are three things that really stand out. I think that it says a lot for the work of the public service.

The first is that our current unemployment rate is 4.2 percent. That is a leading statistic in the country. The next closest jurisdiction would be 6.4 percent. Again, that's where we compare ourselves, apples to apples, across all of the jurisdictions in the country. I think that it is a very important statistic to think about. Basically, for the last four years, we have had some of the strongest numbers when it comes to that.

Second — but more importantly, I think — is our participation rate. So, when we go to November 2020, we have the best statistical participation in the workforce. I think that really means a lot. Here, we are at about 70.7 percent of Yukoners who are available to work or are in there in the workforce.

As well, our employment rate — when we take into consideration Yukon's November employment rate, the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over who are employed is 67. Again, this is the highest in Canada. So, with the best unemployment rate, best participation — I think those are three things that can really give you a sense of the health of the economy.

The other statistic I would just like to share is again from this morning — so it's very current — is concerning building in the Yukon. What we are seeing is that if we take into consideration January to September of this year and when we think about building either a commercial or residential building and then we go back and we take a look at the numbers for last year — so, of course, last year — September to January — when we think about residential and non-residential building and then we compare it to this year — so, of course, last year we weren't in a pandemic. We had a very strong economy. There was lots of activity here. Then we compare it — shockingly, this year — even in the pressures of a pandemic —

if we take a look at our residential building numbers and we compare them from January to October 2019 and compare them to January to October 2020, actually, what we see — on the residential side — is almost a 48-percent increase in values. That's pretty shocking. I mean, if you compare it to the rest of the country — the rest of the country is down 4.5 percent. We're up almost 50 percent. We see very strong growth in the residential building market. Of course, we just put some lots out. We see a workforce right now. We need to continue to focus on tourism. We continue to need to focus on diversity which, diversifying our economy — which overall is just a smart thing to do to reduce our risk from one sector to another, which — we saw what happened this year.

But I think there are some pretty strong indicators. Of course, we debate once in a while here in the House about GDP. I understand the difference of opinion.

But I'll close out by saying — early days — the Conference Board of Canada has come out — I know those numbers get restated. I'm just saying that the Conference Board to date have just come out with their numbers and what we're seeing is the worst-case scenario for the Yukon for next year — worst-case scenario, they're projecting it to be about 4.3 percent; on the high end, I believe, 7.7 percent.

Two jurisdictions in the country — again, Nunavut and the Yukon — are in a position for a bit of positivity. Again, in this year, slight — we'll take it. But next year — really seeing some potential growth. So, I think overall we're seeing some good indicators. That's not all of them; I know we can probably have a discussion about other ones today, but those are some things when you're thinking about economic development that you like to see. I'll leave it at that and cede the floor for questions.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for his comments.

I have a couple of comments to make before I ask some questions. One, it's interesting to focus on GDP when I was under the impression that the Yukon government had actually acknowledged — going back to its inaugural throne speech — that GDP is only one aspect of the socio-economic well-being of a territory or of a community, and they had touted — which I have heard very little of recently — but the notion of the index of well-being as actually the more comprehensive measure of how well this territory is functioning on all levels.

I'm interested as well — I'm happy that the minister has access to November 2020 Yukon employment stats — I don't. I can't access them on yukon.ca. I can get October, because the numbers are different — the unemployment rate was 6.1 percent in October. So, if it's 4.2, great — but it would just be interesting if we all had access to the same data working forward. Maybe that's just a function of the website, but that's how it works.

I would just ask the minister — I have one comment, because the last time we were speaking, we had a conversation about the issues of regional economic development and I was putting forward the case of the importance of having people in the community in order to be able to understand and be able to advocate for the issues. I was struck by an analogy, as the minister was talking and as he — rightly — was speaking highly of the officials from CanNor — because a number of

years ago when I was in a senior management position with the regional office of DIAND — I don't know what it is now, but as it was then — when there was a change of government. Just prior to the change of government, we had been working, as officials — at the direction of the previous government — so a Liberal government to a Conservative government — that had decided that, after many, many years of having regional economic development agencies across Canada but not in the north, it was time to have one in the north.

So, we had gone through the process of getting approval for a new northern economic development agency modelled on what you see with BC, Saskatchewan, or Ontario — north and south — and OCOA in the Maritimes — that would be based in the north. It would have senior management based in the north and would also have the ability — just as the minister was saying — to build and reflect the needs, as we've seen so nimbly and so well with CanNor's response. I watched — only using the Tourism Industry Association's weekly call — but I watched how those CanNor employees were engaged in there and hearing and then responding within a week about what was going on and what the response of the federal government was.

Ironically, when that new Harper government came in, their initial reaction was, "Hell, what would we need a northern economic development agency for?" So, they canned it.

It took a number of years before CanNor was redeveloped. Imagine, Mr. Deputy Chair, how we would be addressing this if you had to deal solely with people out of Ottawa thinking about what is going on and trying to do it by conference call.

I use this analogy because I think it's similar. Whether you are in Watson Lake, Dawson City, or Haines Junction — if we want to see our regions develop in this territory, we need to actually reflect what is going on in those regions, similar to what we have seen happen across the north with the support that has been given through the federal government to CanNor.

I just have a quick question before I move on. As a matter of information, there was an OIC that came across my desk as I was sitting down, Mr. Deputy Chair. I just wanted to have the minister confirm if the order-in-council that was for the Yukon regional relief loan program is the \$12 million or roughly that, and if he could clarify the exact number that CanNor is providing. Is it a relief loan program?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will do my best. I have some other information coming.

First of all, I agree. I think that there are some great points. Concerning that analogy, I think the member is absolutely correct. The member opposite makes a very valid point. It would have been a completely different situation — I think, and I agree — if we were in a position where our conversations, especially early in the spring, were being made to Ottawa or Gatineau. She is absolutely correct. I will take that experience and try to reflect on how we put some consistency into our committees. I think it is a great point.

A bit of background — the OIC that was spoken about is the regional relief and recovery fund. The government has continued to work closely with CanNor on this one. In May 2020, the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency — CanNor — announced \$3.93 million in funding

under the regional relief and recovery fund to assist Yukon businesses with COVID-19 recovery. Government will host the loan program that will run from the fall of 2020 — so now we're getting ready to go live until March 2026, which is the full period. Applicants, I believe, have to apply by March 31 of next year. Businesses can receive up to \$100,000 in a loan. These loans will be interest-free and have principal payments deferred until December 31, 2022.

I want to give a little bit more background on them. Each business can receive up to \$100,000. In calculating the amount of the loan, the department shall only consider the cost of which the applicant has not yet received any other government relief and assistance. The loan will be interest-free, as I said, and have principal payments deferred until December 31, 2022. The applicant can repay the loan fully or partially without penalty, except any interest payable, as specified.

If the applicant repays 75 percent — and this is a very important point — of the principal amount of the loan by December 2022, the balance equal to 25 percent of the loan to a maximum of \$25,000 will be forgiven. So, pay it back by 2022 — 75 percent of it on \$100,000, and \$25,000 essentially becomes a grant. If the loan is not fully repaid by December 31, 2022, the balance due, plus interest, must be repaid within three years, commencing January 1, 2023.

At this point, eligible costs for the loans — costs that will help to stabilize the applicant to mitigate impacts of COVID-19 that are not covered by other government COVID-19 relief measures — costs that have become due or have been incurred since March 15, 2022, and costs that are not otherwise ineligible for loans funded under the fund.

Again, it is pretty broad on the terms. Ineligible costs for the loans would be the costs related to refinancing on existing debt. Costs related to land acquisition would not be covered.

I am just going to find out one more piece of information here that I think is pertinent. I just wanted to check with the officials, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Part of this process is to have a third party administer this versus the department or the government. The request for proposals for third-party administration — that has closed. We went out around that. That was an important piece of this work. There were, I think, a couple of applicants. They are just evaluating the criteria. We should have that identified very quickly — who will be administering the loan program.

Just concerning the statistics — any of those new employment stats for the member opposite — they are on the Stats Canada website, but I will also endeavour to find out about the yukon.ca as well.

Ms. Hanson: I wonder why it takes a month to get from the Stats Canada to the Yukon Bureau of Statistics.

I thank the minister for clarifying how the machinery of the Yukon regional relief loan program is to roll out.

Just to follow up on a couple of the matters that we touched on last week or on November 30 last week — given the conversation that was occurring toward the end of the week with respect to the chief medical officer of health's advice that people work from home where at all possible. My understanding is that the Department of Economic

Development, according to the statistics that we were given at the briefing, has an FTE count of approximately 56. At the beginning or at one point, there were 10 people working from home or on a rotating basis working remotely.

Can the minister provide a current number and what the projection is in terms of trying to adhere to the chief medical officer's advice that, where we can, we have people working from home, particularly those who are working in common areas as opposed to in private offices?

When we were speaking last week, the minister was talking about the sick leave provisions. I just want to see if the numbers that he gave today correspond to the numbers last week in terms of amounts being spent. He said that \$335,000 has been spent so far in the sick leave. Last week, I was told that this represented 150 employees and 84 employers who had been approved to date. Has there been a change or an increase in that?

As well, the essential workers program — he indicated that was \$1.92 million, and the only area I was able to find a number in the notes that we had last week — and maybe I just missed it — was that the retail trade area was the biggest user of the program at \$637,000. Has the number remained static in terms of the essential workers program? Can the minister outline for us what additional communications — notably absent — and maybe that's just because the minister didn't reference it, but I can't find it anywhere in either my questioning or his response to it or his statement of what was going on in terms of the regional statistics; absent was any indication of take-up for that program in terms of the top-up from Dawson City.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, 54 full-time employees, approximately 15 to 20 working from home on a rotational basis. We've seen a little bit of an increase compared to where we were when we started this conversation. We were at around 10 staff and now we've gone up a little bit.

Concerning the paid sick leave — some of the numbers — I think we've updated what we have here. I'll start with the paid sick leave. Paid sick leave, right now, we're at 85 — that was the number of businesses — but we're up to 202 at this point. I'm going to — just for the record, the number that we had given — and there was a bit of a discrepancy, and I just checked with the officials — one of our numbers was booked to the wrong program, so the number is not \$335,000. It's a little bit less — it is \$333,967 — so it's a little bit less than it was previously. I think there was \$2,000 or so booked to the wrong spot.

The Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program update numbers are 105 businesses, with 1,744 employees. To date, in Dawson City, we are looking at \$27,737 of top-up for Dawson City for that program. Still, when I look through it, Destruction Bay, Eagle Plains, and Faro — still no uptake. I know that, this summer, the Minister of Community Services had spent a bit of time speaking with business owners in Faro — again, we can reach out in that case — and Teslin still as well. There are a couple of communities where we are not seeing an uptake on the essential workers program, but those are the most updated numbers that I have.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for those updates. I continue to urge more communication with employers about the importance of facilitating the access by the employees for that top-up program.

Mr. Deputy Chair, toward the end of the session last week, we touched on the Yukon immigration strategy that's out for consultation right now. I believe that the minister said that it's out until December. It is also accompanied by a backgrounder paper, which has a number of statements and questions in it, trying to elicit comments from Yukoners across the board. I do have some questions before I get into that. I want to get an update because, when I look at what's on the government website with this nice blue sheet about the existing programs and statistics, I find that those statistics differ somewhat from the discussion paper.

I would be interested if the minister — so, there's targeted programming for francophone countries, where the Department of Economic Development supports l'AFY in their working to attract French-speaking nominees to come to the Yukon. The info sheet that comes from the immigration unit says that since 2007 — so the last 13 years — there have been 73 provincial nominees from French-speaking countries approved through the Yukon nominee program, which accounts for about almost six percent of Yukon's total number of nominees.

So, I have two questions: Is that number accurate — 73? Three questions, actually — any idea of how many are still resident in Yukon since 2007? What is the retention basically? I am looking for the retention rate. What is the cost of the program with respect to the contributions to l'AFY for managing this immigration program?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'll just start by mentioning that, first of all, there is not a contribution that we put in place for settlement services and the support work by l'AFY. We did sign on. This was something that we signed onto in our FPT in — I believe it was 2018. It was in Manitoba when we came together and there was a number of jurisdictions that had the opportunity to take a look at this program. It made a lot of sense because the success that we've seen in the Yukon for francophone individuals who have made a decision to make Yukon their home — an extremely long history of that. As well, the retention rates have always been quite strong with that particular community, probably only second to Québec. I think that we've always had per capita our immigration numbers, probably New Brunswick and Yukon being very strong.

We don't believe that the numbers are incorrect. We will go back and just take a look and we'll cross-reference our numbers to make sure on that 73. This is something that a really broad number of countries give us the opportunity to have folks emigrate from. We think about, of course, France, and we've always had — I want to thank the folks at immigration. They do a great job. This year, they couldn't, but they've always done outreach. We usually always have representatives in Paris and France — the conference in Paris and then in Belgium as well — and we've continued to do that to try to make sure we just have those consistent relationships with francophone countries and definitely with individuals who are looking to move here.

Of course, this is broad. This goes into African nations and South America as well — so focused on immigration around economic immigration and that's really based on — part of the impetus for that is, when we talk about a population that's aging but also a situation where unemployment numbers — being able to continue to have a fulsome economy — that is part of our reasons to look toward those other jurisdictions.

I hope I got — I will clarify on the 73. We don't have a contribution, again, to l'AFY. I think those were the questions that were asked. I'm sorry if I missed anything; I'll get back to you if I did.

Ms. Hanson: I guess I'm confused. If there's no contribution to an organization to attend these immigration fairs or whatever, how is that resourced? What's the presence there for people to show up? I mean, they can't — if it's not Economic Development, who's doing it?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The Department of Education.

Ms. Hanson: Right. We have this bifurcated system. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair.

One of the other areas that — there are a number of areas that I want to touch on. I want to touch on the Yukon nominee, the business nominee, and the community pilot project which are all described in this strategy. I'll raise a few questions that I would like to explore.

In the business nominee program — the document says that its intent is to attract business entrepreneurs to the hospitality, service, tourism, and arts and cultural sectors in Yukon. They have been successfully attracted in Dawson, Mayo, Faro, Haines Junction, and Whitehorse and talks about how these nominees have invested \$17.86 million into their businesses and 41 candidates have been nominated.

One of the important aspects of this is that the participants are required, Mr. Deputy Chair, to contribute a minimum of \$300,000 to their business in Yukon and have a minimum verifiable income or asset value overall.

I guess my question is: What assessment has been done with respect to the business nominee program? What work is done and follow-up is done with people who are accepted into the business nominee program to ensure that the successful integration into the community — that their business — that there is the kind of forecast success when either they're establishing a business or acquiring a business?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Part of the work that we're doing — which is important to note — as we go through this strategy, of course, it is the time to reflect upon our retention numbers and it is a time to reflect on the experience of the individuals — the clients whom we are working with. I think we can all — people have different experiences and we want individuals to have a chance to tell us where we can improve.

I think that is the same work around the business nominee program. I will speak to it a little bit. It is designed to attract and retain skilled international entrepreneurs. So, many of them are in a bit of a different situation from folks coming through the nominee program. As the member opposite had stated, there is a minimum investment there.

Entrepreneurs and investors arriving through the YMEP inject new capital, businesses, and business expertise into the

Yukon economy, increasing job opportunities and enhancing our economic diversification and growth within the territory. The program has successfully attracted business entrepreneurs to the hospitality service, tourism, arts, and agriculture sectors in Dawson City, Mayo, Faro, Haines Junction, and Whitehorse.

Between January 2019 and 2020, six new candidates were approved under the program to establish four businesses in Yukon, with a total investment of over \$5.1 million. That gives you a bit of a sense there.

I think that we have tried to ensure at all times that the folks who run our immigration programs are going back and having discussions and that they are there to help individuals as they go through it, but I can come back with a reflection upon systematically how we are speaking to some of these new business owners. We look at this program as an important tool to continue to have in our economy. What we have seen across the country, over the last number of years, are very successful family-owned businesses. In some cases, they have moved to the next generation, but after that, sometimes we don't see appropriate succession planning, and some of those folks provide a very, very necessary service in communities across the country. One of the things we have seen is that these particular types of businesses or entrepreneurs have the opportunity to come in and maybe take on some of that work where, you know, other individuals — or maybe even in the local economy, there wasn't an interest in acquisition.

There's definitely a role for this program. I would say that the member opposite — in her riding of Whitehorse Centre, there are, of course, great businesses that are owned by individuals who are very astute folks. Many that we are seeing in the Yukon have had really successful professional careers in their homes of origin and have now moved to the Yukon for a difference in how they want to pace their life or quality of life or just interest in what they're doing. They worked really hard for a number of years at a particular pace, and now they are looking to still be entrepreneurs and take on all that pressure and stress that comes with it, but also have an opportunity to have other businesses.

With that, we will come back to what the system is that we have in place to ensure the success for those folks and seeing if the integration is going well. Of course, we hope that, in most cases, they buy in. The previous owner might still be there in some cases, so it is our hope as well that those folks are supporting their new business partners so that they can maximize their experience. The more they integrate into the community and get their feet under them — I think it will lead to them being more successful in their business endeavours. It is a good point and we will get back to the member opposite.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that explanation. I do raise this because of the fact that, in my riding, there are a few people who are under the business nominee program. When I ask the question, I am pleased to hear the minister talk about follow-up with businesses to try to make sure that the government is doing what it can to not be an impediment or create impediments to the success of these folks who have demonstrated their business acumen and ability to run

businesses and who come to this country and territory with a view to contributing.

I want to know what the minister's department's role and responsibilities are as part of the whole-of-government response to reviews or surveys done. I am referring specifically to an initiative that is called the "Whitehorse Emergency Shelter 2020 to 2021 community safety plan". This community safety plan hasn't been implemented, but it does arise as a result of significant socio-economic impacts over the last two years on the area immediately adjacent to the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter as the government is sorting out its internal management — the spillover effects on residents and businesses.

That culminated in a commitment over a year ago by government to work with area residents and businesses to develop a safety plan. So, the reflection of the businesses in a draft that was put out in March spoke to the fact that — and this is just on the notion of creating a safe and harmonious neighbourhood for shelter clients and neighbourhood residents and businesses. Businesses suggest that more effort is required to mitigate the impact of having a shelter located in a prominent downtown location, so they're looking for mitigation — not as the Minister of Health and Social Services said the other day of shutting it down; that's not what they're saying. They're looking for being able to work out an arrangement.

I can tell you that, in a meeting that I was at in August, it shocked people to see the difference between the draft that was done in March and what came out in May, because what it did is that it changed the language. When the community, the residents, and the businesses said that there was reduced consumer traffic in the area resulting in lower revenues and lost customers, the language was changed to there being a perception that there was a reduction in customer traffic and a perceived loss of revenue.

I would say — and the Minister responsible for Economic Development has been involved in business — that, as a businessman, you know if you have lost revenue or not. What does it say to the business nominee? That it's just your perception that you lost money — too bad, so sad? Is that the message? Is that the kind of messaging that we want those who are involved in good faith in the business nominee program to be conveying to others? We know that people ask others. It's word of mouth. People do ask, "What has your experience been?" I'm sure that the minister, as part of their communications strategy — and I would hope as part of what I heard him say about the immigration strategy is that our best validators for programs are those who have successfully gone through it and been part of the community. What's the role of Economic Development to ensure that the voices of the businesses, the business nominees, are accurately reflected in the government response? Because what is out there now has diminished the voices of those area residents and, in particular in this conversation, has diminished the voices of the businesses.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it is a unique conversation that we are having concerning this one particular case, and it really focuses on the fact that, I think, both the member

opposite and I have a sense about whose experience we are reflecting on, and we will just — without naming a business.

First of all, I think it is important just to isolate that we are talking about folks who have gone through the business nominee program and have had a successful business in downtown Whitehorse and put a lot into it — as the member opposite is reflecting on the experience around individuals outside of their business and some of the challenges caused by those folks.

What I can tell you is that, when it comes to the survey — I know that it was the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Services that worked through it, but I have been at the table with my colleagues, primarily with meeting with the Whitehorse chamber. Those were the meetings that I have attended. Yes, I can go back and look — sure. I'm just reflecting on the question. So, I have met with the chamber and continued — it is a very complex conversation.

The member opposite reflected on a delay. I think that work — and again, I might have to clarify and ask the deputy minister, and we may have to work with the department. But as I understood it, the strategy was built out with Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and, I believe, the City of Whitehorse.

One of the things that I can reflect on from this year is the fact that the department had reached out, I believe — I am not going to speak on — as it was reflected in the meeting was — there were other stakeholders — to ensure that this plan was ready to go into implementation. I will leave it to my colleagues to get into more of the detail.

Again, I think that this is a unique situation. I don't disagree with anything that we talked about earlier — about sitting down with folks and talking about their experience — but I do think that it is important for anybody who has — if you have invested internationally. You get to know that this is a complex situation. I don't have a solution today for it, and I was part of those meetings. I think that what comes to most people's minds when we talk about this — some folks will say, "Just make sure there is some security around these businesses."

I'm not saying that the member opposite feels that, but folks — when you get into these discussions. Then it says that people who are clients of the shelter — we just have to move them away from the front of the building and then they will leave that business or this business alone. As I saw very technically sound individuals from Justice and Health and Social Services in those meetings — the next question is: Are you trying to build a perimeter? Is three blocks away where you want people who are our most at-risk citizens to be because then that doesn't affect that business, but then it's a little farther away — and we're talking about humans. I think that this is part of the difficulty on this. As well, it has been co-opened by two other levels of government — three other levels of government.

What I can say to the member opposite is that I will make sure that we're working with those folks. I have, on occasion, sat with the folks you're talking about. There were concerns about other work that they were trying to get done at the federal level. I know we supported that.

Again, we're back to our department. At one point, I had the opportunity to speak with the federal minister of the day, Mr. Hussen, about this. I tried when I had the opportunity to take on the concerns of these folks. I guess everybody should have the expectation when they come and they invest in another country that they will have that. But having the opportunity for the Minister of Economic Development to go to the Minister of Immigration and ask, on behalf — to make sure that these files are a priority, which I will do. It doesn't matter who the folks are — we're going to work on behalf of everybody. I think that's important.

I also have an experience of investing in other countries and setting up businesses and what that's like and what the experience is like. Of course, it changes from country to country, but I think we do a good job of supporting the folks who come through these programs. I think we're reflecting on a very, very unique situation in this particular case — but again, we take the advice, and we will follow up with folks to understand what their experience has been.

Ms. Hanson: It was a question, Mr. Deputy Chair. My question is: Why would Economic Development change the language and thereby diminish the lived experience — the business impact — so that, when a document comes out that is the territorial government's document in May, it changes it — when the language was that the residents and the businesses say that there has been a "notable increase", they change it to "perceived". When they say that there has been an "increase", they say a "perceived increase". When they say that there have been lower revenues, they say a "perceived impact on local business" as opposed to "lower revenues and lost customers". Those are real and measurable if the Department of Economic Development was interested.

I'm pointing to these sections because its part of a multi-page report. There are only three action items that deal with the community and businesses. I'm presuming that Economic Development is interested in the businesses part of it and would have had a role in at least reviewing that and maybe saying, "Whoa — why would we want to do that?"

When we take one of those businesses, as the minister is aware — and highlighted in the insert that they put up in the *Up Here*, the magazine that I asked the question last week about — the insert — highlighting that business as a contributor of social enterprise. It's doing business in an innovative way and trying to be environmentally active, engaged in this community — and growing that business. Trying to grow that business against odds — why would Economic Development diminish it in the final report so that, when we get to what will happen next, there is nothing about dealing with the economic impact? It's all about funding another 12 studies internal to government — consultants' fees for more internal work — as opposed to, two years on, there being a financial impact in the community.

So, where, since August, has the consultation and the conversation been with those area businesses about how we collaboratively work to establish a good neighbour arrangement between an entity funded by and operated by the Government of Yukon? We talk about a whole-of-government approach. How do we make that real? I can tell you that, over

the last two years, it's not being felt in my riding; it's not being felt.

My first question is: Why would Economic Development countenance that diminishing of the experience — changing the language so that it basically makes it all fine? Don't worry, be happy. Well, that's not what's going on. Why would the real language used by people not be reflected in the government's document?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: In order to be accurate in this debate, what I am going to do is — we will reflect on it. Yes, I understand that the member opposite has a report. What I understand is that the plan was put together by three other levels of government. I understand that Justice and Health and Social Services were the leads. I want to look at how the contributions, if any, were put in place from the department. I want to be able to reflect on that so that I can properly answer the question.

These are points that are in the document. I am not saying that I agree or disagree with those points. I am just saying that, yes, I understand that there are some points in this particular document.

The member opposite said “I assume” on a couple of occasions. Let's not assume. Let me go back and find out what the contribution was. We don't want to have a debate based on assumptions. I get it that the member opposite is asking how I am handling the responsibility of Economic Development around these impacts. I have shared that I have been at the table with the chambers — primarily the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, as they have been the lead on the discussion. I do understand that it is a very complex situation. I do understand that there has been some disruption. In all cases, our department — starting with my role and others — is to continually work with business owners, whoever they are, to try to help them through these pieces.

Let me get back to the member opposite on the specific question about the language that was used in the draft and the language that was used in the latter. I would agree that it is a worthy endeavour for me to take a look to see that. I would say that I would be aligned in some of the reflections that the member opposite has made, based on reading through the material and the work that she has done as an advocate on this particular file.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate the minister's undertaking to follow up on this because it is important. Having represented this riding for almost 10 years, it is important to me that the social cohesiveness of this downtown area, which is so vital to how we reflect out to visitors and residents alike — that we find a way to make this work. I am surprised at times by the fraying patience of some of the — today we are talking about businesses, but I can tell you that it extends beyond that.

I just have a few more questions. You guys rotate through them so quickly. The immigration strategy also highlights the Yukon community pilot, as it's called, and it said on page 12 that a new pilot program is being launched in January 2020. We have heard the minister speak to this before — talking about the Yukon community pilot as a new stream, under the Yukon nominee program, allowing for more flexibility for both employers and nominees in specific Yukon communities.

I do have a number of questions with respect to this new approach that provides nominees with a work permit for a specific community, rather than a specific employer. As you have heard in this House, although the strategy talks about “several employers”, I believe it was on the record as three in the same community. It talks about how this pilot project reflects the unique labour market conditions in Yukon communities and is responsive to the needs of employers for seasonal workers.

So, a number of questions: It was to be launched in January 2020. Did it launch? How many, if any, nominees are involved in that program? What are the arrangements for a nominee going to X community, who may be working for up to three employers? That would provide assurance that they actually have employment that sort of fulfills their criteria of what we would think is 37.5 to 40 hours a week of full-time employment. If they don't, how are they expected to live? Who has the responsibility to ensure adequate housing for employees who are taking a rather vulnerable — potentially vulnerable — assignment to go to work for up to three employers in a community? Is there a requirement for a commitment by those three employers — or up to, or the several employers — to provide a minimum number of hours so that somebody can live?

I raise this as we look across — particularly in provinces like British Columbia and Ontario where, as it says here, the needs of employers for seasonal workers — where we have seen the exploitation of seasonal workers, with huge health consequences in this pandemic. So, we are not always going to be in the pandemic, but we will always have the exploitation of seasonal workers — unless we have some pretty clear expectations of employers who employ seasonal workers.

I'm looking to find out what safeguards are being built into this system so that it's not simply something where you can bring in cheap labour for a few months and then off you go. What are we looking at in terms of trying to ensure that it's beyond the seasonal workers? As I understood it, the nominee program was to create a situation where somebody could then apply for residency and then become a citizen, which we've seen so successfully over the years through the Yukon nominee program and a changed demographic in the Yukon.

Those are my questions with respect to — at least now, until the minister triggers a few others, no doubt — the Yukon community pilot.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: A quick background in the program and then I'll get into the four questions that were the rest.

The Yukon community program is a new stream within the Yukon nominee program. It's a new initiative with the federal government that provides flexibility to employers and Yukon rural communities where seasonal and part-time work is a fundamental part of the local economy and essential for local economic development.

The program was launched in January 2020 in the participating communities of Dawson City, Carmacks, Carcross, Haines Junction, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse. Up to 50 nominees will be eligible through the program to receive work permits enabling them to work for up to three employers

or hold up to three different occupations with a single employer in a participating community on a year-round basis.

Given a COVID-19-related freeze on applications from March to June, only one application has been approved under this stream so far. Employees can either create a single position with up to three occupations that together equal one full-time position or up to three employers in a single community can create one full-time position for one person.

What's key to understand with that is that we were seeing — communities like Carmacks would be a great example, where you have a real bustling group of businesses and when you drive through Carmacks — in one case, you have one employer — probably the biggest employer in the private sector in that community, but they own multiple businesses. So, how can they provide a full-time job to someone? In some cases, the individual might have to work in two of the businesses. So, again, really trying to find a great opportunity for the folks coming in and, at the same time, the unit worked very closely with employers and the Yukon chamber to identify how to deal with this.

We are in a bit of a different world in the sense that, when we launched this, there was a tremendous amount of pressure. If you remember, we were in a situation where businesses were having a very difficult time finding individuals, especially in the hospitality sector. We were in spots where — I was asked questions here where we had individuals who were having a hard time even opening for their full hours. That's partially why we announced this program for a business that was under that stress. Part of it was because we wanted to make sure that we were illustrating that we were listening to those individuals and that we were going to meet their needs with this program.

There was a lot of pushing at the bilateral level, even as we committed to getting this program out in January. On at least one occasion, I made a phone call to remind the federal minister of the commitments that were made on their behalf with us, again, pushing this. Of course, then we got into March and we were in a different situation. We have had one individual. The whole process is to ensure that we have full-time employment.

I am going to go through a couple of specifics that can help answer some of the questions about responsibility and guaranteed employment — things like that. There have been questions about how this program is different from previous programs due to the lack of uptake. Workers who are nominated under the program must meet the following minimum requirements. They must: have a guaranteed job offer in Yukon that meets the economic and other core criteria for nomination; have a valid work permit or student visa if in Canada at the time of the application — so we had some folks who were in school and we're starting to see a real increase at Yukon University with students moving in who then, while they're here, look for the next stage in their life in Yukon; provide proof of qualifying work experience; meet the language requirements for the skill level of the position; intend to live in the Yukon; and apply to the Government of Canada for permanent residency within three to six months of starting work. The community program will help meet our government's goals on labour shortage.

I think we've done a good job just reflecting on what that looks like and why that is. The arrangements — we usually have — for lack of a better term — it's a contract, essentially, that gets written out and it highlights — it's a tripartite agreement setting out the employment conditions and obligations for the business. Yukon government monitors the tripartite agreement to ensure consistent employment.

I don't have an answer on the housing. I know that, in our communities, the employers seem to do a really good job — whether it be Dawson or Carmacks and other places — of providing that. I want to be able to get a proper, fulsome answer to talk about if it is part of the conversation, which is important. I'm going to get back on — to find out what that looks like. I think we can reflect on other nominees and what their experience has been, even though we've only had one.

So, yes, guaranteed employment — the arrangement is the tripartite agreement. How many? Just the one person. Then we're going to get back to you on the housing piece.

This is something that, I think — early stage. The department has had a lot of kudos for the work that they've done since March — all very, very, very warranted. I have to say that this was another one where folks were very innovative because what we were seeing in other jurisdictions — primarily, there was the Atlantic pilot. Those four provinces were having a really difficult time. They had one particular seasonal industry and having a real hard time finding people for that industry — at the same time, for full-time work. It was kind of a mix between fisheries and agriculture. The pilot program was negotiated between the federal government and the Atlantic provinces. It seemed to be quite successful. We looked at that.

There was also a conversation that was happening across the country about specific programs that could be identified in urban areas. We also heard about this rural program. It was rural and northern. It was rural, and I think that the team did such a good job. The federal minister arrived here in the morning and it was called the "rural program", and by the time he went to his hotel in the evening, it was the "rural and northern program". So, everybody did a very good job — from the multicultural centre through to the chambers — ensuring that the federal minister of the day understood the need that we had.

The challenge after that was that there were some criteria that we had to work through, and that criteria really focused on having larger strategies out of your chambers. Really, they were looking for chambers in some sense to help run it. We worked through that. It took a bit of time on the policy side, and then we had the opportunity to put this program in place.

Will we need a program like this? I am not sure. We are going to run it. We will see what the uptake is. Inevitably, the jobs have to be in place in order to have the participants. If the jobs are not there, there will not be participants or clients. Our nominee numbers last year were really good. It was the first time that we tapped out on what our total allotment was. I think that we have to see a recovery in the tourism sector. The tourism sector really was driving the development of this program. We will have to see what happens as we get through the next spring and summer and if we see a rebound. We will see if there is a

real use for this — getting feedback as we go through the strategy work.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that answer. It addresses quite a few of the questions that I had.

What is the duration of the Yukon community pilot project and who will be involved in assessing it? Are there criteria available anywhere that we can see?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am going to get back to the member opposite. Part of it is that we were given a letter of understanding which gave us the opportunity to move through the new stream. I want to go back to just ensure that the bilateral agreement is finalized.

The bilateral agreement will, I think, highlight — I think that it is a two-year pilot, but I want to ensure that I have the information. We had a letter of understanding that gave us the opportunity to do the new stream. There was some negotiation on particular components that was still underway. I'll get back to the member opposite on that.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate that and I look forward to getting that information. I think it's imperative that, when governments establish pilot projects, they actually have some objective criteria by which to evaluate it and generally a time frame for it. I'm sure there is, and I look forward to receiving it.

I have just one final question before I move on. As we talked about, the Economic Development immigration strategy is out for consultation. I asserted, but maybe I'm wrong, that the consultation will be completed at the end of December. When does the government anticipate having its new economic development strategy available for review?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to confirm that it is a two-year pilot — the answer to the previous question. I'm just confirming that it does run until the end of 2021. Whether we'll go back and try to request an amendment on that — potentially because we lost a half year of the pilot time period — we'll leave that to the officials to see if it's worthy to bring it back to the table once we see what the uptake is and see what the interest levels are.

As for the strategy work, I'm just going to read through a few things for the public record — not a whole bunch here.

It was time. Our previous strategy has come to an end. Economic immigration — you've heard me mention that a bit — is an essential tool for us to attract our skilled workers and develop a workforce that supports investment, economic growth, and diversification. It seems like it has worked very well over the last number of years for the Yukon. Since the Yukon *Immigration Strategy* was drafted 10 years ago, the territory's economy has grown and changed. We are updating the strategy this year to ensure that it meets the evolving needs of Yukon's employers and communities.

In the fall of 2020, as we've just talked about, we have engaged directly with program users and stakeholders. Their priorities and experience will help focus our efforts as we develop a new strategy.

The engagement will seek feedback on existing Yukon immigration programs, including the Yukon business nominee program and the recent introduction of the Yukon community

pilot and how the new strategy can help address issues faced by Yukon employers.

The engagement period for the immigration strategy has shifted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and is expected — it was going to start in September, and it is underway. In light of COVID-19 health and space requirements, an updated engagement process — and we touched on this the other day. It is just more online surveys, phone interviews, and virtual meetings to complete this. The input from the public engagement will feed the revised immigration strategy, which is expected to be finalized in the spring 2021.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for his response, and I thank the officials for their presence here today.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*?

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

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Deputy Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

Do we have unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$19,460,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$19,460,000 agreed to

Economic Development agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Community Services — *continued*

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would just like to welcome back Deputy Minister Matt King and our director of finance, Mr. Phil MacDonald. I look forward to any further questions from the members opposite.

Mr. Hassard: I will not use his extra 14 minutes, I promise.

I have a question around the projects taking place in Old Crow. I'm curious as to if the minister could let us know if there were any community components drafted into any contracts for the projects taking place in Old Crow at this time.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just for clarification, when the member is asking about community components — if he can just flesh that out a little bit for me and I'll get an answer.

Mr. Hassard: I just mean in terms of hiring local people, hiring local contractors, renting local equipment — that sort of thing. I know that in Teslin, the community tends to get involved in the contracts to a certain degree to ensure that local components are used as much as possible. I'm just wondering if there was anything in regard to the projects taking place in Old Crow that might enhance local hire, local hire of equipment, et cetera.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Similar to the community of Teslin, the community of Old Crow often asks for a transfer payment agreement so that they lead the provision of the work within their community, which allows them to use their procurement policies and often leads to more local hire. It is pretty typical in Old Crow, I think, that you use the resources that you intend to have on hand.

We are doing work on the landfill, sewage lagoon, and the community hall. The sewage lagoon and the community hall — the larger projects — are using transfer payment agreements. Often in the communities, we ask the community whether they wish to go with a transfer payment agreement. It is our preference to do that. There is a challenge to us, which is that, as we are trying to plan our spending, sometimes those transfer payment agreements lead to those communities dealing with their own timelines that adjust and are somewhat out of our control. That is sometimes the challenge.

Mr. Deputy Chair, you will recall earlier this session that, when I spoke to the Member for Lake Laberge about some of the lapsed funding, it was really around the transfer payment agreements. It is not that the funding is not going to be spent — it is — but sometimes the timing of it adjusts and is not within our control. Overall, we are very happy when we can use this type of agreement with our communities.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that from the minister. I am wondering if there is any type of follow-up from the Department of Community Services to ensure that businesses and local people are being utilized to their full potential. The reason I ask this, obviously, is because I have heard from

members of the community who don't feel that they are being utilized as well as they feel that they could be.

The other question with regard to Old Crow — I am curious as to if the minister could give us a bit of an update on the ice road. We have heard that the ice road going into Old Crow has been postponed for a year. How will that affect the budgets or the costs of the projects that are currently taking place, if it will affect them at all?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We always follow up with communities. Well, first of all, within the transfer payment agreements, we pass on the federal requirements that we are required to pass on around procurement. We work with communities to support them in their procurement, but effectively, we see them as the leads; we believe they are the leads. But I think that we do support them in how they're going through their procurement processes.

With respect to the ice road, the projects that I just discussed — the sewage lagoon, the landfill, and in particular, the community hall — they weren't banking on the ice road as they went through their procurement process. So, I don't anticipate significant impacts as a result of changes to timing for the ice road. There may be effects to future projects, but of course those — hopefully, people judge that as we go through any sort of tendering process, but none that I know of for the projects that we have on hand.

Mr. Hassard: In regard to the energy retrofits program that the government has announced and was intending to work with municipalities on through a local improvement charge, I'm curious as to if the minister could provide the House with any updates on where the government's at with rolling that program out and how the municipalities are all feeling about it — accepting it or — I guess just a general update on that, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This past weekend, I spent a couple of hours talking with municipalities on one of the quarterly Association of Yukon Communities calls. I did have a long and frank conversation with municipalities about it. The main two things that I hear — well, maybe three things, Mr. Deputy Chair, that I hear from communities — the first one is that right now they're pretty darn busy with COVID — dealing with COVID and the stresses of dealing with COVID. Right now, that's a challenge.

The second issue that I hear from them is that using local improvement charges to get at retrofit plans will add burden to their delivery of service on a community-by-community basis. Because municipalities or the property tax collectors and local improvement charges come back and pay back through the property tax, if there's a problem, it's usually the municipality that is on the front line of that and that is a burden to them.

The third main thing that I heard from them is that they all believe that this is a great initiative. They agree that Yukoners will want this and they think that it's a good thing from a climate perspective. They think it's a good thing from a community perspective. What we're doing is to work with them to try to make it a win to find some way to provide support or incentives for them, as a municipality, to have to deal with that

additional burden so that it doesn't become a download on them.

I also heard that we should take a little bit of a breath around it because right now those governments are dealing with other challenges around COVID-19. That's how I would characterize the situation right now. I'm happy to answer further questions.

Mr. Hassard: I'm wondering if the minister could let us know how many First Nations that Community Services has involved in this process and what the feeling of the First Nations are in regard to this program.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, with respect to the local improvement charges side of this, it is the municipalities and the territorial government that are the property-taxing authorities. That is where that conversation lies.

We have had ongoing conversations with First Nations about *Our Clean Future* and many aspects of it. When I did my round of community tours in the late summer and fall, I did alert First Nation governments to this initiative that was coming. There are still conversations that I think we definitely need to have because there is a range of questions around the ownership of land, who would be initiating it, and how that would work through on First Nation properties. There are still questions that need to be resolved, but we haven't had questions directly with First Nations around the local improvement charges side of this, in the sense that they are not the taxing authority.

Mr. Hassard: I think that the one area I might disagree with the minister a little bit on is, when the First Nation is the owner of the land in the municipality and pays the taxes to the municipality, if there are tax arrears from individuals, it is going to also place a burden on the First Nation.

Anyway, Mr. Deputy Chair, the only other question I had was regarding gift cards or gift certificates. There is no legislation that protects consumers when it comes to honouring gift cards or gift certificates. This was an issue that first emerged a few years ago when a local restaurant went out of business and had been raised with us again recently regarding a local travel agency. I am curious as to if the government is contemplating any protections for Yukoners in this regard.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We haven't had any direct conversations that I'm aware of. I will have a conversation with the appropriate branch and see what they've been discussing. If I have any information, I'll be happy to get it back across to the members through a legislative return or through a note across to them, but I don't have an answer specifically today.

Ms. White: Of course, I echo the welcome to the officials who are back today in the Assembly.

When we last spoke, the minister and I were talking about minimum wage and living wage and then we were so rudely interrupted by the end of the day. It just rolled around and then there was no opportunity to go back, but I'm always so grateful that we have Hansard to go back and refer to.

When we were talking about it, the minister was talking about how, in recent years — since 2016 — the gap between the living wage and minimum wage has closed. I just wanted to put on the record that, when we talk about a living wage as is calculated by the Anti-Poverty Coalition — it's important that

we talk about it — it's two adults working full time, accessing all federal and territorial support programs.

Since 2016, we know that the child benefit has changed drastically from the federal government; it has increased. We know that, for example, childcare subsidies have changed. There are a lot of things that go into that calculation. So, it's not just a matter of: People are better off for one reason; it's a whole plethora of reasons.

But the minister did say that they had accepted the recent recommendations from the Employment Standards Board about the increase. I would like to know — in the report from the Employment Standards Board from November 2018, it did have a table of recommendations. In April 2019, it was to go up 90 cents, plus the CPI. In April 2020, it was going to go up \$1. In April 2021, it was going up an extra \$1.10, which they were guessing, at the time, would be \$12.60, April 2020 would be \$13.80, and then April 2021 would be \$15.12. I wanted to know if it was this minister's plan to adopt the recommendation of the Employment Standards Board and increase minimum wage in April 2021.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: My recollection is that the Employment Standards Board wrote that first letter and didn't actually direct us to do anything. It was almost like their analysis. We turned around and asked them to please give us an order, and then they turned around and did give it to us. We followed that order. Then, as part of that order in the subsequent year — so for this spring 2020 — I understand that they gave us another order. I will wait to see if the Employment Standards Board makes another recommendation, but that is how we have been working — is in conjunction with them. So, I will just stop there and see if there are further questions.

Ms. White: I appreciate the information from the minister. When I was looking online, I didn't find the order from the Employment Standards Board. I found the report where it says, "Our recommendation is..." So, it's a recommendation based on the one piece — the document — that I could find. Again, it is an interesting time when we have the essential worker top-up — you know, up to \$4. So, if you made \$13.71 an hour, you would be making \$17.71 an hour, which is more than \$600 — or is \$600 — a month, which is a substantial amount of money. I have opinions about minimum wage, of course.

During the particular shutdown that we saw, kind of, in spring, Internet access at libraries was really important, and you could tell how important it was at the Whitehorse library when you would drive past and people would be in the parking lot in their vehicles accessing the Internet. We could have lots of ideas about Internet and access and availability and all the rest of it, but I think that, in this day and age, Internet is no longer something that should be for the privileged. It is becoming more of a basic necessity as far as communication and access to information.

So, one of the concerns that I had during the lockdown is actually from my time at the food bank when someone told me that they couldn't access the Internet anymore outside the library. I just wanted to know if libraries across the territory

kept their Internet available at libraries during the shutdown, when things were closed to the public.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am going to have to turn back to the branch to ask because some of the libraries are, of course, run by societies — although we try to support them — and there are differences. I know that my own library in Marsh Lake was trying to continue to provide that hot-spot service.

I agree with the member opposite that the Internet is becoming more and more essential to the public. I don't know specifically what was done with each of the libraries. I will get some critical information imminently, Mr. Deputy Chair.

I do want to say that I think that we all felt the closure of our libraries — from a practical perspective and also, I think, from a symbolic perspective — because libraries are often the heart of the community. People felt that loss keenly.

The branch has let me know that, in the community branches, it was available but that, in the evenings at the Whitehorse library, it was turned off at night. I can try to figure out if that is how it normally is or if it was different or not, but that is the situation that I have.

Ms. White: I sometimes can't read my own handwriting, so I can't imagine passing notes to someone under a timeline or a time crunch.

The reason why I was bringing up libraries and Internet access — and we saw this with the emergency phones that had been given to women by the Women's Directorate through women's organizations — is that having that access to information and the ability to access it were really important.

The minister just touched on something when he talked about hot spots. One of the questions that has been floated around by the Anti-Poverty Coalition is developing Internet hot spots in the communities in the territory and making sure that Internet is available to folks. Has the department looked into that at all?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I just want to correct — I made a mistake a moment ago. I said that the Whitehorse library turned off at night; that's incorrect. The Whitehorse library is 24/7. It's the Watson Lake library that turns off at night just because of how they deal with the building.

The question is a great question. I'm going to have to turn to two of my colleagues to answer — the Minister of Highways and Public Works and the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate. It's not something that my folks have been working on directly, but I'm happy to pass across a question.

Ms. White: I appreciate that. When I often get told that we're the one-government approach — no silos — so, if that information can be spread across, I do appreciate that because I think this is an issue that affects a great deal of the population, to be honest.

Earlier in this Sitting, we were able to do tributes to the opening and the hard work behind the F.H. Collins track facility. I did mention lights. It was pointed out to me again by someone travelling from Riverdale this morning that the lights are on. You're supposed to stay off the track when it's covered in snow because it is actually really bad for it, and you're

supposed to stay off the field when there is snow on it because it's really bad for it. My question is: Why have we got it lit up?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'll just add a little bit more about libraries and then I'll move on to the F.H. Collins track.

I know that we did a formal assessment of the library facilities over the summer of 2019. We've been using that report to help with long-term planning so that we can keep the community libraries evolving with the changing needs of our community.

So, some things are purely library things, like books, but it's also about technology, about programming, and about how we connect with the community, schools, et cetera. I will let that go for now.

Moving on to the F.H. Collins track, we are using lights when it's dark. It's really about security. It allows, for example, for there to be cameras that can be mounted so that, if there is a problem, it can be sorted. The recommendation is to not turn off the lights. The experience with the facilities managers is that those areas that are not lit often end up with damage — sometimes by ATVs or snowmobiles or things like that — so it can be a problem. Even though we shouldn't have people on there in the winter, as the member opposite notes — and I know that she knows all about this stuff as her family is a strong advocate around track and field — the real costs would be if an ATV or a snowmobile got on there and chewed up that field. What I will note is that the lights that we put in are energy-efficient LEDs, so we hope that it's not an overly significant use of power.

They also double as lights for the grounds of the school, which also can be for safety reasons for young people in the area. I am always happy to look to see if there are other options that might work. I don't know of them yet, but this is the rationale that led to that choice.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. It seems painfully obvious after I asked it — when we talk about vandalism — but I didn't even vandalize when I was a kid, so I would never go on a field like that. I sometimes think that I misspent my youth and there was more opportunity when I was younger. I appreciate that it makes sense that we don't want people to adversely affect the field, especially with the costs of repairing it. The minister is right.

To say that my father is intimately involved with the construction of that place is an understatement. That man has spent hundreds of hours cutting tracks into grass and waiting with anticipation for that place, so I am well familiar.

Just because the view has changed a bit since the last time that the minister and I spoke — we did talk about alternate self-isolation plans and we did talk about mine sites, but it is relevant now, again, because on December 4, it was announced in NWT that there was one COVID-19 case confirmed at a fly-in, remote camp in the Northwest Territories.

You know, they are describing what their process is there, and I would like to know what our process is here. It is one thing if a person — well, I would like to know first if we can test for COVID-19 in a remote camp setting, and I would like to know, if someone did test positive, what that looks like. If,

for example, their physical health deteriorated, how does that look in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The answer depends on which site we are talking about, because each of them have developed specific plans for their sites, but what every one of those plans has to have within it is the anticipation of what happens if someone gets sick. So, that sickness may be COVID or it may be something else, but in any case, they are going to have to have that as part of the plan. Some mines have looked at rapid tests, but we should not think of that as definitive. Rapid tests tell you at the moment whether someone tests positive or not. They don't tell you, for example, whether someone may have been infected and is going to test positive at a later date.

Sometimes the public thinks that, if we put rapid tests in there, we would never get a case. No — actually, it still is possible and we still have to have provisions to deal with those possibilities.

I can talk at a very high level about what goes on at the mines. They have a health team. That team is working there with them. I am not talking about the chief medical officer of health; I am talking about their own health team that they have provided for there. They have areas set apart for people if they become ill. They have provisions around treatment and evacuation if necessary — about separation. Sometimes it might be to monitor; sometimes it might be to evacuate. They have to have thought through how it will work with respect to neighbouring communities. There is a pretty fulsome plan, and then that plan is — and this has nothing to do with alternative self-isolations; this has to do with mines in operation. If you'll recall, this predates any application for alternative self-isolation.

The mine, in order to get back up and running earlier in the year, had to run over those plans with the chief medical officer of health and review them as robust and also generally then had conversations with neighbouring communities — both First Nation and municipality — depending on that set-up.

That's the high-level look at it. I'm happy to answer further questions as I'm able.

Ms. White: I'm not so sure that — I mean, there are probably additional questions if I had additional information. I just want to know that if something happens in Yukon there is a plan in place.

My colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, was talking about the retrofit program that was initially announced was going to be paid back through property taxes. Because since that announcement, since we haven't moved toward the completion of that agreement, how are folks able to access? Are they accessing the retrofit money still through the Yukon Housing Corporation? The reason why this was, I think, maybe brought forward by the Minister of Community Services and celebrated in the way it was is because it was talking about a much longer payback time — but if the minister can tell me what people are doing in the interim until this comes to completion.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Today, someone could go down to the Energy Solutions Centre and work with them to talk about retrofitting their home. It's possible to do today. What's not

there is the ability to borrow money against your property through the government to support that retrofit. We refer to it as a "property assessed clean energy" type of program — a PACE program. But any individual could go and could seek a bank loan or some other form of loan to do that work. Of course, in ideal situations, the energy savings that you get can sometimes even outperform the cost of repayment on that loan. That's possible. We have low rates right now and some of our homes could really use an energy retrofit.

What we are trying to do is bring in a local improvement charge that would allow more Yukoners — more homeowners and more commercial buildings — to be able to get a loan that would help them to deal with the capital costs up front, then pay it back over time through property taxes.

The Yukon Housing Corporation loan program is still there. People can still use it. It isn't tied to retrofits or to this program specifically, but it doesn't deal with commercial properties, whereas the type of program we are thinking about trying to bring in would. It's still some ways off because we still need to work with municipalities, as I was saying to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. Municipalities have said to me to please be careful right now, as they are quite loaded with respect to COVID. We are trying to be respectful of that. We will try to work with them on ideas in the meantime. Maybe we will do a pilot in a community or two to see how it works. There are some ideas that are brewing, but as far as I understand it, the Yukon Housing Corporation program loans are still there.

Just to go back — I will note this question as well and talk to the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation to check in with her that I am still correct in what I'm saying. I'm happy to take that question to her on behalf of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Ms. White: There is no need for the minister to do that. I am well versed in the Yukon Housing Corporation loan application, as I applied for it twice. It was even, I would like to say, part of the reason why it went from \$35,000 to \$50,000. I spent some time with the deputy minister when he was in his capacity for that department for other reasons — so no need; I am well familiar.

The last question I have today — we have seen our neighbours to the west of us suffer some tragic calamities that are weather-related in Haines, Alaska. I know just based on questions from opposition members — and, of course, from you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and your motion — and the motion I tabled as well about supporting our neighbours in Haines, Alaska — I often say that if Haines was in Canada, I would live there, but it's not, so I don't. Is there anything in the minister's capacity as Minister of Community Services that he is able to do to support them? What are those discussions from the Yukon government's perspective right now in supporting our neighbours in Haines, Alaska?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The answer is yes. There are roles that we have, and I will just read out a little bit about it for the record. Of course, I also know that the Premier has reached out to the governor. I know that the Minister of Highways and Public Works has had several conversations. I know that the Member for Kluane was asking me questions late last week —

on Friday, I think — to see if we could help some Americans who were in transit and stopped because the highway had been closed. While the Minister of Highways and Public Works was in the House debating, I got a quick question to his DM on the side asking about when we could get that road open. He let me know that it was open then and I think the Member for Kluane got word to those folks, so there is a lot of work trying to coordinate.

So, Haines had declared a state of emergency following strong winds and heavy rains that led to flash flooding and multiple mudslides. The last I heard was that there were still two folks missing, sadly — although at first, it was six missing, so I am glad that those four other folks were located.

We now have the highway open, so we can escort aid vehicles from Alaska or to Alaska, if that is needed. We have reached out to the Department of Homeland Security in Alaska to offer additional assistance, and they thanked us, but they haven't come back to us with specifics. I know that there was a question around sandbags, and so we sourced some quickly from our stores to get ready to get to them, and I am not sure whether that has been asked for specifically.

The Yukon is a signatory of the Pacific Northwest Emergency Management Agreement between the governments of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and the Yukon. The agreement is intended to coordinate the sharing of emergency management resources and expertise in response to natural disasters and other emergencies, so there is a mutual aid agreement about how we work together. This, on top of COVID happening and restrictions around the border — but borders, as far as I understand them, will allow for essential and emergency services to move across. So, all we wait for, then, is the ask that comes. We have reached out and we have talked to them. We have let them know that we would be happy to try to help, but we want them to tell us.

We don't want to overload them with something that they don't need, and including — I have heard from a bunch of people who want to head down there and help out. I just think — whoa, let's wait and see if they ask for people power, because once you go across, you may need to isolate for 14 days and you might actually become a burden on the system for them rather than a support. There is a way in which we work together. We have done the initiation of that to let them know that we are standing by and ready should they need help.

One of the other things worth noting is that Alaska has other resources that they use. They have three Coast Guard bases, a National Guard, and five military bases. They haven't asked us for support yet. I think that they may be utilizing some of their own resources, but we are happy to help if we can in any way. Our hearts go out to the folks in Haines, and we can feel their pain as they deal with some of the tragedy that is there. They know that we are with them in spirit.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. I am sure that the minister has had many phone calls as well, but I was contacted on the weekend by an individual in town who has friends in Haines. One of the things that the person in Haines had said is that the first thought, at first, was about the dozens of houses that were wrecked. Now, as it turns out, it's

actually hundreds. It is beyond imagination, really. The person was talking about how there was going to be a heap of essential things — from clothing to bedding to food, et cetera — that they were going to need. The person whom I was having the conversation with was trying to figure out if there was a way — Yukoners are generous, and we know that. We always have room and stuff to give. She was looking to try to figure out a way to put out a call for those essential items that the community needed and were identifying. She was trying to figure out how things can get from Whitehorse to Haines, Alaska.

I am wondering if, within the purview of the minister's responsibility under CEMA, he has any suggestions for that?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I know that Yukoners want to help, and I think it is great. I will look for ways in which to try to help make sure that the help is getting through in the right way. The main way in which we work is through our Yukon Emergency Measures Organization. They coordinate with the state emergency operations centre. In the role as Minister of Community Services, that's kind of the appropriate channel that I use.

People may have personal relationships with folks down there and they may hear of things that are needed, but in terms of coordinating something, I would use those channels. I'll check in with our EMO to ask what is being asked for or what we might anticipate to be asked, and then we can deal with the logistics of it once we get that.

I think that we need to rely on those appropriate channels, from a government perspective. There may be other ways that people can work personally, but if we're coordinating something, it really needs to be ensuring that we are lining up with our colleagues in Haines and in the US. We don't want to cause problems, as well-intentioned as they might be. We really have to follow their lead in telling us how to support them.

I'll leave it there for now. I do want to acknowledge Yukoners' spirit and how much they're willing to give to help our neighbours. That is heartwarming in the face of a tragedy.

Mr. Istchenko: I just want to follow up with something else. The Leader of the Third Party did bring it up, but I was inundated right after that by many people. They were heading down, they were loading equipment, and they were going. I was like, "Whoa, hang on a second. The road is closed right now, so you'll get in a line-up." That is why we did ask the question and I knew that it was going to come up, because we do have a big arts and business community in my riding who took the sales of some of their day yesterday. It was pizza day all day at the pub and all the proceeds went and the top spots and all the proceeds from a couple of days before down there, which is wonderful. I am sure that they can use that.

But I understand, when I asked the question, and I understand how things work — being involved with the military and the Canadian Rangers — that things do go through EMO, so my question, I guess, is: When it comes to the ask that comes back, how will EMO go about — and I will just give an example — say, if they start to need equipment, how will EMO go about — will they go off to third-party rental? Will they put a call out through the public? Those are some of the questions

— or do people need to get a hold of EMO and say, “Listen, I have this; if you need it, call me” — kind of — “We’re ready to go.”

Can I get a little bit more detail on it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This is always a little bit of a chicken-and-egg question. What I will say is that — I think that, if EMO gets a request for something that we feel the public could support, we will put out a public call. If it is something that the business community could support — maybe that is more like equipment or things like that — we will reach out through the chambers. I think we would also work our own internal channels as a government to see what resources we have that we could be supporting and supplying.

So, it is really dependent on what they are asking for — so, sandbags for example. I’m not thinking that Yukoners are going to have sandbags lying around, so we look to our own stores. I think that is an example where we look internally, but I think it really is dependent on what that request is for.

I just will acknowledge here in the Legislature today, just as colleagues from across the way are acknowledging, that there are Yukoners who are willing to help out; we just need to ask. I will wait to see what it is that we’re hearing from Haines that they have identified as being needed, and we will try to be smart about that, about where we go. I don’t want to discount any of this caring and generosity from our community. I realize that it’s there and I am happy to tap into it — not so much to not have responsibility ourselves as a government, but to provide the opportunity to those people who want to contribute to have an opportunity to do that. That’s how I’ll think of it.

To date, the one thing I heard about was sandbags, but there is more to come, I’m sure. It’s still evolving as members opposite have noted.

Mr. Istchenko: The other issue that had happened — it was more federal with CBSA and I got a hold of the minister right away. There were two American travellers who were doing the right thing and they were travelling and they were at a local hotel in Haines Junction self-isolating, but they were there for three days and the requirement, of course, was 24 hours to go through. They got a call that they had to basically head toward Beaver Creek and get out of Canada. I want to thank whoever from across the way helped, but they got a call back from CBSA that said, “No, just stay put.” They realized that here we are in an emergency and it’s not like they were staying back on purpose. Maybe that’s just something that, moving forward, the department can make sure the next time they have a bilateral with the federal government that they realize that we could have these situations, especially in the light of winter and our two — Skagway and Haines — those roads and avalanches and it’s supposed to be a heavy snow year. We could have this again. It would be nice if those people know that they can just stay put and they don’t have to try to go back to the southern states or whatever — most of them are military travellers — or however that works.

I want to thank the department for everything.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It gives me a good chance to say thanks to all of our enforcement folks who have been working out there. When they come across a problem, they’re working

first to try to support Yukoners and educate and deal with the problem directly. So, I will be sure to pass across a thank you to both the CEMA enforcement team, our EMO folks, and also to CBSA.

We’ve had other instances over the summer. I heard about someone whose trailer broke down and I was getting calls in the middle of the night and I’m saying, “Look, it’s okay. Just be reasonable. I’ll try to get word in. I know you’re trying to do the right thing.” Those sorts of things don’t worry us; they really don’t. It’s when someone is purposefully flaunting the rules and putting others at risk — that’s what gets us.

With that, I just will say — because I think we’re getting to the end — so I would just like to take a minute to also thank the officials who have come in again today and I appreciate that they’ve helped support — to get some of this information for members opposite.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*?

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: Ms. White has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$9,501,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$275,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$9,776,000 agreed to

Department of Community Services agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: We will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to thank, once again, my officials, Mr. Gorczyca and Mr. McConnell, for coming in to help us this afternoon to navigate the turbulent waters of Highways and Public Works. I welcome my colleagues' questions this afternoon. Without further ado, I'll let them get at it.

Mr. Hassard: I guess the first question would be: Why are the waters so turbulent in Highways and Public Works? Is there something that maybe we should know about? I guess we will wait and see.

I just have a couple more questions for Highways and Public Works. I, too, appreciate the officials for being here.

The first question that I had was in regard to CVIP inspections. Individuals used to be able to take a course and get certified to do inspections for motor vehicles. The rules have changed. You now have to either be a third-year or red seal certified mechanic in order to take the course and to be allowed to do CVIPs, so I'm wondering if the minister could provide the House with an update as to why that change was made.

I know that there were a couple of people who were on the list to get certified, but the course wasn't allowed or wasn't put out for several months, and as a result, people who were on the list are no longer eligible to get certified. I am wondering if the minister could give us a bit of information on that.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will endeavour to get the member opposite an answer to the question of why we have changed our requirements for CVIP inspections. I will get back to the member opposite with that.

Mr. Hassard: The other question I had was regarding the Nisutlin Bay bridge. I know that there is an RFQ out. I believe that it closes on December 10. I'm curious if the minister can provide the House with any updates on negotiations with the Teslin Tlingit Council and just any updates in general in regard to the Nisutlin Bay bridge.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can tell the member opposite that we're in the midst of negotiations. I'm not going to comment on negotiations on the floor of the House right now. The negotiations are ongoing with the Teslin Tlingit Council on the Nisutlin Bay bridge. I believe that our officials are even down there this week continuing those negotiations. The talks have been positive. The member opposite is correct that the request for proposals is closing this month.

Mr. Hassard: If the RFQ closes on December 10 and the negotiations haven't wrapped up with Teslin Tlingit Council, how is that not going to affect the tendering process of the job? How are the proponents going to deal with that?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That's a little clearer. First of all, I just said — and the member opposite corrected me gently, and I appreciate that. It is an RFQ, not an RFP. The RFP process is to come. We're currently in the middle of an RFQ.

We're going to qualify contractors, but the request for proposals will incorporate all of the rest of the work with TTC as we go along. We're currently working to qualify our contractors to do the job as we continue the negotiations with the Teslin Tlingit Council on all of the matters that have to be addressed going into the proposal going forward.

We will conclude negotiations with TTC before the request for proposals goes out, but we will have contractors in place who are qualified to do the work and we will work with them and the Teslin Tlingit Council.

These things don't happen — you start with step one, do the next, do the next. They are all happening in real time, but the work of the negotiations with the TTC, the Teslin Tlingit Council, will be finalized before we put out the request for proposals.

Mr. Hassard: Then I guess my last question for the minister would be: When does he anticipate the RFP to be going out?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As soon as negotiations with the Teslin Tlingit Council are finalized.

Mr. Hassard: I guess it's not quite my last question.

We have heard on numerous occasions about the greatness of the five-year capital concept — the importance of planning in order for proper budgeting to take place. Is that the planning process that is taking place? Well, when we get the negotiations finished, then we will go to the next step — or is there anything in between there?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: For the record, we have had this discussion over the course of the last several years. It is a five-year capital plan, not a capital concept. The member opposite continually uses the wrong terminology for the work that the department has done creating this document, which is a very useful document for contractors and the general public and apparently for the opposition to actually use in planning — be it questions for the opposition or projects for the contracting community or just knowing what is happening in the neighbourhood for the general public. That document is comprehensive. It is one of the first times that this government has ever used it. I, once again, am very glad to see the Leader of the Official Opposition using it.

Mr. Hassard: That was a great little spiel about the concept, the plan, or whatever we want to call it, but at the end of the day, the minister didn't answer the question. I would hope that the minister could provide us with some sort of timeline that he is anticipating, whether it be six months or three years.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The timeline is laid out in the five-year capital plan. I have every confidence that the timeline is still intact. The negotiations are ongoing. The tone of the negotiations is good and positive, and I have every confidence that the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Government of Yukon can reach an agreement with the Teslin Tlingit Council on the tremendous and important job of fixing the Nisutlin Bay bridge.

Ms. Hanson: When we left off on Friday, the minister had just commented that he lamented the fact that my initial optimism may have been whittled away during the course of his

responses. Indeed, they were. I am hoping that we can see a reviving of that optimism.

I want to pick up on my colleague's — the Member for Pelly Nisutlin — question with respect to how Highways and Public Works is addressing chapter 22 — where the *Teslin Tlingit Council Final Agreement* sets out the process for economic opportunities in their traditional territory, particularly as this government has made specific reference to the opportunities for aboriginal businesses — and we look at the development corporations. It is chapter 22.5.0, which speaks to contracting.

Are there any intentions for some limits and opportunities? What are they with respect to the development corporation for the Teslin Tlingit Council? It is one thing to have a government-to-government conversation, but there is a difference between the government and the business arm, which is the development corporation — which would then be guiding.

I was just joking with my colleague from Pelly-Nisutlin off-mic that there is a sense of *déjà vu*. This bridge went offline once before because of that lack of consultation and meaningful engagement with the community as a whole — with the Teslin Tlingit Council and with the development corporation, in particular. I would be curious as to what measures are in place to ensure that there are equitable opportunities for the Teslin Tlingit Council's economic arm and the businesses that flow from that which would be involved in contracting. That is the issue that was at play in this conversation so far — contracting.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I welcome my discussion with the Member for Whitehorse Centre again this afternoon. I am certainly glad to hear of her optimism. I hope that we can continue that through our discussion.

I believe that the question has to do with contracting and how it pertains to First Nation governments. It provides a sharp contrast between eras in this Yukon government administration.

I'm going to start this afternoon with my response touching on our First Nation procurement policy, which the department officials have been working diligently on for — actually, it has been two years. We had hoped to have a policy passed quite a long time ago. But in discussions as we launched this First Nation procurement policy within the department and reached out to First Nations and started those conversations — which were really, really well attended by many First Nations coming out on a regular basis, even through COVID, to engage with us on this policy — we realized the value in having this conversation with First Nations and their corporations about how the Government of Yukon does procurement and how the First Nations could benefit from it and developing a real conversation about how we can improve things.

Rather than insist on meeting the deadline, I asked how things were going and the department said they were going really, really well. I said, "Then let's keep the discussion going. Let's actually work closer together."

So, we didn't meet the deadline, but in not meeting the deadline, we actually came to a much better place with the First Nations in the territory and the Yukon government. There was

a real exchange of information and of collaboration. Recently, I have had First Nation representatives from the Ta'an Kwäch'än and from the Kwanlin Dün reach out to me and really thank me for the process that the Department of Highways and Public Works undertook. The sincerity with which the conversation happened and was allowed to grow was really, really rewarding.

The work that we have been doing — we started on the Nares River bridge project down in Carcross early in our mandate, and then it evolved into the First Nation procurement policy and is now moving into our work on the Nisutlin Bay bridge. It has been very, very instructive for me and has laid a very good foundation, I believe, within the Department of Highways and Public Works, within the First Nation community, and within communities throughout the territory in how to change the way procurement works in the territory.

This collaborative policy development with First Nations is a first for our government — for the Yukon government, really — and a demonstration of our commitment to reconciliation. We have had, since we got into power, four Yukon Forums a year throughout our mandate attended. It has been that work — those partnerships and the relationships that we have built through that process have been vital. It has worked its way throughout government, including the procurement policies of the government, and it represents meaningful action to help First Nation governments become partners in the Yukon economy in the shape of employment, training, and business opportunities. We see, as well, a representative public service work here. We see it in the way that we are changing procurement, and I think that you are going to see, in the coming weeks and months, more for us to say on that matter.

The Nares River bridge project, of course — I touched on that. That changed the way that we did procurement within Highways and Public Works. It was very collaborative with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, and it gave them a real say in how the project would get done and tangible benefits within a community, both in terms of economic development as well as training for employees. That built some human capital — some political capital — within the First Nation — certainly of the CTFN, but also in other First Nations that saw how we were willing to work together —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Chair: Member for Whitehorse Centre, on a point of order.

Ms. Hanson: The minister is speaking on matters other than what is at play here. The question was with respect to Teslin Tlingit Council, not about Carcross/Tagish First Nation, not about Ta'an Kwäch'än or Kwanlin Dün — with respect to all those First Nations. I was asking specifically with respect to the contracting provisions — chapter 22.5.0 — as they apply to the Teslin Tlingit, not to his general philosophy about Yukon Forum and everything else. I'm asking about the application of that First Nation's final agreement to the contracting opportunities.

Deputy Chair: Are you on Standing Order 19(b)?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Deputy Chair: Mr. Mostyn, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm so very disappointed in the member opposite this afternoon with this point of order.

On the point of order, what I'm doing is answering her question, because her question related to the Teslin Tlingit Council and chapter 22. I'm giving her an answer to chapter 22 and all the work that we're doing that feeds into the Teslin Tlingit Council with regard to the Nisutlin Bay bridge.

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: The Chair has listened closely to both of these. Although I'm not disagreeing with Ms. Hanson, it's kind of a circuitous route to the question that she asked, so I would ask the minister to please wrap it up and get to the point with the TTC, please.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate your ruling. Why I'm profoundly disappointed with the Member for Whitehorse Centre — who is, again, sort of pushing the bounds — I'm giving a very deep response to her question, and I'm very disappointed in the fact that she just wants a cut and dried response, which is really one of the problems that the First Nations have had with the way that the government procures and deals with them all the time — just get to the facts. It is usually much deeper than that and refers to relationships and whatnot.

When it comes down to the Teslin Tlingit Council, just last week, we had a joint presentation with the TTC to the community on the project. They were there. They were presenting alongside us because they are our partners, which leads into the work that we did on Nares and through the Yukon Forum and now into the Nisutlin Bay bridge. We have had lots of ongoing discussion last week and this week. We are down there again, talking to them and bringing them into this project. There is a project charter that was signed in 2019, government to government, which is a framework for discussion and negotiations for economic opportunities. Again, we sat down and had that discussion with them and set a project charter for this that lays out how they will participate and how they will benefit from this economically.

The TTC is also going to be a partner in our ranking of the respondents to the request for qualifications — so qualified contractors. They will also be a part of that — again, working together as one toward a successful conclusion for this project.

We are not rushing things. It's not just going to be "Cut to the chase and get it done". We are working very closely with our partners, as we have throughout our mandate, to build those relationships and to work and understand more deeply what the benefits are that can flow to the communities and to the government from those respectful conversations that we are having with our partners.

Ms. Hanson: It took us 15 minutes to finally get to a notion that there may be something happening, but we're not quite sure. At least we can take from it — well, I'm not sure

what we can take from it, but there is some indication of some activity, even absent an aboriginal procurement policy.

So, let's try something that the minister loves to talk about. He does love to talk, so hopefully, he can answer the question before the time is up today. The minister, in his conversation earlier in this budget area, had talked about the fact that there is a total of 5,000 kilometres of the Yukon highway system that is being brushed by this government, brushed — and I quote: "...brushed to a standard".

My question, Mr. Deputy Chair was: What standard and what criteria are included in contracts with respect to environmental and wildlife hazards? What holdbacks are provided in those contracts to guarantee that the work is done to that standard? The last part of that, Mr. Deputy Chair, is: Does that standard require uniform clearing of 30 metres, from centre line out, for brushing? I raise that because — the minister is very familiar with concerns I raised about Carcross Road and Tagish Road, but as I look up the north Klondike and I look around areas like Henderson Corner, if the minister is going to enforce a 30-metre clearance, you are going to see that encroaching right upon people's property — right through those trees, which are actually bird habitat that, in previous — that actually have had some protection under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*.

It's nice to have clear-cuts all across the highways, but what are the standards? How are they enforced? What criteria are included to ensure that environmental and wildlife hazards are removed and that environmental standards are maintained?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite is absolutely correct — I do like to talk about this subject. I do so because I know it's important to Yukoners. One of the reasons why — we're talking about rights-of-way — highway rights-of-way that are identified — the fact that there are barriers of trees in the right-of-way is because the brushing has not been done consistently ever. So, people have been allowed — had been left to believe that the trees are there — that they've been allowed to grow up. Some of the trees that should have been cleared out are huge; they're five or six inches in diameter. They should never have been allowed to get that big, but there has been no consistent approach to the 5,000 kilometres of highway that the member opposite correctly referenced in her opening remarks.

What we did — and Mr. Gorczyca was part of the team who worked on this project and I'm very glad to have him here this afternoon — they set up five classifications of highway. The brush-clearing is done to those standards set out in the five classifications. They're based on socio-economic factors, traffic volumes, tourism impacts, economic impacts — all of those things have gone into setting up five different categories of highway and then we look at those factors and we have standards.

So, Highway No. 1, which is through Whitehorse, will be cleared every single year to a standard from the centre line out and will be done every year. In areas with lower traffic volumes, with less economic activity, et cetera, we won't be spending all the time to do that work because there isn't the need. We will clear narrower on the highway because the cost

of doing it is expensive. We want to put the money where it is most necessary for visibility and everything else.

We have five categories of highway now. That classification system wasn't used before. As we go through, we then work — when we let the contracts, we look at stem height, vegetation control, clearance width, safety, and sightlines — all those different things — we give them to the contractor. The contractor must adhere to the migratory birds act when they are clearing the trees to make sure that they are not destroying nests or whatever else. They have to adhere to that law as well.

The end result will be that we will have safer highways that have better sightlines. We will have more consistency, so it won't be something like: Cody up at X location has requested brush-clearing, so we're going to go out and do it. It is set in a regular standard. It is done by this date and will be done within the next five years. We can say with certainty when the work is going to be done, we can say to what standard it's going to be done, and we can give those standards to contractors. This is a first for the government in terms of thoughtful and meaningful progression on a job that Yukoners find very useful.

We have heard from people — even last week I had a constituent tell me how much they appreciated the work and the improvements that they are seeing along our highways. Again, I think that it is really rewarding and is largely due to the great work of the Department of Highways and Public Works to bring some consistency, in a consistent application, to the issue of the condition of our rights-of-way, which has been neglected for dozens and dozens of years.

With that, Mr. Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Mostyn that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Chair's report

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

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Written notice was given of the following motions December 7, 2020:

Motion No. 368

Re: announcing tourism relief funding (Istchenko)

Motion No. 369

Re: releasing details of the universal childcare plan (McLeod)

Motion No. 370

Re: costs of implementing *Putting People First — the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services* recommendations (McLeod)

Motion No. 371

Re: explanation of school bus delay (Kent)

Motion No. 372

Re: explanation of Yukon Hospital Corporation deficit (Cathers)

Motion No. 373

Re: Yukon Energy Corporation diesel fuel usage and electrical rate increases (Cathers)

Motion No. 374

Re: distribution of initial COVID-19 vaccines to Yukon (Hassard)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 76

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, December 8, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, December 8, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The chair wishes to inform the House of a matter regarding the Notice Paper. Motion No. 371, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Copperbelt South, and Motion No. 372, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Lake Laberge, were not placed on today's Notice Paper, as the motions were not in order, as they seek an explanation on a matter.

The members may refer to my ruling of October 28, 2020, for further reasoning regarding these motions.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Held each year on December 3, this international day of observance was first proclaimed by the United Nations in 1992. Its purpose is to promote the rights and well-being of people with disabilities and to increase awareness of people with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic, and cultural life.

Each year, the UN declares a different theme for this day. This year, the theme is "Building back better: toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world". What does "disability inclusive" mean in this context? To quote the US Centers for Disease Control: "Disability inclusion means understanding the relationship between the way people function and how they participate in society, and making sure everybody has the same opportunities to participate in every aspect of life to the best of their abilities and desires."

Even under normal circumstances, we know that people with disabilities are less likely to have equal access to health care, employment, adequate housing, and education. They are also likely to have fewer opportunities to participate as fully equal members of their communities and societies. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis is widening this divide.

There are more than one billion people with disabilities in the world today, and sadly, they are among the hardest hit by the pandemic in terms of fatalities. As the United Nations notes,

if the world's COVID-19 response and recovery was designed to reach the furthest behind first, our post-pandemic world would be a better place for everybody. We would be better able to respond to challenges like the one we're facing today.

Here in Canada, the federal Liberal government recently announced plans to bring forward a disability-inclusion plan which is designed to address the social infrastructure gaps that have been worsened by the pandemic. Our Yukon Liberal government applauds this plan. It consists of a guaranteed income supplement, a new employment strategy, and a streamlined eligibility process for federal programs and benefits.

This plan will help to ensure that Canadians with disabilities, who account for about 22 percent of our population, are not left behind in times of crises.

Here in Yukon, we are fortunate to have a number of amazing and caring NGOs that support and serve people with disabilities. These include: Options for Independence; Inclusion Yukon; Teegatha'Oh Zheh, Child Development Centre, Challenge Disability Resource Group; LDAY centre for learning; and Autism Yukon Society. All of these groups provide support to individuals and their families and are key partners in improving health outcomes and enhancing quality of life. I thank all of these groups for the work they do to break down barriers and to open doors for the people they serve.

I would also like to thank the staff at the disability services unit in the Department of Health and Social Services. The dedicated and hard-working team at this office provide support and services to about 350 Yukoners, 175 of whom are children. Today, I call on all Yukoners to celebrate the accomplishments of people with disabilities and to work together to build a post-COVID future that is more inclusive of everyone.

Mahsi' cho; thank you.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the International Day of Persons with Disabilities which takes place each year on December 3.

"Disability" by definition is: "A physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily activities and interactions." As you can see, this definition covers a very broad range of impairments. Disability affects more than one billion people worldwide — about 15 percent of the world population — and yet people have not fully caught on to the importance of addressing some critical barriers faced by those with disabilities.

The theme for 2020 is "Not all disabilities are visible." This is important for us to remember, Mr. Speaker. Equally important to remember is that public judgment is one of the biggest challenges persons with disabilities face every day. By ensuring that all community members remember that disabilities take many forms, we can reach a point where compassion replaces obtrusiveness.

We are fortunate here in the Yukon to have so many professionals, organizations, and volunteer groups to not only work with and support those with disabilities and their families, but also to advocate for them in incredible ways. They work to help eliminate the challenges faced daily by individuals with those disabilities and also to highlight the diverse talents of all community members.

Thank you to all those who work to spread awareness of disabilities both visible and invisible and for the work that you do in support of people facing those challenges. Thank you to those who do their part by working to remove barriers and to create a more accessible community for all.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: On behalf of the Yukon NDP, I join in recognizing December 3 as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Now more than ever, the imperative for legislators to move from words to action to address the real, daily, lived experience of people with disabilities has been exposed as the impact of COVID-19 becomes daily more apparent.

We all know too well that legislators at all levels are more than competent at finding eloquent words to talk about issues as though the expression of abstract thoughts is enough. For example, Canada signed onto the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in 2006. As a nation, we joined in pledging to deliver on the UN's sustainable development goal of leaving no one behind. The federal government took until 2019 to pass *An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada*, the *Accessible Canada Act*.

In Yukon, the government has been silent on its intentions to pass mirror legislation. This is important not only because the federal law only covers aspects of life under federal jurisdiction, like banking, telecommunications, and transportation that crosses provincial and territorial borders. But it is important because, in the absence of territorial legislation respecting disability rights, Yukoners are told, "Well, there is the *Human Rights Act*, which prohibits discriminating against people because of disabilities." Mr. Speaker, in 2020, surely we are beyond the point of expecting the one in five fellow Yukoners living with a disability to rely on having to file a complaint after they experience a situation where their rights have been violated.

As disability activists have pointed out, human rights acts, and the Charter just say "Don't discriminate." That doesn't tell you how to design your school or your hospital or how to operate your doctor's office. Housing, health, education, and employment are areas of concern for people with disabilities when it comes to accessibility.

Provincial governments in Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia have enacted disability rights legislation. BC concluded extensive public consultation on legislation to mirror the federal act.

2020 is supposed to be about taking action to create a disability-inclusive and accessible community. It is past time to move past talking about how accessible we want the Yukon to be. It is time to set standards for businesses, non-profits,

education- and health-related institutions, and the public sector on how to be accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities. Maybe then we can say that we have delivered on our commitment, realizing that the rights of persons with disabilities is not only a matter of justice, but that it is an investment in a common future for us all.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a legislative return responding to a question from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin on October 20 during Committee of the Whole.

I also have for tabling two annual reports for 2019-20: one from the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board, and one from the Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I have for tabling a legislative return in response to questions on November 24, 2020, from the Member for Kluane regarding outfitters' quotas.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates the Kluane Lake Research Station on the establishment of an off-grid, hydroponic food-production facility that will provide Yukon communities access to a variety of freshly grown produce all year-round.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize the importance of making spirometry tests available in the Yukon again, especially during a pandemic, due to the fragile health of many patients in need by immediately taking action to restore this health service.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to acknowledge period poverty experienced by women and girls in the Yukon by providing menstrual-care products free of charge.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Yukon Days**

Hon. Mr. Silver: This week, our government is proud to continue with the tradition of engaging with federal ministers alongside Yukon First Nation leadership through what is now a virtual Yukon Days. The majority of these meetings are taking place this week. Yukon Days is an annual event where we meet with members of the federal Cabinet to discuss issues that matter to most Yukoners.

Since 2016, our government has implemented a collaborative approach to Yukon Days where we have worked with Yukon First Nations' national chief and the Council of Yukon First Nations to share priorities with the federal government through trilateral meetings. Our voices are made stronger when we can all speak together.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, governments are at their most effective when they are collaborative, coordinated, and working on a common goal. Over the course of the past four years, our joint approach has yielded important investments for our territory — for example, the \$26 million that we received for the Yukon University science centre last year. It has also ensured that federal ministers understand the unique land claim and self-government context in Yukon.

This year, we have shifted, obviously, to a more virtual model to allow us to continue this important dialogue while still following the “safe six” guidelines.

While Yukon Days looks different than it did in the past, I'm very pleased that we are having productive conversations with federal ministers on a number of important issues. We are discussing resources to support community safety plans, investments in First Nation housing, the delivery of health services to Yukon First Nation people, and promoting the sustainable management of Yukon River salmon.

Yukon is known across the country as a leader in reconciliation. These meetings have given us a chance to profile the extraordinary and innovative work underway by Yukon First Nations, such as the Kwanlin Dün First Nation community safety officer program and proposed made-in-Yukon solutions for challenges that we are facing together.

I want to thank the Yukon First Nation chiefs for their participation in these meetings with members of Cabinet and me. I'm looking forward to continuing to engage with the federal government in partnership with Yukon First Nations.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement today. I would like to begin by thanking the Premier for this update on what we believe is an important annual event for the entire Yukon. We're happy to hear that the government has found a way to hold this event virtually in these challenging times, and we certainly look forward to an update when the event is concluded and all of the meetings are finished.

Thanks again to the Premier for this update.

Ms. White: When I start, I wonder if this is the first-ever ministerial statement about a Zoom meeting anywhere that

ministerial statements are made. While there is no doubt that it is important to have conversations with federal ministers, I am not sure that this ministerial statement really provides any new information to Yukoners. We hope that the Premier will elaborate in his responses on what ministers his government plans to meet with and how these meetings will concretely improve the lives of Yukoners.

We are happy that Yukon First Nation leaders have a seat at the table, and we salute their leadership and vision when it comes to reconciliation and intergovernmental relationships, as well as issues like health care, housing, resource management, and much more.

I will point out that a positive aspect of this year's virtual meetings is that it shows that business can be conducted remotely. This saves the government money and reduces emissions, which is critical if we believe that the climate emergency that we declared just over a year ago is more than just words.

I look forward to the day when Yukoners who live in the communities are given the same flexibility to work remotely so that they can live in their communities while working for YG. The pandemic has shown us that work can be successfully completed remotely, whether it is public servants working from a home here in Whitehorse or in the communities where they live. If the Premier can have productive meetings with his federal counterparts over Zoom, I have no doubt that, with a bit of creativity, we can decentralize government and allow Yukoners to live in their communities while working for Yukon government.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thanks to the members opposite for their comments. I think that it is extremely important to stand in the Legislative Assembly during a ministerial statement to express to Yukoners who may not know that these conversations are continuing to happen. Every year since we've been in government, our Yukon Days have been trilateral. In the past, the First Nation components of Yukon Days were more of a cultural significance after the meetings were done. What we have instilled in this Yukon government are trilateral conversations with federal ministers, the chiefs and councils, and our ministers. Again, the good news from those previous meetings was a coordinated effort in Ottawa.

We have heard from many different ministers on how thankful they are to be able to speak to First Nation leadership and the Yukon government at the same time about joint priorities. They are happy to also see a five-year capital plan that reflects the unique communities so that they can have a view to the five-year future in the Yukon and priority capital projects for First Nation governments and ours as well.

I think it is extremely important that Yukoners know that these meetings are extremely important to us and that they are ongoing. I want to thank the folks who have dealt with the logistics of these meetings.

It's a herculean task, as you can imagine, to get everybody into and out of the Zoom conversations — federal ministers heading into Question Period — those types of things, but again, the work of all of the public servants in all of the

governments — whether it be in the Teslin Tlingit Council or Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in or our government or the federal government — shows how important this is to all levels of government that these conversations continue.

It really does help complement the Yukon Forum, which we are preparing for this week. The Yukon Forum — more of a conversation bilaterally on things such as off-road vehicle regulations or the *Putting People First* plan or the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirited individuals.

On a federal basis, we have communicated with the opposition on what the conversations are, the topics are, at Yukon Days — not to be confused with Yukon Forum — but I think that it is an extremely important time to make sure that folks know that, despite the pandemic, Yukon's voice is being heard in Ottawa.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: *Civil Emergency Measures Act* implementation review

Mr. Hassard: So, when this session began, the Liberal government proposed a select committee of the Legislature to review the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and its use throughout this pandemic. At the time, we argued that it was inappropriate for the Minister of Community Services, who has administered the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, to sit on this committee to review his own actions.

This morning we received an internal Cabinet e-mail that shows that the Minister of Community Services has been actively orchestrating the Liberals' entire strategy to manipulate the process and the outcomes. The minister himself is preparing quotes, helping to write speeches, and orchestrating the Liberals' entire strategy — all with the ultimate goal of getting himself on this committee to review his own actions.

How can the Liberals continue to pretend that this process isn't a sham, all designed for the Liberals to write their own report card?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, it is correct. I did put forward a motion to establish a select committee of all parties to work on the legislation. I heard from the members opposite that they wanted to change the legislation. In fact, they tabled some amendments to it in a bill. We haven't debated that yet, but, yes, I continue to work on that motion — it is my motion.

I am, of course, responsible for the emergency. I am, of course, working with communities to talk to them about the emergency. I am, of course, listening to concerns from Yukoners. I am, of course, working with members on this side of the Legislature around debate in this Legislature — yes, absolutely. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I brought with me that correspondence, which I inadvertently sent to the members opposite — no big deal. I am happy to even table it.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, this internal Liberal strategy e-mail demonstrates clearly that the minister himself is orchestrating this whole thing just to get himself on the

committee so that he can influence the committee's outcomes. He desperately wants to be on this committee and to review the job that he has done implementing the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. He has written content for speeches, pulled quotes for his colleagues to use, and charted out exactly how his colleagues should argue that he himself is the best person to review his own work. If his manipulation of the debate of this motion is any indication of how he would behave on the committee itself, it is clear that this entire process is bogus and that we are right to oppose his participation in this.

Will the minister admit that he has been manipulating the process with regard to this motion and its outcomes with the obvious end goal of inserting himself on this committee?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, what I will also do is share the correspondence with the media so that everybody can see that correspondence. Yes, absolutely, Mr. Speaker, I was reading Hansard from the past around debates on select committees. Yes, I am doing my work around preparing for a motion that I have put on the floor here that I think is important to debate. Yes, I absolutely think that it is an important motion.

When you read through it, you will see that I even say in there that it is not so important whether it is me who is the person on the committee. What is so important is that Yukoners have an opportunity to talk to a select committee about what they would like to see as differences.

I did look back through past debate in this House, and I did share that with colleagues. I think that I will share it with the public as well so that they can see that debate all the way through. I'm happy to do so.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party has consistently made the case that the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* should be amended to allow for democratic oversight and legislative scrutiny. We have been critical of the Liberal government for their unwillingness to call back the Legislature throughout the summer and for the passage of dozens of ministerial orders. Now the Liberals are saying that they will review the act but that they want total control of the process so the Minister of Community Services can review his own conduct and write his own report card. Now these internal Liberal strategy documents show that the Liberals and the minister are manipulating the process so that they can rig the outcome.

It's obvious to everyone outside of the Liberal Cabinet Office that this doesn't make sense, so will the Liberals agree to scrap this flawed process and start working with the opposition parties in good faith to review the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What we have is a debate about a motion to talk about the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. In that debate, what the opposition is not talking about is equal representation: one member from the Yukon Party, one member from the NDP, and one member from this caucus. But that's not good enough for the Yukon Party. They don't want specific people; if the particular minister is wrong for them, then they're just not going to show up.

It's so interesting — as the Member for Whitehorse Centre speaks off-mic as she often does and doesn't listen to the

answer — filibustering our motion, also standing on points of order to not amend, standing on points of order to not even be able to have this conversation in the Legislative Assembly, and then amendment after amendment, but all summer long saying that they want a select committee. I guess if the opposition cannot control the narrative, they are not interested in the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*.

On our part of the Legislative Assembly, we believe its very fair to have one member from each of the parties. The Yukon NDP can pick their member, the Yukon Party can pick their member, but I guess the Yukon Party doesn't allow us to have representation that we think is extremely important on there, especially when you have an individual who has forensic knowledge not only of the act itself, but how it has been used in the last nine months.

Question re: *Civil Emergency Measures Act* implementation review

Mr. Cathers: The internal Liberal Cabinet Office e-mails that we received this morning outline the Liberals' legislative strategy. In those e-mails, the government minister outlines the Liberals' strategy planning, speaking notes, and ultimately the government's end goal to manipulate the outcomes regarding the proposed review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*.

What is particularly startling about these e-mails is that included on the list of people the Liberal minister addressed these partisan strategies to is the Member for Riverdale North who also happens to be the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

Can the Minister of Community Services tell us why he appears to be coordinating the Liberals' legislative agenda strategy and partisan objectives for the Legislature with the Member for Riverdale North?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I was going to stand on a point of personal privilege regardless. I'm happy to do it right now in Question Period. I sent out an e-mail to MLAs — to colleagues. It turns out that the list has you in that list. An e-mail earlier talking about looking at past Hansard was sent to you. I'm sorry that I sent it to you, Mr. Speaker. That was not my intention, but you will also notice next to it that it's also sent to me; I sent it to myself. Why did I do that? Because it was a list of MLAs. It's just that the list had us on it. There was no intention of sharing it with you. Again, my apologies.

What I will do is table that one piece of e-mail that I inadvertently sent to one of the staffers with the Yukon Party. After I did that, I turned around and sent it to the staff of the NDP, because I thought, well, if I've sent it there, let me send it in both directions. I will send it as well to the media. I will put it out there on my social media. People can see that I've been researching Hansard to look at select committees so that, when we debate select committees here in this House on my motion, there is some good information that we can talk about.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I do have to point out that the e-mail was sent over a month ago. For the minister to now be apologizing is a little bit rich, since it has become public.

These questions are directly related to internal government strategy documents created and sent by the Minister of Community Services as he attempts to manipulate the process with respect to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* review and his own conduct during the pandemic.

In 2017, following a question about the Member for Riverdale North's attendance at partisan events, the then-Clerk of the Assembly issued a statement to media outlining the role of the Speaker. In that statement, the Clerk said — and I quote: "In a Westminster parliamentary system ... the Speaker of a legislative assembly must be neutral and non-partisan when presiding over the proceedings of the legislative assembly. The Speaker is also expected to restrict his or her political activity outside the House in order to preserve the neutrality and non-partisan nature of the position."

Can the minister tell us how he could possibly believe that it is appropriate for the Liberals to include the Member for Riverdale North in e-mails about the development of partisan strategies for the Legislative Assembly?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that it is appropriate for me to send something to you. I did it by mistake. I apologized to this House. It's one of those things when you press "send" on an e-mail and sometimes there is autofill and other things.

What I will say to this House is that I have had no response from you on that. So, you did your job. I am the one who made the mistake. Again, I apologize to this House. I have one e-mail that was sent this morning in error to a staffer from the Yukon Party. That is the challenge here. I took the decision to share it then with the staff of the NDP. I am taking the decision to share that with the public and media. Please — I encourage everyone to please have a look. All it is, is me going through past Hansards and talking about past select committees. By the way, six of the seven past select committees have ministers on them. There has never been any debate in this Legislature about whether or not a minister should sit on them from any party in this House. Now it is an issue — okay, fine, let's have the debate.

Mr. Cathers: Well, it's a fairly desperate attempt by the minister. He knows that, like the Public Accounts, the principle is that ministers don't review their own work, but the minister is trying to issue his own report card.

The 2017 statement by the Clerk of the Assembly also notes that — and I quote: "The Speaker will not, under normal circumstances, attend caucus meetings when the House is in session or in the two weeks prior to the reconvening of the Assembly."

Can the minister explain why the Liberal government was appearing to coordinate House strategy for the government's legislative agenda by directly involving the Speaker and why he has only made this public once he got caught?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am finding this line of questioning very interesting. Apparently, nobody on the other side of this Legislative Assembly has ever sent an e-mail in error. Apparently, the explanation given by the minister is not satisfactory, but most important, in relation to the last question, is the fact that the member opposite has clearly not

read the motion that is before the Legislative Assembly, has been debated, and is the subject of the particular e-mail, because it clearly says that the select committee — special committee — would “... consider and identify options for modernizing the Civil Emergency Measures Act, and make recommendations on possible amendments to the Civil Emergency Measures Act.” There is another bit of information there about how that would happen. Those are not report cards; it is not about looking back; it is about looking forward and speaking to Yukoners about what they think this piece of legislation could and should do for them.

Perhaps he could read the motion.

Question re: Hemodialysis services in Yukon

Ms. White: A year ago today, my friend Terry came home to die. He said he would rather die with friends around him than live alone in Vancouver, dependent on hemodialysis not available to him in Yukon. He died just after the new year.

My question is: What has this government done, since Terry’s death, to address the needs of Yukoners who require hemodialysis that is not provided in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, of course, our sincere condolences to the family. We take into consideration every death that happens as a serious lesson learned and we always look for improvements, as we just recently rolled out the *Putting People First* report. The objective, Mr. Speaker, was to look at preventive measures, to look at collaborative care, and to work with our partners on best practices.

We certainly don’t want to focus on acute care. We want to focus on prevention and we want to focus on the best possible models that we can bring here to the Yukon.

We have been working with British Columbia’s renal agency to improve services available in the territory for Yukoners with kidney disease. This early intervention and support delay the progress of the disease and supports home dialysis therapies to keep Yukoners in the territory.

We are taking into consideration and looking at best practices and we’re doing that with the experts who focus on the supports needed for hemodialysis and different aspects.

I would be happy to respond to further questions.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, after Terry’s death and the publicity surrounding it, I received many e-mails and letters from folks who were shocked by Terry’s needless death, but also concern for their own future health care needs. Some individuals were already experiencing the impacts of kidney disease.

This government was willing enough to cover over \$450,000 for Terry’s care while he was in a Vancouver hospital. The government indicated then that there were not the numbers in Yukon to justify offering hemodialysis to Yukoners. Mr. Speaker, his family doesn’t want condolences. They want others to have access to hemodialysis in Yukon.

Can the minister tell this House what the magic number would be in order to offer hemodialysis in Yukon rather than sending Yukoners permanently away?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, again, I’ll reiterate that BC supports Yukoners who need dialysis or transplants. Their

guidelines do not recommend developing a hemodialysis centre here in Yukon. These guidelines are rooted in evidence, experience, and research developed by BC Renal agency to ensure equitable and logical distribution of high-quality kidney care and services as a guide for best practices. It would be fair to say that this work that we are doing with our partners in British Columbia has been slowed as a result of COVID. The work will continue as we look at the future.

I certainly want to acknowledge that we have had a number of patients in the same situation. We take every one of them very seriously. Acting on many other initiatives that have had a direct impact on chronic kidney disease, we are working on recommendations to improve travel and we’re working on recommendations to support the patients to access services in British Columbia and that is something that we historically have done. Are we looking for improvements? Most certainly we are — from the experiences that we have learned from.

Ms. White: I am not sure that I would cheer about the answer, because I believe that it is the government’s responsibility to Yukon citizens and not British Columbia’s. We know that Yukoners have had to make this choice in the past, they are making it now, and they will continue to have to make this impossible choice: move permanently away from jobs, homes, friends, and family to receive hemodialysis, or remain here to die.

In the Northwest Territories, there are two communities where hemodialysis is available for 23 people in total. One is Yellowknife, and the other is Hay River. Hay River, with a population of just under 4,000 people — one-tenth of the population of Yukon — now has four hemodialysis machines. There are two NWT communities where individuals can remain in their community and get access to the health care that they deserve. Yukoners do not have the same access to health care.

How does the minister explain that the Northwest Territories has enough patients to justify not one but two communities with hemodialysis support while Yukon patients have to relocate south?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, acknowledging what is happening in the Northwest Territories and the focus on in-centre hemodialysis treatment while the Yukon focuses on more of an independent model and we work with our BC partners — just as a note for the record, the individual the member opposite is speaking of would have had to go to BC for services because that is where we rely on supports.

With respect to proactive and preventive care, which is really important in this conversation, it is delaying the progression of kidney disease. For this, we have initiated the find-a-doctor app; we supported Yukoners; we have allowed for funding and constant glucose monitoring for diabetes patients. We have currently 53 patients with chronic kidney disease who require no dialysis and seven patients who require dialysis. Those seven patients are treated out of BC, and we fund and support those patients. We will continue to do so.

I wanted to just again say that Yukon does not take this lightly. We are taking every experience as we look at putting people first and as we look at a collaborative model and a preventive model.

Question re: ATAC Resources tote road project

Mr. Kent: The decision by the Liberal government to deny permits for the ATAC road continues to receive negative feedback from mining companies and the investment community. Companies are saying that they don't know what to tell their shareholders and potential investors about this decision and how it will affect their projects.

In a *North of 60 Mining News* article from December 4, the CEO of ATAC is quoted as saying: "If this road can't be permitted following a positive environmental and socio-economic assessment decision and years of governmental encouragement to invest in the project, then you have to wonder if Yukon is in fact open for business."

The Liberals boasted about the new requirement for sub-regional land use plans to be completed before projects can be approved as their new way of doing business. Are the Liberals considering this new way of doing business for any other projects in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Once again, part of the work that I've been doing over the last number of weeks is continuing to communicate with the financial sector across the country. What we've seen in many cases is the analysts who do that work and then provide insight and advisement to the financial firms have done a lot of deep diving. They have taken a look at the recommendations that were put out by the environmental assessment. They've also taken a look at the information that has been provided by the Yukon government. I think what they've done has given an opportunity to contemplate on what the recommendations were and the decisions by the Yukon government. I think there is a lot of work being done just to understand this. I think that's important.

We spoke last week about some of the reasons behind denying the road based on the application. Over and above that, I think it's important that we still touch upon the fact that we have a very vibrant industry. Environmental assessment structure is very important when you look at the ESG financing. Even this week, discussions with other financial institutions about the importance of how they're going to look at it — and we see the other territories — Northwest Territories and Nunavut — position themselves in the same way.

Mr. Kent: The question that I asked is: Will this sub-regional planning be considered for other projects in the territory?

But on Yukon.ca this morning, the Beaver River land use planning documents still include work on a road access management plan. It's scheduled to be completed in March 2021. This update was submitted in November before the minister pulled the rug out from underneath ATAC Resources by denying the permits.

Since the road permits have been denied, has the minister instructed the committee to stop work on this road access management plan?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, to answer the first question — and I apologize if it wasn't answered in full at this particular time. We have had some First Nations reach out to us. That has been the only discussion on sub-regional planning. There have

been some First Nations that have asked us to look at that. We have not, as the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources or with the Department of Environment, dealt with any conversations, but there have been conversations that have been led by First Nations on that particular topic.

Again, concerning this particular process, we are going to undertake the work that we have looked at doing with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. We spoke about this at length in budget debate under Energy, Mines and Resources, and we talked about the timeline that is there and the work plan. I explicitly shared the fact that December 14 is the next date of our senior liaison committee. From that, we continue to do that work and there are some key pieces around sub-regional planning that have to be done around wildlife management and others. That is the work that is being done between the two governments, and we will continue to do that work.

My colleague, as well, wanted me to touch upon the fact that ESG, for those who don't know, is an acronym that really focuses on environmental, social, and governance. Those are some of the key things that you need for investment these days.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as we have said before, the Liberals have changed the rules of the game on the ATAC project at half-time. They introduced sub-regional land use planning as part of the process after the project received a favourable environmental assessment. What normally would have been a decision on this project in perhaps the summer or fall of 2018 has now dragged on into late 2020, with no end in sight. Jurisdictions need stability and certainty with their permitting processes in order to attract investment.

Although the minister doesn't seem overly concerned with what this decision means to mining in the territory, what is his message to investors about his new way of doing business?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I think that our message to the overall investment community is: First and foremost, some of the challenges that we found coming into office were that there was a tremendous amount of legal cases going on and there was real instability concerning the fact that folks were pretty worried about the government-to-government relationships. That is something that we have put a lot of work into through our MOU with 11 First Nations. That, of course, then led to the work that we do on all those sub-tables. Then, of course, over and above that, is the mineral development strategy, which I think is a very important undertaking — something the previous government tried to get off the runway, didn't quite happen, and crashed. Again, for us, we have that work underway.

I think that when you take a look at that work and then some real optimism going into this year where a lot of capital has been raised, it looks like we are going to have a very, very strong exploration season. Of course, we have those three mines now, up and running, and more in the pipeline.

I think that we can really take a look at this one particular case where an application was denied, but if you take a look at the entire picture, what we're seeing is folks working in mines and mines actually being built and going into production. That is really not what we were previously seeing. When you take a look at year over year, our exploration numbers are quite

strong. There have been some anomalies, but the finance folks said, “Listen, make sure you get mines open.” That’s not what was happening in the past.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic public health measures for hospitality industry

Mr. Istchenko: Starting yesterday, the government is requiring that bars and restaurants take contact information for guests. Did the government consult with the Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner about the planning and implementation of this policy?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will start with the responses.

I did put the question to my folks about a privacy impact assessment. I am sorry, but I don’t have the answer in front of me, but I know that when the chief medical officer of health let us know that his office believed that this was important to keep up safety, we agreed that it should come forward quickly. My understanding is that bars and restaurants are to keep this list. It is not a list that’s shared with us unless there is a case. Then it is much like flights where there is a manifest, so we have a way to contact people.

I will get the specific answer for the member opposite, but we let bars and restaurants know that, as of December 2 and as of yesterday, this started to happen where people are signing in. I know this because I went out last night and checked it out. I saw that it was at work. I will get a specific answer for the member opposite, but it’s just to say that the whole point of this is to make sure that we can follow up with people and protect their safety.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, protecting the privacy of Yukoners is extremely important. Businesses are being instructed by the government to collect and retain personal information. We understand the public health purposes of this as it relates to contact tracing, but we also need to ensure that we are protecting privacy. While the minister is off finding out whether or not he consulted with the Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner about the planning and implementation of policy, can he also find out what other measures — maybe in the House today he can answer this — his government has put into place to protect the privacy of Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question around the Privacy Commissioner, I would like to note that, given that the information collected is collected by the respective bar or restaurant, this information is held for 30 days and then is destroyed. We did not consult with the Privacy Commissioner because this is not the government collecting the information.

As we continue to adapt and respond to COVID-19, we are identifying new ways to keep our communities safe, and Yukoners need to know that. The objective here is so that we can do contact tracing and prevent Yukoners from essentially coming into contact — if they have come into contact, we have a means in which to quickly correspond with them, and that is as advised by the communicable disease centre under the direction of our chief medical officer of health. Businesses, including bars and restaurants, were required to submit their operational plans prior to reopening to ensure the health and

safety of staff and customers. These plans were approved by the Health Emergency Operations Centre and follow the guidelines of the chief medical officer of health.

I would like to just say that Yukoners should feel safe in knowing that we are following protocols to do the necessary contact tracing when appropriate.

Mr. Istchenko: I am not sure if the minister heard the question, but I was asking about what other measures the government is putting in place to protect the privacy of Yukoners. Both ministers weren’t sure if they had consulted with Yukon’s Privacy Commissioner about the implementation of the policy.

I am going to switch gears a little bit with respect to the enforcement end of it. If an individual refuses to provide this information, what is the responsibility of the bar or restaurant? Are they required to deny service?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk this afternoon about the actions that this government is taking to provide more information to our citizens and also to better protect their privacy.

We undertook a debate about two years ago here in the House about our new *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. We undertook to rewrite that act and make sure that the privacy of our citizens is better protected. We consulted with the Information and Privacy Commissioner in the drafting of that piece of legislation. I can say to the members opposite that the regulations that will bring that act into force are currently on their way to Cabinet. I know that when that act is finally brought into service, it will provide much more robust privacy for our citizens interacting with government and much clearer rules around the provision of information. Once again, we know how important that is for Yukoners. I know that when this act is brought into force in a few months, it will certainly do a much better job protecting the privacy of our citizens as they react and interact with our government. Those rules will be a lot clearer as well.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members’ business

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, December 9, 2020. It is Motion No. 358, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, in order to continue debate on government business as we approach the end of the current Fall Sitting, the Official Opposition will not be calling any private members’ business for tomorrow.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 212, amendment to — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Motion No. 212, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker, resuming debate on the amendment proposed by Ms. Hanson; adjourned debate, Mr. Cathers.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, in resuming debate again on this motion and the amendment to it, I would like to again recap the fact that, throughout this year, the Yukon Party has focused on bringing forward constructive solutions, including proposals to work together on all-party committees related to multiple aspects of the pandemic. As well, last week, as the Official Opposition critic for democratic institutions, I tabled proposed changes to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* which would provide the Legislative Assembly with oversight and control over the extension of the state of emergency and require that any regulations and ministerial orders be subject to a mandatory review by the Legislative Assembly or committee of the Assembly within 45 days of being issued and empower committees of the Legislative Assembly to conduct public hearings on regulations and ministerial orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*.

In saying that, as well, we agree that there are likely additional changes that are required to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and we would be happy to participate in a committee, but we are making it clear that we believe the highest priority changes would be to improve democratic oversight and provide the ability that has been missing throughout the government's management of the pandemic for the public to be involved in matters including the imposition of ministerial orders that are affecting the lives of 40,000 Yukoners, Mr. Speaker.

We believe, fundamentally, that even if an order has to be made in a hurry, that there needs to be, at the very least, an after-the-fact check with Yukoners asking questions as simple as: What's working? What isn't? How can we do better?

Now, in speaking to this proposed amendment, I would note that, with the proposed committee, a key question all members should consider is this one: Why should Yukon citizens have confidence in a committee reviewing the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the work that it will do?

Well, Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals insist on having the Minister of Community Services on the committee as proposed by the minister, the fact is that Yukoners have every reason to question the government's sincerity because of that conflict of interest of the minister continuing to manage aspects of the pandemic under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* while being asked to participate in a review of that legislation.

We can safely assume that the number one thing Yukoners will want to talk about is how the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* has been used throughout the pandemic, including the use of ministerial orders issued by the Minister of Community Services. That will be at the heart of the discussion about what changes should be made to that legislation that would affect the future. People whose lives are being affected right now are

going to want to talk about that. I believe that they have every right to talk about that.

I want to also, in speaking to this amendment to the motion, remind all members of the Yukon Party Official Opposition's position. We are happy to participate in an all-party committee reviewing the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. If the Liberals reconsider their position and agree to have one of the Liberal private members on the committee of the Minister of Community Services, we will happily support the passage of this motion. If they refuse, we continue to have concerns that the committee's credibility will be tarnished by the Minister of Community Services sitting on it while he is still responsible for issuing orders related to the pandemic because of the declaration of a state of emergency.

What the Liberals have appeared not to get — or are perhaps willfully ignoring — is that just as with the principle that's applied when Public Accounts committees do reviews of the government action, the long-standing principle has been that ministers, if they are sitting on that committee, recuse themselves from any discussions related to a department that they're currently the minister responsible for or that they were the minister responsible for during a period covered by the review. In the absence of that, unfortunately, there is not the necessary public appearance of impartiality. The process appears biased and it will have the appearance, if the government proceeds with having the Minister of Community Services on the committee, that the government has perhaps already decided what the outcomes will be.

This has also been added to throughout the year. The government has had a perfect record of shooting down every single proposal that we have made regarding working with them in all-party committees or the proposals that we have made to amend their motions, such as their motion regarding the civil emergency when they shot down three amendments proposed by the Yukon Party and one proposed by the NDP and a previous amendment that we proposed to this very motion that we are discussing. The government — the Liberal government — has shown an indication that they are not willing to take suggestions from everyone else, and it does leave us questioning — especially if the Minister of Community Services sits on the committee — why we should believe that this committee will be any different. If this process is simply one where the government has already decided what the outcome will be, then it will not have the credibility it should have, if it is actually going to listen to Yukoners — give Yukoners the confidence to come forward to the committee and actually recommend the solutions that should occur, in terms of proposed changes to this committee.

I should also note that we are concerned that officials from the Department of Community Services and other departments who are called to testify will be afraid to share their opinions frankly with the committee, since the Minister of Community Services would be sitting on it. We are concerned that the minister will fundamentally be in a conflict by continuing to issue ministerial orders while effectively reviewing his own performance.

That process risks making a mockery of parliamentary tradition and propriety and our democratic solutions. There is a very simple solution: The government can simply agree to allow one of the Liberal backbenchers to sit on the committee and to work on behalf of Yukoners, including their constituents.

It is ridiculous to pretend that this committee's work is only about the future. People who are being affected by the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* today will want to talk about those effects when they talk about what they think should be changed. I would certainly hope that this isn't a case — we are getting the impression that the Premier doesn't really have confidence in the ability of the Liberal private members, and I would encourage them to in fact allow those members to participate in the committee and do good work alongside members of the Official Opposition and the Third Party of listening to Yukoners and suggesting changes.

While we are critical of parts of the government's response that we disagree with, including the original proposed structure of this motion, we have consistently throughout the pandemic not just identified the areas where we criticized the government, but brought forward — time after time after time — constructive proposals for what could be done better. That includes the legislation that I mentioned that I tabled on behalf of our caucus and the proposals that we made during discussion of the civil state of emergency where we proposed that any future extensions of the current state of emergency being debated should be debated in the Legislative Assembly prior to their implementation.

We proposed that the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments convene to review, call witnesses, and study all ministerial orders and orders-in-council issued during the state of emergency. We proposed as well that all Members of the Legislative Assembly should be provided with the same information that informs the Yukon government's decision on whether to implement and extend the state of emergency. In addition to that, the Third Party made a proposal that we supported. I will note as well that the Third Party, the NDP, did support the amendments that we proposed, and we thank them for that.

Ultimately, the pandemic should be an opportunity to work together for the betterment of all Yukoners. Unfortunately, we hear the government members occasionally using phrases that suggest that we are all on team Yukon or that they are interested in working together, but their actions do not live up to those claims. It has not increased our confidence in a committee with the minister sitting on it when we see, as we did earlier today, the e-mail that the minister claims to have accidentally sent to people — including the Member for Riverdale North — which appeared to me to be instructing MLAs to do things, including to cast aspersions on Yukon Party MLAs during discussions regarding the review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. It appeared as well to be instructing them on what they should say and why they should be arguing for the Minister of Community Services himself to sit on that committee. It does not increase our confidence in a process in which we were already questioning the sincerity of the government when the minister sends e-mails that have the appearance of him playing the role

of a puppet master in trying to orchestrate the outcome that he wants.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to, as I mentioned, the proposals that we have made regarding democratic oversight and information sharing, we have, throughout this year, as you will recall, since the beginning of the pandemic — we in fact began early in the month of March — we proposed an all-party committee where all MLAs would have the opportunity to work together, dealing with the territory's response to the pandemic. The government refused to consider it. We again, throughout the months since then — on several other occasions — made other proposals regarding working together to deal with aspects of the pandemic.

Those suggestions were again rebuffed by the Liberal government. We are certainly getting a strong sense that the government is not actually interested in working with the Official Opposition or the Third Party and that they simply want the appearance of working together, but on terms that they themselves have dictated.

Frankly, especially if the Minister of Community Services is the government's member on this committee, as they proposed in their original motion, it leaves us questioning their interest in actually taking any suggestions or any constructive proposals from other members of the committee. If we're simply going to see an exercise in window dressing and a sham process, that really is not a good use of the time of members of the Assembly. It's not a good use of taxpayers' resources, and frankly, Yukoners deserve better from the government.

What Yukoners do deserve are changes to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* that improve democratic oversight and accountability. As noted, we have identified those that we see as high-priority changes. So, in contrast to the government's approach, we are clearly outlining a vision for improving oversight by the Legislative Assembly — oversight of ministerial orders and, most importantly, inclusion of the public in reviewing the rules that are being issued that are affecting their lives.

Ultimately, a pandemic is not an excuse to avoid democracy. It is not an excuse to avoid public consultation. Fundamentally, every single one of us has an obligation to represent our constituents and people throughout the territory.

The people throughout the territory do want to be involved in the decisions that are affecting their lives. In my view, they have every right to be involved.

Ms. White: I thank my colleagues for what they've said so far in this debate.

One thing that I just want to bring forward is that I would guess, especially based on what the minister has said himself, that the Minister of Community Services is incredibly busy right now. As we've heard, we're in month nine of a pandemic and he is in charge of the CEMA legislation. I know, sitting on other committees, that often they are reorganized around the availability of ministers who are busy right now, which I appreciate.

But if we're going to talk about the importance of changing or opening up this legislation and taking a look at what needs

to be done, one would expect that it is going to require a certain amount of time. The timeline that it has been set for is for the summer of 2021, I believe.

The amendment that my colleague for Whitehorse Centre has proposed is bringing in the Minister of Community Services as an expert witness. It would allow him to share what he has learned in the nine months — since this has been ongoing. What it would also do is free up the committee to continue to meet as required and not be beholden to the busiest person possibly who would be on that committee. I think it's reasonable. I don't think that it weakens the motion; I see it only as a strength.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am very pleased to hear the Member for Lake Laberge say that the public should be involved in a conversation regarding future CEMA legislation and that Yukoners need to be heard, because he has introduced a bill here in this Legislative Assembly to amend that legislation without any of that being done. I am certainly happy that this has changed.

I can appreciate that the amendment is an attempt to structure the special committee from a selection of our talented and dedicated private members, but the motion brought in as Motion No. 212 indicates that one MLA from the Official Opposition and from the Third Party would join the Minister of Community Services on a special committee for the purposes of considering and identifying the options for modernizing the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and that the committee would make recommendations on possible amendments to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*.

They would be empowered, Mr. Speaker, to hold public hearings and to call for persons, papers, and records. They would be required to report to this Legislative Assembly on its findings and recommendations by August 31, 2021. They would be supported by the Clerk. Equal representation from the three parties represented here in the territorial Legislative Assembly — no chair yet chosen that would be appropriate for the committee to do this. I also note that equitable, fair representation is what is proposed here in Motion No. 212. Parties would choose their own participants.

I am puzzled, frankly, as to why there is such vehement opposition to the Minister for Community Services being the selected person on behalf of the Yukon Liberal Party. All parties should get to choose who they want to send to do this work on their behalf.

They are required, as I've noted, to consider and identify options for modernizing the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* legislation. They are required to work together on behalf of Yukoners.

When this motion was brought forward, it was carefully considered. Research was done when contemplating a special committee —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Member for Whitehorse Centre, on a point of order.

Ms. Hanson: In the interest of facilitating this conversation, I stand on Standing Order 19(b). The member opposite is speaking to matters other than the proposed amendment to the motion, which has only two key matters. It doesn't speak to the whole construct, the history, or anything else of the motion that was put forward by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes.

I fail to see how this is speaking to the amendment as proposed.

Speaker: The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: On the point of order on Standing Order 19(b), I would say that this is a difference of opinion between members. I see that my colleague is again just building some context in order to properly debate this particular topic.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Just a few sentences before the point of order was raised, the Government House Leader was talking about the composition of the proposed select committee and how each party would have their respective choices. That does relate to the amendment as well.

I will continue to listen to the Government House Leader. I would remind all members in the debate that we are governed by Standing Order 35(b), which says: "When taking part in a debate on an amendment to a motion: ... (b) a member, other than the mover, shall confine debate to the subject of the amendment."

There is obviously some latitude provided by the Chair to all members during amendment debate. But, like I said, I'll listen. I'm listening.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If it is necessary for — certainly, I am well-aware of the rules mentioned by the member opposite and carefully structured my comments to respond to the amendment — the amendment which asks for a person named in the motion to be removed — and I am going to speak to why that person was intentionally selected. I think that is exactly what the amendment is.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

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

Point of order

Mr. Cathers: It seems like the Government House Leader is debating your ruling and attempting to intervene on the point of order that was just made after the fact. I thought that was not procedurally in order.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Certainly, no member should be debating with the Chair, the Chair of Committee of the Whole, or the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole on rulings. So, there is an element of that — but the Government House Leader can continue, because she appears to be on topic right now with respect to the amendment.

Government House Leader, please.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was simply directing my comments at you, as I am required to do — and rightly so.

Research was done when contemplating this special committee and how it should be structured. Research led us to believe that this motion would be supported and that the special committee could be perhaps even at work by now. Research involved looking at former special committees or select committees, as we on in this particular side of the Legislative Assembly have not had — with the exception of the Premier — any experience with that.

Since 2000, some seven committees of this nature have been struck in this Legislative Assembly: one in 2007 on anti-smoking, one in 2008 on human rights, one in 2009 on the *Legislative Renewal Act*, another in 2009 on the *Landlord and Tenant Act*, in 2009 on the Safe Operation and Use of Off-road Vehicles —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: The Government House Leader has the floor, Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Whitehorse Centre, on a point of order.

Ms. Hanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am just clarifying that, in fact, those are not select committees; those were special — this is a special committee, not a select committee. All of what has been cited by the member are select committees, so she is incorrectly attributing what kind of committee they were.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Well, that is not open to the Member for Whitehorse Centre. As we all know, during the course of the four years of debate in the 34th Legislative Assembly, it is about competing narratives, and when people have the floor to provide their competing narratives, that is when they will do so. It is not tenable for members to sit and provide their competing narratives from their chairs. So, that's not on.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: The Member for Whitehorse Centre will stop her comments.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: The Member for Whitehorse Centre will cease her comments for now. Thank you.

The Government House Leader, please.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Six out of seven of those committees had a minister on the committee, so the objection that the minister should not be now on this committee rings hollow and certainly does not follow the precedent or the practice that has been set by this Legislative Assembly. The Member for Lake Laberge himself was on a select committee when he was a minister; as well, the current Leader of the Yukon Party conservatives was on a committee when he was a minister.

I will speak in a moment about the then-Minister of Justice, Ms. Marian Horne, when she was appointed to a committee regarding future legislation of the *Human Rights Act* and the Human Rights Commission.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I would call the minister on Standing Order 19(c) — needless repetition. These arguments are the same as the ones that were made in the e-mail written by the Minister of Community Services that he tabled here this morning. She appears to just be reading those notes back into the record.

Speaker: The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: On Standing Order 19(c), I believe that the interpretation of that particular point of order is repetition, if anything, that would have happened here within the House during this debate. I believe that the member opposite is referring to a document that, again, has not been recited here in the House. I believe that would be an incorrect point of order.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition does not have a point of order at this time. I have learned from the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly that, even within debate on motions, if certain representations have been made at second reading, they can be made again in Committee of the Whole and they can be made again at third reading.

So, the repetition rule does not apply. In any event, we haven't had this repetition that I can recall on the record in Hansard with respect to this motion.

The Government House Leader, please.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that the point here is that, in previous committees of this Legislative Assembly, in six out of seven in the last 20 years, ministers were on that committee. Parties were allowed to choose who they wanted to be on that committee. I would like to draw a parallel with one particular situation and focus on one such precedent, because it is almost a direct parallel to the particular matter that is before us — to the motion and to the amendment to the motion to remove the Minister of Community Services.

Back in August of 2008, a select committee on human rights was formed with three members — one from each party — including the Minister of Justice. To be clear, the Minister of Justice is responsible for the issues of human rights, and the Human Rights Commission appointments and other work falls under the authority of the Minister of Justice here in the territory. On that motion, there were three speakers — one from the then-governing party, one from the opposition, and, in fact, the minister herself spoke to the motion. Government members spoke for some 20 minutes. The Yukon Liberal member spoke for some 20 minutes and the Yukon NDP did not speak on that motion at all. After the three members spoke — some 40

minutes of debate — the motion passed, with the responsible minister as a member of the three-person committee. There were no amendments, no one spoke against the motion, and there was no recorded vote.

The Yukon Party member at the time — the Member for Klondike — and the mover of the motion went on to say — and I quote: “We want this legislation to reflect the values of all parties...”

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I would have to call the minister on Standing Order 19(b), because it doesn't appear to me that she's speaking to the amendment at all at this point in time.

Speaker: If the Leader of the Official Opposition is referring specifically to the amendment, then as I've stated before, we're likely governed more by Standing Order 35(b), I suppose, because that seems to be the Standing Order that is specific to amendments. In any event, I take your point.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just on the point of order, Mr. Speaker — on Standing Order 19(b), I think that it's a delicate situation. Based on what has been past practice — at least, even in this particular part of the Sitting, listening to debate by some members — quite robust debate by certain individuals. It seems that a lot of context is being built in those debates. I think that it would be in contravention of how we've looked at things to date — even since early October — if we were to believe that this was veering away from the type of debates that we've had since starting a couple of months ago.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I think that the main issue is still the Government House Leader's contributions to this debate — as to why the words “the Hon. Minister of Community Services” should or ought to or ought not to be deleted. I'm listening, but I think that this is still the subject matter of her contribution so far.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'll start again with a quote from the then-Yukon Party member when debating that motion that I've just described — and I quote: “We want this legislation to reflect the values of all parties, and most of all, all Yukon citizens.

“When this work is done, involving all stakeholders, we will have a piece of legislation that all parties can support and be proud of, and I look forward to the support of all members for this motion.”

The then-minister went on to note that they would be holding public hearings and that Yukoners would be given an opportunity to speak on the very important issue that was before them. As I've noted, that motion passed with very few comments and little debate, and it was one in which the minister

directly responsible for that area of the law and that area of legislation was on that committee.

It seemed like a good idea at the time. There were no — certainly not that I'm aware of — difficulties with that process.

The Minister of Community Services — this amendment suggests that this person be removed — the wording “be removed” from this motion — and, in fact, be replaced with a selection of the private members. Each of the parties of this House has the opportunity in participating in this process, Mr. Speaker, of choosing who they want to send to do this work. I think that's fair. I think that's equitable. I don't truly understand the objection, other than perhaps some personal situations — but I don't think that's an appropriate conversation to have here. Each of the parties should be able to choose who they wish to do this important work.

I can tell you that the Minister of Community Services is not terribly keen on having been chosen with respect to this motion coming forward. But what is incredibly important is that Yukoners know why he was chosen. It is important that we have a select committee that listens to Yukoners about what they would like to see in our emergency legislation. The minister brings expertise, experience, opportunities in professional work — he comes with an open mind. He has an extraordinary —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: It appears to me that, pursuant to Standing Order 35(b), the minister is not confining debate to the subject of the amendment. She is, however, quoting from the instruction e-mail sent out from the Minister of Community Services to the Liberal members.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: So, I'm listening, and it seems like we're still on the topic of why — the Government House Leader, the member who currently has the floor, is taking the position as to whether clause 1 of the amendment to Motion No. 212 — the Hon. Minister of Community Services, as I cannot name that person in the House — whether those words or that person ought to or ought not to be deleted. I believe that the member is still within that subject matter.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: In case the members opposite didn't hear, I was extolling the virtues — exactly, that's what I was doing — of the Minister of Community Services and why he has been chosen by our government to do this work on behalf of Yukoners.

He has expertise. He has experience. He is a professional. He comes with an open mind. He has an extraordinary work ethic, and he is the one person, frankly, who knows more about this process and the legislation than probably anyone in this Legislative Assembly. Again, I go back to the opportunity for each of the other parties to choose whoever they want to send to do this work, and why they should want to choose who we want to send to do this work is a strange situation for me.

I mean, earlier, we heard the Member for Lake Laberge indicating that Yukoners would want expertise and that they would want the best possible result. He also indicated that he was concerned that somehow this work would not be properly done — that we were casting aspersions on them. I actually think that it is exactly the opposite, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Lake Laberge is indicating what they have concerns about because, in fact, they are interested in picking the person who we would be able to choose to do this work. I'm not sure why they would. They should pick their own person; the NDP should pick their own person. The three people should come together and do the work.

One of the criticisms, Mr. Speaker, of the Minister of Community Services for being on this committee — I guess there was also a criticism earlier that I forgot regarding electoral reform — was that he had previously expressed an opinion on some aspects of those issues. In this case — in this amendment and in this motion — we have the Official Opposition, the conservative Yukon Party, having tabled a bill to amend this legislation.

As I've mentioned earlier, it is appropriate that they are now saying that they want to hear from Yukoners, but that's not what they've done here. They've tabled a bill in this Legislative Assembly to change the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. They are clearly proposing that the —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 35(b), the minister is taking a lot of latitude, and it's also bizarre that she's portraying a bill that seeks public consultation as one that is somehow excluding the public. But the minister is well off the track of the amendment to the motion tabled by the Third Party. She has had a lot of latitude this afternoon.

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

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would say, of course, that it is not a point of order. I certainly understand that the members opposite disagree with what I am saying — and they are entitled to do that, but I am also entitled to say it during my submissions to you on an amendment to a motion that is on the floor of this House.

Speaker: The Member for Whitehorse Centre, on the point of order.

Ms. Hanson: I will try again with Standing Order 19(b). The minister may be speaking to an amendment but not to the amendment that is before us today. There were previous amendments made by the Yukon Party. That is not the amendment. The amendment that was put forward by me is not what is being spoken to by the member opposite at the moment.

Speaker: I think we're almost done here, but the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just a quick question, Mr. Speaker, on the process —

Speaker: On the point of order?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, on the point of order — based on the practice of the House, we have sat here over and over again, and during that, what we have seen is a tremendous amount of latitude. What we have seen from our colleagues is not being in a situation — there — that will probably quiet things down.

What we have seen in the past is real latitude and a cordial response from this side of the House on letting individuals continue to go on and not having three, four, five, or six points of orders.

I guess that, if the rules are changing, the rules will change.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Yes, I think that I have heard a fair bit of debate on the submissions on the points of order from all members, but my memory is fading now.

What I will say is that what I was hearing from the Government House Leader was her commenting on some of the comments made by the Member for Lake Laberge in his comments on this amendment, and obviously there is some latitude to respond. However, I will continue to listen. I would certainly remind all members that the comments should be confined to the subject matter of the proposed amendment, if at all possible.

Government House Leader, please.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the bill introduced by the Yukon Party to amend the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, I say again that this is the first time we have heard today that they are interested in hearing from Yukoners. Hopefully, they will agree to participate in a committee struck for that purpose.

We clearly are intending to hear from Yukoners. The member opposite had criticized that intention clearly during his submissions on this amendment. We didn't really see how that was appropriate, but nonetheless, it is appropriate to engage Yukoners in this process and to hear from them moving forward. I have made the point clearly that the intention of the motion — in fact, the stated words of the motion don't have anything to do with the report card. They don't have anything to do with looking back. They don't have anything to do with anything except engaging Yukoners on how we could get the best possible law going forward. They will, of course, have great opinions, ideas, and comments on that. This is the work that needs to be done. That is how we are proposing to do this work: a three-person committee. Each party gets to pick the person that they choose to send and do this work and that group of individuals will choose who will be their chair.

Our focus as a government, Mr. Speaker, and as a Legislative Assembly should be how we can best support Yukoners through this pandemic and focus on the health and safety of Yukoners. I am submitting to us all that we move forward together to listen to Yukoners through this committee, that we hear what they think, and that we serve them well about what we have learned and what we can do better in the future.

I certainly appreciate that there are other opinions. The three parties should and could come together by individually choosing who they want to do this work. The motion was clear.

There was no intention to hide who it was we were choosing. We clearly put thought and research and intention into this motion and have brought it to the floor of this Legislative Assembly. We truly hope that the other parties will support it. We will not be supporting the amendment.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the proposed amendment to Motion No. 212?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Mr. Adel: Disagree.

Mr. Hutton: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Mr. Gallina: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Paired: Hon. Ms. McLean and Ms. Van Bibber

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

Speaker: The nays have it. I declare the amendment defeated.

Amendment to Motion No. 212 negatived

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion?

Ms. White: Now, speaking to this sadly unamended motion, a lot of the thoughts that I have are the same — mainly that the Minister responsible for the CEMA legislation has put himself down on the committee. We have concerns that this will hold up the process, for a whole bunch of different reasons.

I think there are so many reasons why the Minister responsible for Community Services would be an excellent witness, including the fact that, for the last nine months, he has been immersed in this legislation and because he is so close and because he is so involved. We also know that we are still currently in a pandemic. We have just extended the state of emergency. This one goes until March; we might have to extend it past that. Knowing that — this special committee that is being proposed by government is scheduled to report at the end of August 2021.

You know, having witnessed, for example, the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic

Fracturing, I can say that was a blistering schedule, watching from the outside, and there was no way that it would have been able to complete that work in that short a time, especially nine months into what it is looking at, which is the state of emergency.

I have concerns, because if an election was to happen before the committee reports, then the committee would be dissolved and the work done by the committee would be lost. We have heard how important it is that the committee hear from Yukoners about their concerns, their thoughts, and suggestions — whether they were good or bad — or what worked and what didn't, and all that collection of information would be lost, and that is of concern.

You know, we in the NDP caucus had said — when we were talking about land use planning, when we were going through the whole Peel debacle — how could you ask people to participate freely? How could you ask people to participate when they don't believe in the land use planning process anymore because of what happened there? Here is an example of government getting ready to set up a committee that it is going to be asking for people's information and going out and asking for input — and to know that this could be lost if an election was called before is worrisome.

So, before we engage in a committee like this and put the time and energy into this work — because we believe that it needs both lots of time and energy — we need to know that the government is serious and that they won't throw out the work of this committee just because they have the ability to call an election. Because again, we know that, in our current system, the ruling party has the ability to call an election.

So, I have one question for the minister — or any minister for that matter, if anyone else chooses to get up to speak — and I'm looking for a direct answer, because one thing that we've come to understand during this pandemic is that people need certainty. They are looking for certainty. They're looking for the ability to plan.

So, if we go forward with this motion and this committee is struck, does that mean that this government is committing not to call an election until this committee has completed its work in August 2021?

Mr. Hassard: I rise briefly today to share my objection to this motion.

Mr. Speaker, we've made our position on this motion abundantly clear. From the outset, we've indicated that the process that the Liberals are proposing is certainly flawed. In fact, we believe that it's nothing more than a sham being rigged by the Premier and the Liberal Cabinet.

We all agree that CEMA needs to be amended. We've proposed numerous areas where we want to see a legislative change. But inserting the minister who is responsible for implementing the CEMA into a committee designed to review how CEMA has worked clearly, Mr. Speaker, puts the minister in a conflict.

Now, we recognize that the Minister of Community Services will have some significant input into this process. As the Member for Takhini-Kopper King has just said, it would be

very important to have the Minister of Community Services testify before the committee — and probably even be the first and number one witness. But to have him as one of the three members of the committee — it really makes this process flawed.

Our position in this respect was really only confirmed when we received the internal e-mails this morning from the minister showing that the whole thing was being orchestrated by him — the Minister of Community Services. He is manipulating the process, the debate, and ultimately the outcome of all of this from beginning to end, Mr. Speaker.

Now, it's quite clear that the minister's and this government's intentions are not in good faith. The minister wants to be on this committee. Even though the Minister of Justice insists that he doesn't, it is pretty clear that he does. He has written the speeches and he has done the research to give to his colleagues so that they have the material that they need to support his position. He even says that he is going to slip them quotes and speeches to reference. It is pretty clear that this minister has everything nicely and neatly lined up. They know that they have a majority. They know that they can force this motion through, as they have in the past.

But one thing that was surprising about the e-mails that we received this morning was who was and wasn't included on the e-mails. It is pretty clear whose input the minister wanted and whose he did not and who was actually in the loop about the plans and who was not. Over the past few months in the Legislature and throughout the summer, we have come forward with numerous proposals for multi-party work related to this pandemic. We have even proposed a select committee of our own. We have proposed motions. We have put forward friendly amendments to Liberal motions. We even proposed motions that specifically state our support for the Liberal government's position.

It was just last week that we offered a motion that would strengthen the Liberals' position regarding the per capita allocation of vaccines for COVID-19. Each and every time that the opposition or the Third Party have proposed anything at all, the Liberal government has used its majority to shoot it down. I wasn't entirely surprised that the Liberal government used their majority to vote down the amendment that we just voted on — the proposed amendment that was proposed by the Third Party. It certainly fits with the government's perfect record of voting against every single motion, amendment, or proposal that either of the opposition parties has proposed. It certainly fits with the government's perfect record of voting against every single motion, amendment, or proposal that either of the opposition parties has proposed since the spring. We know that they are going to use their majority again today. I would be very surprised if they don't ram this through, just as they continue to show the way they have done things.

But, Mr. Speaker, that is unless one of their non-government members stands up and refuses to continue to be part of this flawed process and biased process.

I will remind all members that it is the job of non-government MLAs, whether they are on this side of the House or that side of the House, to hold the government to account.

That is what we were all elected by our constituents and communities to do. That is how our system is supposed to work. The executive branch is accountable to the legislative branch.

So, do members of this House really think that the way to objectively and impartially review how the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* is working is to have the minister whose job has been to implement the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* sit on the committee? It is simply impossible for an objective, non-biased review from this minister — especially while the state of emergency is still ongoing and that same minister is still currently exercising powers under this exact act.

Do members of this House think that the minister can look back at his actions over the past nine months and be critical and objective about them? Is it in the best interests of Yukoners and Yukon communities for the minister to be thrown into such a conflicted position? Is it in the best interests of Yukoners and Yukon communities to have the minister diverting his attention to be on this committee when he should be focused on the emergency and protecting our communities?

We know that he is just working with what he has got and that he will have useful input, but that input — as I have said before and as the Member for Takhini-Kopper King has said — should come as a witness to the committee, not as a voting member.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's quite clear that we will be voting against this motion and the flawed process that it represents. The evidence to date suggests that, in its current design, it's nothing more than a sham and the results are being orchestrated.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I will ask all members to remember one thing when they are voting, and that is to do the right thing for Yukoners and Yukon communities.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have some brief comments, but based on some of the discussion that has happened here today, I think it's important to note that what is now being described as a "flawed process" by the Yukon Party opposition is the process that they used six out of seven times in the last 20 years or so. They used a few of those six out of seven — they weren't always in government.

The precedent of this Legislative Assembly, as I said, was researched in determining how to best set up this process. We indicated that the research brought forward that kind of information, certainly, by way of knowing that this had been done on many occasions before — many of the members sitting opposite were, in fact, ministers who headed up committees like this.

On the questions about the integrity of the Minister of Community Services and his abilities to do this work, I feel extremely strongly that he is the one person who can bring an objective eye to this role because he has the expertise. He has also been accused of being in a conflict of interest. That is not the case, Mr. Speaker. There is no conflict of interest here. There is no personal gain. He is doing the work on behalf of Yukoners that he has had to do every day and night, seven days a week, since March and will continue to do on their behalf.

Yukoners will want to have —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: The Government House Leader has the floor.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yukoners will want to have expertise, Mr. Speaker, to get the best possible result. The vehement opposition to this particular person — that the opposition party should be able to choose who we would send to do this work — but the structure of the committee is that each party would choose who they wish to send. All are entitled to do so in a free and democratic society. Individuals are, of course, open to having their own opinions. There have been some opinions cast about from a —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: This appears to be needless repetition by the minister. We've heard this speech from her before when she was speaking to the amendment and straying to cover topics that really were not related to the amendment.

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

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm assuming that the member opposite wasn't listening. I hadn't spoken before about conflict of interest, about opinions, about the things that I had been speaking about. Nonetheless, I am now speaking to the main motion. I am almost finished with my remarks, but clearly they are not being welcomed.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There has been an element of repetition, but I think that, speaking on the main motion, there is certainly some latitude. The main motion contains a lot more subject material than the amendment, so the Government House Leader can continue and I'll certainly continue to listen closely.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Lastly, I'm concerned with the criticism from the Yukon Party that we somehow don't want to work with the other parties — actually, maybe it is from both parties. Clearly, in my view, it's the Yukon Party that doesn't want to work with us. There are some real questions about why they would object so vehemently to the Minister of Community Services being on this committee. I have heard their submissions and their debate. We will no doubt agree to disagree. In my submission to this Legislative Assembly, I ask that we strike the committee, that we get to work on behalf of Yukoners, and that we listen to them so that we ultimately have a strong piece of legislation that will take us into the future.

Speaker: Is there further debate on Motion No. 212?

If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I want to start by acknowledging some things that I think are positive out of this process. What I understand from all parties is that everyone here believes that there are ways to improve this act.

Second of all, what I hear is that a select committee — or a way to listen to Yukoners — is important — a special committee. Pardon me, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say just a few things, and I recognize that members of the opposition have expressed concern that my party has asked me to be the person to come forward. I was the one who suggested that we go for a select committee, and I brought forward the motion; thus, my name is there. I will just read, for a moment, from my e-mail that I sent this morning to the Chief of Staff for the Yukon Party. I didn't mean to, but I did, and after I did that, I thought, "Well, okay, let me share it with the Chief of Staff of the NDP as well." Then I suggested to our team that we send it out to the media so that everyone can see it.

I will now quote from it: "The other thing I ask that you emphasize is about me on the committee." Sorry, Mr. Speaker — just for context — this is me writing to the Minister of Justice, who I knew would be speaking to the amendment. "The other thing I ask that you emphasize is about me on the committee. Explain that when the amendment(s) came forward, I expressed that I would be happy to step down, that the more important thing is that we have a select committee to listen to Yukoners about what they would like to see for our emergency legislation."

So, that is what the members opposite are talking about as me "orchestrating things". What I was doing was what I believe is my job — is to go off and research the motion, to research Hansard to look at what has happened here in past legislatures. I have not viewed this as a review of what has been happening. I think that is a critical thing to happen — a review of that. I think that something like Public Accounts is a great way to do that. I think that there are many ways that I think that it is important to hear from Yukoners about their concerns about how we have navigated through this pandemic.

Trust me, Mr. Speaker, I think that it is fair to say that there will be things that could have done better. I can't imagine anyone navigating through something this new and challenging without making some missteps. One of mine — again, I sincerely apologize for it — was to send an e-mail with that research work to the Liberal MLAs and miss that I was sending it to you. That was not — pardon me, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: You're addressing the Chair. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Pardon me. Mr. Speaker, I sent that to you. That was a mistake, and I apologize to you and to all members of the Legislature for that.

I also was attempting to send something to my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt North, whose first name happens to be the same first name as the chief of staff for the Yukon Party. I sent it in the wrong direction. All right. I don't believe that there is anything in there that is incorrect. I went off and researched how committees have been struck here in the past. I looked to try to see those instances. But was I trying to make this about me? No. Again, I encourage everyone to read it. I am not worried that I was doing that work. I think that work is only appropriate. In fact, I hope everyone does it.

What I do think is important here is that we find a way to look at this act. I think that all members of the Legislature have

good ideas. So, my suggestion was that we put together a special committee and that we make it two opposition members and one from the government side to show or provide that opportunity so that it is not purely the government side and that we could think about this from a longer perspective — over time, what would serve Yukoners best? I have pointed out in this House that there are other things that I think are missing. It isn't just about whether there is the opportunity for all MLAs to vote on the extension of this state of emergency. I think that there are many other things that are worthy of improving upon with this piece of legislation. During Committee of the Whole, I made comments here about that.

The Leader of the Third Party asked a question — she raised a valid concern. We don't know when the next election is. I've heard the Premier say that, right now, the focus is on this pandemic — okay. So, I don't know when that election is, but I think that is a valid point. I think the way to do it is, once the committee does come together — and I still hope ardently that the Official Opposition will be an active participant on that committee — that what happens is we talk about how to make sure that we can get interim findings or something tabled so that nothing is lost.

So, Mr. Speaker —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Yes, the Minister of Community Services has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you. So, I think there are many ways in which we can make sure that the information is not lost and I think that it will be a valuable process regardless.

What I've heard from the members opposite is that they want to see some changes to this act, that they want to contribute, that they want to help serve Yukoners, and that they want to bring forward their ideas. Even though they disagree with my participation on this particular committee, their concern seems to be that I'm the minister responsible.

In history, we see that this was never a concern previously. Okay. We keep saying, "Let's do this. Let's look at the act. Let's find other ways to do a review." So, I don't know which way the parties will vote today. I will note for all members of the Legislature — in fact, I will table — again, I've been looking at how many times we vote in this Legislature and I have counted up — not counting yesterday, but to date, we have 223 votes in this Legislature. Of those 223 votes, 117 — 52 percent — have been unanimous. I will note that one quarter of the time —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: The minister seems to be talking to something other than the question under discussion. Also, his time would be much better spent managing the pandemic than counting votes or the number of words in Hansard.

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

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Leader of the Official Opposition opened this door when he spoke about how certain votes were always challenged by the government. He opened the door when he spoke about the way in which parties have voted. I think that it is appropriate that the member speaking is able to respond in that way.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: During the course of the debate of Motion No. 212, there certainly have been contributions by members about the narrative that there has been a lack of cooperation by the government side or a lack of support. I have certainly heard that both today and when we started with this in early October.

So, yes, there certainly is some latitude and some ability for the Minister of Community Services to provide his narrative on that topic.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: As I was saying, so far, I have recorded 223 recorded votes in this Legislature. Of those recorded votes, 117 of them have been unanimous; 55 of them — roughly one-quarter — have been the government voting on its own; 44 — roughly one-fifth — have been the Yukon Party voting on its own — not that different. I will happily go back and find —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. Hassard: I would call a point of order on Standing Order 19(e) on the minister — "reflects upon any vote of the Assembly unless it is that member's intention to move that it be rescinded".

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I will return to the House with more fulsome and complete reasons, if needed. Certainly, with respect to the House, for the member, it is certainly open to the members to reflect that certain votes took place.

Like I said, I will review Hansard. I will speak to the Clerks-at-the-Table on this topic, but the fact that votes took place is not, in my view, running afoul of Standing Order 19(e). The reflection is looking at it from a substantive or qualitative — such as "I have an opinion that the House ought not to have taken that approach on that vote." That is offside of Standing Order 19(e).

Like I said, I will likely come back and provide a more detailed statement on that topic, but the very fact that certain votes have occurred, in my view on the fly, does not run afoul of Standing Order 19(e).

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Finally, with respect to the history of support — or lack of support — I will go back and find amendments that have been brought forward by the members opposite that we have supported. I do all of this — I measure these things. I have said that previously. The members opposite

seem to be concerned that I am looking back through Hansard and looking at things. It just makes me want to do it more.

I am happy to table all of that. If the members find some time that I am shirking my duties as a minister — or on this select committee or in any other role — please, by all means, feel free to bring that criticism to me. I am happy to receive it. I feel that there is a process here in this Legislature and outside of this Legislature where members opposite provide criticism that helps improve the work overall. I think that this is the point. I hope that I have been open to that criticism. I actually have had some of that conversation with my wife — about whether or not I am open to criticism and whether I am serving Yukoners well in that regard. Maybe I can be criticized about how I'm receiving criticism — fair enough.

The most important thing that I started off with — out of my own remarks, which I emailed all over the place this morning — is that on December 8 —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The one that I'm referring to, Mr. Speaker, is the e-mail from this morning —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: We are not having a conversation here.

Standing Order 17 — as we know, every contribution that a member makes is through the Chair.

I am listening to the Minister of Community Services. He is closing debate on Motion No. 212. We are not having a conversation between the members.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I will redouble my efforts to focus solely on the conversation that I am having with you and the remarks that I am making to you.

This morning I sent an e-mail around in all sorts of directions. In that e-mail, I emphasized that the most important thing is that we get an opportunity to strike a committee that will listen to Yukoners. That is the most important thing.

I appreciate that members opposite have expressed concern about my involvement on that committee. However, what I hope that we do is get to the committee so that we can hear from Yukoners, because that is the most important thing.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Disagree.

Paired: Hon. Ms. McLean and Ms. Van Bibber

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

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion No. 212 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Hutton): Order, please.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 205 — *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Mostyn has 15 minutes and 36 seconds.

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I won't take that long. I want to thank my officials for once again showing up to support me as I answer questions on this supplementary budget. Again, we have a total of about \$30 million worth of items on our books for this discussion — roughly just a little over \$20 million for capital, which is a decrease; and we have about \$11.5 million in O&M spending. I am more than happy to talk about those numbers which are the subject of this debate this afternoon.

I am also — in the spirit of openness, transparency, and democracy — willing to answer questions on any other matters that the members opposite may wish to ask.

I know that yesterday, my good friend, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, had expressed that she had more questions, and so I did ask that I have my officials come back today to answer the questions that she had remaining. So, I am more than happy to open the floor to those questions.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the officials for being here today with the minister. When we left off, the minister was being very happy about the question I had asked him with respect to brushing. I just want to get three points of clarification from the minister with respect to that. So, the minister had said that the government now uses five categories for brushing, so I would appreciate it if he could elaborate on what those five categories are and how they accommodate the differences in, say, communities that are adjacent to the various highways or roadways in the territory.

So, for example, the accommodation that is made for a community like the residential neighbourhoods along Fox Lake — where we and you, Mr. Chair, and I have for many, many years seen the transformation of the north Klondike Highway — it's not configured as it was 40 years ago. People's residences have been built up over those many years and may or may not — maybe even inadvertently — be closer to the right-of-way than they thought they were. What does that do to affect the quality of life and also the tourism values of places like that? I raise that in the context of trying to understand whether or not these standards are intended to be standard or if they accommodate — as we've seen across Canada with the Trans-Canada Highway and others — the changes to roadways — with the Trans-Canada, again — if you, as I have as a child, have driven across this country in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 2000s, 2010s, and 2020s, you have seen the changes and some of the ways the road has morphed, but the accommodation has been made over time for communities and nearby residences so that their quality of life is not affected.

I am interested in that — and related to that brushing, the total budget of the 2019-20 — the total expended — and then the 2020-21 budget and expenditures to date for brushing.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: First, I would like to correct the Member for Whitehorse Centre. As I said yesterday, they are not five categories of brushing; they are five categories of highways. Those five categories of highways are determined by socio-economic factors, traffic volumes, tourism impacts, and economic impacts. All those criteria went into the designations of our highways. There are now five classifications of highways in the territory, and each one of those have levels of service that we will assign to those highways. So, they're not brushing categories.

The five categories of highways will — some of the things that we will look at, as far as maintaining, will be lines — how often we paint the lines on the road. We will look at safety features — i.e. barriers that we put along certain categories of highways and which categories of highway get those safety features implemented first. Brushing is another criterion that we will work into which category of highway gets brushed

more often — and wider or less wide. Also, lane delineation — things such as reflectors — which category of highway will get reflectors and where they'll get them.

As I said in my opening, the current issues that we have in the supplementary budget are about \$11.5 million in O&M spending and about \$20 million in capital spending that we're discussing today. I will endeavour to get the member opposite the numbers for the brushing contract for 2019-20 and 2020-21.

The last question that the Member for Whitehorse Centre was asking this afternoon had to do with the accommodations that we're going to make for communities. So, when we were brushing along certain communities — in Crag Lake recently and other places — we actually — I know that my colleague, the MLA for the area, and I went out to Crag Lake and met with residents. I actually had a measuring tape that we used — the two of us — and bushwhacked through the highway right-of-way to actually delineate the amount of space between the highway centre line, the side of the highway, and the residences. We then went back to the department and spoke to them, and in the end, the engineers went out and took a look at the roads and started to change or at least reduce, in some cases, the recommended brushing width from 20 metres to 15 metres from the centre line.

Where the posted speed limit is above 50 kilometres an hour, the minimum brushing zone requirement remains at 7.5 metres from the shoulder and brushing should remain at 10 metres.

So, we are looking at traffic safety. We are also looking at the condition of the road, the slope of the road, the slope of the road away from the shoulder — and the slope up from the shoulder will also inform the decisions that our engineers make. We have actually started to look at how we have dealt with some of these areas. That has become part of the common approach that we're having, and we will apply the same principles — as I have spoken to the departmental officials. The accommodations that we have made in places such as Tagish will now become the norm as we move up the highway and run into other areas where people's homes, businesses, and cottages are affected.

I have rough numbers, Mr. Chair. Since 2019, \$6.5 million has been allocated to the program. We have brushed more than 750 kilometres along Yukon highways, 5.5 kilometres of new barriers have been installed, and approximately 2,000 kilometres of highway lines have been painted. We are moving toward a total of 5,000 kilometres as the goal, and we are well on our way to accomplishing that goal.

Ms. Hanson: I surely hope that the residents in other areas of the Yukon don't have to rely upon having to prevail upon ministers — or sitting Cabinet ministers who serve as the MLAs for the region — to have to come out and tape measure to prove that it is important that their private properties and their businesses be protected.

I have a couple of questions with respect to the HPW role, as the government owner of properties and leaser of properties. The minister — in responding to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, I believe, in commenting about Macaulay Lodge — said that it was not fit for renovation.

My question is: What are the current O&M costs of maintaining that building, as it has been, for the last number of years, vacant with lights on?

The second part of the Macaulay Lodge question is: Did Highways and Public Works — or did the Department of Justice consult with Highways and Public Works with a view to using it as an alternative to the ARC? The Minister of Highways and Public Works will recall that, as a result of the widening of the highway and other reasons, the Salvation Army withdrew from providing that service to the Yukon, and alternatives needed to be found. One of the questions that I have is: What whole-of-government conversations occurred to look at the possibility — at least on a temporary basis — of using that currently lit — and apparently heated, because it doesn't look like there are pipes freezing or running out — facility for the transition services for people? They are men, in this case. One of the criteria that Justice had told was that they wanted to be on a bus route and close to community services, so a normalized lifestyle. Those are two aspects of the question with respect to Macaulay Lodge.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I told the Leader of the Official Opposition during Question Period, I believe, we completed a building condition assessment and feasibility study report on Macaulay Lodge in May 2020. That report considered renovating and repurposing Macaulay Lodge as housing or office mixed-use space. That report indicates that repurposing Macaulay Lodge to housing or office mixed-use space is not financially viable. As a result, we did not consider Macaulay Lodge as a site for the ARC.

If we're going to house people from the justice community in a new place, we're not going to do it in a building that is in that state. Fixing it up — the cost estimate to renovate the facility into housing is approximately \$15 million, which includes \$1 million worth of hazardous material remediation. Of course, once you start doing a renovation in a building such as that and start to encounter these hazardous materials, it could become even worse. So, no, we did not consider putting the ARC in that building.

I can tell the member opposite — because my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, and I, on another one of our outings, did actually tour Macaulay Lodge, checking it out for potential use during the Arctic Winter Games. I can report that the interior of the building is really in very, very poor shape. I'm going by memory, but I believe that one of the shower facilities in there was not even operational. There is a lot of work that needs to be done to that building. It really is not in very good shape, and Highways and Public Works came to that conclusion as well after a full review of the study.

Now, the member opposite has asked me for the O&M costs for that building. I'm going to get that information. It's not part of the supplementary budget, but I will endeavour to get the member opposite an answer to that question. I had hoped it would come in while I was speaking, but it has not yet. When I get that answer, I will certainly relay it to the member opposite.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate the undertaking by the minister to relay that information.

On a related matter, can the minister provide an update on the status of the former women's correctional facility located adjacent to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre that was designed to have bedrooms rather than cells and that has been sitting vacant? It was used by Teegatha'Oh Zheh for housing disabled adults. Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works please tell us what the current status of that building is? Similarly, what is the cost of keeping it empty?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: My officials have informed me that the status of Takhini Haven is still an ongoing discussion between Health and Social Services and Justice. I can tell the member opposite that the facility is part of the upgrade we are running as the new wood boiler expansion at the jail and part of the district heating system we are putting in place there. Takhini Haven will be benefitting from that upgrade that was funded in part by us and the federal government.

As far as the final use of that building, I believe that those discussions are ongoing between Health and Social Services and Justice.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. I am assuming by the minister's response that, in fact, there has been an inspection and that he can dispel the rumours on the street that the building has been condemned. That would be very helpful to have clarified.

Can the minister provide us with an update on the status of the amendments to the *Motor Vehicles Act*? It has been well over a year. We recall that there were over 300 issues identified with respect to the *Motor Vehicles Act*. We have heard many, many times from this minister about the imperative of getting this new act to improve public safety and make laws easier to enforce. It needs to be updated, so we have been waiting to hear when that would be happening. That is probably the second last question that I have.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon about the *Motor Vehicles Act* rewrite. As members in this House are well aware, the *Motor Vehicles Act* has not been significantly updated since it was first implemented in 1977.

Rewriting this piece of legislation is necessary to improve safety for all road users on Yukon highways. This new legislation will allow us to address long-standing issues with the existing act. It is a large and complex piece of legislation. It touches on a wide range of issues important to Yukoners. I have no doubt that all members of this House have heard many, many complaints about traffic in the territory.

I believe that rewriting this piece of legislation is a foundational piece that will address many, many of the concerns we hear about on an if not daily, then weekly basis. We hear about noise of vehicles, the speeding, the intoxicated people driving impaired, and distracted driving. Of course, there are concerns and issues — and not concerns so much as — well, speeding — I mean, all of these things can be addressed with a new piece of legislation.

We've spoken and I think we agree that this work is vital for the territory. I know the police officers who I have spoken to — from Beaver Creek to Watson Lake and points in between — are very, very glad that we are actually taking on this task

because they say that enforcing the existing act is a nightmare. I know that judges have said the same thing.

It's an important piece of work. The work to rewrite the act is underway — well underway. Public engagements have taken place in 2019, with more than 2,800 responses provided by the public. I have just recently issued a letter to First Nation leaders and leaders of municipalities asking for more feedback. We're committed to working with our stakeholders — including municipalities and First Nation governments — to update this important legislation and make our roads safer.

In the letter that we have just sent out to First Nation leaders and communities, we have indicated that we are working very hard to fuse both the introduction of the legislation and the regulations together.

I know that is an issue that the member opposite — even as late as last week — was talking about — that we should endeavour to get the legislation and regulations together. Our Justice minister and I agree that this is something that — we have seen the lag between the ATIPP act passing and the regulations coming into play. We really want to bring those two things together. It is an issue that the member opposite has raised. I fully agree with her that it is frustrating to have these really progressive, solid pieces of legislation be passed by this House and then have a lag with the implementation. We are going to bring the *Motor Vehicles Act* and the regulations together, and we hope to have all of that work done — I believe the deadline I said in the letter was 2023.

Ms. Hanson: I am not sure — that is quite an underwhelming response — a five-year process to get amendments to legislation — “a vital piece of legislation”, as I just heard the minister say — that is pretty sad. I fully anticipate — I'm reacting because I anticipated that the minister was going to tell us that this legislation would be brought forward in the spring, so I guess I'm disappointed.

On a happier note, Mr. Chair — we raised many, many times concerns about the safety in Hillcrest — my old stomping grounds — for the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists crossing. We heard that it wasn't possible to make it safer because there wasn't anybody to fix the lights there. They are all wrapped in dark plastic. Now, according to the Hillcrest community page, the comment — a bit cheeky — but it was that they guessed they didn't need Outside electricians after all, because now we have at least flashing lights, so motorists should be aware that there may be stoplights soon.

Can the minister inform this House as to when that next step will happen — when it goes from flashing to actually operating?

Part of the issue that we keep raising is really around pedestrian and bicyclist safety. We know that we have an active transportation network that has been slowly built up in this community which encourages people to walk and to bicycle to work for fun and to get around the city. In some places — actually, it's the municipal government that has done this, but hopefully the territorial government can do it — but there are means to facilitate or assist bicyclists to cross without having to dismount, go through the snow, climb over the snow, and get to the button to push it. Apparently, at Robert Service Way,

there is a simple modification to the crossing that allows the bicyclist to not have to do all of that.

Has that been considered for the Hillcrest crossing for the Alaska Highway — something that is similar to what is available, in use, and appreciated by the cycling community at Robert Service Way?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: First of all, I would like to correct the Member for Whitehorse Centre again, because she said in her response to the *Motor Vehicles Act* — a long time to amend the act. It's not an amendment. I want to make sure that the record is clear. It's not an amendment to the existing act. It's actually a full rewrite of the legislation. It's not an amendment. It is a full rewrite of the *Motor Vehicles Act*, and it takes time.

We could actually present the legislation sooner, but we feel that, to the member opposite's point, fusing something as complicated as the *Motor Vehicles Act* with the regulations that play such an integral role in the enforcement and giving life to the legislation — that we bring them forward together. It usually takes about two years to draft the regulations on such a complicated bill.

I will note for the member opposite that — I believe it was Nova Scotia or New Brunswick — one of the Maritime provinces just recently rewrote its *Motor Vehicles Act* and took 10 years to rewrite that piece of legislation.

Our piece of legislation could be done a lot sooner, but I think that taking the time and care to actually bring the regulations and that piece of legislation together is well worth the wait.

I share the Member for Whitehorse Centre's frustration and disappointment that it's taking this long, but having worked with Justice, Highways and Public Works, and the drafters, I am confident that they are working as fast as they can to bring this forward. I have the utmost confidence in that team to deliver this work. If they say that it's taking until 2023 to bring the regulations and the legislation together, then I am confident that this is how long it will take. I have no doubt that they are working as hard and as fast as they can to deliver this piece of legislation because it is so important.

I will also note for the record that it was the Member for Whitehorse Centre who referred to the community of Hillcrest as “cheeky” — read the post from the residents of Hillcrest as “cheeky”. Yes, the light is flashing. It is flashing because we want to make sure that the lights are powered up and working before we actually bring the programmer up from down south, as required to bring it from a flashing light with no programming behind it to an actual working light on our highway.

That individual — as I said in the House in Question Period a few days ago, the Department of Highways and Public Works is working with the company to bring their technician up to program those lights. They have been talking with that company and the individual. They have come up with a plan to ensure that the individual can come up and work safely in our community, while meeting the self-isolation rules. That individual, as I understand it, is scheduled to fly up here tonight. I am hopeful that the programming of this light will be done by the end of the week. It is late, yes, but the bubble burst,

Mr. Chair, as we all know, and that forced some changes in plans and some trepidation with the company down south.

We have worked with that company and we have alleviated the concerns. I believe that the individual is scheduled to arrive here tonight, so I'm very happy to have that news for the House this afternoon. I fully expect that, if he does get on the plane and he does get here, then we should have that light functioning hopefully this week. So, there's that.

As for the cycling, as a cyclist who uses that stretch of road and who does cross at Hillcrest to come into work, when I have been cycling — and admittedly, the last month, it has been so busy that I haven't been able to get on my bike, and I have a flat currently, so that is inhibiting my biking to work. But when I fix the flat and when I get back on my bicycle — if we continue to have these nice snowy conditions and don't get a melt — and I hope to do that fairly soon — I will be crossing at Hillcrest as well, and I will certainly take a look at how it is to cross that highway.

Personally, my officials don't have the specifics about the Robert Service Way crossing, but I will endeavour to get that answer to the member opposite.

Ms. Hanson: I did say that it was one last one, but there is another one. Well, you know, time gives a different perspective, so if the minister, the Member for Whitehorse West, is lucky, in 2023, he will be sitting on this side of the House asking questions of the minister with respect to the new *Motor Vehicles Act*. Perspective is everything, actually.

One of the things that I just wanted to ask the minister to follow up on — we have had a number of conversations with respect to — according to Transport Canada and Nav Canada — the imminent cuts that are being proposed across seven airports, including Whitehorse. Today the Premier spoke about the great opportunity that is available to Yukon government and Yukon First Nation leadership because of the Yukon Days meetings, where I understand that federal Cabinet ministers, territorial Cabinet ministers, and First Nation leadership partake in meetings — as the Premier outlined this afternoon. That relates to a letter that the minister got today — along with federal ministers, as well as the Premier and the Yukon Senator, who I mentioned last week had raised this issue in the Senate transportation committee. It seems to me that this would be a matter that the proposed Nav Canada cuts at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, as the heading of this letter — given that this is a unified voice speaking to our federal government with Yukon Cabinet ministers and Yukon First Nation leaders meeting with their federal counterparts — the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon asked today that those cuts not occur.

They state that, with more than 400 tourism businesses — and I would note that includes Yukon First Nation tourism businesses — and 4,000 tourism employees in the Yukon, at five percent of our GDP, Yukon is the second highest in the country — and talks about the aviation sector as an essential element in the Yukon's economy.

Can the minister confirm whether or not Yukon Days meetings have — whether he, in that forum, has raised with the Transport minister, the Hon. Marc Garneau, this issue? As we

know, it's not up to Nav Canada. Nav Canada has been seeking for the federal government to assist this private sector entity. We heard last week, from the transportation committee of the Senate, that the Transport department officials at that Senate committee told our Yukon senator that the \$116-million request was not on.

Was this raised, or is it going to be raised? It's only Tuesday, so Yukon Days, I would gather — the minister can clarify this — will go on throughout the week. What advocacy has been used at this unique opportunity — a joint voice coming from Yukon First Nation leadership and the Yukon government — to raise the concerns that have been raised across the sectors, across this community, and across the territory about any proposed cuts that would impact the safety and integrity of our Whitehorse airport?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, I am going to take a moment to correct the member opposite for Whitehorse Centre. The Member for Whitehorse Centre keeps talking about cuts. So far, I have not even heard officially from Nav Canada that they are going to cut anything. They are currently doing a review. The review is going to take a number of months — a long time, relatively speaking — several months. They are going to be talking to various jurisdictions across the country. Nav Canada itself is an autonomous business run to provide services to the aviation sector. It is independent of Ottawa, and it is undertaking this review itself as many aviation businesses across Canada during the pandemic have suffered grievous financial losses.

The cuts the member opposite is talking about are still hypothetical. They're doing a review. There are reaching out to the communities across Canada — there are several — and we are one of them. We will see what they have to say about that review.

I have been endeavouring to reach out to Nav Canada and the president, whom I have spoken to and will continue to speak to. I've heard just this week that they are trying as well to arrange a meeting with me. When I speak with Nav Canada officials, I will certainly make my concerns with any reduction in services to Whitehorse International Airport known.

I appreciated the letter from the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon today. I did speak with them about this issue last week in a Zoom call with the executive director and president of TIAY. We had a discussion about their thoughts and my thoughts about the review that Nav Canada is currently undertaking.

I have, as well, regular correspondence — as this government does — with our colleagues in Ottawa. The Minister of Transport is aware of our concerns with reductions in service at Nav Canada. I will continue to work very closely with my colleagues in Ottawa. I know that the Premier has also spoken about this subject with his counterparts in Ottawa — the Deputy Prime Minister, perhaps the Prime Minister whom he has been talking to very closely, and certainly other officials.

We are on this file. We know how important it is to the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon that we retain service here in Whitehorse. We are in conversations with our airlines here, including Air North, and with TIA. This week we will be

talking with Nav Canada — or in the near future we will be talking with Nav Canada when we can arrange that meeting.

My position, as I've said, is that I do not support cuts to our service levels here in Whitehorse with Nav Canada, but I am going to be talking with the officials with that institution in the very near future. I will learn more about what they're proposing and what the scope of their plans are in light of the pandemic.

So that's what I have to say about Nav Canada and its service levels this afternoon.

Ms. Hanson: Unfortunately, the question wasn't about Nav Canada. It was about whether or not at the Yukon Days meetings occurring this week — whether the minister and his colleagues, including the Premier, who indicated that this was a significant opportunity to meet with federal counterparts via Zoom, were going to use that opportunity to raise this issue with the minister responsible for Transport Canada, since they are the ones who would be looking at possibly trying to address this in the spring budget or before. Given the consequences and impact on Yukon's economy — particularly the tourism sector, which affects both First Nation and non-First Nation governments and their citizens with, as I said, 4,000 employees and five percent of the GDP. It is a simple question: Is the agenda for Yukon Days this week inclusive of a conversation about this important issue to the whole of Yukon? Can the minister simply tell us whether or not it is on the agenda?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Nav Canada is an independent agency that makes its own decisions. I will be speaking with officials from Nav Canada in the near future.

We have been speaking with our federal counterparts on support for the aviation industry. The federal government has been very supportive of our aviation industry in the territory and across the north. I am very glad and grateful for the federal support that we have received and that all of the territories have received to keep our northern aviation industry flying. That connection — from Whitehorse to Vancouver, but more importantly, Whitehorse to Old Crow to Dawson and to Mayo — is essential to this territory. The federal government recognizes that and is moving to support that.

Nav Canada is having a review. The member opposite is characterizing that as cuts to Whitehorse. That is a hypothetical, Mr. Chair. We don't know the extent of the moves that Nav Canada is going to make. Until I know what Nav Canada is proposing, I am not going to presume to know what they are asking or what they are going to do.

I have stated publicly that I support our tourism industry in the territory as a whole and that I am not supportive of service reductions in Whitehorse — cuts, perhaps — that would hurt our aviation sector. I am going to be working with Nav Canada and relaying to them that I am not in favour of any moves that would impact our tourism sector, that would prohibit players such as Condor coming to Whitehorse, or that would impact our safety — the safety of our aviation sector.

So, until I know what Nav Canada is proposing, I am not going to start hounding Ottawa for resources when we do not know the extent to which we are going to need them. Ottawa is aware, and we are working — and the Premier, my colleagues

on this side of the House, and I are very clear that we want to make sure that our aviation sector remains whole and healthy — as healthy as possible to get to the other side of this pandemic.

As far as Yukon Days goes, I know that the agenda has been set. I am not scheduled to talk to Minister Garneau. That does not mean to say that I have not spoken to Minister Garneau and that I will not in the future. They are aware of our concerns surrounding Nav Canada. They are aware of our support for the aviation industry. They are aware of TIAY's support for the aviation industry. We are working with our players in Ottawa, at several levels. We are working at the official level, and we are going to work very hard to guarantee and to safeguard our aviation industry into the future.

Mr. Hassard: I thank the officials for coming back today one more time. I just had a couple of questions regarding highway reconstruction and widening in the Porter Creek area. I know that, here in the Legislature, we have asked many times about turning lanes in front of Super A, in particular, and lights, et cetera, so I am just curious if there is anything in the works in regard to upgrades through that Porter Creek section.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have just announced recently that we are going to public consultation for two residents of Porter Creek to ask them their thoughts on the highway running in front of their neighbourhoods.

Mr. Hassard: Would the minister be able to provide this House with an update on the particular sections in that area that they will be looking at and consulting on?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite will find information regarding that public consultation on yukon.ca, but to save him the web search, it's Azure to Centennial.

Mr. Hassard: Rather than going by the street names, could the minister provide us with an idea — is that from the south entrance into Porter Creek to the north entrance into MacDonald Road? How much of that stretch in there — maybe the minister can correct me on my geography. Is Azure part of the road into Crestview?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will again save the member opposite a Google map search. I did it just while he was asking the question. It is actually from Goodman's Appliance Services and Repair right down — just north of Trails North. It looks like the first access coming into Crestview as you are coming north on the highway back to Centennial — so, north back.

Mr. Hassard: I thank the officials for being here. I think the minister actually meant Goody's Gas, but that is beside the point. I appreciate that information. Thank you.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate in Vote 55.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On COVID-19 Response

COVID-19 Response in the amount of \$10,396,000 agreed to

On Corporate Services Reduction

Corporation Services Reduction underexpenditure in the amount of \$324,000 cleared

On Information and Communications Technology
Information and Communications Technology in the
amount of \$324,000 agreed to
On Transportation

Mr. Hassard: Can we get a breakdown on that amount, please?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would be happy this afternoon to give a breakdown on that \$1,029,000. If the member opposite will oblige me, I will continue to seek that information.

I will say that, when it comes to information communications, it is a very important matter for us to discuss. I can say that it's part of our efforts to make it easier for the public and businesses to access government services online. Last year, in 2019-20, the government spent over \$10 million on information technology projects, of which \$3.8 million went to local companies. This year, we budgeted \$14.5 million on information technology projects, including \$2.5 million to the Department of Health and Social Services for the 1Health project and an additional \$4 million for new IT projects in other departments.

These projects include everything from enhancing IT to expanding mobile radio systems to providing internal business solutions and web-based services for citizens. Our government continuously seeks ways to provide best value for money for taxpayers. We are evaluating solutions to enhance our phone system for flexible work arrangements, as well as a video conferencing presentation sharing capability. We have started to upgrade boardrooms and meeting rooms in strategic locations to facilitate video conferencing, thus reducing personal travel and associated costs. That, of course, is very important as we move through this pandemic that we find ourselves in and have to make allowances for people working from home who cannot come into the office for various reasons.

As members opposite can hear this afternoon, our investments in information and communications technology are very important as part of improving the way that we operate and turn this, as I say, 19th century institution into a 21st century, data-driven institution. It is vital.

We are looking here to see if we can get some detail for the members opposite on the \$1 million. We are certainly going to continue to look at this.

The fact is that we've seen a woeful negligence, perhaps, in the investments in our data and communications technology for many, many years. We really do have to do a better job, and that's what we have striven to do over the four years of our mandate.

The members opposite will note that we launched an open data portal in June 2019. This tool makes government information available to be freely accessed, used, and shared by anyone, anywhere.

Of course, as we've spoken to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin over the last little while, we've also spent some considerable time and effort improving the Bids and Tenders system so that our contracting community can actually bid on jobs remotely from Dawson City and not have to pick up paper-based documents. The advantage of that, Mr. Chair, is that the contractors, when they fill in those documents, can actually be

told when and if they have made a mistake. It actually improves the success rate by which our contractors can bid on their jobs.

I will happily answer any other questions that the member opposite may have.

Chair: We are on the item Transportation for \$1,029,000 in the operation and maintenance vote.

Is there any further debate?

Transportation in the amount of \$1,029,000 agreed to

On Total of Other Operation and Maintenance

Total of Other Operation and Maintenance in the amount of nil cleared

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$11,425,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Information and Communications Technology

On Corporate Information Technology Equipment and Systems

Total Corporate Information Technology Equipment and Systems underexpenditure in the amount of \$2,500,000 cleared

On Property Management

On Dempster Fibre Project

Dempster Fibre Project underexpenditure in the amount of \$19,500,000 cleared

On Total of Other Capital

Total of Other Capital in the amount of nil cleared

Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$22,000,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures underexpenditure of \$10,575,000 agreed to

Department of Highways and Public Works agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee now is general debate on Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

French Language Services Directorate

Hon. Mr. Streicker: To begin with, I would like to welcome Monsieur André Bourcier, who is the director of the French Language Services Directorate. Je vous présente Monsieur André Bourcier, le directeur des services en français.

I just want to mention two things in opening remarks, Mr. Chair. The first one is that the budget itself is for \$400,000, which really is about the sponsorship of the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie. That is the group

that manages the federal-provincial-territorial table on French language ministers. We are hosting it. Most of this money is going to be recovered. Only a small amount is really coming from the Yukon government itself, but the \$400,000 is the amount in the budget.

The other thing that I would like to do is to just say thank you very much to all of the folks who have been doing all the translations during the pandemic. It has been quite a remarkable job that they've done to try to keep the francophone community informed and up to date with all things to do with the pandemic. In fact, I would just acknowledge Mr. Bourcier has been doing his role during the livestreams to make sure that, if there is a need for translation, it happens during the livestream.

I am happy to answer any questions for the French Language Services Directorate today on these matters or other.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the official for joining us here today in the Legislature. I thank the minister for his information on the expenditure under the supplementary budget. I do not have any questions today for the French Language Services Directorate.

Ms. White: Merci Monsieur le président. Bienvenue au directeur des services en français, pour sa première visite aussi à l'Assemblée. Malheureusement, il n'y a pas grand chose à dire aujourd'hui, alors je n'ai pas beaucoup de questions.

There is so little to talk about in the \$400,000 line item. I was going through the significant budget at the beginning of the year but, in all honesty, we have had such leaps and bounds in French Language Services from the very first time. I called the very first official back in Highways and Public Works — say that all we see is steady growth, and it is, of course, through the direction of both the minister and the director. It is not a very exciting first time in the Assembly for the director of the French Language Services, but it is meaningful. I also just really want to highlight the importance of having the translation services on demand, essentially, for the livestreaming. We saw in very quick succession the adaptability of government departments. We asked for the American Sign Language interpreter, and she arrived. We asked for French language, and they arrived.

It means that what we are seeing in those updates is that we are reaching out to as much of the community as we can. So, thank you, of course, to the director who gets us that service during those live briefings, and I thank the minister for the work. I appreciate that, as he got busier, he said that he had to drop his French classes, and I appreciate that. It has been an interesting time in learning a second language and practising a second language with all that additional stress. It's one thing that you can put down and pick up later on. Merci beaucoup d'être venu, et un grand merci à la Direction des services en français. C'est important. On voit un grand changement dans cette direction depuis quelques années, alors c'est quelque chose que j'apprécie, mais je n'ai pas de questions aujourd'hui.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*?

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all

lines in Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, cleared or carried

Chair: Ms. White has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 27, French Languages Services Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$400,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$400,000 agreed to French Language Services Directorate agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I just would like to say thank you to Mr. Bourcier. Bienvenue pour la première fois ici.

I thank him for his first time here and thank the members opposite for their comments.

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes. Mr. Adel, please.

Mr. Adel: EMR officials have gone home for the day. The minister is happy to come down to answer questions for the short period that is left in the Committee, so when we come back in five minutes, just so the House knows, that is the situation that we're in.

Chair: Would members like to have the minister all on his own for a few minutes?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: We will recess for five minutes and give the minister time to show up.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Pillai, you have 18 minutes and 36 seconds.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — continued

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I know that the member opposite had a number of areas that he touched on as we were concluding. I know that we have limited time. I'll leave it to the member opposite — maybe we'll go through something. I know that there are some areas of forestry and smaller pieces. We will probably be back again together, but we can have an opportunity to clear some of that. I'll just cede the floor and try to get through some of the questions from the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that from the minister. A quick question coming out of Question Period today. I know that I had asked about additional sub-regional plans that were being contemplated. I don't have the Blues with me, but I believe the minister said that he is working on additional sub-regional land use plans. I'm curious if he could tell us how many and where those are located.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I appreciate the opportunity to clarify, and hopefully it will be reflected in the Blues — the comments that I made in response. We have had at least one First Nation request to have a discussion with us about sub-regional planning. There has been an ask. We have not received anything formally.

At this point, the only plan that we're working on is with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. I spoke a bit about that today — that we're still committed to that work, and we continue to follow on the revised work plan. But no other sub-regional plans have been undertaken.

There have been some overtures from at least one leader with council, but again, we haven't received — normally what would happen is that we would receive some sort of a formal correspondence or there would be another discussion. There hasn't been, but it seems that there was some interest in the concept. Maybe that First Nation will undertake a discussion with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to do their own due diligence; I am not sure.

Again, I think that where that question was going today during Question Period was: Would this affect other projects that are underway? The answer is no, because we haven't undertaken that.

All of the folks who are currently inside that area — and that was asked of me today — as we're communicating to folks who reach out to us and who are in that sub-regional area now — they are still, in some cases, applying for renewals to their permits or continuing to do the exploration work that they're undertaking. We have communicated to them that, again, it's the same process that it would have been whether we were doing that planning or not.

Mr. Kent: I am going to just jump over to forestry issues for the balance of our time here this afternoon. I just wanted to ask the minister a couple of things.

Going over the Yukon Liberal Party platform from 2016, there were a couple of items dedicated to forestry in there. The first was developing opportunities for forestry companies to create fuel for biomass heating projects. I am just curious about the fuel wood and the opportunities.

I know that I have said in the past that, even with the firewood contract for the campgrounds in the Dawson area, some of that fuel wood was being hauled out of northern British Columbia just down the Stewart-Cassiar Highway, south of Junction 37. The second commitment that they made was targeting investment to boost small-scale softwood lumber opportunities, including a forestry plan for southeast Yukon. I know that this was asked of the minister in Question Period — about the southeast Yukon forestry plan — so I'm interested in an update on that. Exactly what investment has been targeted to boost small-scale softwood lumber opportunities?

The minister and I have both been in conversations with the small mill operator in the Whitehorse area. He is having some difficulty getting access to timber, so I'm interested in any updates that the minister has with respect to that and then any other fuel-wood opportunities that they are looking at for biomass heating projects — potential firewood or fuel-wood opportunities closer to communities throughout the territory.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will start with the quicker answers. First of all, with southeast Yukon, I think that it has just been in the last two weeks that I sent a letter to Chief Charlie. We have been ready to engage on a transfer payment agreement that would offset some of the costs and capacity that would be needed by the Liard First Nation to work with us on that plan. Previously, the funds were in place and we were ready to do that work. I guess that maybe other priorities had come up — by the First Nation. Certainly, with the previous administration there, we did have some discussions a bit about biomass. We did talk pretty thoroughly about biomass as well as opportunities.

There was some pretty big impact from fire on the Robert Campbell Highway a number of years back. I know that the LFN had reached out.

Part of what we communicated at that time was that we really wanted to get to the table to get this management plan in place. We're ready and willing, and I've sent a letter off just reaching out to say that, if there is more information needed or another discussion that has to happen — but we want to be doing that work.

On the biomass side of things, it's really three departments. We've tried to work with the Yukon Wood Products Association and others to have those discussions. Of course, Community Services — what we saw was some of the work that was done this year around Mary Lake. I will say to the member opposite that I might not get to the softwood discussion today, but I appreciate the good work being done in the sense that the member opposite connected one of the cutters with somebody who had just won a tender on some of that firesmarting, and so it has been good. There has been an opportunity there to access some needed fibre and then, at the same time, we're working between Community Services and the Forestry branch in Energy, Mines and Resources to look ahead to be able to provide folks with forward-looking opportunities on fibre.

Biomass is between three departments. So, Community Services' role is to identify areas for firesmarting, and a lot of that work has been done just south of the city, understanding

that some of our biggest areas of threat are there. As well, Highways and Public Works — I'm not sure. I might have missed it during debate, but they are leading that work on installing the actual furnaces that are needed to be able to use that wood. It's all part, really, of an ability to maximize the use of some of that fibre that's being cut through fire mitigation, then having that ancillary use, and putting it into our system and pivoting over to that.

I see now that we're in a position where we're installing — or identifying and moving to install — some of these furnaces. Again, we felt that some of these areas — I'll call them "cut blocks" — have been a real opportunity for people who want to look to get into biomass.

Also, in the Haines Junction area, another area that had a bit of a fire threat previous to that — and another area — and we're working with a number of First Nations. The Forest Management branch and Wildland Fire Management are working together to create more fire-resilient communities through their participation in planning, contracting, and permitting for fuel-abatement activities. The materials harvest for fuel abatement can provide opportunities for biomass industry development, and contracts offered through the Wildland Fire Management fuel-abatement program can provide harvesting and clearing opportunities for a variety of forest industry operators.

To aid in the coordination of the development of the biomass industry, the departments of Community Services and Energy, Mines and Resources have initiated an interdepartmental working group on fuel abatement, biomass, and climate change implementation. The working group will also provide support for implementing *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*. This is very key to that.

There is a lot to discuss, and hopefully we will have a chance to continue on the biomass. We have also had some significant situations occur through Mother Nature. We had a really serious blow-down between Lake Laberge that stretches all the way to Kusawa — so a lot of mature trees knocked down. The Forest Management branch and Community Services right now have been very quick to identify what that means. We know that there could be a fire threat in the summertime — and at the same time, what is the best way for us to get in there and maximize the use of that fibre that has fallen? That is work that is underway, and I will report back when we have a chance.

Seeing the time, Mr. Chair, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Pillai that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled December 8, 2020:

34-3-59

Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board Annual Report 2019-2020 (Mostyn)

34-3-60

Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board Annual Report 2019-2020 (Mostyn)

The following legislative returns were tabled December 8, 2020:

34-3-53

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 204, *Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20* — Old Territorial Administration Building in Dawson City (Mostyn)

34-3-54

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — outfitter harvest quotas 2020-21 (Frost)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 77

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, December 9, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, December 9, 2020 — 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. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming Yukon University interim president, Dr. Maggie Matear. I recognize her, I hope, behind the mask, and I would like to welcome her here, joining us today. Thank you so much.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Order of Yukon inductees

Mr. Gallina: Mr. Speaker, on December 3, I presented a motion in this House congratulating the inductees into the Order of Yukon for 2020. Today I rise to pay tribute to these inductees on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government.

Keith Byram is the founder of Pelly Construction and a long-time supporter of Yukon community groups — Keith is the former chair of the Yukon Water Board and former president of the Yukon Association of Professional Engineers. Jack Cable is a former Liberal MLA and Commissioner of Yukon — Jack has volunteered for organizations, including Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon and the Law Society of Yukon. Bess Cooley is a master of Tlingit language and recognized for her work on genealogy and the inland Tlingit people. William Klassen — Bill Klassen — is a former RCMP officer in Teslin, wildlife biologist, conservation officer, and deputy minister for Yukon government. Bill and Rayanne recently moved. They no longer have their horses, and with the safety measures in place, my family and I will not be enjoying their horse-cart rides over the winter. Dr. Sally MacDonald has been a family physician in Yukon since 1980. Dr. MacDonald has delivered over 1,000 babies in this territory and continues to work, assisting Yukoners with end-of-life care. Agnes Mills is an elder for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation who has advanced the rights of indigenous peoples and is a national elder of the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation. Agnes was also the First Nation elder at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. Doug Phillips is a small-business owner and volunteer. Doug has served on many Yukon boards and committees, as well as serving both as an MLA and the territory's Commissioner. Gertie Tom has made significant impacts on the revitalization of First Nation

languages throughout Yukon, including providing a basis for a practical writing system for the previously unwritten Northern Tutchone language. Ron Veale initiated the earliest civil actions regarding abuses suffered by indigenous children in residential schools and is recognized as the first Chief Justice of Yukon. Finally, Frances Woolsey, is a Ta'an Kwäch'än leader, elder, and promoter of indigenous cultures and traditions.

Each of these individuals has made significant impacts in Yukon's history with their respective roles. They are each leaders in their own respect and rightfully deserving of recognition for their continued contributions to Yukon. I am proud to call these people neighbours and to be sharing my home with individuals so incredibly passionate and dedicated to their communities.

Recognized as the highest honour bestowed by the Government of Yukon, I welcome each of these inductees to the Order of Yukon and thank them for their contributions to our territory.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 2020 Order of Yukon recipients. Ten Yukoners will be presented with the newest civilian honour for merit to those Yukoners who have made a significant contribution to the advancement of Yukon society.

During a virtual New Year's Levee, Commissioner Angélique Bernard will present these awards along with other Commissioner's awards. There is so much to say about each of these amazing people, but the time allotted for tributes will never do them justice, but I'll try to capture a few thoughts on each.

Elder Bessie Cooley for her continued work in sharing of culture, tradition, and caring. She's always smiling, soft spoken, and so enjoys being involved. The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin sends out a special, personal congratulations to Bessie.

Elder Gertie Tom for language revitalization, but also for her beadwork and sewing. She is a mainstay whenever there is a craft sale and, especially at this time of year, she will have a table loaded with her lovely handiwork.

Elder Agnes Mills, who was the First Nation elder at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. I remember her working for the First Nation health department at the hospital, visiting and caring for First Nation patients and helping them to manoeuvre the system if needed — a quiet, soft-spoken beauty.

Elder Frances Woolsey and I sat on a board of directors together many years ago. I so admired her quiet strength and wisdom. She is recognized for her leadership in sharing her culture, and she always has a ready smile and time to share a story.

Keith Byram for his years as a local businessman and philanthropist — he and his family have been generous donors to major initiatives. This Christmas, the Yukon Hospital Foundation along with the Meadow Lakes golf course have united to host the Festival of Trees, raising funds for the Travis Adams foundation. From all the praises, it is another success.

Dr. Sally MacDonald is retired — not. She continues to give us her expertise and knowledge to help people who need end-of-life care and support, ensuring that patients are comfortable and that families are aware of the situation as it is ongoing. At times, her beautiful face shows stress, but Dr. MacDonald smiles and continues her amazing calling.

William Klassen has worn so many hats in his career and therefore is well known throughout the territory through his many jobs. He has also volunteered for many worthwhile organizations, such as the Salvation Army. If this were an ordinary year, he would be ringing the kettle bells.

The Hon. Ron Veale, former Chief Justice of Yukon, retired in July 2020. His career is varied and, I'm sure, chock-full of stories during his time as a lawyer, politician, and Chief Justice. He was also the backup to the Commissioner of Yukon, should both the Commissioner and the Administrator be unavailable to sign documents or assent to bills. Mr. Veale and his wife, Katherine, were guests of mine at many functions, and we shared many laughs.

Jack Cable was part of a law company — Cable, Veale and Cosco — before throwing his hat into the political arena, and he was an MLA for two terms. He was appointed Commissioner in 2000 and also volunteered for a few NGOs. Jack was always so kind and helpful to me while I was Administrator during his tenure.

Doug Phillips was an MLA for many years, a small business owner, and a volunteer. He was appointed Commissioner in 2010, and he so enjoyed his time in office. His sense of humour and laughter were always delightful to witness. He is a master gardener and loves the outdoor life of Yukon.

Now, one should see a pattern here: each of them volunteer, help, and give back to others in their communities. It also strikes me, as we tribute these honourees, that they have enriched the things that they have touched, and that is what the Order of Yukon was meant to embody. Although we cannot gather in person to celebrate this coming January 1, we can join virtually and are encouraged to do so. We wish them and their families all the best for the holiday season. Congratulations.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to join in celebration of 10 incredible individuals who are set to receive the 2020 Order of Yukon. These folks embody excellence and achievement in their fields, and we have heard about the outstanding contributions to the social, cultural, and economical well-being that they have made to Yukon and to the benefit of her residents.

We have heard about their contributions and accomplishments over the years from my colleagues, and I thank them for that. I know that we are all so close that we each have stories about all of these individuals. Our congratulations and thanks for a lifetime of service to others go out to Bess Cooley, Keith Byram, Doug Phillips, Jack Cable, Bill Klassen, Frances Woolsey, Sally MacDonald, Gertie Tom, Agnes Mills, and last but not least, Ron Veale.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling two legislative returns responding to questions from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin on November 23 and December 7 during Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling two documents: One is regarding private members' motions and analysis on recorded votes; and a second one is on rent protections across Canadian jurisdictions.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I have for tabling a legislative return in response to questions that have arisen in and out of the House over the course of the past few months and in response to Motion for the Production of Papers No. 21 requesting a detailed breakdown of COVID-19 expenditures in the *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Julie Jai and Leah Robinson to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective December 14, 2020; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does reappoint Marius Curteanu and Roxanne Larouche to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective December 14, 2020.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to table a detailed list by December 18, 2020, showing any additional equipment, training, or resources provided to Yukon Emergency Medical Services to help them deal with the pandemic, including:

- (1) support for rural EMS volunteers;
- (2) support for EMS staff on the ground; and
- (3) support for EMS staff in the air.

I also give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of all e-mails sent from the Liberal Cabinet Office to the Member for Riverdale North regarding House strategy, talking points for Liberal MLAs, or desired outcomes in the Legislative Assembly during all Spring and Fall Sittings since the last territorial election, as well as during the two-week period prior to those Sittings of the Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon Forum

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise today to recognize the importance of the Yukon Forum. The forum has been critical in advancing our government's goal of building strong government-to-government relationships and collaborating on shared priorities with Yukon First Nations. The forum is a regular meeting between leaders of the Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations, and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

When our government came into office, we committed to reinvigorating the forum and working closely with First Nations to find tangible solutions to challenges that meet the needs of all Yukoners. In January 2017, our government signed a declaration to renew the forum and committed to coming together at meetings four times a year. We have followed through on this promise, despite the pandemic, and on December 11, we will hold our 16th Yukon Forum since 2017.

We have made significant progress over the past four years, and I would like to highlight some of those for you here today. In 2017, we focused on establishing our shared priorities in setting up the right structures to ensure our success. In May 2017, we identified priority areas including: fiscal relations; collaborative processes for justice, health and social services, education, and heritage — and with the Government of Canada — and also land claims and self-governing implementation. These joint priorities addressed long-standing and complex issues of great importance to our government and to all Yukoners.

Under fiscal relations, we reached an agreement to clarify how resource royalties are shared under chapter 23 of the final agreements, as well as signing personal income tax-sharing agreements with First Nations with final agreements.

We have developed a new Yukon representative public service plan, which includes an 18-month Yukon First Nation and Canadian aboriginal hiring practice pilot that started in October 2020.

We signed a memorandum of understanding on mining and established a number of joint working groups on progressive reclamation, compliance monitoring, and enforcement. We also established an independent mineral development strategy panel, which will release their recommendations following public and stakeholder consultation very soon.

The list goes on, and I have more to say in my response. I am extremely proud, Mr. Speaker, of the progress that has been

made and the lasting relationships that we have formed through the Yukon Forum. I want to thank all Yukon First Nations for their collaboration over the past four years, and I look forward to continuing to work on priorities that benefit all Yukoners.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you for the update. We understand the importance of the Yukon Forum and, of course, the importance of working with First Nation governments. The Yukon Forum is an important avenue to build and maintain these relationships and advance reconciliation. We look forward to an update from the Premier at the conclusion of the Yukon Forum on December 11.

Ms. White: I feel that today I have been asked to respond to a ministerial statement on something as elusive as the sighting of an elephant shrew, one of the rarest animals on Earth. You might ask yourself why I make this comparison, and that's a good question.

Mr. Speaker, I know that these animals exist. I can find photos of them online and even read about the experience of others as they view these creatures, but I have never seen one myself and, until some date in the future, I won't have that opportunity.

There's a strong parallel to be drawn with the Yukon Forum. I know that the *Cooperation in Governance Act* stated what the purpose of the forum was when the act was first passed in 2005, because I can read about it. I can find photos of the forum online, and I can read press releases and listen to interviews about what has happened and what has been discussed. But to date, I, as an elected Member of the Legislative Assembly and a leader of a political territorial party, have never once been able to attend.

This Yukon government has said that the forum is for ministers and First Nation leadership, which I respect. However, it is unusual for intergovernmental fora to prohibit the presence of representatives of other parties represented in the Legislature or Parliament.

The Liberal government's insistence on excluding opposition leaders from attending as observers runs contrary to their avowals of openness and transparency. This is all the more mysterious given the fact that members of the Liberal caucus who aren't ministers are able to attend. So, what makes them different from other elected members of this Assembly?

We agree that intergovernmental meetings, such as the Yukon Forum, are important. They are an important part of the evolution of governance in the territory. We agree that finding common ground and setting goals together is important, but we also know the value of oversight and accountability.

We understand that, sometimes when a commitment is made, the follow-through is sometimes lost, and that's when it's important to have outside oversight. We look forward to the day when the Yukon Forum will be treated with the respect and openness that it deserves, rather than a carefully managed communications operation for the sitting government.

Over the past four years, we have seen indications that substantive issues remain on the table, and that is when the truth does leak out. Sometimes it's about the processes that the

Premier touts are ongoing. Process can often be used to provide cover for government indecision or, worse yet, the fear of making a decision. As a result, we have seen First Nations express concern that this government continues to act as if it is business as usual, whether it is mining and wetlands pending a wetlands strategy, or the development of a major industrial strategy absent land use plans, or failure to report on actions taken in response to the *Child and Family Services Act* Review Advisory Committee.

If nothing else, the Premier might be doing himself a favour by allowing opposition leaders into the tent as observers, which would provide opposition leaders with context for the complexities that the Premier has, to date, been unable to convey to this Assembly.

Unlike travelling to the other side of the planet to see the elephant shrew in person which seems unlikely, the Yukon Forum happens right here at home.

I look forward to a government that is unafraid of inviting all elected leaders of this Assembly into the tent as observers.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would like to thank the members opposite for their statements and comments. As I did note in my opening list of accomplishments at the Yukon Forum, there is an impressive list of accomplishments. The member for the NDP says, “But there is much more work to be done” — and we completely agree with that.

We know that there is not a united voice, necessarily, when it comes to all different governments in the Yukon. The Yukon Forum is an extremely important part of us figuring out how to work together to commit to some of the policies and to really promote the extenuating work that the First Nation governments have been doing as they work to draw down on their self-government agreements.

We’ve worked with the federal government and the First Nation governments to sign a memorandum of understanding to reset the relationship, for example, under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*. Through this work, we have established an oversight group and have begun to do the work of reviewing and improving YESAA processes and legislation. We have worked together to create a plan to restart Yukon’s first land use planning process and set it up for success. This includes approving the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* and starting land use planning discussions with a number of other First Nations.

Under health and social services, we are working together on four priority areas: child welfare, mental wellness, income assistance, and co-governance delivery models for services.

Under education, a Chiefs Committee on Education was established in 2019. We have signed a number of bilateral education agreements and transfer payment agreements with First Nations, and we are in discussions on a renewed joint education action plan — otherwise known as JEAP — and a Yukon First Nation school board.

Related to justice, we’re working with First Nations and Public Safety Canada to support community safety plans for a number of First Nations. We passed amendments in the *Corrections Act, 2009* and implemented recommendations

from the Loukidelis report on the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, including a forensic care team to support complex mental health needs for those in these correctional systems.

In May 2019, leaders also signed a memorandum of understanding to collaborate on heritage management.

Mr. Speaker, our approach to federal engagement is shaped by our work with the Yukon Forum as well. Just this week, as we mentioned earlier this week, we carried out the tradition of Yukon Days, holding joint Yukon government and Yukon First Nation governments’ meetings with First Ministers. These meetings are an effective way for us to jointly advocate for shared issues and priorities. Intergovernmental collaboration on this scale has not been done before.

Yukon is leading the way in Canada and in this level of engagement and collaboration between First Nations and Yukon government — the work that we are doing through the Yukon Forum and in bodies such as the vision of *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow* — by supporting two-way communication and a fair and just partnership between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: School busing

Mr. Kent: On August 12, the government announced that they were working with Standard Bus to add additional school buses for the 2020-21 school year to accommodate as many students as safely possible. A CBC story from August 19 says that the department was getting three additional school buses to meet these demands.

On November 10, the minister told this House that the buses had arrived and would be on the road in two weeks. Seeing no action, we asked for an update on the buses again on Friday, December 4 and again on Monday, December 7. However, we learned this morning from the *Whitehorse Star* that the buses are indeed ready to go, but Standard Bus is still waiting for the schedules from the Department of Education.

Considering the months of advanced notice, why hasn’t the government given the busing company the schedules yet?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The health and safety of students and staff in the Department of Education and in the entire Yukon government is, of course, our first priority. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, school busing for the 2020-21 school year has had to be limited in order to meet the chief medical officer of health’s health and safety guidelines for school bus operations during the pandemic. As a result, we have not been able yet to accommodate as many non-eligible families as in previous years.

I think that it is incredibly important that Yukoners understand that we have been able to assign all eligible students who have registered for busing to a school bus this year — the number being 1,907 students.

Mr. Kent: So, we have three buses sitting in the yard at Standard Bus ready to go, waiting on schedules from the minister’s department. I am hoping that she actually answers that question here as part of the second one.

We have repeatedly brought up this important issue in the Legislative Assembly during this Fall Sitting. I say it's an important issue because this affects parents and students who are dealing with the pandemic, and they have been coming to us with their many concerns. The government has said that about 250 fewer students are riding the bus this year. Parents have to adjust work schedules to transport students to school and, in at least one case, a parent had to put their child in a taxicab to get them to school.

Information from the *Whitehorse Star* indicates that the department is not going to provide schedules for the new buses until the new year. So, can the minister tell us when the buses will be on the road and why the department has not provided the company with these schedules yet?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We have obtained three additional buses specifically to support the non-eligible students and their families who want to ride a bus here in the territory, primarily here in Whitehorse. We have heard the concerns from these families, and we are working to deploy the three additional buses and to optimize the existing routes in ways that allow us to accommodate as many students as possible. This is a complex situation, a complex puzzle to unravel.

I would like to take the opportunity to recognize the very strident and difficult work being done at the Department of Education by the folks who work on the bus schedules and by the folks who work with the families who are seeking to be on a bus, even though they are not eligible to do so under the law. Nonetheless, we are working very closely with Standard Bus, which is working diligently to obtain the appropriate drivers.

The buses are ready to go. We expect good news with respect to that situation very soon.

Mr. Kent: Again, Standard Bus lines told the *Whitehorse Star* that the buses are ready to go. They're waiting on the schedules and routes from the Department of Education. This is another unfortunate case where the Liberals have dropped the ball on the timelines they committed to. It's an extremely important issue for Yukon families.

The Liberals were slow to order extra buses, and now they have been sitting idle for weeks in Standard's yard, waiting for the government to get them the necessary information. It looks like many will have been without bus service for the first five months of the school year because of these delays.

Can the minister tell us how much these additional three buses will cost, and if the money is coming from the \$4.1 million Canada sent us for school reopenings?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I certainly concur that this is a serious situation for families here in the territory. I should note, however, that despite — well, COVID-19 has certainly thrown a wrench into this situation.

We ordered the buses in August, which was around the time that it was determined that they would be necessary — actually, maybe before that — I don't want to have those dates wrong — but in the summer. Nonetheless, they took a while to arrive, as everyone knows, because there has been a great demand for buses across the country. What I can indicate is that these buses have been ordered to obtain service and provide

service to students who are otherwise not eligible to ride the bus.

We are looking forward to providing that service. We have done so as quickly as has been possible. We want to make sure that all eligible students — well, they are already on the bus — but that the non-eligible students are served to the best possible routes, to the best possible routine. We are working closely with Standard Bus. I am very appreciative of their work. They have been a great partner with the Department of Education and with the folks at the Department of Education who have been working diligently to get this done.

What I can indicate is that, in a regular year, we often don't have non-eligible students scheduled until well into November.

Question re: Government of Yukon borrowing limit

Mr. Cathers: Earlier this year, we learned that the Liberal government had secretly gone to Ottawa and asked for the territory's debt cap to be doubled from \$400 million to \$800 million. This came out in June while the Legislature was adjourned during a pandemic and when the territory was under a state of emergency. In fact, the same day that the Liberals doubled the Yukon's debt limit, they announced the first extension of the state of emergency.

They didn't even put out a Government of Yukon press release to tell Yukoners about doubling our debt limit. It is pretty clear that the Liberal government was hoping that Yukoners simply wouldn't notice.

Why did the Premier use the pandemic to try to hide the fact that the Liberals were doubling the territory's debt cap?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We have been down this road quite a few times. I think that the Yukon Party is out of questions. Again, we brought up in the Legislative Assembly the fact that we were going to Ottawa and that this request was happening well before that. We have talked about that in the Legislative Assembly. The government's current borrowing limit is \$800 million, set by two regulations under the *Yukon Act*, which is Canadian legislation. It is allocated between Government of Yukon and the corporations — Yukon Development Corporation, Yukon Energy Corporation, Yukon Housing Corporation, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

The limit was increased earlier this year by the Government of Canada, and of the \$800-million borrowing limit that was set in the Yukon's borrowing limits regulations, \$590.5 million — which is about 73.8 percent — is still available to fulfill outstanding and future approvals of debt. We are very pleased to present this evidence of strong fiscal management.

As noted in our early AA rating issued by Standard & Poor's Global, a debt limit does not mean that the Yukon has incurred debt, and also, there has been no borrowing for general government purposes. Borrowing has been done by the corporations. Most of the borrowing that has been done to date has been by the Yukon Party.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier's government has borrowed tens of millions of dollars and he knows it very well.

We have asked the Premier many times in this House if he was going to get our debt limit increased. Let me quote his

responses. October 24, 2017, he said, “Have we touched the debt cap? No. Do we want to? No, we don’t want to. We want to make sure that we work inside of our means...”

October 2, 2018, he said, “I’ll just say up front that we’re not contemplating taking on any extra debt for our five-year capital plan...” He also said, “... I have said this a few times, but I don’t think the member opposite is paying attention to it — that we are not contemplating borrowing.”

Like many things the Premier says, his words didn’t end up being true, because we now know that the Liberals secretly went and got our debt cap doubled to \$800 million. Why did the Premier say one thing in this Assembly but then go and do the complete opposite?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don’t know what the member opposite is talking about as far as doing the exact opposite. We were asked about whether or not we were going to ask the federal government about a debt limit. We spoke about that in the Legislative Assembly. It is no secret when you talk about it in the Legislative Assembly.

Our Yukon borrowing rate was last increased in 2012 to \$400 million. Our current borrowing — the amount of money that has been borrowed so far — is \$209 million, most of which occurred under the previous government and covers loans for the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Development Corporation. I told this House in 2018 that we raised this issue with the federal Finance minister. I told this House in 2018 — let me repeat myself for the member opposite, who doesn’t like to listen to these answers.

The draft 10-year renewable electric plan — again, we have talked about this — includes proposed projects that would exceed about a half-billion dollars in spending. We are working with our federal partners. We are working with First Nation governments. We have made overtures that, if we were going to be spending money, this is something that we believe is a necessity in Yukon, but we are hoping that we can work with the federal government and First Nation governments in that pursuit. We have been very clear about that.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is a federal decision, not a Cabinet decision. The members opposite want us to open up the Legislative Assembly for this, but at the same time, they’ve increased it a few times and never opened the Legislative Assembly for that debate.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Premier told us he didn’t want to touch the debt limit and then he secretly went and asked to get it doubled. The record shows that he has many times told Yukoners that the Liberals were not going to get the debt cap increased. Then they broke their word, did the complete opposite, and got it doubled to \$800 million.

Early in their time in office, the Liberals commissioned a Financial Advisory Panel to advise them on fiscal matters. That panel told them that, if the Liberals didn’t make changes to spending patterns, we’d reach our debt cap by 2020.

I’ll quote from that report: “If sensible and gradual changes can be made now, Yukoners will be in a strong, more sustainable position going forward.” Instead, many of the panel’s recommendations went ignored and the Premier and his colleagues have taken us deeper into debt.

When will Liberals come up with a plan to get out of debt, instead of taking us into the red by borrowing money every year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners deserve accurate information. Before COVID, what we did in this part of the government — in the Liberal government — is we actually got us to a surplus. Now, the member opposite is talking about a debt limit that has been increased and then saying that we took Yukoners into debt. No, we actually, before COVID, took Yukoners into a surplus — so I’ll correct that record right away.

Also, this can allow us to make major infrastructure investments and to support green energy plans. I’ve said that in the Legislative Assembly a few times, yet the member opposite is making it seem like we’ve never talked about that.

We’ve also said, in the Legislative Assembly in 2018, that we will be going to Ottawa and having this conversation, but the member opposite says we secretly went to Ottawa. Again, not the reality.

It sounds to me like the Yukon Party clearly does not support increasing the borrowing limit. The borrowing limit was increased under the Yukon Party, so I guess it’s okay when the Yukon Party does it, but when a Liberal government does it, I guess that’s not okay with them.

Question re: Inclusive and special education review

Ms. White: The Department of Education has embarked on an independent review of inclusive education. This review is one step in the department’s response to the Auditor General of Canada’s 2019 report on education that was critical of the department’s handling of students with special needs. Parents were pleased that the department had taken this step and were looking forward to taking part in this evaluation. After all, who knows more about the gaps experienced by families and their children than the parents themselves?

Unfortunately, parents have discovered that their opinions and suggestions are not actually being sought out. They are being told that they can share their experience, concerns, and even praise with their school council. It is then up to the council to pass these on.

Mr. Speaker, what kind of review on inclusive education would choose to exclude the very individuals who experience inclusion programs the most?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I’m pleased to rise today to speak about the review of inclusive and special education. I will ask after this session, or in the very near future, to be able to speak with the member opposite because that’s certainly not the information that I have. I’m sure that she’s received it from a source and we should determine how to resolve that.

The department wants to ensure that students receive timely and effective supports for their learning needs and that the approach is consistent across the system. Back in 2019 — and actually before the Auditor General’s report came out in 2019 — we were working on a review of special and inclusive education, knowing that it was an area that needed improvement in our school system and in our Department of

Education. That work was supported by the report of the Auditor General of Canada when they wrote part of their recommendations. We have completely accepted those recommendations, and we are working with a consultant who is leading the review on inclusive and special education here in the territory.

Ms. White: Every family with a child with special needs experiences the education system differently. Some families might be perfectly happy with the services that their child receives, and their views should be included in this review. Equally, families who have difficult experiences should also have a voice in this evaluation process.

Surely, it is the point of this review to hear from all parties involved on how to deliver the best inclusive education, designed to meet the needs of individual children. Parents are demanding to be heard. Will the minister change this course and direct that parents have an opportunity to provide direct feedback as part of this review?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It's not necessary to change the course because what has been described by the member opposite is exactly the plan going forward. The timeline for this review has unfortunately been extended due to COVID-19 into the 2020-21 school year. Obviously — perhaps not obviously — let's be clear: The consultant and the team of individuals working on this intended to meet individually with parents, students, families, and educators for the purposes of doing this work. That simply is not possible. Travelling to the communities is not advised. Travelling to face-to-face meetings is not advised.

The extension will provide more time and opportunities to safely connect and gather perspectives on these programs and services from students, families, central administration and school staff, Yukon First Nations, partners, and school communities.

Ms. White: So, parents are not the only ones concerned about the inclusive education review. The minister received a joint letter last week from the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, the Yukon Teachers' Association, Autism Yukon, and LDAY. The letter states — and I quote: "The Yukon Government's planned complete and apparent avoidance of the OAG recommendations as part of the current review is deeply worrying and undermines the legitimacy and integrity of the review."

Those are very strong words from essential partners. What immediate action will the minister take to get the inclusive education review back on track?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Department of Education, the consultant who has been hired, the Auditor General of Canada, the individual families, students, and professional educators all agree that there is no point whatsoever in embarking on a review of inclusive and special education that will not be meaningful and real and bring about real change for the experiences of these students. The extension that has been given will provide more time and opportunities to safely connect and to gather perspectives on these programs and services from students — which are critical — from families — absolutely critical — central administration and their

experiences, and school staff, Yukon First Nations, our partners, and school communities.

This review and report will be used to frame a collaboration with Yukon First Nations and our education partners to respond to the feedback and the findings from this review and to together develop next steps and actions to improve and modernize these programs to more effectively support student learning and outcomes, which is truly what this is all about.

Question re: Government of Yukon borrowing limit

Mr. Cathers: As of March 31, 2017, the Yukon government had \$193.5 million in debt. What is the territory's current level of debt as of today?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe that the member opposite asked this question during Committee of the Whole. I will look back to see what the answer was at that time. I don't have that number in front of me.

Mr. Cathers: Most Yukoners would think that the Finance minister should actually know what the territory's debt is. The Premier probably wishes that his past comments in the House weren't recorded, but he has many times told us that the Liberals would not ask for our debt limit to be increased.

Let me just remind the Premier of his quotes when he misleadingly told Yukoners that the Liberals would not increase our debt limit. On October 24, 2017, he said — and I quote: "Have we touched the debt cap? No. Do we want to? No, we don't want to. We want to make sure that we work inside of our means..." On October 2, 2018, he said: "I'll just say up front that we're not contemplating taking on any extra debt..." He also said: "... I have said this a few times, but I don't think the member opposite is paying attention to it — that we are not contemplating borrowing."

Why would the Premier make these false claims when, in fact, the Liberals were going to ask that the debt limit be doubled?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I guess they are definitely out of questions. They are asking the same question again — two times in one day. We have talked in the Legislative Assembly here. We have given numbers during Committee of the Whole. I believe that the numbers I gave at that time — and I just have to double-check if they are still accurate, but I assume they are: Yukon Development Corporation at \$157.8 million; Yukon Hospital Corporation at \$33.2 million; the Yukon Housing Corporation at \$2.7 million; and Yukon College at \$1 million. Again, with the members opposite, I have to make sure that I have the most up-to-date information as far as what we've borrowed so far.

We've talked about borrowing limits as well, and we've talked about the fact that the members opposite — their information is not, in fact, correct when he says that we secretly went to Ottawa. We spoke about how we've talked in the Legislative Assembly about that. We've also talked about how we have these incredible green energy projects that are coming into fruition. We hope to not increase our debt, but it's good to have that \$800 million for things that Yukoners have told us are extremely important to them, which is green energy. We will

continue to work with First Nation governments and the federal government as well. I spoke to the Prime Minister of Canada about exactly this issue just yesterday in our phone call — about how important it is that green energy projects are recognized not only in Yukon, but by the federal government.

Mr. Cathers: It's not very comforting that the Finance minister has lost track of how much they're borrowing. The Premier tries to dismiss this as no big deal, but in fact, their spending is a big deal.

The Premier's hand-picked Financial Advisory Panel actually made a recommendation about the territory's debt limit. They suggested that the territory's debt limit be indexed to 15 percent of the territory's GDP. The panel's report goes on to point out that this would mean that the territory's debt cap should only increase to \$485 million by 2020. I'll table that part of the report since the Premier seems to have conveniently forgotten it.

Again, that's the Premier's own Financial Advisory Panel suggesting that the debt cap only increase to \$485 million, yet the Premier secretly asked for it to be increased to \$800 million.

Why did the Premier ignore his own independent Financial Advisory Panel's advice about getting the Liberals' spending under control?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, Mr. Speaker, again, I think that the Financial Advisory Panel will be very pleased that we actually got to a surplus — not a deficit, as the member opposite would have you believe — a year ahead of schedule. It's very unscrupulous for the member opposite to try to confuse Yukoners between a borrowing limit and an actual surplus. He did the same thing when we were in Committee of the Whole about debt anchors. We believe one of the best debt anchors is to have a surplus compared to a deficit, but again, the member opposite makes it seem like there is something else going on.

All the personal attacks aside from the member opposite about my —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I haven't exactly heard personal attacks, no. I've heard concerns raised about the competing narratives and discharging duties in the minister's capacity. So, you can sit down, yes.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Well, the last thing he said was "personal attacks".

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: He also referred to quoting the Financial Advisory Panel report as being "unscrupulous", and I think that counts as insulting language that is contrary to the Standing Order 19(i).

Speaker: On the point of order, the Hon. Premier.

Hon. Mr. Silver: That's not the unscrupulous part — sorry.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I don't love "unscrupulous". I'll review that with the Clerks-at-the-Table and return, if necessary.

Hon. Mr. Silver: My point being made is that we increased a borrowing limit, but what we also did was balance our budget into a surplus. We told Yukoners why we were going for the increase in the borrowing limit, and we have talked about that ad nauseum in the Legislative Assembly. We have also made reference to the fact that most of the debt that we currently have in the Yukon is because the Yukon Party spent money that they didn't have. They went out and increased that debt. We have not — not to the rate that they had.

We have increased the limit — yes — but the members opposite increased the limit as well. In 2009, the borrowing limit was \$300 million, up from \$138 million. So, they increased it at that time — more than doubling it. They also increased it again in 2012. But, again, good for the goose — I guess not good for the gander.

Question re: COVID-19 testing for children

Mr. Hassard: On September 23, the government announced that it was exploring the possibility of offering COVID-19 gargle tests for children in Yukon as opposed to nasal swab tests. During the October 7 COVID-19 update, the chief medical officer of health reported to Yukoners that the gargle test would be available in Whitehorse in a matter of weeks and throughout the territory after that. That was over two months ago.

At that time, we were waiting on a supply of the tests. Can the minister tell us: Have we received a supply of the tests yet or not?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Throughout our response to COVID-19, we have taken an evidence-based approach to testing. After receiving tests at the lab in British Columbia for disease control — the goals that had been set in terms of technology and the processes that have been established — we are definitely taking advice from our chief medical officer of health to determine which testing options are best suited for Yukon.

The direction for testing is done in collaboration with the chief medical officer of health. I would just like to acknowledge that. The response for testing for all Yukoners is done in collaboration and the best practices are done under the advice and guidance of the chief medical officer of health.

Mr. Hassard: I was actually asking the minister about the gargle test. I was hoping that she would have maybe had some answers around that. I would think that this would be more of a priority for the minister.

We have all seen an increased number of children getting tested. Multiple daycares have closed while children of all ages await results. We have also heard from parents that many children really struggle with the nasal swabs, which is further complicating getting kids tested. These gargle tests are available throughout BC and have been rolling out across the country.

Can the minister tell Yukon parents when the gargle test will be available to children here in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I can tell Yukoners is that Yukon uses the gold standard test, which is processed through the BC communicable disease centre. I appreciate the question around children and childcare centres. Certainly, these are a key priority for this government. Yukoners should know that the advice that we take around testing and the best methods is under the advice and guidance of the chief medical officer of health. I would like to acknowledge the expertise in terms of the testing, the epidemiology, and how we proceed with our approach to COVID here in the Yukon. It is great work by the team in terms of keeping Yukoners safe.

I know that we have had some concerns brought to our attention. Those are discussions that are being had by the experts. When the recommendations come with respect to changes, certainly I would be happy to let Yukoners know the approaches under the guidance and direction of the chief medical officer.

Mr. Hassard: Unfortunately, we get a lot more words but no answers to the question.

Let's review this: In late September, the Liberal government told Yukoners that they were looking at options for this test. On October 7, we were told that these tests would be available in — and I quote: "... a matter of weeks, not long." Then we were just waiting on a supply. Since then, multiple jurisdictions have rolled these tests out. We know that many Yukon kids are struggling with the nasal swabs and we know that there is an alternative out there.

So, why, Mr. Speaker, isn't this new kid-friendly test more of a priority for this government?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to take this time to advise Yukoners that, in terms of testing methods and methodologies, we certainly take the advice of the chief medical officer of health, as we proceed. We are waiting at the moment for the chief medical officer's advice on when and if this test will be implemented here and how it fits within Yukon's overall testing strategy.

The member opposite is not the expert, so I would rather rely on the expertise of the medical professionals who are best suited to give us the advice on the approaches — appreciating, again, that we have a multitude of pressures. The chief medical officer and the team are working as quickly as they can. They are doing a very excellent job in providing supports to Yukoners and keeping Yukoners safe, and that is what we have to tell Yukoners. They are safe, the resources are there, and the supports are in place to keep Yukoners safe. I am very proud of that and I will keep standing up to say thank you to the experts — thank you for the advice and the guidance on the practices that we follow here in Yukon.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 358

Clerk: Motion No. 358, standing in the name of Ms. White.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, under the authority of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, to declare a rent-increase moratorium until July 1, 2021.

Ms. White: I will just note that, at this point, I don't have the information that the Minister of Community Services tabled and his cross-jurisdictional comparisons, so I am hoping that I will have it for my closing statement.

I am happy to speak to this motion about preventing rent increases until the end of June 2021.

We know that the pandemic has been difficult for a lot of Yukoners, and part of my job is to question whether the government is doing enough to support people.

I believe that this is our chance at helping folks with one of their biggest monthly costs by preventing those costs from being increased for at least a few months.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please. Order.

The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has the floor. If members wish to engage in useful conversations, they can take those conversations outside of the Assembly. Thank you very much.

Member for Takhini-Kopper King, please.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I was saying before I was interrupted by members across the way is that I believe that this is our chance at helping folks with one of their biggest monthly costs by preventing that cost from being increased for at least a few months.

It's important to mention that this isn't a permanent fix to housing costs, nor is it a permanent solution to housing availability. Government has recognized that rental housing in the territory is so high that they introduced the Canada-Yukon housing benefit as a way to offset housing costs.

In this motion, we're not talking about creating more rental housing because, realistically, that wouldn't help anyone until that housing was completed. We're not talking about capping rent prices, because we understand that such a concept can be polarizing and ultimately we're looking for support for tenants right now and we don't want to get into a value-based argument about rent caps.

What we're proposing will help folks directly as we keep working to get through this pandemic together. Rent right now is the biggest cost that many Yukoners have to pay each and every month, and ensuring that this cost doesn't increase during a pandemic should be our priority in making life here more affordable. That's true at any given time, but it's something we

really need to be aware of right now because, for a lot of folks, their working lives have changed. Some have lost their jobs, and it's possible that others aren't working as many hours as they used to.

Mr. Speaker, it's too bad, because you can't top up the wages of folks who have lost their jobs. So, this is a way to help them. It's something we can do that says, "Hey, we see you, we're here for you, and we're going to get through this together."

What we're proposing isn't new; it's actually something that a lot of other places have done. Across Canada, other governments have announced that rent won't be increasing well into 2021 and even beyond. Just below us, in British Columbia, they have frozen their rent increases until July 2021, and they have capped the 2021 increases to 1.4 percent. In Ontario — as I mentioned before — the Conservative government under Doug Ford — not known as the most progressive of individuals — has frozen their rent increases until December 2021.

There has also been a movement to establish how much landlords can raise rent, but even a one percent increase in rent can be hard to afford when you make less than \$14 an hour. It's time that we follow the lead of others and do the same here in Yukon.

Yukoners haven't had it any easier than folks in other places and we need to continue to help and support them in whatever ways we can. This motion would create a little stability for renters during this pandemic. It would mean that the rent of Yukoners wouldn't increase while we all get our bearings on this whole thing.

We're eight months into this. Things aren't going back to normal yet. We can't even project when life as we knew it will return. Many folks whose work realities have changed back in March still haven't recovered. We know that they will in time, and this is a way to help bridge that gap with certainty.

A rent increase freeze or a moratorium, as the motion calls it, will make it so that Yukoners don't see the cost of one of most basic needs go up. It's important that we get this passed because it means giving Yukoners some assurance that they'll be able to continue to afford what they need to live and that they can count on the stability of their housing costs, at least until the middle of next year.

So, that's what we're trying to do today. We want to ensure that tenants don't face increased costs of rent until July 1, 2021. We want to support Yukoners who are struggling through this pandemic by ensuring that rent doesn't increase until July 1, 2021. I think we can do that.

We've asked that the minister look at doing this under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* because we believe that there is a lot of flexibility there and we believe that this can help Yukoners. I hope that we are able to do that today.

I believe it's more accurate to say that what this motion will do is make it so Yukoners can continue to afford to live during this pandemic. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues and I hope that we come to a successful resolution on this.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: On December 1, I think we were in debate here in Committee of the Whole on Community Services and there was an exchange between me and the Member for Takhini-Kopper King where we were talking about this. She had raised questions about this as a possibility.

I said then, and I'll say it again, that in order for me to try to think about this, there are always steps that I would take to begin with. The first step that I talked about trying to do was getting a cross-jurisdictional look. I did table that this morning. I will work to get a copy for the member opposite. That cross-jurisdictional look just says, "What are other jurisdictions doing?" I think that it is important to put it into the context as well of: "What are we doing in terms of supports for folks around rent?"

So, I will go over a little bit of what we have done so far, and I will go over a little bit of what other jurisdictions are doing. Then I also said that I would talk to various groups, and I named two of them — the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and the Yukon Residential Landlord Association. I have not had an opportunity to talk to those groups as of yet, but that is sort of always where I would start. I had been hoping to hear whether the member opposite had that opportunity yet. I didn't hear that in opening remarks — maybe in closing — we'll see. I haven't had what I would call a full opportunity in order to try to look at this question.

When COVID first hit and we were here in the Legislature and we were debating the budget, one of the requests that came from the Third Party was that we put in place eviction protection. We agreed with that. I remember the Premier coming to talk to me about how we could do it and the tools that we would have at our disposal, because we hadn't even declared the state of emergency at that point. Noting that I can't put it in place without that state of emergency, we used a regulation-making authority under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and then later on updated and augmented it through a ministerial order.

What we did was to say right away that, if someone had a loss of income due to COVID-19 or if they were self-isolating, we would protect them from being evicted. But we went beyond that, Mr. Acting Speaker; we went and looked at how to support Yukoners during this whole time. So, we came out with a rent supplement program, and we also put in place the update through the ministerial order — that if there were rent arrears, there could be a period of time of deferral for paying those rent arrears, and we did that through multiple calls with some of those groups that I was talking about earlier.

There was a six-month rent deferral as well. There are others who will talk about this, but the federal government came out with programs to support folks — for example, the civil emergency response benefit. We worked to make sure that there was not a clawback under the civil emergency response benefit during COVID-19. We put in place the minimum wage top-up for low-income workers — essential workers on the front lines. There was a series of ways that we went to support and protect those people who might not have as much means at their disposal.

One of the things that I noted, by way of the motion, is that — first of all, the suggestion was to use a ministerial order. I have been criticized quite often about using ministerial orders — that they are not an appropriate tool. I note that they are exactly the tool that is under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, that they are a good tool if it's an emergency, and that they are there to help protect and support Yukoners. The first question here is: Is this an emergency? Well, yes, we're within the emergency, but I think that the pressure that was there at the beginning of this pandemic is not necessarily the same pressure that is being felt today.

I took some time to try to look back at the rent survey that is put out by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics to try to see whether rents had changed. Part of the conversation that's before us today came from an example that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King cited — where there was someone whose condominium rent had been going up very significantly — but I have not yet seen that it is the norm that's out there. I checked in with the residential tenancies office to ask whether there was any change in the types of files that they were working on during COVID-19. The answer was no — that there had not been an uptick. I looked at the Bureau of Statistics rent survey. Unfortunately, the one that we'll talk about — this past October — is due out in the next month or so, so we don't have that information in front of us. But what I could see, up until the early parts of the pandemic, was that rents had not changed significantly over time, so I wasn't sure whether there is a demonstrated need around using a ministerial order. But as I said earlier in debate, I'm happy to try to do more groundwork on this question to try to see whether there is an issue.

The final thing that I looked at when I saw the motion come forward from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King was that it gave this date of July 1. Well, the ministerial orders are in effect while an emergency is in effect. We just extended the state of emergency earlier this week and, as we did that, it's an extension. It can extend for up to 90 days, and then, if you need to go further again, as we've debated often in this House lately, you would then have to put in place an extension for that through an order-in-council.

If I count July 1 and if we count the beginning of this week on the extension of the state of emergency, we would need two more extensions to get to July 1. I don't know what's going to happen yet with the emergency. We're hearing now about the rollout of vaccines. That's welcome news — even hopeful news — and we'll see where things are at, but I just note that, in the way that the motion is worded, we would need to figure out what is happening because the state of emergency — if it ceases to exist, then so would the ministerial orders.

I believe in ministerial orders. I think that they are a good tool, although part of the incongruity for me is to hear criticism, generally, about ministerial orders and then, whenever I try to ask for specifics, the only two that I've had so far are: "Please introduce a ministerial order around online cannabis sales", and today, another around a moratorium on rent increases. I agree that this is a worthy topic to look into, although I would want to balance it out with this look on what the other aspects are for

the work that we're doing to support Yukoners. I want to continue to try to understand some of those questions.

Very quickly, and just looking at the other jurisdictions, the two that I think currently have something in place right now are British Columbia and Ontario, as the member opposite noted. There was some early work by Nova Scotia and Manitoba, but those have lapsed. It was earlier in the pandemic when the situation was more extreme and more uncertain. Other jurisdictions have not done this. So, there are, I guess, examples of it across the country, but not everyone is doing it — that is for sure. It's not that most are doing it; in fact, there are a couple of examples.

If we were going to do it, I think that the important thing would be to do that analysis here, as I've said, and look at how various groups would receive this and what impact it might have on the Yukon. I haven't yet understood whether the need is there. The indicators to me are that, sure, we are in the pandemic and there are pressures, but maybe they are being dealt with by the wage top-up, maybe they are being dealt with by the additional supports that are given through Social Services, or maybe they are being dealt with through the Yukon Housing Corporation. That is what I'm not sure of.

I was hoping to hear a little more from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King about whether any of that work had happened or about whether, in her investigations leading up to this motion, she had more than that one example of the condominium where the rent had gone up significantly. Looking at this, I would want to try to understand that this would be an important program broadly, because it is significant to sit there and say that we are going to freeze rents.

Let me back up for a moment. When we were talking about deferring rent, we had some very good conversations with the Yukon Residential Landlord Association where we talked about the risks that were out there for the community of renters.

We talked about the pressures that this might put on them as landlords, because for some of them, it is their livelihood. You want to be careful that you are not trying to affect their income as well. So, I had productive conversations with the Yukon Residential Landlord Association, and you may recall, Mr. Acting Speaker, that when we came out with some of those programs here, we actually had the Yukon Residential Landlord Association writing a letter in support of that.

So, I think that this is all important work and I look forward to further debate on the motion to just understand some of those ongoing questions about sort of a broader sense of whether this is the right solution for the situation that we have right now. But I will continue to say — as I said in debate in Committee of the Whole — I am happy to continue to follow up on it and look at it, if that work hasn't as yet happened.

Ms. Hanson: I intend to make my comments brief. I am kind of disappointed. Actually, I am doubly disappointed with the response I heard from the minister just now, because — despite what the minister has said — yes, we appreciate and I think that tenants do appreciate the notion of a rent deferral, but a deferral is a delay. The reality is that, for many people — as my colleague, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King has put it

— the crunch is now. We are talking about trying to avoid more debt or more people facing the possibility of not having a place to live. We know that, in the Yukon — for people with middle and lower incomes — the cost of your housing is above the 30-percent threshold that we would say is acceptable.

I had hoped that the minister might have approached this through a lens of social justice. I know that he referenced the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and I know that he has supported the work of that entity — that body — over the years, but to equate the power base and the constituents represented by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and the landlord association — those are very different.

Consider this, Mr. Speaker: Under the law as it stands today, a landlord can increase the rent once a year by any amount. My colleague has said that she's not asking this government to consider a cap on rent; she's simply saying that there be no increase — a delay, a moratorium — until we have sorted it out.

Now, if the minister was sincere and serious in his response to wanting to assist ordinary citizens to survive this very uncertain period, and if he was concerned about the use and the reference to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, then he could have simply said — as we have seen many times in this Legislative Assembly every time opposition members —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would just like to point out Standing Order 19(g): "(g) imputes false or unavowed motives..." The comment was made that, if the minister — I believe, to paraphrase — was sincere about his actions — and so I believe that this is imputing false motives. My sense is that the minister is very sincere about the work that he's doing and that he does care about those folks, and he's giving a data-based argument here.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: My gut reaction, right now, is that it's a dispute among members and that it's a different narrative and characterization of approaches that could be taken, but I will review Hansard and return, if necessary.

The Member for Whitehorse Centre, please.

Ms. Hanson: As I was saying — I was trying to point out that the opportunity — the power — as the minister has demonstrated in the past, if he hasn't liked something that has been put forward by the opposition — and in every instance, the government has — they have come forward with amendments to what has been put forward by opposition members in this Legislative Assembly. I think that we would have welcomed that. We would have welcomed something that indicated a recognition by this government that the playing field is not level and that recognized that there is a need to prevent what we see as rent evictions.

I will note that, in addition to the actions taken by BC and Ontario, Nova Scotia — I think it's November 20 — they called it a "rent eviction action", which put a control — and the Premier in Nova Scotia basically described it — they're not allowing any increases of more than two percent.

Now, we're not asking for a cap, but we also recognize — and the minister has recognized — that it's very plausible and it's legal for increases of two percent, 10 percent, 20 percent, or 30 percent. As we see the squeeze increase in this town for available, affordable rent, those pressures increase. Maybe he doesn't travel in circles where that's happening, but it's a reality.

So, the motion that was put forward was an attempt to get a reflection from this House that we recognize that not everybody can afford adequate housing. Not everybody has access to it. The playing field is not level. There are those who own and those who don't and those who rent from those who own.

We're simply saying that, for a period — now, it could be an extension to match the current order that's under CEMA. The government has many ways of enacting this. We're not government, Mr. Speaker; we're the opposition. The minister has many, many, many skilled professional advisors who can assist him with coming up with an equitable approach to addressing this very real situation.

It's not up to the minister individually to come up with these resolutions. Maybe the minister hasn't figured this out yet — he has many skilled professionals who are able to advise him if he gives that direction. That's what we're looking for. That's what we're looking for from this government — to give the direction in order to create a fair environment and an equitable environment. We want to make sure that people are not going to be forced out.

So, we're prepared to say that there will be no increases for a period of time until we get through this awful period of time and until we get through to where the light is shining on the other side. Right now, it's not. We may see vaccines, but the announcements we've heard this week for the rollout of vaccines in the Yukon is not until well into the new year. The minister knows that. So, why would he even suggest that things would become the new normal in January, February, and March? It's not going to happen.

I guess we could hope for better. My colleague and I will continue to hope for better. Unfortunately, today is not one of those days that we will see that hope realized. It is sad and so it is kind of disappointing — very disappointing. It is not just "kind of" — it is disappointing. I can't say much more about it because, really, it will just be another one of those Wednesdays where the government says, "Disagree". That is unfortunate. What they are saying is that they disagree with the lived reality of a lot of Yukon citizens.

Ms. Van Bibber: I am pleased to respond to this motion on behalf of the Yukon Party.

As we all know, the Yukon is facing challenging economic times as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen a huge hit to our tourism industry and the many businesses that

rely on visitors to the territory. We have seen our hospitality sector — which depends on Yukoners getting out and about and, more importantly, getting together — take a huge hit. This has been going on for months, and we are starting to see the impacts that are taking hold as businesses rely on the holiday season to cap off their year. They are unlikely to make it through.

All of this means that Yukoners will be losing their jobs and losing their income. Of course, the situation has not impacted all Yukoners equally. As we know, some Yukoners have been hit harder than others. We believe that it is important that the different levels of government that are providing relief to citizens recognize this. Earlier this year, when all levels of government were scrambling to respond to the emergency pandemic, policy-makers rightly chose speed and generosity over effectiveness and accuracy when they were developing their relief programs.

The programs like CERB, for example, were policies and programs that were to get money into Canadian pockets quickly. It was not designed to necessarily get it there just to those who qualified or needed it. While it may have met a certain need at the time, it will certainly have consequences when tax time rolls around.

Now, when we turn to this motion, we note that we certainly agree with the intent. We know that some Yukon renters are facing difficulty at this time. We know that some Yukon renters need support, and we certainly support different levels of government working together to provide them with the support that they need to get through this, but we do have some concerns about the policy prescription contemplated in this motion.

Rather than limit what landlords and property owners can charge for the use of their property, we wonder if providing direct support to renters who need it may be the better option.

We also note that this motion is silent on the impact that this will have on the landlords and property owners. It is easy to dismiss property owners, but the reality is that they are Yukoners too and, in many cases, depend on the income from their properties to provide for their families.

Throughout this pandemic, the cost for property owners has not stopped rising. We have seen taxes go up. We have heard that insurance has become a real problem for many property owners, and insurance costs are rising dramatically. Condo rates are increasing very dramatically as well. All of the fixed costs associated with owning property have been going up, despite the challenging economic times that we all face.

So, I do worry about this going without also providing support to those who have costs increasing endlessly under the Liberals. We are concerned about offering support for one group of Yukoners at the expense of another group of Yukoners. It just doesn't seem fair and equitable, so we need to consider supporting both sides of this.

We support the intent and the efforts to date by all governments to assist Yukoners and businesses. We believe that we need to make sure that we strike that balance so that we aren't leaving any folks behind.

Hon. Ms. Frost: As the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, certainly homes and shelter are always on the top of my mind. We know that Yukoners across the housing continuum face a variety of circumstances, especially during a worldwide pandemic. We work hard to provide Yukoners with a variety of housing solutions to meet their needs. My colleague, the Minister of Community Services, highlighted some of what we have done here in the Yukon, with the efforts around the eviction protection, rent supplement program, rent deferrals, no clawback on CERB, and the minimum wage top-up. Significant work and effort have been put into place to ensure that we provide the necessary supports to Yukoners during this very difficult time.

I acknowledge that the previous COVID-19 rent assist program that went directly to landlords presented some challenges. I note the comments that were just made in terms of direct support needs to go to the renters. That consideration has been taken into advisement as we look at the early announcements, so we perhaps have learned some things from that. We know that the pretext to raise rent — that we form some relationships with the landlords and, of course, the tenants. Now what we essentially have done with dealing with the rent assist is — the resources are going directly now to the renters. The program for relief is there. We've learned from the infancy of the program and made some adjustments.

The new Canada-Yukon housing benefit that was just launched last month goes directly to the tenant with this program. Landlords are not informed whether their tenant is receiving financial assistance. This ensures that the privacy of the tenant is respected and that they continue to live and pay their rent in dignity.

With that, under the Canada-Yukon housing benefit and depending on household income or the size of the family, applicants can receive \$200, \$400, \$600, or \$800 per month, which is paid directly to the tenant. There are supports in place. The program is available to Yukon households that make less than the affordable housing income limit, which is \$103,000 in gross household income per year.

From the data that I received this morning, 92 households are using the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. This means that our Liberal government has already assisted 92 households, alleviating anxieties related to keeping a roof over their heads during this very difficult time.

Under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, a landlord cannot increase the rent during the first year. If the landlord wants to increase the rent, they need to give 90 days' notice prior to the increase.

Lastly, it can only happen once every year. The motion up for debate seems to imply that Yukon landlords are exploiting the pandemic to raise rents at the expense of vulnerable tenants. I just want to assure Yukoners that we are certainly keeping those things in mind as we look at our programs as we roll them out, ensuring equity and fairness.

As the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I asked the member opposite to share with us some evidence, perhaps, with the work that has been done so that we can help Yukoners and alleviate some of the situations.

Yukoners have been grappling with housing challenges now for more than a decade. There are many factors involved. The remedy brought forward by the opposition is not something new. I see that it is something that we've been confronted with for quite a long time. We have made significant efforts on this side of the House to address housing pressures across the Yukon, looking at providing supports to struggling Yukoners with the relief that they certainly need, ensuring that those are put in place.

I would venture to say that it wouldn't be very effective for Yukoners if we only just deal with the one issue now. We have been dealing with it for quite some time and taken multiple approaches in addressing the challenges that we've seen. We have worked with our partners, we are responsive, and we continue to bring tangible solutions to Yukoners, not blanket orders with an arbitrary time frame. We want to work with Yukoners to address many of the challenges that they are confronted with.

We have done a number of really great, innovative things in terms of quick, timely action to the pandemic and some of the stresses experienced from the pandemic, such as loss of jobs, perhaps, and deferring rent and of course ensuring that there was a rent supplement in place. I would just give a shout-out to Yukon Housing Corporation for the great work that they're doing. We will keep moving, working for Yukoners, working in the best interests of Yukoners, and finding concrete solutions that actually make a difference at the end of every month. We will continue to do that here on this side of the House — working with our partners to ensure a fair and equitable environment for all Yukoners.

We are always learning. As I indicated earlier, we had the first tranche of initiatives that went out and we have made some adjustments, having learned from that, and we look forward to further discussion.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: In opening the debate, one of the things that I really wanted to listen to — which I did — was what information we are going to have to substantiate this policy decision. Was there going to be some data shared with us? Would the Leader of the Third Party talk about some discussions that she had with constituents? Would she reflect on discussions that she might have had with other organizations concerning this particular case, where we're talking about not increasing rent for six months? Because I think — I would hope — that the Leader of the Third Party was coming with a policy decision to try to fix a particular problem, and the particular problem, I thought, was the fact that there were some people in a situation where they were maybe behind on rent — or there was some due diligence done in that sense.

We didn't get any of that information. Also, her colleague got up and spoke. What we did hear were comments such as that her colleague was "very disappointed" because of the comments from the minister and she had "hoped for better", and the reason that we should do this is so we can reach out to people and say, "Hey, we see you" is the other piece.

That's great, and from a sentimental standpoint, I think it makes a lot of points. What I was hoping for was that we were

going to debate the fact that, right now, there are a number of individuals who are potentially behind in rent payments, and we were going to substantiate that. I'm not saying that this may not be the case, but it was not put forward.

The member opposite — every two weeks, the opposition has the opportunity to come forward with a motion, and so weeks of opportunity to make phone calls, build a case for this, and to bring it up more than what we saw. We found out last night that this was going to be called, and so what I did was I made phone calls last night and I spent the morning reaching out to people, trying to find out if this is a real issue at this particular time.

The other thing that the motion does — it just gives a blanket. It says that, under the authority of the civil emergency, we declare a rent-increase moratorium. So, not clarified in the preamble and not clarified in the motion — I assume that this is rent for everybody. That would be both residential as well as commercial rent, which, if it is tabled on the floor, is what I believe to be accurate.

So, we certainly appreciate that COVID-19 is having great impacts here in the Yukon and across the board for individuals, families, businesses, and not-for-profits. Our government has been working extremely hard to implement programs and ministerial orders to support in every way that we can. Right now, what we are seeing — there was some information that was shared from other jurisdictions. What was tabled this morning, I think, was just information that is publicly available. I think that most jurisdictions right now, in most cases, are in a bit of a different situation.

Our unemployment rate, first of all — if we're talking about what are the real data points — as of last week was 4.2 percent, and we compare it across the country. I think Nova Scotia, which was reflected, is even two points higher than that, and then you go up. That comparison is apples to apples across.

The latest statistical information that I saw is that we have 900 people currently who are unemployed, and so the member opposite reflected on that. There are people who are out there and they might not be working full time. Their incomes may have come down. My colleagues have talked about the multitude of programs from two levels of government that have offset some of those pressures, but in this particular case, we were talking about 900 people who are unemployed.

Now, 900 people unemployed right now looking for work is the same number of people who were unemployed at this time one year ago. If it is a point where it is such a compression right now that we're looking at, why did the members opposite in 2015, when there were 1,300 people out of work on average, or in 2016, when there were more — there were actually more people in difficult positions in 2015 and 2016 than there are right now as we go through the COVID process. Not only that, we are looking at the 1,400 — and I will say that I might have to clarify this. I have reached out to the department. I read a piece of information a month ago — a couple of weeks ago, at the earliest — and we had 1,400 jobs that I thought were available to folks. Now, that might not be where they want to work. I know that there were lots of places where I have worked but where I did not want to work, but I did that because, at the

time, I had to pay my rent, I had to pay my mortgage, or I had to pay my bills.

In the current situation, we have 1,400 jobs — that was put out there — that are available. I think that the average rate is about \$18.80, which is just under \$19. Members opposite, over and over, have come and said, “Look — what are we looking at from a living-wage perspective?” Those numbers are quite close, as I remember, and we have 900 people.

So, we have more jobs available right now than we have folks unemployed. We have the same number unemployed — last year, in October or November, with the same situation, we did not have the NDP come forward and say, at this point — so, it does make good sense.

Do you know what it is? I believe that I’m hearing from the Yukon Party that they are also in agreement that this, as it’s tabled — they talked a little bit about maybe some other work that could be done, and they may table an amendment to this to reflect on their thoughts. But right now, my sense is that, if the Yukon Party and our government vote this down — what this is really about is: “We’re nice; you’re mean” — and that’s what it’s about. “We’re the ones who care; you don’t care” and this is about going out and saying, “Hey, we see you.” At the end of the day, you have to have a mix of actually making some policy decisions based on data points as well.

So, what has happened? I have reached out to landlords and talked to them last night and today, and some of the challenges — first of all, in some cases, their costs have gone up. I know that the member opposite from the Yukon Party said that some of these are Liberal costs. I think that, at the municipal level, there have been increases in cost. In some of those cases, I have called to the member opposite’s own riding and called people who are owners of trailer parks.

Do you know what they’re finding? In some cases, the tenants who are there are not behind. In one case, there was one tenant — they are not going to reveal who that is, but there was one tenant who had to pay the rent. They had been working with that individual to ensure that they have the opportunity to pay the rent at this time.

So, again, what we’re seeing is, from a residential standpoint — then I called the Whitehorse chamber and said, look — I know that the Leader of the Third Party — if they’re going to go and do their homework and come in with this, they are going to make a call. They’re going to probably call the Whitehorse chamber because the Whitehorse chamber would be a great spot to speak with, because it would give you a sense — this is, as the Member for Porter Creek North said — we’re talking about all Yukoners, not just people who are renting, but the people who have saved their money, invested in an asset, and now they’re renting it out. Folks may just say that they are sitting up high on a hill because they have it.

Look — for anybody who has rented a space, it’s also a tough ride sometimes. You have individuals who come in and sometimes they’re not respectful of your place. It doesn’t matter what socio-economic background they are coming from — sometimes that’s just the situation.

So, reaching out and talking to the Yukon Residential Landlord Association — but also talking to the chamber

because they have done a tremendous amount of work. They have a subcommittee that focuses on this — Mr. Hartling — and in those cases, no contact from the NDP on this one.

Again, coming in with a good argument, it hits most people. At the door during an election — to be able to walk up to someone’s door and say, “You know what? I tried to make sure that there was a rent freeze, but the other folks voted it down.” So, just picking pieces of information — I’m sure that it would make great fodder: “The Yukon Party and the Liberals don’t care about you, but I care about you.” Well, you know what? It doesn’t hold weight. The work wasn’t done.

I urge the member opposite to reach out to the chamber, have a sit-down, put some information together, and maybe reach out to folks as well, and then bring it back. It would change the discussion, Mr. Speaker. It would change the discussion if we walked in here today and it was based on the things that are happening.

On the commercial side, that’s another story. I also took some time this morning and last night to start reaching out. The commercial side, which also would be encompassed in this — we are not seeing delinquency. The reason that we are not is because we put the business relief program in place. At the start, we had 500 businesses that received those dollars. That money flowed through so all the rents were paid. We ensured that we put in a foundational piece of policy that could support all of those other businesses. If folks went out, maybe took their life savings and had a building, and they were renting it to two small business owners — what ended up happening was that those small business owners could continue to have their space and pay their rent.

I think that this motion maybe would have been more focused and been better — because what we are doing now is that we are saying to all of the individuals out there on the commercial side of things, which are still seeing a potential increase in the costs that they have to spend to the municipality for the services that are paid — in some cases, as the Member for Porter Creek North touched on, we are seeing some challenges with insurance that has gone up — and definitely for strata title buildings and for others. So, you’re in a position where those costs are escalating, but we are coming in — I think, on that side — to solve a problem that doesn’t exist with this particular motion.

The Member for Whitehorse Centre can laugh, but what I’m saying is that I have made the calls and done the work that they didn’t do. What I found is that I haven’t had one case in those discussions where we’re seeing people falling behind because of COVID when it comes to commercial. She can mock or laugh, but spend some time, make some phone calls, and do some work before you bring it in and have that discussion.

I think that it’s important, as I touched on, to speak to these individuals and understand what the impacts would be to the landlords, which has not been touched on. First, I think the question that we need to ask is: What evidence is there to support the moratorium on rent increases? There was absolutely zero evidence presented to us today other than to make us feel

like we're the bad people and the folks across the way are the only people who care.

Are the supports already in place and not doing what they're intended to do? I think those supports that we've put in place have been very — one of the senior folks just said to me today that, from a public policy perspective, the business relief program — the way that money has impacted our community and how it's ensured that we're shoring up so many different areas — whether it be paying their bills to utilities or it has to do with ensuring their relationship with financial institutions was still in place or the fact that they were making sure that others who provide services to them have that money.

What are businesses hearing from their employees? Is it a factor? In recruitment, what are business owners faced with in terms of their rental costs? What are landlords' perspectives? I'm not sure. What are the large numbers of tenants to fall?

Again, what we are asked today is to walk in and put six months in place — and I don't want to reflect on everything that came from the Whitehorse chamber, but what I would say is that I think it's worth it for folks to have a call. That particular call — I think it's just to speak to them and have a discussion about their prerogative and some of the things that they're seeing and the rental market that's here. As we also touched on, when you think about the different federal programs — I'm not going to analyze the effectiveness of them, but I think that, in most cases, we saw increases for central workers in some cases here, and we talked a bit about it. We also talked about CERB and other programs that have been available.

I'm just trying to figure out why this time right now — based on COVID — but when we go back and we actually look and reflect on the information that we have and we dig into it — if it's about the fact that, just in general, that — as touched on — the rent is just, overall within the community and the territory, at this particular level and because that rent is high, we should do it. I don't believe that is where you want to use the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* because I think the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* is actually pertaining to what's happening around COVID, not because of significant growth, not because of the population increase — not because of all those other things — the many things — that are driving some pressure on rental.

As well, one of the comments that was made was that this could potentially signal to folks that maybe they shouldn't make an investment into building more rental units. I'm not saying that's correct; I'm just saying that's what was said today. Maybe that's how folks would approach that.

The comments were — what does this do to a free market, when you're seeing the lack of available rental housing in the marketplace? What does this look like for the economics of building market rentals? We should also consider what has happened in other jurisdictions and the caps piece — and the member opposite did touch on that and said that it's contentious — I'm going to leave that — on increases, compared to what happens here in the Yukon. I'm curious to see how regularly landlords implement rent increases.

I also went back 20 years the other day — because I listened to the member opposite on pad rental increases and

how much they were jumping and what was happening. It did seem accurate when I heard that, and it wasn't accurate, because I used to pay it. I listened a lot in the House about the member opposite — and I appreciate the work that she does on behalf of her constituents, but sometimes, actually having made that investment myself — having lived at 27-7 Prospector Road — I don't know of anybody else, but I at least have that experience. I don't know if the member opposite had paid any pad rent previous to this or understood what that relationship was, but actually, the relationship with the landlord at the time was great. The increases were very low, going back — and I believe — and I think I have it — about \$150 was what I was paying for my pad rent. In most cases, people were very flexible with me.

I knew what I was getting into. I have listened to this argument for three or four years from the member opposite. I knew what I was getting into. It was an opportunity for me. I had a pad rent I had to pay, but it was also an opportunity for me to build equity, which I did. There are many, many former — the leader of the NDP had lived around the corner from me previously, just in that area — and lots of different business owners. What a great place to go in and have — I knew what I was getting into and I knew that I couldn't move the asset, because there was nowhere to move the asset to, but I knew that it was a flexible way for me to build some equity as a young individual and then be able to transfer that.

I always thought that the pad rental increments were fair. I think that it's a good discussion.

I think, hopefully — the Third Party probably won't agree with anything I said, but I do believe that we can agree that there is a bit of a lack of information, other than it is — I guess I can leave it at that — it's based on feeling and sending a message. I don't know how many people we're sending the message to. I think, for one member or for one party, they will have an opportunity to go out on the street and tell that they've done it — but again, it doesn't seem to me that the policy work was done and the background was done.

Some of the folks, I think too — I didn't have a chance to reach out to the Anti-Poverty Coalition, and I apologize; I didn't. The member opposite may have and in closing remarks could reflect — maybe the Anti-Poverty Coalition has said, "Look, besides the compression, we have this many people right now who we're hearing..." — and it could be in the closing remarks. I appreciate that. So, they'll be there and we'll have a bit of a sense, at least, from there.

Even with that being said, I also believe — other than the anecdotal information, I think that it's important to reach out to others on this particular topic and just to do the work before it's brought forward — something this significant where it's just a carte blanche policy decision.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on Motion No. 358? If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard on debate of Motion No. 358?

Ms. White: I have to say that I'm extremely disappointed but not surprised by the government's response to this motion. They've done nothing to bring more protection for tenants through their whole mandate, so it would be surprising if they would start today.

Actually, there was one exception: They did bring in a three-month ban on evictions at the start of the pandemic. But it's important to note that they only did that after the Yukon NDP made it a condition to pass their budget with little oversight.

The minister flagged concerns with the date and his issue with the date of July 1 is irrelevant. Obviously, if the civil emergency doesn't last until July 1 — wouldn't that be fantastic? — then the order would be void.

The minister asked — and I've heard it from two ministers now — if I've talked to the landlord association and the Anti-Poverty Coalition. You know what, Mr. Speaker? I have spoken to tenants. I continue to hear from tenants. They are the people right now who need the help. Sometimes I ask myself if the minister and I live in different worlds. Landlords in Whitehorse have seen their property value increase in the last calendar year. Will they make it through this pandemic? I think that they will. Tenants right now who are facing hundreds of dollars in rent increases are at risk of losing their homes in the middle of a pandemic. They are the ones who need the help. The fact that the minister is asking if the situation is an emergency shows how disconnected he is from the reality of tenants.

The minister says that he went and asked the residential tenancies office if the situation has changed and if anyone has come forward with these concerns, and he said no. I am not surprised, because in the very real example that I used — and it wasn't a condo association, actually; it was someone who rents an apartment. When we were going through the notice of their rent increase, we talked about the possibility of going to the residential tenancies office. I said, "Well, the reality is that this is legal. You are being given three months' notification. They can increase your rent to whatever they want."

It is super fascinating that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and of Economic Development said that I have been silent on it. If he had gone back to the debate in 2012 between the Minister of Community Services of the day and me, I actually tried to amend the legislation at the time. If anyone was to read through that, they would understand the pain of that debate. It was not pleasant. To be honest, it was hard. I am also the first one to say that I did not realize all the mistakes in that legislation until they started to come forward.

I appreciate that the Minister of Economic Development lived in a trailer park and he talked about the rent. Well, in Prospector Trailer Court, it's now \$395 per month if you pay in the first three days. It is not surprising that the landlord and tenants board has not seen any changes, because nothing has changed; that is the problem. Landlords are able to increase the rent by however much they want once every 12 months. It is not illegal. I have said that it is not illegal. Is it right to increase someone's rent by 30 percent, 40 percent, 50 percent, or 100 percent? That's a matter of opinion. I believe that I have a

different opinion than others. Why would the residential tenancies office hear about it? Well, the truth of the matter is that they wouldn't, because it is totally legal.

So, to wrap it up, Mr. Speaker, I think it is interesting, because this government is refusing to take action to protect tenants, which makes them no better than the Yukon Party, which also ignored the concerns from tenants during its 15 years of power.

Yukon laws allow for unlimited annual rent increases, and today, neither the minister nor government members have explained why they think that this is appropriate. We don't think that there are any circumstances that justify such large rent increases, but it is important to note, despite the fact that I was accused that I was going to tank the rental housing market, that our motion wasn't even asking to put a permanent end to rent increases. It wasn't even asking for a calendar year. All that our motion did was to ask to put a hold on rent increases until July — six and a half months. That is what I was asking for. That is all we're asking for. Let tenants get through the pandemic without being at risk of losing their homes because of rent increases, and the government has said no. It is too bad.

There is a quote on my wall that I am going to end with because, when people are facing this right now, tenants — if they choose to read Hansard or choose to listen to Hansard — will figure out where we stand. When they look back at the time in the middle of a pandemic when their rents increase substantially — they will look back and they will remember that it was this government that left them at that point.

So, I have this quote on my wall because sometimes we have talked about the challenges of this job. We do; we have talked about it. It says, "Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are Anger and Courage — anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain as they are."

I live forever in hope, but I am not without anger or courage.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Mr. Adel: Disagree.

Mr. Hutton: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Mr. Gallina: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are two yeas, 14 nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion defeated.

Motion No. 358 negatived

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 205 — *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Energy, Mines, and Resources — continued

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, I just want to thank the officials for coming back in to support, Deputy Minister Paul Moore, and Assistant Deputy Minister Shirley Abercrombie. Really, at this point, I think that we were having some discussions yesterday. We are limited in our time and it's probably best to just cede the floor to the member opposite and get into the questions and answers.

Mr. Kent: I too would like to welcome the officials who are here to support the minister for the afternoon and the discussions we are having.

As the minister mentioned, we had very limited time yesterday afternoon to talk about some of the issues in Energy, Mines and Resources.

We left off talking about forestry. A couple of questions that I had, just skimming through the Blues, on end of day, yesterday — I guess we'll start with the southeast Yukon forest management plan or forestry plan.

The minister had said that — and he can correct me if I'm mistaken — there has been recent outreach to the new chief and administration of the Liard First Nation. I think he said it was within the last couple of weeks, so I'm curious on the timing — if he has any timing on when the transfer payment agreement that he talked about might be signed off on and if he can provide us with the amount of that transfer payment agreement.

Building on that, when can we expect to see a southeast Yukon forestry plan developed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: A little bit more context around that question concerning southeast Yukon. The forest resources management plan, which is what we're talking about — this is the TPA that would help fund this work. Management plans provide certainty for Yukon's land base, identify sustainable forest management practices, and foster economic opportunities for Yukoners.

We work closely with the First Nations to plan how to manage our forests and have collaborated on management plans for the Whitehorse, Southern Lakes, Haines Junction, Dawson, and Teslin regions. The Whitehorse and Southern Lakes forestry management plans have been approved by the Government of Yukon, as well as two of the three First Nation governments. Final approval will hopefully occur in the next few weeks.

I'm going to focus on that — that's really around the southern lakes. The member opposite would also probably have worked on this one. One First Nation — we're just waiting on a signature. Three First Nations are involved in that work, and two nations have signed off.

I have had positive conversations with the chief of the First Nation that has not. There were some concerns on how that policy may affect some other work that they have been doing. I think we have done a good job of being able to alleviate any of those concerns.

A forest resources management plan for southeast Yukon is top priority for Government of Yukon forest management branch. The member opposite is correct.

I had sent a letter that was built by the forest management branch in Energy, Mines and Resources really communicating to Liard First Nation that we feel that this is a priority for us and that it's important for us to begin that work. I said a couple weeks — and I'll stick with that. Sometimes two days feel like two weeks. I know the member opposite would understand. I think, without going back — I didn't check last night. I think it's within the last couple of weeks that the letter went out.

Again, I think there are a couple other important things just to touch on about southeast Yukon. As I remember, we still have — I'll have to get the amount on what the TPA is. I was just saying that my correspondence really reflected on the fact that there is a transfer payment agreement ready to go. I think

that there were some early conversations. I believe that what has happened now is that the branch has gone back and made sure that it is going to meet the work plan that is being discussed by both parties. Concerning this, Liard First Nation voiced an interest in establishing a forestry table to address forestry concerns at a government-to-government level and indicated that they would like to move forward with a forest management planning contingent on funding arrangements to support participation in the process.

Discussions are underway. Once a funding agreement is finalized — so there could be some edits to the original TPA that we had built. There are new elected officials there. Government of Yukon can initiate and collaborate on forestry resources management planning.

As required under the *Forest Resources Act*, the establishment of a forest resources management plan requires consultation with First Nations that have overlapping traditional territories within the proposed planning boundary, which also includes Kaska Nation, both settled and unsettled First Nations, as well as transboundary. We will have correspondence. In that area, there are a few different nations that have assertion that we'll have to speak to.

I'm just going to take a quick look through my notes. We still have a pretty substantial amount of available fibre that can be harvested there. I think that it's important just to touch on that. My recollection — in my last briefing with the Forestry branch — was that the amount that was allotted, permitted — and I think it was directly with the development corporation for Liard First Nation — First Kaska — that there was a pretty significant amount of wood that could be cut. I think that we still weren't hitting that total amount. It's important to note that, as I remember, there still was an ability for some wood to be harvested there.

The member opposite touched on it before. There is wood across the border. There have been some folks in the Kaska Nation who have been cutting and selling to Yukon. They would be permitted by the BC government to do that. I think what happens is that they get checked when they stop here. I believe that the permits get reviewed at weigh stations or something along those lines, and then they move in.

Overall, some of our most substantial harvesters are still coming out of Watson Lake. There are a couple of entrepreneurs who have been pretty key to ensuring that there is a wood supply in the Yukon — more on the side of firewood — and so there's quite a bit of wood coming up.

Members opposite have made it known that there is a long history of entrepreneurs who work in that field in Watson Lake. The chamber from Watson Lake has reached out to me. We talked a little bit about it in Question Period. They wanted to meet with me directly. I am committed to doing that. We have essentially been going seven days a week, and that's what will happen until December 22. I am just working with our staff to make sure that they know that I can go down and have that meeting. I was hoping to have it before Christmas. I don't know if I will get down on December 23. It might happen in early January, but that conversation is really about — the chamber

really wants to know what the plan is because it is a very significant part of the economy in Watson Lake.

As well, there was interest previously — we touched on it yesterday — about some of the fires from two years ago that took place on the Robert Campbell Highway. There was interest at that particular point. It was still early. We were still dealing with smoldering fibre at that particular time. It wasn't time to harvest yet, but I know that it is going to be key to get in there and take a look at the wood there. It's usually a couple of years — while you can still harvest that — and there is still going to be value in some of those burn areas.

That is our update for southeast Yukon. Hopefully, that answers the questions — other than that we will, with the deputy minister, go back to take a look at the TPA. I should know the protocol about bringing the number in. I will just check on what that is. The member opposite might be aware, but if that's something that can be brought to the House, we can put it into our overall legislative return for some of the questions that we didn't have all the answers for.

Mr. Kent: I'm just curious if the minister can just give us a sense of when he would expect the southeast Yukon forestry plan to be in place. Perhaps he touched on that — and I apologize if he did — in his response. Then he mentioned that there is a quite a lot of timber still available. Is that for fuel-wood purposes or for sawlogs? Is that amount dedicated to the LFN or First Kaska, or are there sawlogs and fuel wood available to the broader public in any areas down in southeast Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: On the first question, I haven't given a timeline on concluding negotiations concerning the work. Part of that is because — well, for a couple of reasons. First, I want to make sure that I have a sense — if the work plan has been amended — and I haven't had an opportunity to see it, so I am going to take a look at the work plan. The reason that I think the work plan could be amended is because there are some discussions about the TPA being amended, so I want to see what the fullness is and if the scope has changed. Secondly, it is always difficult to predetermine the conclusion of what is a discussion/negotiation to some extent, because there are two parties involved and that can be difficult. I should look at the work plan before I start to provide any idea. This has been a really important piece of work, and the member opposite would be aware. Lots of folks have wanted to get this completed, and that is something that we are committed to doing, working with LFN. I will leave it — to name a date on it — because I think that might be a little inappropriate without having all of the information.

My understanding is that the permit is provided, I believe, to First Kaska. I can follow up with some other information about other opportunities for folks who are running businesses to go in and cut — who are outside of that one indigenous corporation and what the other opportunities are for folks in the area in southeast Yukon — and get that information back.

Yes, I was referring to the fact that I just know — in a briefing that we had, the acting director had mentioned that there's a permit there, but it wasn't being fully used. That is what I remember.

Both the member opposite and I — and we touched on this yesterday — have been working to try to — I believe it's one of the member opposite's constituents and one of the folks whom I have been trying to support — we have been pretty active in that. When I left here last night, that's the call that I was making on the way home. That's really about trying to access the sawlogs. Maybe we can get into a little more detail on that and what's happening around Whitehorse, but my understanding is that most of the wood that's coming from Watson Lake is wood that's being used for firewood.

I think we're seeing sawlogs coming from places that are closer to Whitehorse. Now we have some stuff happening on some of our firesmarted areas between here and Teslin, and I can speak to that. I would probably have to do a little bit more research on where the rest are — but that's my understanding — that it's mostly firewood and it's coming out and moving as far as — I talked to some folks this week, and they said that it's moving as far as Faro, if not further, at this particular point.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that, and hopefully the minister is able to arrange a time to meet with the Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce as soon as possible in the new year or perhaps at some point virtually before then.

That said, I do want to touch on the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan. I have the first few pages of the plan here that was recommended in 2019 by a working group of officials, I believe, with Kwanlin Dün, Ta'an Kwäch'än, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, and the Government of Yukon.

I am curious, though — we're a little over a year since this recommendation was sent. I believe that the minister, during a Question Period response earlier this Sitting, did mention that there was one of the parties that they were still working with to get them to sign on. If he's able to, I would be interested to know which one of the First Nations that is — or perhaps it's the Government of Yukon — but which one of the First Nations it is.

With respect to that plan, as well — I know that it says here that the first priority, after it's accepted, is to establish an implementation agreement and identify areas for timber harvesting and fuel abatement.

I think that there are only three active timber harvest plans in this region. There is one at Lewes Marsh that is currently going through the YESAA process. There is the Marsh Lake timber harvest plan, which is nearing the end of its life, I think, for sawlogs. There is also one at Lubbock, which is currently undergoing a licence renewal by another operator. I know that there are a couple of small mill operators that supply a lot of the local product to retailers and others around town. One that the minister referenced is a constituent of mine, then there is another gentleman who works down in the Lubbock THP, and I have seen some correspondence from one of the local retailers to the minister about that project as well.

I am curious with respect to the south Yukon plan — when the minister expects — or if the minister expects — all the parties to agree to it so that implementation can start and if there is a timber supply analysis done for the region or additional

timber harvest plans being contemplated for this Whitehorse and Southern Lakes forest management region.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The outstanding signature is with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation — there was some planning, I believe, underway by Carcross/Tagish. A multitude of First Nations have done some First Nation planning — usually very close to their primary community. I know that work has been done in Haines Junction with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations as well. I think that there were policy concerns. It was a valid conversation where some of the folks — I believe that, in Carcross, it is the Land Management Board. Each clan has one or two representatives who sit in that group. There were some conversations that have occurred. I think that our team has done a good job reaching out and ensuring that those two pieces of work can coexist.

When we think about access to fibre and the work that Community Services has been doing around the member opposite's riding in the Mary Lake area — when you take into consideration the magnitude of fire mitigation that has to be done — even that alone, you're talking about some very significant amounts of fibre. This summer, for instance, I think First Nations fire did — I believe it was like six hectares, something in that range. Then of course there has been another contract that has been let.

I think, first of all, part of our focus is to ensure that we know — working with the branch, working with Community Services, and working with the private sector to understand what exactly is available there. Some of that is more extensive work on ensuring that we bring in technical professionals to understand what's there for fibre. Are there sawlogs? Is it just firewood? Those things that are really important. I think we have to — as a group, we're really focusing on having the two departments work together and take a look at that. It's going to be first.

The reason I bring that up is because I feel good about moving toward signing. I had a discussion with Chief Dickson and my sense was that the chief was going back to talk to their technical teams, but I'm hoping to see this done pretty quickly. I want to be open to the Assembly and say that, before we were dealing with COVID, I was hoping that we would be concluding that work in the spring of 2020 and now we're coming to the end of 2020. So, I'm hoping that this work will be concluded and that we can start to implement.

I don't think that's going to necessarily preclude us from having other areas where we can access fibre. I did discuss with the First Nation some work around the Lewes Marsh, and I know that at least one entrepreneur and operator has gone out and had some discussions. I think that they brought out government officials and just sort of showed what the treatment would look like in that particular area.

I think it's important to share with people — and anybody who has discussions with some of these folks — and I think probably for myself and the members opposite — one thing that I was pleasantly surprised at is — I think a lot of people maybe don't know, but these operators are harvesting just outside of town. In most cases, the treatment that they're using is quite minimal, really — when you're looking at a track skidder

having basically a towline cable to pull out the trees. Then what they're doing is they're using those saw logs, but the saw logs are being — in most cases, they're going to one of our local hardware and wood supply stores just outside of town. It is a great situation. I think what has happened is that this particular operator has stated that they will take as much wood as they can from these operators.

You don't get a situation very often where the value added is happening, and then that wood is being transported to the retailer and the retailer, in some cases, is only miles away. So, you're not shipping wood from another jurisdiction, and then, in turn, we know that there has been a real run on wood and supplies this year because people have been home and wanting to do home improvements, so there has been a real demand.

Again, these folks — people don't know, maybe, that they're out there operating, but they're buying wood that has been delivered from just miles away.

I did receive that e-mail concerning the Lubbock area, and I think that there was some concern around the fact that the operator was being asked, I think, to move some of the infrastructure that was there. I have requested to look into that. I don't have more information, other than that. There are some of these spots that are going through environmental assessment or renewals for the permits. We're just closely watching that. Inevitably, we'll see those decisions come from an environmental assessment, and they'll go to the technical teams to come up with decision documents.

Other than that, I think that gives a bit of a picture — looking to implement after the signature is done. My sense is that — what I'm being informed of — is that we're pretty close here on that signature, so it will be in 2021 — looking to do the work and implement. Again, I don't want folks to think that this is going to stop us from being able to go into some of these areas between Whitehorse and Carcross/Southern Lakes and still be able to cut, because we have another very significant amount of wood that we have to deal with just outside of town. It's the right thing to do, and it's going to help us with our biomass.

The annual allowable cut limit in southeast — just for the record, and I'll get back on how much is used — is 128,000 board metres. That's what it is, but I'm going to find out exactly how much — hopefully today, and if not today, we'll get back to you — of that 128,000 metres is being used on annual time.

Mr. Kent: That 128,000 cubic metres is for southeast Yukon.

I don't think the minister caught this part of my question about the Southern Lakes piece, but is there a timber supply analysis or additional timber harvest plans being contemplated for the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: One of our next steps will be the timber supply analysis, so that work still has to be undertaken. What is important for us to decide is how we are going to do that work. This has been a discussion that has been quite live, so the question right now will be: Are we going to work with proponents? In some cases, proponents have gone out and have hired their own technical expertise to do that timber harvest

analysis. Our branch has the expertise to do it. Sometimes the branch goes out and accesses others who will do that work. Community Services does the same.

What I hope to see is that we are becoming pretty client-centered and understand that working with those folks who are in that industry and trying to make sure that we can get them the best possible information — whatever that route is going to be — so that they understand the most efficient and effective way to get in there and get the type of fibre that they need. Of course, we are talking about firewood; we're talking, in some cases, about material or fibre for biomass and, in other cases, things such as sawlogs.

Mr. Kent: I wanted to touch quickly on the fuelwood or the firewood aspect. We did talk yesterday — and the minister referenced it again today — about how quite a lot of the fuel wood — not all of it, but a lot of it — that comes into the Whitehorse area and other areas is being hauled out of northern British Columbia, right across the border. On the Stewart-Cassiar, there was a substantial fire there a number of years ago, and I think that is where a lot of the fuel wood is being accessed. An operator and a constituent of mine who operates in the Mount Sima industrial area is getting supply out of there, as are others. There is some coming in, of course, from southwest Yukon in the Kluane area, as well.

But just given the fact that firewood — just looking at the last campground contract, for instance — from northern British Columbia is being hauled as far north as Dawson as part of that, I am curious if the minister or his officials in the Forest Management branch are looking at additional areas for fuel-wood supply, especially given some of the fires that were close to existing infrastructure and on public lands — if there is any work being done on that so we can get fuel-wood supply a little bit closer to some of the communities that require access to that firewood.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: People in all communities that are accessible to Yukon highways have access to fuel-wood harvesting areas on public land. The Government of Yukon continues to identify and develop new areas for cutting fuel wood in addition to the areas already in place.

In the Whitehorse area, a new personal-use fuel-wood area has been made available to the public within the Little Fox Lake timber harvest plan. Several developments have occurred in the Dawson area to increase access to timber. A new forest resources road within the French Gulch timber harvest plan was completed in September, enabling access to both commercial and personal fuel-wood opportunities. Two new personal fuel-wood areas are now open within the French Gulch timber harvest plan.

We work collaboratively with First Nations and the Yukon Wood Products Association and with the local woodcutters to provide a secure wood supply for commercial operators to support their businesses.

We are exploring strategic harvesting programs that will reduce the risk of forest fire around our communities and increase fuel-wood supply for Yukoners. We have partnered with the City of Whitehorse on a new pilot project to encourage

harvesting in specific areas to make more fuel wood available and to reduce forest density around the city.

This project began in July 2020 and is expected to run until July 2021. We are pleased with the initial response and uptake to this pilot project. Thirty personal-use fuel-wood permits have been issued so far, representing a total harvest of up to 750 cubic metres, which is about 330 cords of firewood.

We are also committed to developing opportunities for accessing forest biomass — whether it is for heat, energy, or other uses — through forest management planning industry engagement. We are collaborating with the Department of Highways and Public Works on this initiative.

We are working collaboratively with the Department of Community Services on fuel abatement treatment projects to encourage greater fibre utilization. To add to that, as the member opposite said, we have this extensive mitigation that has to be done with communities across the Yukon, and we think that there are some real opportunities there to extract and harvest. Then, here in Whitehorse, even that work that was done last year — I think it was about 250 cords that were pulled. It is pretty substantial when you think about all the permits — the 250 cords that were pulled just out at Mary Lake.

We really just touched on that area, so some of that work was done with First Nation fire. I think that we are looking at different types of treatment as well, where we have the opportunity to potentially do a more mechanized process, which will give us the ability to more quickly pull wood out of there.

We are developing a pilot program that will provide funding for certain forestry planning and construction activities. We are also working collaboratively with the Department of Community Services and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council to develop a management plan to clean up and utilize blown-down trees from a wind event that caused a significant disturbance in Deep Creek. We touched on this a little bit yesterday, Mr. Chair. That alone is extremely extensive. I know that Community Services has already gone in there. They have brought their FireSmart specialists. They have done a bit of work by analyzing what they believe is there for fibre. I think that it goes all the way to Kusawa.

I think that they are also in the midst — I think they are going to do it on Friday; they haven't had a chance yet — of getting ready to take a drone over that entire area. That drone will give us an even better sense of what is there. We might have to prioritize some of that cut. There is a lot of wood there. There are thousands and thousands of trees that have been blown down just from that one windy afternoon we had. Inside some of the most populated areas, there is extensive opportunity.

The only other piece I would add is that I think that there are opportunities for cutting fuel. We are trying to ensure that most of our woodcutters are close. There is just a difference between entrepreneurs and the business relationships. Some of those bigger contracts are with the Department of Environment and provide fuel wood to campsites. Now the company that was doing it last year has been acquired by somebody else. They are, of course, making different business relationships and there

are different people who are selling wood to them from Watson Lake and locally. I know that the demand is still there, but I do believe that there are people cutting close to town. I don't think that the only place we can source the wood is out of the southeast. I think that some of those entrepreneurs who have real investment in that type of work are primarily based out of southeast Yukon. Some of the folks who are local have stopped cutting. One of our top three cutters went back to university and is now doing a degree in commerce. He is on the Dean's List instead of being out cutting. There are other folks who like to keep it pretty small. They have retired from their previous occupation, and now they're just cutting.

Again, I just want to say, I think that there's wood that we are making available. The branch is putting in the infrastructure, so I don't think necessarily the fact that wood is going all the way to Dawson — I think it's because there are entrepreneurs who are really good at what they do, and they have opened up a bunch of different markets.

Mr. Kent: I kind of wanted to move on to some different topics, but I do have a couple of other questions on forestry, but I'll save those and send them in a letter or perhaps in a written question that I'll table before we're done, with respect to commercial use and amounts available for commercial cutters versus the personal use areas that the minister identified.

I wanted to switch gears now and talk about abandoned mines for a little bit. I know that there are a number of abandoned projects that the Yukon government still maintains responsibility for, but the first one I wanted to talk about was Faro. I know that the federal government took responsibility for that back a couple of years ago now — or three years ago — however long that was. I'm just curious as to if the minister can provide us with a status update on the contracts at Faro.

I know that there was a substantial one just done, I believe, for the diversion of one of the creeks. I think it was Rose Creek — I'm not 100-percent sure. I know that contract is wrapping up or is completed now. I'm curious as to when some other contracts might be let with respect to the Faro mine. I think the final remediation plan is going through the environmental assessment process right now, so hopefully we get an opportunity to see that completed soon so that remediation work can be continued and hopefully completed — with ongoing monitoring, of course — at that mine site.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The Government of Yukon is pleased that the Government of Canada is able to undertake urgent works and other improvements to address the water quality concerns at the Faro mine site. We actively participate in the governance, as the member opposite touched on, at the Faro project and we provide regulatory oversight as the project progresses toward remediation.

The Government of Yukon's role is to ensure the long-term protection of human health and the environment and that Yukon First Nations and Yukon communities benefit from the urgent works construction activities from the remediation project.

In August 2020, the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon signed a transition agreement that

clarifies roles and responsibilities on how to deliver Faro mine remediation.

I am just going to go through a timeline to answer some of the questions from the member opposite on the care and maintenance. In 2018, changes in roles and responsibilities were implemented to ensure uninterrupted services at the Faro mine site. In May 2018, the Government of Canada assumed responsibility of care and maintenance operations. In July 2018, the Government of Canada awarded its interim construction manager contract to Parsons to oversee urgent works and sight upgrades.

As the interim construction manager, Parsons, I think, was issued nearly \$60 million in contracts for urgent work projects to date. Pelly Construction, in partnership with Dena Nezziddi Development Corporation of Ross River, was issued a contract estimated at \$44 million for the multi-year North Fork-Rose Creek diversion channel realignment. In October 2020, the North Fork realignment project was completed and clean water is now flowing through the channel.

Other urgent work projects include upgrades to the Cross Valley water treatment and electrical improvements across the site.

Other Yukon companies benefiting from contract awards include C McLeod Contracting, Mercer Contracting, Norcope Enterprises, and Cobalt Construction.

Several companies working at the Faro mine complex have signed joint venture agreements with local First Nations. For example, Tu-Lidlini, a Ross River Dena-owned company, supplies fuel at the site.

In July 2020, the Government of Canada initiated a procurement process for the main construction and care and maintenance manager by issuing a request for information. The request for information includes an optional pre-tender Faro site visit that was scheduled for September 16.

I just asked the officials — to answer that question, I think that's concluded. I have a sense that there might be some work extending on for a little while with Parsons. Then the bigger piece of work — and the bigger piece of work, which is a very significant piece of work and is the substantial amount — my sense is that it's getting close for them to put that out. I don't have a date. I've just checked with officials. We don't have a date on when Canada is putting it out, but I know that it's very substantial. We understand it to be the bulk of the rest of this work. As the member opposite knows, if we do the calculations — I'm probably putting myself out a little bit on this. I think that about \$1.3 billion was the total cost. We're talking a very significant amount of money. If we add up the work to date, there has probably been hundreds of millions, and now we're talking about the remainder of that work that is still coming.

I think there will be a lot of interest on that because this is something that, when you start to talk those numbers — what we've all tried to do is to just make sure that we're trying to get as much local impact as possible. We're happy to have Pelly there and all of these other companies that are working. This other contract that is coming out and is going to be let by Canada is probably going to garner a lot of attention — that's my sense — at the highest level for the general. Probably some

of the bigger firms in the world are going to be likely competing on this.

We're going to talk a bit about abandoned mines here, and these projects that have been moving along for a while are going to have a really substantial impact on our economy. Whether that's in Carmacks, Dawson, Mayo, or Faro, the monies are in place by the federal government.

We are in meetings in Ottawa — the day that I remember hearing that the abandoned mines budget had passed about a year and a half ago, for all of the north, including our projects here.

That's a bit of background on the care and maintenance piece of this.

Mr. Kent: Moving over to the Ketzia project for a second, I know that there was a clause in the devolution transfer agreement where the Yukon government had to pay a fairly significant amount of the initial design expenses for remediation. Has that work started? Can the minister provide us with an update of exactly how much that is going to cost Yukon taxpayers when it comes to the Ketzia mine?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'll just touch on three different pieces of information here. The work at the Ketzia River mine site for 2021 is budgeted at \$3.49 million. That was a budget that we put through for care and maintenance, monitoring, and project management. The Government of Yukon contracted Boreal Engineering Ltd. to provide care and maintenance services, and that's going until the end of March 2021.

The approach to remediation planning at the Ketzia site is significantly different from that used at other type 2 sites, which was alluded to in the question. An MOU has been signed by Yukon and the federal government to establish an approach for remediation by using an independent assessor.

Activity there, of course, took place after devolution and was not the same as our other type 2 sites. It was really trying to figure out whose liability it was. Was it Yukon government's or the federal government's? Inside of that, by using an independent assessor to outline pre- and post-devolution liabilities and assign responsibility to each of the governments and develop a remediation plan for the site to set a standard — and review care and maintenance costs and determine eligibility for the Yukon government to be reimbursed by the federal government — the member opposite is correct that we did have to lay out some dollars, and we are waiting to see what that will look like.

The independent assessor is going to be selected by both governments and affected First Nations. We have primarily had discussions with the Kaska, but also pretty significant conversations with the Teslin Tlingit Council on the activities that are happening there. I have to check — maybe also the Selkirk First Nation, but the conversations that I have seen have been mostly with Ross River and the Teslin Tlingit Council.

The Yukon government will be responsible for payments of an independent assessor, currently estimated to cost \$5 million in total. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada has agreed to contribute up to \$750,000 toward the advancement of the design. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada will be responsible for the costs associated with the finalization of the

remediation plan, completion of an environmental assessment and permitting, and implementation of the remediation work for those liabilities identified as pre-devolution.

A bit more background: Since 2015, the Government of Yukon has been responsible. We have touched on that. Fast-forwarding, the Government of Yukon — we talked about Boreal Engineering, which we have in place for March 2021. In their role as care and maintenance contractor, Boreal Engineering has entered into a lease agreement with Dena Nezziddi, which is the Ross River Dena Council development corporation, to lease a 15-room camp for an 18-month period. A public tender process is planned for the fall of this year and beyond for 2021. A contract was issued to Cobalt Construction as well, through a public tender process, in June 2019 to replace one of the five bridges along the Ketza access road. Installation of the bridge was completed in September 2019, and a public tender process is planned in 2021 to replace bridge 4.

Yes, so it is — it's Kaska and Teslin Tlingit Council that we have been in discussions with.

I believe, to answer those questions, a little background — a lot of the work is still underway. We know we have that commitment, and we have to put \$5 million out. For both governments, it's not until that assessor has really completed their work that we're going to have a real sense of what the true costs are for both Canada and the Yukon at this time.

Mr. Kent: I was looking to get some updates on some of the other projects that the Yukon still has responsibility for, but I want to be mindful of the time here today, as there are a number of things I want to touch on. If we do have time, I'll come back to them. But my last question with respect to assessment and abandoned mines, looking at the 2020-21 mains — and I stand to be corrected by the minister if my numbers are off — but it looks like, for assessment and abandoned mines, there is \$15.352 million in expenditures, with recoveries from the federal government of \$9.67 million. So, that leaves us with a fairly healthy deficit when it comes to what we're expending on assessment and abandoned mines and what we're recovering from Canada on that line item. So, I'm curious as to if the minister would be able to just perhaps explain that deficit for us here today, and where those dollars are being spent.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The Assessment and Abandoned Mines branch — we didn't have a chance — it was the very last day, and we were wrapping up here in the springtime, so we didn't have an opportunity to go through some of these key points on the EMR budget. So, I'm going to just read back through, and it should give us a pretty good sense of that \$15.4 million that was touched on.

The Assessment and Abandoned Mines branch directs and oversees remediation of type 2 mines in accordance with the devolution transfer agreement. This includes — so, these costs were for planning, design, and construction of remedial solutions, as well as ongoing care and maintenance, as works that are supported by the annual Canada funding agreements.

The total operations and maintenance estimates for the branch are \$15.4 million, with \$1.8 million covering the 18 full-time employees.

The \$13 million for operating and support costs includes \$2.2 million in Yukon government funding for the independent assessor work at the Ketza mine site as per the devolution transfer agreement — it is anticipated that we are moving to complete that work now; \$3 million is for the Wolverine mine water treatment work; and \$7.7 million in federally funded expenditures for Faro, Mount Nansen, Clinton Creek, Ketza, and United Keno Hill.

There is also \$516,000 in transfer payments provided to affected First Nations and the Town of Faro for their participation in type 2 mines clean-up activity. Government of Yukon funds \$50,000 of that and the remainder is federally funded at \$466,000.

So, with some minor exceptions, the federal government is funding all of the work, including personnel on the five type 2 mines as follows: Faro — \$1.3 million; Ketza — \$3.5 million; Mount Nansen — \$2 million; Clinton Creek — \$2.8 million; and United Keno Hill — \$50,000. That is the breakdown of the \$13 million.

Mr. Kent: Thank you; I appreciate that. I thank the minister for indulging me on some questions on the mains that we didn't get a chance to talk about in the spring.

I do have some questions now on the energy side of things. I just wanted to go back to a couple of platform commitments that the Liberal Party made in 2016 around energy. There are two in particular that jumped off the page at me. One was “working with communities and the utility companies to convert all street lighting to LED”, and the second one was to “pursue federal funding for energy research”. So, I am just kind of looking for an update from the minister on those two commitments that were made in the 2016 Liberal platform.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Some of the work is led through Yukon Development Corporation, some of the work is work that we are doing here, and sometimes we partner up between both. First in the platform — from a standpoint of leveraging federal funds — and I'll talk a little bit about energy efficiency initiatives, which is really part of the work. Shane Andre and folks — and of course ADM Abercrombie is here — they have done an exceptional job of going out and getting the federal money to do some of that work.

I would say that, if I look at specifically that platform commitment — both of those that we've touched on — one, I have to think about our work where — it has not actually been through Yukon Energy. What we've done is we've done it through — or not through Energy, Mines and Resources, but through Yukon Energy.

We're lucky enough to have a PhD that specializes and is really focused on energy in the north. What we have been able to do on that project to be able to help communities is go out and have a research centre at the university. The individual who is there doing that work is supporting all three territories, but has done a tremendous amount of work in the Yukon.

All the utilities have contributed across the north. So, he is working pan-territorially, but he has also been key — I'll give you a couple of examples — to meet that commitment. When we were doing the work early on — where we were getting the finalized work on the independent power production — not the

actual policy work, even though he has an opportunity to put some interventions in on that, but more around — I'll give you the example of Old Crow.

You have the Vuntut Gwitchin at the table and you have ATCO at the table — because they're the folks who are there currently supplying the energy needs and now they're negotiating the purchase of that energy. So, having Dr. Michael Ross — to have him be able to come in and help through that work — we've been really lucky — a pretty unique situation — great because of the university playing a role in it and really focusing on the research side of things.

That's some of the work we've done. I will say, on other energy efficiencies — again, Government of Yukon's popular energy efficiency initiatives are successfully encouraging Yukon residents and local businesses to conserve and reduce energy.

I think that we have completed the work in Old Crow — and I'm mad at myself that I can't remember — I think the LED conversion at Old Crow is the equivalent to — I want to say 5,000 litres of diesel. But then you have to take into consideration the cost of flying all that diesel in. So, it makes some pretty substantial changes. It might come up here in some of my notes.

Teslin — again, another spot where we've gone in and now we're seeing some of the new lights that are coming out that are converting and some of the new highway work that is done and the LEDs that are there.

I'll just go through a bit of this and then I'll see if I have any other information. I'll commit to — when we get into debate for Yukon Development Corporation, where we've used some of our funds through IREI to offset that cost in conjunction — I'll make sure that I have a better scan of all of the communities.

To date, for residential — participants in the residential energy efficiency rebate programs have saved enough energy to power 4,273 average Yukon homes for one year. They saved \$13.8 million in energy costs and avoided emitting 55,140 tonnes of greenhouse gases. Heating accounts for about 21 percent of Yukon's total greenhouse gas — so of course this is pretty substantial. I just want to go through this because there is a lot of great work that is done by the Energy branch. They're so busy on so many of these programs.

As of August 2020, 32 commercial and institutional projects were completed through our energy retrofit program, significantly reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. Thanks to the Government of Canada's support, we're offering a retrofit program for local government buildings. This program focuses on improving the energy use in larger buildings, like community centres or main administration buildings of First Nation communities or municipalities.

We want to acknowledge that these incentive programs are funded in part through the Government of Canada's low carbon economy leadership fund. Our programs are assisting Yukoners to meet our climate change commitments, lessen our energy consumption, and increase our use of renewable energy — and ultimately sustain and protect the Yukon's environment.

I'm just going to see if I can get any other key data points. I think I'll leave it at that — anyway, a couple communities that were there.

I think we've been able to illustrate here that the branch has done a really exceptional job of being able to leverage money. Working with the Minister of Community Services through their bilateral relationships and fulfilling that commitment of having an expert here based at our post-secondary institution who is not only helping support communities in Yukon, but is working on helping with the development of microgrids pan-territorially — so, it is really key work.

Mr. Kent: Just a couple more questions on the energy side of things. I know that in the *Our Clean Future* document, there are a number of electric vehicles that the government is hoping to have on the roads by 2030, I believe. I am curious as to if the minister has some baseline on how many electric vehicles are on the road now and if he could perhaps remind us what the goal is in that climate plan to get to with respect to electric vehicles.

I then just wanted to ask a quick question about whether or not the minister has an update for us — I know that, in the early stages of the current government's mandate, there was an IPP proposed for a wind farm on Haeckel Hill by a company. I haven't seen anything recently by that company, so I'm wondering if that project is still active or if the minister has an update on that project for the House today.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: If the member opposite would give me a little latitude here, I'm just going to go back and answer a few questions concerning the LED conversions and some of the work that we've done.

Out in the communities — for the record, there are: the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation government house conversion to LED lighting, building controls, and door sweep seals — so not only street lights in communities, but also in some of the bigger buildings; the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations main administration building door seals, occupancy sensors, roof insulation, boiler adjustments, AC replacement, ventilation, heat recovery ventilator, and insulation upgrade; White River First Nation door sweep seals, programmable thermostats, LED lighting, insulation upgrades, and heat recovery ventilator; Selkirk Development Corporation Selkirk Centre door sweep seals, LED lighting, occupancy sensors; and the Village of Carmacks municipal administration building windows, occupancy-based thermostats, variable flow devices, door seals, pipe insulation, LED lighting again, and air-handling unit upgrades.

I just think it is important. This is a lot of work here by folks. So, there is Lumel Studios' solar project completed as well. That was the same with the branch — and that was a project to install a new PV system expected to supply 26,950 kilowatt hours of electricity per year. The system was completed in June of 2020.

There was the Whitehorse Curling Club solar project as well — again, it was a big one with a PV system for about 76,000 kilowatt hours of electricity per year on that one, for a rebate of \$40,000. The Guild Hall — another one — 3,768

kilowatt hours that will be saved on that particular project. Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club upgraded its trail lighting with the help of the good energy program — 13 lights were converted to LED, saving 5,306 kilowatt hours of electricity per year. The ski club received a grant of almost \$4,000. Yukon Spaces — an upgrade to Dawson Lodge, completed — so, this was the project that involved upgrades to appliances, controls, lighting, insulation, HVAC — these improvements are expected to save just over 200,000 kilowatt hours of energy each year. The Yukon Spaces received a rebate of just under \$30,000.

High level — Village of Haines Junction St. Elias Convention Centre — work being done right now — the same types of work. The Village of Haines Junction recreational complex; the Village of Teslin municipal centre — this is again controls, LED lighting — the Village of Mayo community centre; Kluane First Nation main administration building; Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Bedrock Motel; Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Community Hall; Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation community support centre — almost all of these have LED lighting as part of the scope of the work. The City of Dawson — some of that work is still underway, which is City Hall and Gertie's and the public works building; Selkirk First Nation main administration building and capital works building — so, energy audit reviews are being done now, and that will help define some of the scope of that work — Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation health and social services centre and services building; and Carcross/Tagish First Nation main administration building and capital works. So, there is very significant work done in that particular area.

When we talk about electric vehicles — part of what we have done is we have added two more DC fast chargers that were installed December 1 in Haines Junction at the Da Kų Cultural Centre and one at the Army Beach day use area in Marsh Lake. These two units will bring the territory's total number up to five and help extend this. I think that we might even have more at this point — I can go back and check — but a very significant number of electric vehicles. We have five chargers right now — three installed, two in Whitehorse.

So, the Energy branch — talking about *Our Clean Future* — what our current number is and what our estimated numbers are. The Energy branch has good energy programs — broaden again our clean transportation, increase support for renewable heating systems for residential, commercial, and municipal clients. As of November 2020, the Energy branch has issued rebates for 122 e-bikes — there seemed to be a real run on e-bikes and we were hearing from the retailers that people were really buying them up — and 17 electric vehicles at that particular time. The target is upward of almost 5,000. We are talking about 4,800 zero-emission vehicles by 2030.

I have asked the Yukon Energy Corporation to provide the opposition with a bit of a rundown on their 10-year plan. That is important because, when you take a look at the increased demand — what does that look like? Are you getting people to buy electric vehicles and are you just shifting that demand back onto fossil, or do you have a plan in place that identifies assets that will produce renewable energy? They have put a lot of

work into their 10-year renewable plan. We know that the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation will be coming in as witnesses. There have been a lot of discussions in the House around what is happening there. I have asked them to send that out so that whoever is going to be asking the witnesses questions will have a real sense of the entire plan, and it gives a little bit more ability for the opposition to have more focused questions when the individuals come in to see us.

Concerning the IPP, a lot of this work is Energy, Mines and Resources, but also through the Yukon Development Corporation. What is important for folks to know is that the pricing mechanisms that we have used for the independent power production — the witnesses will come in. Probably mostly the Member for Lake Laberge — I don't get to debate, say, energy on this one. I have to commend the folks on the IPP, and I'll just touch on Haeckel Hill, but we priced it at the cost of thermal. We priced it at the cost of diesel.

I've heard in the House bigger conversations around how other jurisdictions paid a pretty significant price for that power. Ontario is one of the jurisdictions that gets reflected on in the House during debate. What we tried to do — because we were late in the country to be putting the IPP in comparably. We were the first territory, but it was new. One of the conversations that we had — there was some work done, but when we started to get to identify the mechanism and look at pricing, we said, "Let's take a look at what happened across the country. What are the best practices? Where have there been some problems?" That was really part of our focus when we built this. Then we did the pricing mechanism at whatever it is — it's just around 17 cents in the on-grid area, which is what we're paying to displace. So, we've built a good mechanism. Part of that also means that we've also contributed to some of the capital costs.

With Haeckel, to answer that question — yes, Haeckel Hill is there still. We've worked with the company and with Kwanlin Dün — Chu Níikwān, the partners — to ensure that some of the federal funding money that they've looked to use met the criteria. There was some simple stuff administratively that we had to work through to make sure that those funds could be used. Now we're there and we're looking at Haeckel. I had this discussion with somebody yesterday. I think we're looking at breaking ground this spring. That's just under four — I'll go through some of these quickly — some of the other ones that we have. Maybe I'll just go with that.

So, there are nine projects that have been advanced through the standing offer program and pre-application process. Three projects are unsolicited proposals. Only two projects have energy purchase agreements with the respective utilities. These are Solvest, north Klondike Highway solar energy project under the standing offer program, and the Vuntut Gwitchin government solar energy project under the unsolicited proposal program. Only the Vuntut Gwitchin government solar energy project is constructed and awaiting connection to the grid.

The policy is enabling energy projects in all four of Yukon's diesel-dependent communities — so we have the Vuntut Gwitchin solar project in Old Crow. The airport is constructed and awaiting connection to the community grid,

and the travel of technician staff to do the installation has been delayed. We were hoping to see that live at the end of July.

It was the plan to have indigenous leaders and others across the country — we were actually hoping to have the energy ministers from across the north go to see that good work, but that was held up.

The Kluane First Nation wind project again has broken ground and received regulatory. Part of what happened — this was work under the previous government — was that there was money put aside. I think that it was about \$1 million in Energy, Mines and Resources. We have been waiting to spend those dollars, but the problem is that the company that was identified to supply the hardware on the Kluane project went bankrupt. Those are the folks they were working with. I know that Kluane now is recalibrating. We are still committed to doing that work with them. We will probably use the Arctic energy fund, which fits that perfectly to be able to fund.

The White River solar project with Beaver Creek is at the pre-feasibility stage. We have done a lot of work on that. We have brought in the federal government and multiple Yukon government departments. Highways and Public Works has been at that table as well, ensuring that there are opportunities. Everyone has really been trying to put their shoulders behind that one. That is another one.

Liard First Nation is preparing to develop a significant renewable energy project as well. They have looked at different work from biomass to solar.

Another thing that I would like to put on the record is something that came up during Question Period. When you look at the bigger energy projects in the Yukon, there has been a lot of discussion about how you ensure that you are respecting chapter 22 when you're building the projects. Chapter 22 identifies the amount of equity that First Nations would invest in a particular project. It is 25 percent. Sometimes you would double it up or go down that route, but what is important is that, while we are looking at these energy projects, we are looking to have First Nation governments go out and build them. If there is assistance required, we are there to provide that — “we” being the Yukon Energy Corporation and others. When you commit to buy energy from somebody, that's also a liability.

We heard a lot about it today — and we've talked a little bit about our energy plans. But in some cases, just making a commitment to buy energy from somebody affects your debt. It's not that you are going out and borrowing a bunch of money. All that you're doing is making a commitment that you are going to buy potentially clean energy from somebody so that you can ensure that you have enough energy in your grid, but there is an accounting treatment that has to happen. I think that we will discuss that a bit more as we go through things. That is one of the reasons why it is important for us to have that room. We want to be able to have clean energy.

It doesn't matter what kind of energy you are buying, but if you are committing to buying energy from somebody else, there is an accounting treatment that has to be taken into consideration.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate the projects that the minister went through there. Apologies again if he did mention that

initial wind farm on Haeckel Hill. Has the proponent just moved away from that project, or is it still being considered and still being evaluated through the department or the Yukon Energy Corporation or Yukon Development Corporation?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It is. We maybe added too much other stuff there.

It is moving forward — leveraged money in conjunction with Yukon Development Corporation. I have worked with the Minister of Community Services on that because our overall infrastructure funding sits with Community Services. So, yes, we are looking at that project — breaking ground in early 2021 when they can get up on that hill. The pieces have come together, and it is the same company that the member opposite might have spoken with, and Chu Niikwān is there as well, so you have a joint venture between them and Kwanlin Dün.

Mr. Kent: I just wanted to move on and ask some questions around some infrastructure projects that I believe are in the minister's realm of responsibility. Actually, I will check on this one first. The proposed Alberta-to-Alaska rail project — is the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources responsible for leading the government response, or is that being done through Economic Development?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Wearing two hats, really, is how I have addressed that. From the standpoint of Economic Development, they reached out to our department. The member opposite would be aware that, previously, work on potential rail lines was done through Economic Development; it was funded through Economic Development. Some of that old work sits there, and our response has been that the proponents of this particular project should reflect on some of the work that was done at that point and the expert who worked on it as well — identifying who that expert is for the group and telling them that they should be reaching out to Minister Boland.

We have also spoken with the proponents. We had two proponents originally who were both looking at this. It seems that one has sort of become more advanced in their work and has hired folks to do this particular work. JP Gladu was one of the names that would come up — well known over the last number of years in aboriginal business, former CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. He's now sort of the lead. He has reached out to us.

We've tried to share with them important things that they should consider. First, whatever your plan is, you really have to get to those communities and have discussions with people. Understanding that COVID is in place, that has been difficult. I know that they want to get in and have those discussions.

Also, the route that was identified publicly — trying to understand how it is affected potentially by Dawson land planning or not. We said that there is a regional land planning process underway, that they should consider that, and that these are some things that they need to take into consideration.

The Alberta government has identified — I had discussions with the Minister of Infrastructure and then they have another individual who is an MLA. They have essentially said to that gentleman to sort of continue to lead that file and have discussions. It's really high-level at this point. But again, through both departments having the discussion — not getting

into too much detailed conversation, but just letting them understand that, if they need help getting in contact with particular folks in communities who would be affected, we can help. They've reached out in some cases directly, and in some cases, we've had a couple of First Nations that, upon hearing about this — at least one that I'm aware of — have reached out directly to them because they're supportive at a high level of what's being contemplated.

Mr. Kent: I think that the minister mentioned engagement with Alberta on this. Has there been any engagement by the Yukon government with Canada, the United States, or the government of Alaska?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'm flexible in the fact that — because we cleared Economic Development, but I think that it's still, as part of it, good to touch on.

With Alaska, the only discussions that I've been party to are with EDA. EDA is the economic development arm in Alaska. It essentially looks at all development. We are having conversations with that particular organization that are more focused on ensuring that we have port access in Skagway. We have been having a lot of discussions with them around understanding how they are going to deal with the fact that the port leases are changing hands. There is a real need for investment in Skagway. During those discussions, I did touch on the railway project with them. They didn't speak to a lot of it. They were aware of it, but those are the only discussions that we have had with Alaska.

Concerning Alberta, I think that there have probably been three discussions to date that I've had with them and one with the Minister of Infrastructure and subsequently with the MLA who is involved. My sense is that the Alberta government is very supportive of the project. My sense is that they are really trying to move this forward. I have not had a discussion with the Northwest Territories government at all on this particular topic. There was a bit of a switch and a new minister in the role. A lot of our work has really been around mining and trying to work with the federal government through this COVID time.

But there have been really high-level conversations. As we have stated, we are very sensitive to this. It is a conversation where we really have to see the project reveal itself. We haven't seen the scope. We know that they want to build a line. We know that they want to go to Alaska. We have asked some questions about why that line is going to Alaska and why that line wouldn't go to Skagway. Did they know we had a rail line here that actually goes to Carcross? There are different things to try to get them to think about and what this really means. For us, we are really concerned. We want to make sure that we have access to a deep-water port. Any of this that could spur extra investment, we think, is a smart part of the conversation.

Mr. Kent: I will have my colleague, the Member for Kluane, the Economic Development critic, follow up perhaps with the minister with additional questions on that project.

The other infrastructure project that the Minister of Highways and Public Works mentioned for us and that was shared responsibility with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is the Gateway resource road project. I know that a number of new portions of that have been announced recently

and I think that the Carmacks bypass has received a recommendation from the environmental assessment board as one of the initial projects announced. But I just want to ask the minister — the project parameters were changed. Some of the projects are obviously not what was contemplated in the initial application. When I saw that new document, I did share it with some of the anchors of the initial roads — whether it was the Nahanni or the extension of the placer loops near Dawson or the road from Carmacks up into the Dawson range — and it seemed to me that they weren't consulted on the change.

So, I'm just curious as to if the minister did do engagement with them before making changes, or if that engagement just came after those changes were made to the parameters of that project application.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I was made aware; I know that the information was shared. I had phone calls from all of the proponents, I believe, after the information was shared. I guess what I would offer up first to the member opposite — I am always available to have discussions about this, because in one particular case, after the information was shared — and as I had said to one of those proponents — they called me to say that they had cut their budget and there were going to be less Yukoners at work this summer because of the information they received. Then I had an opportunity to speak with them and let them know what the strategy was, and then, once we clarified that — I guess they would have had to go back to their board and have a discussion.

This summer, it was so important to make sure that every dollar that we had was out there. I wanted them to know that we would be committed to those folks. That's not something that we're wavering on.

What we've said all along is that if you have projects — there are three projects that are anchor projects. The Casino project — which is on hold, but it's in the YESAA system and it's an executive committee level assessment — so, a number of years in front of us. Under the last number of years, we're working on a timeline of up to 2025 at this point. I've stated it publicly that we would look at a potential extension on this if we had to. Then we have the Coffee project under Newmont — they're still waiting to complete that assessment. My sense is that Newmont is also trying to make some decisions about what they want to do. They might want to do further exploration before they move on it. Then our third project is Selwyn Chihong — and that's a really very big project. It has lots of different pieces to it. They're still trying to make some decisions about where they're going to go.

What we've tried to do is we've taken the scope of work that originally was there — which was really the roads to those three spots. At the time, I think the folks who worked on the project — and maybe the member opposite would look and say, "Look, these are the three key projects. There is other activity in these areas that we can open up." In early 2017, that's what was being contemplated. What we've also seen is some of those projects still progressing, but maybe not at the same speed as was thought in 2015. Other projects in other areas are starting to have significant activity.

What we've gone out and had discussions with what we'll call the three "anchors" is to say that we've always been committed; we said that all along. It wasn't like I was reaching out to any of those companies. We talked about the fact that we were trying to get flexibility, which we were able to receive to move some money. We shared with folks that if you're building Coffee or you're building Casino or you're building Selwyn — that the history of the Yukon government has been, if you're building a \$2-billion project and you have gone through assessment, you have a good relationship with that community, you have your QML — your quartz mining licence — in place, you have your water licence — whenever that happens, the Government of Yukon is going to be there to work with you.

What we have done in all those cases — in Carmacks with Casino — one of the first agreements was that bypass. We are seeing that movement start. We also had the announcement just a little while back — which is the second stage of that work. In the sense of Casino, we are seeing — let's say — phase 1 and phase 2 start to move. We are increasing the quality of infrastructure in that area and we think that this is really important.

We saw Casino share that information publicly in a very positive manner. They are doing a really good job of continuing to move their project. They raised about \$30 million and they shared that with us at the Monday Geoscience Forum. They continue to do their work and we are committed there.

When it comes to Newmont, I was on the phone just last week with their lead for Canada. The deputy minister and I had always met with the chief operating officer for Newmont Global. We met with him — that would be just over a year ago, in September. We sat down and had the discussion and said that we need to figure things out. We have a timeline on these funds and we wanted to have a sense of what they're doing. We are looking to allocate some of this money to different places. I would say that is consultation. We sat down with them on that discussion in Denver and tried to get a sense of where things were going. Again, this week, we talked to their Canadian lead on this and said, "Look, it's really important. We are going to try to gauge how you are moving your project forward." Again, there are other areas that I think we should probably try to use some of these funds for.

Again, with the Selwyn project — we continue to make progress. We have significant agreements that were signed with the Liard First Nation. The first agreement we signed was for that initial work on the Nahanni Road. We have two projects where they are actively moving it ahead and we are spending money on those roads. We have gone back to folks and I think we will be having more discussions in the new year. We still have a couple of negotiations that are underway. I think that we will probably save some of that information for the new year.

But really, we're just saying to folks that we are trying to make sure that we also have some of the overall package of funds in place as we see some people move forward.

I guess to say that we felt that we have been in active conversations — I mean, we could get into a more significant debate on this one, but I think that is what we have looked to. The folks did reach out to me afterward, and in the case of one

of the proponents, they said, "We just want some comfort around the fact that you're still supporting us and this project is there now."

It is important as well to touch on the fact that inevitably, when you have these agreements — whether it is Casino, Coffee, or Selwyn — I mean, our amendment was about flexibility. The amendment that was in 2016 was about what the First Nations' role would be on these projects, and the First Nations' role is — inevitably, you have to have a project agreement with the First Nation, which really means that the First Nation has to agree on what you are going to do on this road, so you are in full partnership on it. In some of those cases — I don't think that I will get into the specifics of which project, but in some cases, when we get to the table with the First Nation governments and we're saying, "Okay, we want to move this forward; this is the project" — they are going to have their own perspective. I will just leave it at that.

Prior to us being in government, when that was changed, that really is a significant piece of the negotiation. Your time is ticking on your project and you want to make sure that you make the best positive impact to Yukon, Yukoners, Yukon businesses, and the industry. At the same time, there are other factors, such as the relationships between those proponents and where they are going to go with their own board and their companies, those proponents, and the communities that they operate in.

That is a bit of information that, I hope, helps a little bit for the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: Just one more quick question before we leave that particular topic — the Minister of Highways and Public Works, I think — when my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, was in Committee with him — mentioned that there was still \$107 million included in here from the private sector. Initially, obviously, I think a lot of that, or most of that, would have come from the three "anchors", as we're calling them, but are there other private sector companies that are being asked to contribute with the changing locations for the projects that are encompassed in this overall funding package?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What's important to understand about that is that, in all three cases, the private sector contribution to this project was — we'll say, for the previous anchors — was all last mile. The way it was formulated was that the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon would both contribute to build the infrastructure, and then the private sector company would take care of that last piece, kind of, into their project.

There needs to be a project — right? You need to have a project that's being built. Those three projects are not being built yet. Actually, of those three projects, we're waiting to see one go through assessment, and the other two have a further journey, and then, once they have approved that — if you look at the timeline now, we're going into 2021. We have asked for an extension. The federal government seems to be giving us movement, so that's a good thing. It gives us more time to be able to stretch it. Being able to go back to some of the anchors that have aspirations of being — within that extended timeline,

we would be able to continue to work directly with them on this funding pot.

I don't believe that you know how much of that \$108 million that you get to use until a lot of things happen. Is there an agreement in place with First Nation government? Did you get through assessment? Do we have recommendations accepted? Do you have a decision document? Did you get a quartz mining licence? Do you have a water licence? All of those things have to happen.

I don't know when they would make that decision. The member opposite may have a better sense, but probably, when you're starting to at least work on your quartz mining licence is when you would start to make those decisions. You would be raising your money, and you would be getting ready to put that money into your road infrastructure.

It's hard to say right now how much of that \$108 million would be used, because we're still kind of pondering those other projects. We can still augment funds here and there from different spots, but that's what we're waiting to see.

At least a couple of other proponents have come to us and said, "Look — we need an upgrade." It's the same model. We're going back to different areas of the Yukon where there seems to be some really substantial activity. We're having discussions with First Nations because those are the partners the program has. In particular cases, we have contemplated having the private sector meet us to upgrade infrastructure.

Some of those negotiations are coming to conclusion, some are still ongoing, and some are live. I don't have a dollar figure of the contribution from the private sector, but I will say that we have had discussions with a few different mining companies, and we have discussed with them contributing funds in the same model that would happen with the first three proponents that were part of this proposal.

Mr. Kent: I'm going to just switch topics now, and I appreciate the amount of ground that we've been able to cover here this afternoon. I thank the minister for that.

I wanted to talk a bit about the wetlands policy now. I believe that this policy development is being led by the Department of Environment when it comes to the drafting of the wetlands policy. Obviously, a couple of areas that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is responsible for are affected — of course, placer mining.

I'm just curious if the minister can tell us if he has any idea when this policy will be ready. One other aspect that I wanted to talk about was with respect to the agricultural sector. We were informed of a virtual meeting of the association back earlier this fall where it was said that the new wetlands policy will affect private land, including working farms, not just future farm projects.

So, I'm curious if the minister has any updates on the effects to the agriculture sector, and then if he has any idea on when we will see a final plan available for Yukoners to look at.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Delivering a wetlands policy remains a government priority. We are committed to completing a policy that reflects Yukoners' perspectives and ensures that the benefits of Yukon's wetlands are sustained for all. Yukon's wetlands policy is targeted to be finalized in 2021. We find

ourselves in a complex situation, especially with the uncertainty of the willingness to travel and gather in larger groups and the need to give time and space to similar projects to take place — such as wetlands discussions by the Yukon Water Board — and consequently, we have decided to shift our policy development approach.

I think that it is important to touch on the early work that started this, I think, that was important, and we need to keep this continuing on — because it is probably the one time that I have heard from a multitude of people. Folks from the conservation side sitting with folks from the prospectors' association — and everybody getting to a place of common ground — I have heard that from all sides. So, people want to see this work continue. They were invested in it, they put their time into it, and they of course are motivated to see this work continue.

The seven full days of roundtable discussions have been valuable in crafting the draft policy so far. We believe that the safer choice is to shift our focus to bilateral discussions with our roundtable partners.

Our next step is to host an online public review of the draft wetlands policy, following these bilateral discussions, and commit to sharing how feedback is considered. The Government of Yukon will implement the final policy, following consultation with indigenous partners. We have been developing the Yukon wetlands policy with First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, federal and municipal governments, industry, and other key organizations in order to develop a strong and consistent stewardship approach that reflects the values and interests of Yukoners.

We recognize that wetlands are essential for biodiversity, water filtration, climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as for cultural and social connections. This policy is not designed to address site-specific challenges in wetlands areas — such as the Indian River, which has been probably the most focused topic around wetlands. It will provide overarching principles and guidance for decision-making throughout the territory and clarifying project assessment and permitting requirements. Those are some key pieces there.

I'm going to hold off, because the member opposite didn't focus on the Indian River — and I know that he's very well-informed on the Indian River. There might be some other questions, and if there are, I can go there.

On the agricultural side, I do owe a response back to the Member for Lake Laberge on two things, and I'll touch on them here because we're in Energy, Mines and Resources. The first one is the permit of last resort. I received a letter from the member opposite and I have endeavoured, through our departments, to make sure that I have that information back. We had a face-to-face discussion about it, and then there was a follow-up, and I need to conclude that. I know — I was chatting with some of my team members last week about that. I think that's being worked on.

Secondly, I don't have a substantial answer concerning how the wetlands policy development — the member opposite was asking — affects agriculture. The member opposite was asking questions on behalf of the Member for Lake Laberge —

and he is absolutely correct. We were at this year's agricultural banquet. It was virtual. There were a few of us — the Member for Lake Laberge and I had the opportunity to attend, and there was real concern. Folks were just trying to understand, in the agriculture sector, how this affects.

We owe that response and we will get back, and we did have some discussions the next day over the conference with individuals who are just trying to understand, in that sector, what this means to them. I think that there was some work done around the Lake Laberge area where folks have agricultural land that is sort of close to lakefront. So, you could tell that folks were very respectful and polite, but they definitely had some concern around just where this is going.

So, we'll get back on that one. Again, 2021 is when we're going to conclude this, and Environment is absolutely the lead. I want to be respectful to them and not predetermine the outcome of the work that they are leading, but we are also very invested in this, because it's important for how we're going to look at things from a regulatory perspective, moving forward.

Mr. Kent: I'm sure that the Member for Lake Laberge will appreciate the minister following up on those issues with him.

With that, Mr. Chair, that's going to conclude my questions on Energy, Mines and Resources here in Committee. Hopefully, we can get the department cleared here today. There are a few issues that I will follow up on with letters with respect to prospecting and class 1 notification, some of the regulatory concerns and the mineral development strategy, as well as issues around offshore oil and gas discussions and staking bans throughout the territory.

I thank the minister for his time today and I thank the officials for their time — Mr. Moore and Ms. Abercrombie. I wish everyone at EMR a healthy and safe holiday season and I'm prepared to clear general debate on EMR and hopefully clear the line items.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

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

Mr. Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried, as required.

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

Chair: Mr. Kent has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the
amount of \$1,100,000 agreed to
On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,100,000 agreed to

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Seeing the time, Mr. Chair, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

**The following legislative returns were tabled
December 9, 2020:**

34-3-55

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — Mayo airport lease (Mostyn)

34-3-56

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — periodic motor vehicle inspector qualifications (Mostyn)

34-3-57

Response to Motion for the Production of Papers No. 21 re: Expenditures under “Operation and Maintenance — COVID-19 Response” in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* (Frost)

The following documents were filed December 9, 2020:

34-3-40

"34th Sitting of the Yukon Legislature Private Members Motions as of 8-Dec 2020" prepared by Hon. Mr. Streicker (Streicker)

34-3-41

"Rent protections during COVID As of December 2, 2020" prepared by Hon. Mr. Streicker (Streicker)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 78

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, December 10, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, December 10, 2020 — 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. Ms. McPhee: I will ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming three guests here today. They are: Birju Dittani, who is the director; Vida Nelson, legal counsel; and Drew Spicer, information officer — all with the Yukon Human Rights Commission. Thank you very much for being here.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-spirit+ people

Hon. Mr. Gallina: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government, here on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, to humbly pay tribute to the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-spirit+ people.

I had a very close relationship with my mother, Francesca. She was there for me, she supported me in any way that she could, and she loved me unconditionally.

There are women who are no longer with us today here on Earth. They are not with us for reasons unknown. These women are daughters, sisters, aunties, cousins, and, yes, many of them are mothers.

One of the privileges that I acknowledge in being a member of this Legislative Assembly is working alongside the matriarchs of the House that we are in today and the many women leaders throughout our Yukon communities. Leadership that has come together to change the story of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus individuals is the MMIWG2S+ advisory committee.

The Yukon advisory committee was created in the spring of 2015 to guide and support the first Yukon Regional Roundtable on MMIWG2S+. This group was also tasked with connecting the work of the national inquiry in Yukon to families of MMIWG2S+ and indigenous survivors, experts, and communities. Following the national inquiry, the mandate of the advisory committee was expanded to include the development and implementation of Yukon's response to the

final report. Just a few short weeks ago, they finalized Yukon's strategy.

It is because of the tireless work of this group of leaders over the last year that we have been able to gather this morning, where people pledged their support for changing the story to upholding dignity and justice — Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy.

The Yukon advisory committee is co-chaired by my honourable colleague, the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, representing the Government of Yukon, Chief Doris Bill, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, representing Yukon First Nations, and Ann Maje Raider, executive director of the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, representing indigenous women's organizations.

Additional current members of the YAC are: Terri Szabo, president of Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council; Adeline Webber, president of Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; Toni Blanchard, MMIWG2S+ family representative; Amanda Buffalo, Liard Aboriginal Women's Society representative; Shaun Ladue, LGBTQ2S+ representative; and May Bolton, elder representative. Ex-officio members include officials from Yukon government, indigenous women's organizations, Government of Canada, and Yukon RCMP.

I would also like to recognize the contributions of past members of the Yukon advisory committee on MMIWG2S+, including: Doris Anderson, former president of Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council; Krista Reid, former president of Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; and Agnes Mills, elder representative.

I want to thank this group for the incredible work that they have done to create Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy. It is truly a historic and nation-leading beacon on a path to seek truth and to create story. I know that this group has dedicated their time and energy to this work. They have connected with many partners, hearing directly from First Nation governments, municipal governments, governments of Canada, RCMP, and many non-governmental organizations.

Most importantly, they have heard directly from family members — as recently as this summer — about their priorities for action in Yukon. I know that these conversations were not easy for many — so difficult to share and so challenging to hear — but these conversations were so important and contributed to the final strategy that we have here today.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I'll take a moment to reflect on the ceremony that I was a part of today. We lit a fire together that called upon all of our ancestors. We talked about standing up as leaders to champion the actions laid out in this strategy, taking action as men to do our part and hold up the women in our lives, both personally and professionally.

We are all on a journey together, and the ceremony that took place today set the intention for this journey to change story, to write new chapters, and to commit to work to end violence against indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people in Yukon.

As a member of this government, I am truly humbled by the work of all members of the Yukon advisory committee. Your unwavering commitment to a decolonized approach

shows us how we can all operate differently. Your dedication, courage, and hard work is already building a safer, healthier, and stronger community where indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus individuals can live in safety, with the dignity and justice that they deserve.

I know that my mom is looking down on us today, and I know that she joined us in ceremony. I also know that many others also joined us, both physically, virtually, and spiritually, and I feel them smiling down on us, recognizing the hard work that has been done to date and the stories yet to be defined.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the Yukon advisory committee's work in response to the national inquiry's final report on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

On June 3, 2019, the final report from the Canadian national inquiry was presented, entitled *Reclaiming Power and Place*. This report was a culmination of two years of testimony, action, stories, gatherings, and calls for justice by families, indigenous women's organizations, First Nations, and all levels of government.

In the report, there were 231 individual calls for justice — action to take place, not just recommendations. This morning at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, the Yukon strategy for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus individuals was released — the first response to the final report in Canada. Congratulations.

A signing ceremony took place to begin the implementation of Yukon's commitment and action plan. Representatives from the 14 First Nations, municipal, territorial, and federal governments, as well as the leaders from the opposition parties, witnessed the signing ceremony.

We take a moment to celebrate Yukon's work throughout the years to confront the issue of violence against indigenous women and girls. Through collaborative efforts with many partner organizations and communities, Yukon has been a supportive force in this national effort and also a leading edge in many instances.

In December 2015, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle hosted a gathering in Whitehorse, bringing together 25 family members of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. This gathering was held with the intent of supporting local families and allowing them to provide recommendations to government, First Nations, and RCMP in advance of the regional roundtable that was to be held in February.

The regional roundtable of February 2016 included a declaration signed by the co-chairs of the Yukon regional roundtable: former Deputy Premier and Minister of the Women's Directorate, Elaine Taylor; Kwanlin Dün First Nation Chief Doris Bill; and then-president of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, Doris Anderson. As well, thanks to all of the amazing women who worked on these roundtables, meetings, and hearings. Once the Canadian national inquiry began the hearings, its first gathering was held in Whitehorse from May 30 to June 1, 2017.

There are community hearing transcripts online under the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I applaud each and every participant who spoke, because you made history by sharing your story. The participants are named and listed for each of those days. There are too many to call out in our tribute time allotted, but rest assured, you are noted and recognized.

At this time of year and during the pandemic, the stats are not positive as domestic and sexualized violence is on the rise. Let's all make a commitment to be supportive and help anyone who cries out for help. Thank you to everyone who has and continues to support these initiatives, past and present. We look forward to seeing continued progress throughout the territory as we set out to implement the newly signed Yukon strategy.

Remember — it is our silence that makes this normal, and this is anything but normal.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party to hold my hands up and pay tribute to the members of the Yukon advisory committee on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people. We want to say thank you from the depths of our hearts. Thank you for this incredibly important powerful and hard work. Thank you for being inclusive and never turning your backs on those who needed you. Thank you for listening to the stories that were shared so honestly with you and hearing them with open hearts — stories of our sisters, mothers, aunts, neighbours, and friends, stories of loss and heartache, and stories of stolen potential and what could have been. Thank you for holding space for those who so desperately needed to be heard — those asking the questions fuelled by the loss and absence — always with the hope of seeing real justice.

You took these stories from across Yukon and into yourselves and have turned them into a guiding document of action. The work that you did will help to restore the dignity and justice of indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people, just as it should have always been — and will be again. Your work gives me hope that, from the most tragic events that have tainted our history as a country and a territory, change will come. Like Ann Maje Raider said today, it's about "rematriation" — restoring balance to the world.

Applause

In recognition of Human Rights Day

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government in recognition of International Human Rights Day, celebrated every year on December 10, the day that the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. That declaration was a milestone document that proclaims the inalienable rights to which everyone is entitled as a human being — regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.

This year's theme of International Human Rights Day is "Recover Better — Stand Up for Human Rights". This theme relates, of course, to the COVID-19 pandemic and seeks to

ensure that human rights principles are applied to our recovery efforts. We know that the pandemic has exacerbated and deepened poverty, exposed and worsened existing inequalities, brought light to discriminatory practices and attitudes, and increased hardships — some physical, mental, financial, or otherwise.

A few weeks ago, federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for human rights met virtually. As part of these meetings, we heard from national indigenous organizations — including three national indigenous women's groups — and a number of other civil, societal, and human rights organizations. The clear, overarching message was that if we are able to create an atmosphere where an equitable recovery for all can flourish, we need to reaffirm the importance of human rights and the need for global solidarity, we need to tap into our sense of interconnectedness and shared humanity, and we need to foster resilience in pursuit of a society that is just and true.

This morning, the Yukon has once again shown its leadership with our own first MMIWG2S+ strategy — the first in Canada, its own milestone document. As was noted in this morning's ceremony, it is so fitting that, on this Human Rights Day, we should all make the commitment to uphold dignity and justice for indigenous women.

The work is clear: As society and the world grapple with a new normal, inequities — many of them systemic — have in fact worsened. Governments everywhere have made their best effort to walk the fine line between public safety and upholding the economic, social, and cultural rights of their citizens.

December 10, International Human Rights Day, is an opportunity for governments, individuals, civil society, grassroots communities, and private enterprise to come together and imagine their role in building a post-COVID world that does better and ensures a future that we can all be proud of — a future free of hate and discrimination, a future where all voices are heard, and where everyone can access services, heal, and feel protected.

It is also important today to recognize Yukon's Human Rights Commission and to remind Yukoners that its core mandate is to promote equality and diversity through research, education, and enforcement of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*. While hardships exposed and created by the COVID-19 pandemic are real, we must look to human rights principles to ensure that our recovery efforts are equitable and address the failures exposed by this devastating time.

What we know is that transformative action is possible if we look for examples — both practical and inspirational — of acts of kindness, compassion, and love. We have seen and participated in such an action today, with the historic commitment made to Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy. On this, we should reflect, be proud, and move forward together.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize today as Human Rights Day. As has been mentioned, this important day is observed each year on December 10, which was the day, in 1948, that the

United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

This year, as we deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, Human Rights Day is focused on ensuring that human rights are upheld and central to recovery efforts worldwide. As the pandemic has affected us globally, the United Nations notes that we will reach our common goals only if we are able to create equal opportunities for all, address the failures exposed and exploited by COVID-19, and apply human rights standards to tackle inequalities, exclusion, and discrimination.

While the pandemic continues to impact communities around the globe, it has had a disproportionate impact on those vulnerable and marginalized populations. I would like to say thank you to the Human Rights Commission for the work that they do to support and promote human rights across the Yukon and to Yukoners and organizations who continue to live, work, and serve the public in ways that respect the human rights of all and promote healthy and happy communities. Thank you to all those organizations, volunteers, and individuals who work with our more vulnerable populations to ensure that they have access to the things that they may need during this pandemic.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party to acknowledge December 10 as International Human Rights Day — a day marking the anniversary of the international community convening 72 years ago at a time when the world was still reeling from the worldwide catastrophe created by the Second World War.

Despite — and in many ways because of — the horrendous divisions and appalling aftermath of that war, world leaders recognized the importance of finally acknowledging the common thread of human relationships reflected by their adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

This historic document — and the treaties that grew out of it — set out minimum rights essential for a life of dignity for all people, including children, by recognizing: the rights of indigenous peoples and workers; gender equality; the full and equal participation of women; intergenerational equity; a just transition of the workforce that creates decent work and quality jobs; ecosystem integrity and resilience; and food security.

Today, as we mark Human Rights Day, we are being asked to ensure that our recovery plans for a worldwide catastrophe that is the COVID-19 pandemic — that those plans are based on the same human rights that we have pledged as a world, a nation, and a territory to uphold. We need to resist the easy fallback assumption that economic security and rights can only be afforded to some and not to all. With that comes the need to state clearly that, by recognizing the rights of anyone — particularly a group that is statistically disproportionately impacted — we are somehow reducing the rights of another group. This is simply wrong. Allowing attention and support to one group — particularly when you are talking about fundamental human rights — does not create an automatic penalty for others; it is quite the opposite. It levels the playing field and increases basic rights for all.

We are called upon to address the failures that have been exposed and exploited by COVID-19 locally, nationally, and internationally. Now exposed, we have the opportunity and the obligation to apply human rights standards and to tackle entrenched systemic and intergenerational inequalities, exclusion, and discrimination. When we recognize that human rights are not a zero-sum game, Mr. Speaker, we will begin to act, because we recognize that no one loses their rights if everyone else has theirs.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling today an analysis on voting here in the Legislature for the 34th Sitting of this Assembly.

Ms. Hanson: I have for tabling a document entitled *Pandemic Planning — Questions and Answers for Human Resources and Managers*, new version, dated October 27, 2020.

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

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to increase support for volunteer fire departments, including ensuring that our rural fire departments are not left without equipment they need, such as pike poles and reliable ice augers.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to provide the Legislative Assembly with a detailed list of the full costs associated with implementing tipping fees at its solid-waste facilities prior to the end of the 2020 Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to recognize that providing communities with nearby garbage-disposal options reduces greenhouse gas emissions and lowers the risk of wildlife conflicts by taking the following actions:

- (1) keeping the Silver City solid-waste transfer facility open;
- (2) keeping the Keno solid-waste facility open;

(3) pausing his plans to close other solid-waste facilities; and

(4) consulting with affected businesses and communities before making a decision that would reduce their access to waste-disposal options.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to ensure that the pedestrian crossing signs on the Alaska Highway in Porter Creek are fixed in a timely manner.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy

Hon. Ms. McLean: Today we unveiled *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice, Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy* during a sacred ceremony taking place on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Today was a remarkable and historic day for Yukon and Canada. We must take a moment to recognize and celebrate what an accomplishment this really is. It marks a major milestone for the family members, survivors, and advocates who have been waiting too long for action, some for decades. Holding our commitment to each other and to family members in ceremony represents a sacred agreement to do this work in a good way.

The strategy will guide us for the next 10 to 15 years toward our vision of violence-free communities where indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people are safe and respected. We went into a major consultation with our stakeholders to develop this strategy, and every single one of our stakeholders sees themselves in it.

Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy includes 31 action items under four paths: strengthening connections and supports; community safety and justice; economic independence and education; and community action and accountability. I encourage all members and all Yukoners to read this document and consider how you can be involved in implementing the action items.

Our next step is to develop an implementation plan together. This will outline the concrete actions to take under each item in order to meet the goals set out in the strategy. We will also identify who will lead, be involved, or contribute funding in each item.

We know that the Yukon government cannot, and should not, lead all action items set out in the strategy because we know that approach has contributed to the problem in the past. We are committed to doing things differently in a decolonized way, reflecting the principles set out in the strategy, such as truth and reconciliation and self-determination. We will work in partnership with MMIWG2S+ families and survivors, First Nation governments, the Government of Canada, municipal governments, indigenous women's organizations, the RCMP,

the media, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and individual Yukoners.

As we move forward to develop an implementation plan, we are committed to the principles set out in the strategy, including the principle of accountability. We will regularly report back to each other on progress made and identify new, emerging priorities; we will bring all partners together alongside a family gathering, once public health measures allow, to make sure that we are on the right track.

I look forward to Yukon government working alongside our partners to implement concrete actions that will restore dignity and justice to indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus folks in Yukon.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement, and thank you to everyone for their efforts in the creation of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls two-spirit-plus strategy. I would also like to thank all those who have been part of the conversations and part of the process throughout the years.

It has taken many years of action to get to where we are today, going back as far as 2010 when the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Circle, with support from the Government of Yukon, launched the Yukon's Sisters in Spirit project. In February 2015, a Yukon delegation consisting of the Yukon's Premier, government officials, First Nation chiefs, and aboriginal women's organizations attended the First Nation Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Ottawa. At the time, the Yukon delegation reaffirmed its commitment to preventing violence against aboriginal women and girls and committed to a second national roundtable in 2016.

I would like to give out thanks to the Yukon advisory committee, past and present members, and, as well, the many community partners and organizations that have played a role in the creation of this strategy.

There is still much work to be done. With the 231 individual calls for justice within the final report, this will be no small feat. It is now in the hands of government, organizations, institutions, and — yes — all Canadians to see those calls through and to ensure that the hard work done throughout the inquiry sees action and merit.

Today's ceremony brought together leaders from all levels of government and many community organizations, each of whom pledged to contribute to the vision set out in the strategy and to be accountable to all for the implementation of this strategy. Yukon Party Leader Currie Dixon was honoured to be invited and participated this morning as well.

It was a historic and moving ceremony and another important step forward, as leaders from all levels of government have come together with a commitment to end violence against indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people.

I look forward to the good work to come — the implementation plan that will be responding to the Yukon's strategy, all interim reports, and, of course, the final report.

Ms. White: It was an honour to participate in such a meaningful ceremony honouring the families, friends, and the communities of many missing and murdered aboriginal women, girls, and two-spirit people. The work accomplished by the advisory committee is tremendous and, given support from all levels of government, it has the ability to shape Yukon's future. The work gives me hope that, from the most tragic events that have tainted our history, our country, and our territory, change will come.

Today, I join leaders from across the territory in commitment and celebration of the completion of Yukon's Strategy on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People. It's so beautifully and aptly named *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice*.

To echo my commitment this morning: On behalf of the New Democratic Party, together and as an individual, I'm committed to do my part to take action for the implementation of *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy* and initiatives that contribute to the vision set out in the strategy. I commit to end violence — including all forms of race- and gender-based violence — and to uphold dignity and justice for indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people in Yukon. I commit to be accountable to families, survivors, other partners, contributors, and Yukoners for implementation of this strategy. I thank all those who participated over the years and look forward to playing my part as we move forward.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you to my colleagues across the way for your words and for your participation today in this very important and historic day for Yukon.

I thank the member opposite for the recap in terms of the Yukon advisory committee. I worked alongside the minister at the time — Minister Elaine Taylor — and was a technical person. I supported the work that was happening at that time and I recognized that leadership during the consultation. I really wanted to just say that here today: that a lot of people have blazed this trail for all of us, as well as many elders and many family members.

The work has gone on for decades. As Ann Maje Raider talked about her sister today — that's 50 years ago when her sister was murdered. It has been a long journey. So, this is truly a historic day and a remarkable one. Yukon is the first jurisdiction in the country to release a comprehensive response to the national inquiry. We have charted a course that other provinces and territories are watching across the country. Yukon is, once again, a leader and trailblazer on a national stage.

Our colleagues across the country are looking to us. Our ability to come together as representatives of all levels of government alongside indigenous women's organizations, family members, and elders to create a coordinated approach is the envy of the nation.

The national action plan on MMIWG2S+ will be informed by our journey in the Yukon. As Minister Bennett said today,

the national gender-based violence strategy will also be informed by Yukon's approach.

I want to share with the Assembly that getting to this point has been hard work, but it has also been heart work. We have led this work with our hearts. It has been painful at times. This has all been part of the journey to get here, but the heartache was necessary, and we recognize that. I wish that we could have held a huge celebration today to mark this event. I wish that all family members could have been in the room with us this morning. I wish that we could have invited our elders and many strong indigenous leaders who paved the way for us. I wish that we could have shared food, tears, laughter, and hugs together. But I am so grateful for the technology that allowed us to connect with each other, even if we could not come together physically. I thank the staff of the Women's Directorate once again and Gúnta Business Consulting again for all of their effort and everything that they did to ensure that we had a successful event. Thank you to those partners, contributors, and family members who joined us virtually. I know that people were watching from all corners of the territory and across the nation.

I hope you feel as proud as I do of the strategy. As leaders, we will keep working together to uphold justice and dignity in our communities. Today really showed Yukon unity and the spirit of our amazing territory.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic contact tracing

Mr. Hassard: This week, the government started requiring bars and restaurants to log and store the contact information of customers. Earlier this week, we asked the government if they had consulted with the Information and Privacy Commissioner about the planning or implementation of this policy.

The Liberals stumbled over the answer and didn't even know who was responsible to answer, as three separate ministers got up to deliver three different responses — but the Minister of Health and Social Services did eventually admit that the government did not consult the Privacy Commissioner about this policy.

Can the minister explain why the government did not consult the Privacy Commissioner about the collection of personal information?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: My recollection of the response to that question earlier this week was that the work had been led by the chief medical officer of health. I recall that we were going to speak with the chief medical officer of health and find out what work had been done around privacy.

I heard the Minister of Health and Social Services also explain that the privacy issue was around the businesses and how they were retaining it. This was not information that was going to be held by government. I am happy to again say that we will get back to the member opposite by conferring with the chief medical officer of health.

What is important to note here is that businesses have been working with us around this. They agree that this is a good

approach to keeping their staff and clientele safe. It's just a way of making sure that we can follow up with people if there has been some potential risk or exposure. So, it is a good thing that everyone is doing and I'm sure that most of the public are very appreciative of having this safety net in place.

Mr. Hassard: If you go to a bar or a restaurant right now, everyone is doing this differently. There are sign-up sheets at the front in some places where the public can see everyone who has been there and when. Other places have more of a raffle box system. Staff and businesses have been given no guidance by the government on how to store this private information or keep it safely.

The minister has said that they did not consult with the Privacy Commissioner because the government isn't collecting the information and that it is just businesses doing it, so it's not their problem. We have heard that again today, Mr. Speaker. But the reason that businesses are doing this is because they are being instructed to by the government, so the government is responsible for this. The government had no clue about what was going on earlier this week, so hopefully we can get a better answer today.

Will the government commit now to consult with the Privacy Commissioner?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The beginning of that question was that there was no conversation with the private sector, but I know that the president of the Yukon Liquor Corporation had calls with licensed establishments to go over it. I am aware that there were other conversations with non-licensed establishments — so there has been work with the private sector. So, I am not sure where this is breaking down for the members opposite.

If they know of people who haven't heard, please let me know. I will be sure to pass those business names across so that we can make sure that there is information getting out to everybody. I am happy to continue to work to make sure that this is as smooth a transition as possible as we all work together, as a territory, to keep the public safe.

Mr. Hassard: Unfortunately, we haven't heard the government commit to consulting with the Privacy Commissioner yet. Earlier this week, we asked: What happens if an individual refuses to provide information? What is the responsibility of the bar or restaurant? Are they required to deny service? Not only did the government not know the answer to this when we asked, the minister was so confused and bewildered that he started talking about access-to-information legislation. So, it has become quite the trend that this Liberal Cabinet doesn't know the answers to basic questions about issues that they are responsible for.

We are just hoping that we can get a simple answer to our question now. What is the responsibility of a bar or a restaurant if a patron refuses to provide this contact information? Are they required to deny service?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: In all things, as we introduce new measures here in the territory, our first role has always been around education; it has not been enforcement. That has not been the way in which we have rolled out any of these programs — whether they are masks or whether they are rules around the

borders or rules for isolation. I have said that we have a complaint-driven process, and I have said that, after 1,000 or so complaints, approximately 85 percent of those were dealt with just by informing the people who were bringing the issue forward. About 15 percent, or maybe 13 percent, were dealt with by educating the person who was making the mistake, and about two percent were dealt with by tickets.

So, enforcement isn't our first rule. The experience that I have had, in speaking with the enforcement officers — in almost all cases, just a simple conversation deals with it. I am happy to get the specific details, but I think — it underlies — that the approach here is not about a heavy hand; it is working with Yukoners to help keep them safe. In my experience, almost all Yukoners are supportive of that, including the business sector.

Question re: School busing

Mr. Kent: Yesterday, we raised the issue that the three new school buses are in town and ready to go. They are just waiting for the Department of Education to provide the schedule to the company. In response, the minister appeared to not be up to speed and gave a non-answer. That part wasn't shocking for us. What was shocking, however, was that the minister seemed unaware that these buses have been ready to go for some time and that the holdup was her responsibility.

Can the minister tell us how long the buses have been ready to go and how long they have sat idle because she has not provided the necessary information to the contractor?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am not really sure where to start. I will just go with the idea that the member opposite is asking about school buses and that Yukoners are concerned about the fact that there are some students who are not eligible to ride the bus and have not yet been assigned to buses — that it is generally a practice that occurs over a period of time in the fall of the year while bus routes are finalized and while student numbers are finalized — and those who want to ride the bus. We have heard the concerns from the families.

We are working to deploy the three additional buses that have been here since about the middle of November and to optimize the existing routes in ways that allow us to not only accommodate some of the students who have not yet been assigned to buses in particular corridors or on particular routes — those additional buses will help with that — but also to amend some of the other routes' stop times or small changes so that we can accommodate as many students as possible on the school buses.

Mr. Kent: The minister just admitted that these buses have been ready to go since the middle of November and here we are — almost in the middle of December, one month later. As often happens with the Liberals, their commitments don't line up with what actually happens. Not only was the minister not aware of what was going on with these buses, the Premier, in his media scrum yesterday, was also completely uninformed on these issues as well. He actually said that he would brief the minister based on information he got from the media.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals seem to be indifferent to the challenges that so many families are facing and don't seem to be following up on what is going on in their departments.

Can the minister at least tell us how much has been spent on these buses, and if the resources came from the \$4.1 million that Canada provided for school reopening?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, I will overlook the insults to give the information appropriately to Yukoners.

The work has been ongoing. Let me just clarify: The buses were here in the middle of November, but they needed to be properly outfitted and properly inspected to be ready to go.

As the member opposite knows and perhaps Yukoners know, Standard Bus is the service provider for school busing here in the territory — throughout the territory — and they have been doing an exemplary job under very, very difficult circumstances. They had a number of drivers who were unable to return to work. New drivers needed to be hired and trained. The driver situation, we hope, is settling down now.

We have reviewed existing routes and remaining requests from parents of non-eligible students and are working to have those three buses respond to that situation, as well as to some additional situations for families who are wanting buses.

The purchase of the three buses cost approximately \$300,000. That does not include the operations or the driver costs.

Mr. Kent: So, throughout this Sitting, it has become abundantly clear that this Liberal Cabinet is inattentive to what is going on in their departments. They are unable to answer questions that they should know the answers to. They frequently give inaccurate information and inaccurate timelines. When they get caught, they pass the buck or blame others.

As I've pointed out, on November 10, the minister told Yukoners that these school buses had arrived and that they would be ready in two weeks. We found out yesterday that the buses are ready to go, but the government is the holdup.

The buses were actually ordered in August, so why wasn't the route and schedule work done in September and October so that these buses could be on the road now?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think the member opposite might have been a former Minister of Education and perhaps he has forgotten that school bus registration happens throughout the summer months — usually to end in June. This year, it didn't end until August, officially. We still had many families either registering or de-registering for the bus as late as October and early November of this year. We are responding to a very complex situation in order to have students who are not eligible under the law to ride school buses, but yet we would like to respond to that situation and assist those families.

I can indicate that 1,907 students who are eligible to ride school buses here in the territory are all assigned and riding school buses as permitted. The additional students who are technically not eligible will be accommodated as soon as we are able.

Question re: Hemodialysis services in Yukon

Ms. White: On Tuesday, I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services about the lack of access to hemodialysis here in Yukon. A year ago, my friend Terry was forced to choose between spending the rest of his life in Vancouver away from his family, friends, and community or coming home to die surrounded by loved ones. Had he lived in the Northwest Territories, he could have accessed those services in or near his home community. In her response, the minister said — and I quote: “We certainly don’t want to focus on acute care.”

Well, no one is disputing that prevention is key, but it’s no excuse to force Yukoners to leave their loved ones to access life-saving care Outside. Can the government explain why they have not taken any meaningful steps over the last year to bring in-centre hemodialysis to the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. Our government is proud of the work that we are doing to ensure that Yukoners live happier, healthier lives. It is incredibly important that our health care system respond to the needs of Yukoners. We have seen the work done by the *Putting People First* report and the future of health care in the Yukon by way of accepting those recommendations and moving forward together as Yukoners to provide better care for all of our Yukon citizens.

It’s very important as well that Yukoners have access to the care that they need and that, when possible, that care is offered here at home. It is a commitment being made by this government going forward and the opportunity to respond to Yukoners’ needs here at home is a priority.

Ms. White: I would hate to see what would happen if it wasn’t a priority.

We know that, when my friend was in Vancouver for hemodialysis, his costs were also covered by this government. His family shared with me that, in just over five months, this government paid over \$450,000 for his care Outside. This included the hemodialysis he received and coverage for the facility he was staying in.

On Tuesday, the minister said that there are now seven patients who require dialysis who are treated in BC. So, beyond the human cost of not offering hemodialysis through the Hospital Corporation, there is a significant financial cost. Has the government made an analysis of the cost — both human and financial — of keeping individuals away from their families, friends, and communities rather than finally bringing hemodialysis to Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that’s an important question. I don’t want to provide the numbers — because I simply don’t have them today — on whether or not that analysis has been done and what the cost amounts are determined to be. I’m happy to seek that information from the department and provide it to the member opposite.

Ms. White: I look forward to that information.

Prevention is important, but unfortunately, prevention does not mean the end of kidney disease or even a cure. Illnesses, diabetes, high blood pressure, and even amputations are just a few pretty common contributors to kidney disease. More

patients, families, and communities will continue to suffer from this lack of service.

The Yukon government made a decision to bring the first MRI north of 60. The Northwest Territories government made a decision to offer hemodialysis in not one but two communities. This government hides behind the BC Renal Agency, but it’s their job to do what’s best for Yukoners.

Why won’t the government make it a priority to bring in-centre hemodialysis to Yukon, and can they at least acknowledge that it’s a decision that they have the power to make?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We are focused as a government on creating a health care system that will meet the needs of Yukon — as I noted earlier — for years to come. There are many ways in which this is occurring, not the least of which is a plan going forward with *Putting People First* and the partnerships and cooperation that will take place in implementing those stages of that plan.

We are committed to ensuring that Yukoners who safely qualify for dialysis have every opportunity to receive that treatment in the comfort of their own home. We know how important that is.

Earlier this year, our government signed a letter of intent with the BC Renal Agency that will maximize opportunities for Yukoners to receive home hemodialysis here in the territory. This partnership will focus on early intervention and support of independent dialysis options.

Question re: Government of Yukon auxiliary-on-call employees

Ms. Hanson: Auxiliary-on-call workers make up a large number of the front-line workers who provide care and support to our most vulnerable. These dedicated staff are employed in our continuing care facilities, at the emergency shelter, Housing First residences, group homes, in-home care, and in our family support and day programs.

We know that auxiliaries on call — or AOCs — make up the majority of front-line workers in most of these workplaces. This government as a whole — but Health and Social Services in particular — has chosen to staff AOCs to work in essential front-line positions that require full-time staffing but provide no guarantee of hours to workers.

I will start with a question that, given our persistence in asking, we hope the minister can now answer. Will the minister tell this House how many auxiliary-on-call workers are employed by Health and Social Services?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Auxiliary-on-call employees are an important and valued segment of our Yukon government workforce — that goes without saying. They are integral to us being able to staff important positions throughout government. They help us to fulfill our public service obligations when departments determine that there is not operational justification for an indeterminate or term position to be hired. They are called into work as and when required to replace other employees who are sick or on other leave and to provide coverage for peak periods and special projects.

The use of auxiliary-on-call employees will vary by department and depends on both the size of the department and the makeup of its programs and services. For example, the Department of Health and Social Services relies on auxiliary-on-call employees to deliver critical health services to the public, to provide for people living in care, and to protect those who are vulnerable at all times. I do not, at this moment, have the exact number of auxiliary-on-call employees who we have working within Health and Social Services at this particular moment; it changes from week to week and month to month. But I will endeavour to get a number for the member opposite.

Ms. Hanson: Kind of ironic — so important that we fill full-time positions with auxiliary-on-call staff. Auxiliary-on-call workers are paid an extra \$2 an hour to cover all the benefits provided to permanent employees. These include sick leave, vacation special leave, and extended benefits for the employee and their family members, like dental and drug. In the pandemic planning document that I tabled earlier, AOCs are told that they don't have access to sick leave because they are already compensated. This goes for any leave an AOC may need if they are sick or if they need to care for family members or dependents. During this pandemic, auxiliary-on-call employees are left with no option but to take unpaid leave.

Mr. Speaker, given the extraordinary circumstances of a global pandemic, does the minister think that the \$2-an-hour compensation for these essential front-line workers is adequate? If the work that they do is essential, why would they not be offered permanent positions?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, I will say that the use of auxiliary-on-call employees will vary by department. It depends on the size of the department and what roles they want them to play. People work as auxiliary-on-call employees for a variety of reasons. Some choose it as a lifestyle choice because it affords employment flexibility and variety, while for others who prefer full-time employment, the work can be a stepping stone to a full-time job.

Auxiliary-on-call employees are members of the Yukon Employees' Union and their terms and conditions of employment are covered in that collective agreement. The Public Service Commission monitors the use of auxiliary-on-call employees across the Yukon government and maintains an ongoing dialogue with the Yukon Employees' Union on their appropriate use.

Ms. Hanson: I would suggest that the Minister of the Public Service Commission actually talk to some of those full-time two-year auxiliary-on-call employees and ask them if they would choose that.

In the same pandemic planning document, managers are told that they can ask an employee on sick leave for a doctor's note if they are not satisfied that an employee — whether permanent or auxiliary on call — is sick. This directly goes against the advice of the chief medical officer.

The same document covers wearing masks in the workplace. It informs managers that, no, employees will not be provided masks or gloves based on the April 6 advice of the chief medical officer of health. This document was released on October 27 — 44 days ago. As of 11:00 a.m., that link was still

valid. A lot has changed since then, Mr. Speaker, including mandatory mask-wearing in public spaces and, where appropriate, in workplaces.

When will managers and employees see an updated pandemic planning document posted that reflects the current direction from the chief medical officer of health?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can say to the member opposite that, throughout the pandemic, the Public Service Commission's work has been guided by the need to protect the health of public servants while maintaining the capacity to deliver services that Yukoners rely on.

We've been fortunate in the Yukon that public services continue to deliver most of the services that Yukoners depend on, even if we've had to shift our approach and implement new and even innovative ways of doing things here in the government.

Now, the member opposite has been talking about how we actually deal with employee leave through COVID-19 or even coordinate the way that people work in the civil service. I can say that, throughout the pandemic, we have worked very, very closely to make sure that we safeguard our public servants and the way that they work, and our public. That has been top of mind throughout our pandemic response.

At the very beginning of this pandemic, we had almost 50 percent of the workforce working from home. Just last week, I issued a letter to deputies encouraging them to look — on the heels of the chief medical officer of health's recommendation to work from home — at getting employees home with a lens toward public safety. That will remain our focus, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: COVID-19 testing for children

Ms. McLeod: Yesterday, we asked the Minister of Health and Social Services if the government had received the COVID-19 gargle tests for children in the territory yet. As is often the case with the Liberals, they were unable to answer this simple question about what the government is doing.

I know that the Liberals think that it is just the Yukon Party asking these questions, but they should know that, in fact, it's being asked by many parents and families.

Can the minister just tell us: Are these kid-friendly tests in the territory yet — yes or no?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Since British Columbia concluded their trial and put the mouth-rinse and gargle test into regular use in late September, the Department of Health and Social Services and the chief medical officer of health here in the territory have been reviewing the policy and the evidence around implementing the mouth-rinse and gargle test in the territory. As a result of this review, the Government of Yukon has moved forward with this testing option on a trial basis. The trial in Yukon is being done in consultation with the BC Centre for Disease Control. Implementation is based on the program in British Columbia. We are leveraging their expertise and experience with this type of testing.

Once the testing trial is completed, we will explore options for further rollout, which we anticipate may occur in mid-January 2021 — in a few weeks. This is a less invasive, simpler collection process than the gold standard nasal swab test, but

samples collected in the Yukon will still require processing through the BC Centre for Disease Control. This is a welcome option — hopefully in the near future.

Question re: 1Health computer system

Mr. Cathers: In the spring of 2017, the Official Opposition began pushing for the replacement of the 30-year-old Meditech system used by our hospitals. After two and a half years of pressuring by us, this Liberal government finally looked like they were going to do something. On October 11 last year, the minister touted the rollout of a replacement Meditech computer platform branded “1Health”. The government indicated that the first portion of the system would be live by November 2020. It is December 2020, and we are hearing that the rollout hasn’t even started yet.

Can the minister please update Yukoners on where we are regarding the installation of the 1Health computer system in Yukon health care facilities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The upgrading of our systems throughout government has been a priority of our government. We know that the previous government cancelled the Meditech upgrades. We actually resurrected that project because we realized how important it was to Yukoners. I, myself, am befuddled as to why this upgrade has taken so long and why the previous government took the decision to nix this very important upgrade to our health services in the territory. Certainly, that is not the direction that we like to take, so we have undertaken to fund and actually upgrade this system, which will greatly enhance the amount of information that our doctors, nurses, and medical professionals have in dealing with their patients. It will also greatly improve patient care.

Now, I know that Highways and Public Works has transferred money to Health and Social Services to execute that program. We did that this year. I will certainly endeavour to get a response to the member opposite as to where that program upgrade is at the current time.

Mr. Cathers: The Minister of Highways and Public Works is famous for his spin attempts, but as he knows very well, it took two and a half years of pressure by us before this Liberal government agreed to proceed with the replacement. You can simply check Hansard.

This is another case of the announcement last year — the Liberals are pretty good at press conferences and not so good at actually getting things done. The press conference on October 11, 2019, was complete with stand-up banners and special t-shirts featuring the 1Health logo. Included was a press release saying that \$7.2 million would be provided to the hospital for the new system.

While we appreciate that the pandemic has delayed everyday life, this is one item that should have been prioritized to support health care. This new system is now even more vital in this new age of working from home, with more emphasis on systems such as telehealth and remote health care for communities.

Can the minister tell us if the delay in the rollout has increased the cost of the project?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like to check Hansard too, Mr. Speaker. I would like to go back to 2015, 2014, and 2013, look at the Hansard discussions there, and see the lack of progress that Yukoners were subjected to under the previous government.

I can tell the Speaker this afternoon that this government is working very hard to upgrade systems inside this government that have been neglected for years and years — systems with critical information for Yukoners that have Pong-era servers that had to be upgraded because of the neglect of the previous government and their inability to see the importance of data and actually managing this government in a 21st century environment.

We have taken the tough decisions. We are upgrading our systems. We have the Meditech upgrades underway, something that was neglected in the past, but we are taking that hard work and digging ourselves out of a very big hole, and we’re proud to do it. We know that this is what Yukoners want, and we are going to continue that good work throughout the term of our mandate which, right now, has another year left.

Mr. Cathers: Despite the Minister of Highways and Public Works’ infamous, desperate spin attempts, he knows very well that I began pushing on behalf of our caucus for the replacement of the Meditech system in early 2017, and the Liberal government dismissed it for years before finally listening to the request about the importance of implementing this new upgraded computer system.

When you implement a new computer system, it takes training and time to bring employees and others who will use it up to speed. I want to emphasize that we support the upgrade to the 1Health platform.

We’re glad to see that the government has finally listened, but we also recognize that doctors, nurses, and other health care workers need time to learn about a new modernized computer platform that meets the needs of our health care system.

So, with the government not even into the first phase of this rollout, instead of the minister’s desperate spin attempts and rhetoric, will he actually tell us how health care providers and those who work in rural facilities will be trained and what the timeline is for the rollout of this important system?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: You know, Mr. Speaker, I will tell this House this afternoon exactly why the Member for Lake Laberge stood up in 2017 and asked us about the status of the Meditech program. He asked us that question, Mr. Speaker, because he knew that it had been ignored by his government in the past.

I know, Mr. Speaker, because when I was going out in the neighbourhood and talking to people in my constituency, I had health care workers coming to me and saying, “Will you please bring the Meditech system into place? This has been long ignored. We need this going.” I logged it. It was one of the first conversations that I had with the Department of Highways and Public Works when I got into office and into this portfolio, because Yukoners needed it. Yukoners were pleading for it and, Mr. Speaker, do you know why? Because it had been so long ignored. The members opposite know this. That’s why they are asking the question — because when they came into office, the

only things that they could ask about were the things that they couldn't deliver on and they started to put it on our shoulders. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're shouldering that load and we're going to do the hard work that Yukoners have asked us to do and that was so long ignored at the hands of the party on the opposite side — the conservative Yukon Party.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Mr. Kent, on a point of order.

Mr. Kent: We have had discussions with our colleagues in the Third Party and we will be submitting our Justice questions in writing. Just for the minister — she won't require Justice officials during that portion. We will require Health officials be present relatively quickly, as we do not have any general debate or questions. We will obviously pass the questions on once the Committee reconvenes — or if the minister is amenable, we could pass through Committee now with the proper motion. I will leave it to the Chair and Clerks to discuss the proper order.

Chair's ruling

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes while we have a discussion.

Recess

Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has not been granted.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Chair: Ms. McPhee, on a point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Deputy Chair, I am going to seek a brief recess so that I might have the officials come in and join me. I think that it is a bit unorthodox not to do so. I understand that generally to be the practice. I appreciate that the members opposite disagreed, but I am seeking that adjournment perhaps for 10 to 15 minutes, please.

Deputy Chair: Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: I don't believe that is actually a point of order. It is the practice with recesses in this House that, if there is not unanimous consent, there isn't a recess. We are prepared to move into the Department of Health and Social Services, since it is a priority — especially in a pandemic — and as indicated earlier, we will be submitting our questions about Justice in writing, so the minister really does not need officials here.

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: I am going to take this under advisement and I will get back to the Committee with a ruling on that, but I think that it would be appropriate, if the minister requires a recess even to get into her general debate, that five minutes would be appropriate to bring in the officials.

So, we will take a break for five minutes.

Recess

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

Bill No. 205: *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Justice

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. If I may have a moment while I welcome the officials to have a seat here with us this afternoon.

I welcome Deputy Minister John Phelps and Director of Finance for the Department of Justice, Luda Ayzenberg — I welcome them to join us here this afternoon. Thank you very much for coming.

I understand the submission — prior to break this afternoon — from the Official Opposition to be that they would be submitting some questions with respect to the Justice supplementary budget in writing. I am happy to receive them in that way and respond. I note that in the general debate here in Committee of the Whole, they won't be asking questions, but

that is open to them. I did not understand — or maybe I didn't hear — what the intention of the Third Party was.

That being said, as part of general debate, I will make some comments with respect to the supplementary budget on behalf of the Department of Justice that will, I hope, explain a number of things and perhaps either alleviate further questions or prompt some to come forward. As a result, I will take the time to do that now and thank the officials from the department for joining me for that purpose today.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I rise to present the Department of Justice supplementary budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year. I will take some time this afternoon to highlight the department's supplementary operation and maintenance expenditures and supplementary capital expenditures for the past eight months. Throughout this fiscal year, the department has continued to work diligently toward a justice system that is responsive to the needs of all Yukoners in a fiscally responsible manner, all while responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a story that will be heard over and over again — presumably, it has been heard already in some of the debate with respect to other departments that are up in this supplementary budget — but plans for 2020-21 have certainly gone astray in some circumstances with respect to the requirements to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the strategic investments in our future, we continue to build healthy, vibrant, safe, and sustainable Yukon communities, Mr. Deputy Chair. It is critical that this is a priority and, in fact, all of the work of our government was focused on doing so prior to the pandemic and it has certainly been focused on that work during the pandemic because of the safety and health of Yukoners. The supplementary budget that I present today enables the Department of Justice to continue to offer programming and supportive initiatives that meet the needs of Yukoners and Yukon citizens.

First, I will outline the variances that are seen in our operation and maintenance expenditures because I think that will be helpful to those looking at the supplementary budget and also, as I've said, perhaps address some of the questions that might be coming from the opposition or from the Third Party or be of interest — more importantly — to Yukoners if they have reviewed these documents.

Specifically, I will be discussing the expenditures for the following programs, initiatives, and branches: the independent legal advice pilot project or program; the family information liaison unit; the First Nation policing program; the RCMP mobile radio system; Court Services; and Legal Services — all important initiatives of the Department of Justice. Additionally, I will outline the expenditures that are before us in relation to the COVID-19 response.

I would first like to turn attention to the newly launched independent legal advice pilot program. This program is known as "ILA" and provides independent legal advice for victims of intimate partner violence and sexualized violence. This is an incredibly important opportunity for Yukoners to have a service that was not readily available prior to this program. Victims of all genders and ages can access independent lawyers to assist

in making informed choices, such as when a victim is deciding whether or not to report an incident.

The independent legal advice program aims to make the legal system more accessible to victims and is another step toward improving services for victims of violence here in the territory. There have been a number of initiatives aimed at doing just that — providing additional kinds of services, listening to Yukoners, listening to victims of crime, and listening to those folks who work with them — having heard what kinds of services, where the gaps are, and how we can improve.

The Department of Justice is pleased to have earmarked funds for a one-time transfer of \$140,000 to fund contracts for legal advice services from specially trained lawyers. There is no impact on the overall budget of the program. I can indicate that the services that are provided to these victims — to Yukoners who need this assistance of the independent legal advice pilot program — are absolutely free to them.

Next, I would like to revisit the family information liaison unit, another catchy acronym known as "FILU", to discuss funding increases that we will be allocating to this unit as part of this supplementary budget.

The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting the important work and mandate of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and two-spirit individuals.

We've heard a number of comments today and important information about the MMIWG2S+ strategy that has been introduced here and signed and committed to publicly — a community declaration, if you will, today here in the territory on Human Rights Day and the importance of us moving forward with respect to the implementation of that strategy — that strategy being the first of its kind in Canada and being one that is looked to by other provinces and territories, and in fact the federal government, for the purposes of seeing how we've done that work as a community and seeing how it is not a strategy that is the responsibility of the Yukon government. It is, in fact, a strategy that is bought into, signed, and declared to be committed to by the community. That will, we know, make it successful.

The government is committed to supporting that important work, and going forward, the Department of Justice plays a key role in providing that support — as do other government departments, but clearly here today I'm speaking about our commitment as the Department of Justice.

We know that many families of victims will have questions regarding their loved one's cases and that helping them access information and support is an important step in their journey toward healing.

FILU provides centralized, coordinated supports for families of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls and two-spirit individuals to help them access information related to their loved one's case. I can hardly think of a program or project that is more poignant today, on Human Rights Day, or more poignant today as we introduce the strategy to the territory for MMIWG2S+ — and an important role for the

Department of Justice to play with the family information liaison unit for that purpose.

Members of the Assembly will recall that FILU has received funding from the Government of Canada since 2016. The Government of Yukon has received a three-year extension from the Government of Canada to continue this important work. Therefore, FILU is now allotted \$285,000 in this budget, 100 percent of which is recoverable from the Government of Canada.

Turning to policing matters, this budget includes an ongoing increase of \$226,000 to fund the mobile radio system for Yukon RCMP. The RCMP's use of the mobile radio system, of course, is essential for public and police officer safety. Access to this system contributes to integrated communications between territorial emergency dispatch — commonly known as “911” — and allied emergency responders and members of the public. This is a non-discretionary operational requirement, and the costs are determined by the service provider. Additionally, an ongoing transfer of \$50,000 has been earmarked for the First Nations policing program in order to support community consultative groups.

Community tripartite agreements will now govern administration of the new First Nations policing program in 11 Yukon First Nation governments, replacing the older First Nations community policing service agreements under Public Safety Canada's existing framework agreement. These First Nation governments are Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Ross River Dena Council, Selkirk First Nation, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and White River First Nation.

The move to community tripartite agreements is intended to increase transparency and to encourage meaningful partnerships between First Nation governments and the RCMP. Examples of these measures include: establishing community consultative groups to guide and inform ongoing work — a very critical opportunity for communities to be involved and for RCMP to work closely with communities and inform the ongoing work. It includes drafting letters of expectation in partnership with the RCMP to set out specific community priorities — again, opportunities for communities and the RCMP to communicate with one another and to have clear expectations set out for their relationships and how they will work together to the benefit of Yukoners.

It will include establishing regular reporting practices among partners. Mr. Deputy Chair, this is all extremely important work in the evolution and improvement of services for Yukon to Yukon by RCMP in communities.

The ongoing funding transfer will enable the Public Safety and Investigations branch to provide funding to each community consultative group to offset any additional cost to the community associated with establishing and monitoring letters of expectation — not only good work going forward, but the ability to assist in the capacity of those First Nations to do that work to the benefit of their communities — particularly around letters of expectation. There is no impact on the overall

budget of the Department of Justice for this work. I am proud to say that so much of this work in the Department of Justice is so ably managed by the officials there with the opportunity for working closely with Canada to the benefit of Yukoners. The financial management in the department is absolutely stellar.

Next, I would like to turn to the Justice Enterprise Information Network. This is known to some folks as “JEIN” — although I am always not sure about that because it is spelled “J-E-I-N” — but that is with Court Services. That's just my little acronym question mark. Known as “JEIN” — and pronounced as “JEN” quite regularly, the Justice Enterprise Information Network — it is a software database system for storage and retrieval of court records. I am sure that all members and Yukoners would understand the importance and critical work done by the JEIN system.

This system, as members may recall, replaced an outmoded computer system from the 1980s and creates a more efficient Yukon court system by allowing for faster court document production and improved case tracking and greater data capacity. Unfortunately, my days of appearing in court every day or every week predate the implementation of the JEIN system, so many a day, we waited for handwritten documents to come out of the court registry so that individuals could be on their way — but I have certainly seen how the JEIN system works and the benefit it has not only for the folks who work in the system but, more particularly, for Yukoners who find themselves in a court process.

We are pleased to say that an ongoing transfer of \$167,000 within Court Services has been earmarked to fund a business analyst position to support this system and for a JEIN support contract. The transfer utilizes lapsing funds from court reporting and will not have any impact on the overall budget.

Additionally, an ongoing transfer of \$96,000 has been allocated to fund a trial coordinator position within Court Services for the Supreme and Territorial Courts. The transfer only reallocates funds within the Court Services branch and will not have an impact on the overall budget.

Turning to the Legal Services branch, an ongoing transfer of \$258,000 has been allocated to restructure the solicitors group. There is no impact on the branch's overall budget.

The last budget increase for the operation and maintenance expenditures that is noted in this supplementary budget pertains to the Government of Yukon response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Justice is working with all government departments to protect the health and safety of our staff, clients, and the public. A number of our workers were deployed to other work units to assist with emergency planning, response activities, and enforcement measures. While the majority of workers have continued with their regular assignments, it is through their efforts and the cooperation of Yukoners that we have been able to limit the spread of COVID-19 within the territory. We recognize that there have been service disruptions due to COVID-19 and the department has remained committed to ensuring the delivery of essential services throughout Yukon. We have allocated \$768,000, representing \$485,000 as required for enforcement under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this information to the Legislative Assembly, and I'm open to questions, either with respect to some of the comments I have made or the supplementary budget.

Ms. Hanson: I believe that my colleagues from the Official Opposition had indicated that, in light of the few remaining hours of actual time to debate the budget and given the substantive issues and amounts of money that are contained in the supplementary budget for both Health and Social Services and Education, it's our intention — our intention as the Yukon NDP — to follow up with the minister with either a request for a legislative return or a letter — whichever is the most effective means — because I'm mindful that we did not, during the Spring Sitting, debate the Justice budget at all and we do have a number of substantive issues and questions with respect to the 2020-21 budget that we would not get through in the limited time that's available to us today.

It's with that in mind that we'll be looking to clear Vote 8 and move on to Health and Social Services, as I understand was discussed at the House Leaders' meeting this morning.

Mr. Gallina: I'm going to take an opportunity to ask questions of my colleague here in Committee of the Whole as a private member.

The minister spoke to community safety initiatives in her opening statements. We know that the Government of Yukon continues to support safer and stronger communities across the territory by working with Public Safety Canada and Yukon First Nation governments to develop community safety plans. The minister did speak about community safety plans, and I'm interested in having the minister speak about community safety initiatives.

Can she speak to the partnerships that are in place, dollars spent by this government to date, and the community safety planning that First Nation governments are undergoing?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is a broad topic, and I'm certainly able to provide some information to Yukoners about this. As a matter of fact — it's hard to remember the days of the week — on just Monday of this week — so some three or four days ago — the deputy minister and I had the opportunity, along with the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, to meet virtually with the Minister of Public Safety Canada, Mr. Bill Blair, for the purposes of discussing a number of topics, and this was high on the agenda.

We have continued to work closely with the Government of Canada, indicating that community safety planning processes have been very effective here in the territory. They have been undertaken by a number of First Nation governments and their communities for the purpose of determining public safety plans going forward. There is a federal program that has, in the past, been funded and supported by Public Safety Canada for the purpose of doing those community safety plans and assisting communities with how they want to move forward.

The success of community safety plans comes from the fact that they are grown, determined, drafted, and decided upon by communities, with help with other facilitation. Subsequent to that, there needs to be assistance in going forward with the implementation of those plans.

A good example — and it is a well-known example now across Canada — was the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, which availed itself of a community safety planning process and ultimately came up with a number of things to be implemented in their community to effect safety for their citizens. Perhaps most well known is the community safety officer pilot program that was developed by the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. It is wildly successful and has also been developed — not the same program, but one that suits their community — by the Selkirk First Nation, and those community safety officer programs are an element of the community safety planning process going forward.

I can also indicate that the Government of Yukon continues to support safer and stronger communities across the territory by working with Public Safety Canada — as I said, speaking to the minister a couple of days ago. Yukon First Nation governments are supportive and work to develop community safety plans for their communities.

That process supports indigenous communities to develop plans and initiatives specific to their unique circumstances and uses traditional knowledge and culture to make communities safer.

As I have noted, the two First Nation governments that have already completed a community safety plan under that federal program and facilitated by Public Safety Canada — the Kwanlin Dün First Nation did their own assessment and then moved forward with some work. There are other First Nations here in the territory that are interested in this process. We spoke with Minister Blair about continuing funding overall for that kind of program. We spoke in person and, most recently, for the purposes of having that available to all communities across the country. Yukon, being a leader, has been a successful partner with Public Safety Canada. The success of these programs and the need for them to continue in a meaningful way and be properly resourced is the message that we have delivered to Canada and is, in fact, the message that is being heard there.

I can also note that Minister Blair will be working with us, going forward, on a number of initiatives. They are excited by the work that is being done here in the north of Canada and particularly in the Yukon Territory and around policing initiatives and the innovation that the Yukon often brings to the table.

Mr. Gallina: I thank the minister for that response. Continuing on with community safety and community initiatives, I wanted to talk about the Yukon Police Council. We know that the Yukon Police Council is a citizen advisory council on policing in Yukon with a focus to promote ongoing dialogue and to foster a positive relationship between Yukon citizens, the Yukon RCMP M Division, and the Department of Justice. We know that the Police Council works to gain community perspective and provide recommendations to set policing priorities for the Yukon RCMP.

Can the minister talk to this House and Yukoners about the policing priorities that have been set as a result of these recommendations and speak to the resources that have been

dedicated to these priorities and the results that we are seeing in communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Yukon Police Council is unique in Canada. I spoke to Minister Blair about that a few days ago. I was very pleased to provide that information — not that he wasn't aware of it, but clearly, his plate is full. He is looking for work done across the country with respect to making policing better and improving citizens' responses and interactions with the police.

In 2021, policing priorities offer a foundation for effective policing here in the territory and continue to focus on addressing violence against women, responding to serious and organized crime, and fostering meaningful relationships with First Nation governments, communities, and youth.

The Yukon policing priorities are conveyed by the person who holds the Minister of Justice portfolio to the RCMP on an annual basis. That happens to be me at this time. The Yukon policing priorities come to me from the Yukon Police Council after they — as I have said, they are unique in Canada — interact with citizens, communities, community organizations, First Nations, and other governments across the territory to determine how the RCMP should respond and what those priorities should be. Yukon's policing priorities are informed by recommendations that come from the Yukon Police Council and are, again, the priorities of the Department of Justice. We both come together with our priorities from the department and those from the Yukon Police Council, and we convey those. Often, they are very similar to one another. Sometimes one or the other will have additional information or additional priority. I am happy to say that, in the years that I have been here in this privileged position, they have often dovetailed very nicely with what the department's positions or priorities are, as well as the communities'.

The Yukon Police Council is a citizen advisory council on policing in Yukon. Their focus is to promote ongoing dialogue in order to foster a positive relationship between Yukon citizens, the Yukon RCMP — also known as the M Division — and the Department of Justice. Each year, the Yukon Police Council works to gain community perspective and to provide recommendations so that I may set the policing priorities for the Yukon RCMP.

This year, the Police Council has launched a survey — this is a great opportunity to mention it — to seek input from Yukoners on their experiences with Yukon RCMP, partly because of COVID. The opportunity has been restricted for them to visit all communities or the ones where they would normally go in the course of a year to meet with individual Yukon citizens.

The survey, they hope, is going to reach out. I really encourage all Yukoners to participate in this important initiative and share their experiences, as it is only through opportunities — and I spoke about this yesterday in the Legislative Assembly on a different topic — but obtaining meaningful perspectives and meaningful experiences from Yukoners is the key way that we can make improvements going forward and the opportunity to do that.

I think part of the question also involved funding for Yukon policing priorities. The funding arrangement with the RCMP is generally base funding with additional funding for some particular programming. But there is no additional funding that is provided to them for the purposes of achieving the policing priorities. The policing priorities are an exchange of expectations, if you will, between the Department of Justice, the Yukon communities, the Police Council, and the RCMP. They make arrangements with their core funding in order to respond.

Mr. Gallina: I thank the minister for her response. I wanted to talk about the sexualized assault response team. I wanted to get some information on what has been completed as a result of the implementation of SART. We know that, in March 2020, the sexualized assault response team was implemented in Whitehorse with expanded and improved services available to victims of sexualized assault, including emotional, medical, and legal supports.

We know that components of SART include a 24-hour, confidential, toll-free, Yukon-wide support line for all victims of sexualized assaults. Victim support work is available for after-hours support on weekends and a roster of on-call physicians specifically trained to support victims of sexualized assault.

Could the minister please elaborate or speak to items that have been completed since the implementation of SART? Could she also speak to what next steps are for this program or the next phases?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. The sexualized assault response team is something near and dear to my heart and a responsibility that I have personally taken very seriously — as well as my colleagues around the caucus table. In particular, I have worked closely with the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate for the purposes of rolling out and leading a sexualized assault response team for the purpose of providing services to Yukoners — particularly to women but certainly all individuals who become victims of sexualized assault.

The reason I say this is a personal matter to me is that, a very long time ago — some 40 years — I worked with a similar organization as a young post-secondary student for the purpose of providing a version of this kind of service to individuals who were in need of help. It was a profound opportunity to learn about the difficulties and to learn about the way in which our community can better respond. I have had other work opportunities throughout the years that have brought me to the conclusion that this was a service that we needed to pursue here in the territory. Colleagues have also had the same idea, and we pursued this together.

We were proud to formally launch the sexualized assault response team, also known as "SART", in Whitehorse. The Department of Justice, through Victim Services, plays a key role in SART by providing victims of sexualized violence with specialized accompaniment and support services from trained SART workers. Victims of sexualized violence can call the confidential support line to explore options including

requesting that a support worker accompany them to SART locations — including maybe the hospital or the police station, a nursing station — they might just answer questions for them; they might just have a kind ear on the other end of the phone; they might provide them information about housing or about other kinds of services that might be available if they find themselves in a situation where they are dealing with sexualized violence and the opportunity to get help — to know how to respond.

This service is available during weekdays and on weekends, evenings, and nights. While this in-person service was suspended for a period of time due to COVID-19, it has now resumed and I am very pleased to say that it is in phase 1 of the sexualized assault response team, where some of the services that were noted in the beginning of the question are in fact available. From the Justice perspective and Victim Services, the on-call services of Victim Services support people — properly trained — is one aspect of that. There is a 24/7 helpline. There are trained health professionals — nurses, doctors, and others — on call at the hospital — and throughout the territory, if need be. There are specially trained police officers to assist in responding to these kinds of cases. The phase 1 operation involves all of those — but an opportunity for us to enhance that, as we go forward.

We also recognize that, while some Yukoners may have had a reluctance to access services during COVID-19, we encourage victims to contact the support line to explore how to access support safely.

SART involves multiple government, community, and system partners who are all committed to coordinating and improving services for victims of sexualized violence.

When we began having this conversation — and there have been many services provided to Yukoners throughout the years — it was really about improving it so that it was coordinated. A key element of this system and the response team is that, no matter where a victim might first enter the system or first come in contact with someone asking for help, they should receive the wraparound services that are available. They should receive information about all aspects of what might be available to them. If they walk into a police station, they should have those services provided to them. If they walk into a community health centre, if they call a friend, or if they call a 24/7 line, the idea would be that the coordinated response would be prioritized so that the individual could have the service or access the service that he or she needed at any possible entry point so that you don't have to make it through the right door in order to get the right service. It was more important that we meet every victim where they are and help provide them with the service that they need and the response that they need in a trauma-informed, compassionate way every time that they call.

Mr. Gallina: I thank the minister for that response.

I wanted to talk about the Yukon strategy on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people. We know that Yukon released its strategy this morning, which was supported with declarations from federal ministers and members of this Assembly. I wanted to understand what

the role of the Department of Justice is in addressing the 231 calls for justice.

We know that the Yukon government has worked closely with Yukon First Nations, Yukon indigenous women's groups, and family representatives to finalize *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice*, the Yukon MMIWG2S+ strategy.

The strategy outlines four main pathways to guide our action in response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It includes strengthening connections and supports, community safety and justice, economic independence and education, community action, and accountability. We know that the Yukon advisory committee has worked hard over the last year to finalize this strategy.

I would like the minister to speak to the role of the Department of Justice in addressing and supporting this strategy in addressing the 231 calls for justice.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As noted, I think, in the question — perhaps not — the Government of Yukon has worked closely with Yukon First Nations, Yukon indigenous women's groups, and family representatives who were key partners to finalize the *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice*, the Yukon MMIWG2S+ strategy.

We have heard quite a bit today about how that strategy was introduced today and how many, many community partners made a declaration and signed a declaration indicating that they would help to implement and find a better path forward — in particular, by implementing the strategy.

I am very proud to say that the Yukon advisory committee has worked so hard. We heard from the Member for Porter Creek Centre, as well as the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and others today, about the importance of this going forward. The strategy does outline forming pathways that are actionable responses from the final report. They involved strengthening connections and supports, community safety and justice, economic independence and education, and community action and accountability. The advisory committee has worked hard to develop those pathways forward. The Department of Justice is — by virtue of the responsibilities for community safety, justice, justice systems, concepts of community accountability, RCMP services, court services, and investigative services through the work of those organizations, departments, or parts of departments as well — responsible for a number of initiatives that will be interwoven.

I think it is key to remind Yukoners that, in fact, while this advisory committee was co-chaired by one of the ministers in our government, there were two other co-chairs. They brought a community perspective — a Yukon-wide community perspective. It was clearly noted today — and it has been through all the information — that this strategy will not ultimately be the responsibility only of the Yukon government, but that Yukon government is a proud partner coming to the table for the opportunity to work on a number of those initiatives for the implementation of that strategy.

Clearly, Justice will be involved in the areas that I've noted. The RCMP is an important partner. The Yukon

Department of Justice and Victim Services and the programs that I mentioned earlier today are all incredibly important — FILU and others — for the purposes of supporting families through this process and the opportunity for this work to begin as a one-government approach and a one-community approach. This is something that we clearly look forward to.

Mr. Gallina: I have one final question. I appreciate the time from the minister today in helping Yukoners understand Justice priorities and policing priorities throughout Yukon communities. I wanted to end on the registration of First Nation settlement land.

We know that the Government of Yukon is committed to supporting those First Nation governments that have an interest in using Yukon's Land Titles Office to register their settlement land, which would allow for future development of settlement land for a variety of residential or commercial purposes.

We know that, in 2017, the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Self-Government Agreement* was amended to enable the First Nation to register their category A or category B settlement land in the Land Titles Office without affecting aboriginal title. We know that the option to pursue using the Land Titles Office to register First Nation settlement land remains completely at the discretion of the First Nation.

The question that I have for the minister is: What other First Nation governments is the Yukon government looking to support or to work with in support of settlement land through the Yukon Land Titles Office without affecting their aboriginal rights or title?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting those Yukon First Nation governments that have an interest in using Yukon's Land Titles Office to register their settlement land. As a matter of fact, we had a bill before this Legislative Assembly just some days ago to facilitate that process.

This would allow for the future development of settlement land for a variety of residential or commercial purposes, which is the intent of this work with Yukon First Nations. The Government of Yukon has approved recommendations to support the amendment of the Kluane First Nation, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, and Carcross/Tagish First Nation self-government agreements to facilitate registration of their category A and B settlement land in Yukon's Land Titles Office without affecting aboriginal rights and title.

In 2017 — if anyone can remember back that far — the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Self-Government Agreement* was amended to enable the First Nation to register their category A and category B settlement land in the Land Titles Office without affecting aboriginal title.

Also, I had the pleasure of participating in a ceremony — pre-COVID, sometime ago — when Kwanlin Dün First Nation in fact did register their first piece of land in the Land Titles Office, to much celebration and opportunity going forward. The system has been designed such that any Yukon First Nation that intends to avail themselves of that — we are happy to support and work with them. There are relatively small changes needed to self-government agreements for the purposes of completing that procedure, and Canada is a signatory there, but all

indications that we have — and certainly it was the case with Kwanlin Dün — the federal government is also supportive of these options being made available to First Nation governments.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*?

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

Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: Mr. Cathers has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,292,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,292,000 agreed to

Department of Justice agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has not been granted.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Chair: Mr. Streicker, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'm just looking for understanding on this. You just asked whether members were agreed. I believe that it is a vote of the House. I heard several people say "agreed" and I heard some people say "disagreed". I'm not sure if I understand — if you can explain to me. I went and checked with the Clerk earlier, and the understanding that I was given is that, if there is a misunderstanding of whether it is one or the other, that it is a simple majority, and that we would go for a count.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Deputy Chair: Just one moment, Mr. Cathers; I just want to confer with the Clerk and I will get right to you.

Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The rule has always been, in rulings in the past, that taking a recess requires unanimous consent. I think that the minister is misunderstanding the rules.

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: In conferring with the Clerk, it has been said to me that unanimous consent has to be granted to have a recess. I heard that some disagreed, so we are continuing on.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Health and Social Services

Ms. McLeod: Earlier this year, the government ended drop-in dinner service at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, and then they moved to a contract with Coast High Country Inn to prepare the meals. Can the minister tell us how much the contract was for?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Chair: Mr. Pillai, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I guess it would be a point of order. I think it would be appropriate, as per the conduct that we have had, that if officials are changing over — what we have done is the Sergeant-at-Arms has come in to wipe this down so that we're making sure that the health protocols are in place. What we have seen here is a quick call for questions. We haven't been able to take the appropriate health precautions. It seems to be that things are quickly being rushed, and I also didn't see the opportunity for opening remarks for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Deputy Chair: Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: This cleaning of chairs is not a point of order. Officials do not have to be in their seats the entire time that a minister is. There is certainly time to do that before officials sit down and for the minister and the critic to engage in questions. The critic just asked a question, and I would hope that the minister would take the opportunity to respond to it.

Deputy Chair: Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Whether or not it is a point of order, I am bringing to your attention — much as my colleague has — that there are protocols for this room. If our friends across the way are not interested in a break, we could at least have 30 seconds for the desks to be properly cleaned, as is required by this Legislative Assembly and the rules that we have discussed therein.

In addition to that, I was standing for the purposes of doing an opening statement. Perhaps you didn't see me, but launching into the questions at this point, I think — the questions about general debate — I was trying to be recognized. I appreciate

that there seems to be some urgency today in proceeding without any breaks. That's the prerogative of the other side, but I think that the cleaning protocols are something that we should all be respecting.

Deputy Chair: I will go back to Ms. McLeod. Could you please repeat your question?

Ms. McLeod: Is the government side ready, Mr. Deputy Chair?

Deputy Chair: They appear to be. We can either ask your question or we can have the minister make her opening statement.

Ms. McLeod: I believe that there is probably no point in me asking a question at this time. Given that we're going to get the opening statement anyway, I will stand down and the minister can proceed.

Deputy Chair: Ms. Frost, please proceed.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I appreciate the opportunity to speak today to the Legislative Assembly. I would like to acknowledge my colleagues who are here with me — Deputy Minister Stephen Samis and Assistant Deputy Minister Karen Chan. I would like to also say thank you for giving us the opportunity to follow very closely the COVID protocols in ensuring that we have a safe work environment and that my colleagues were not in any way jeopardized by not essentially following the protocols and doing the necessary cleaning.

As a note, as the Minister of Health and Social Services, it's critical that we follow protocols. If that's not the practice of this Assembly, then I suggest that we would perhaps not be in a very good position in that we would jeopardize the well-being of all of us — and that's essentially why the protocols were established in the first place.

With respect to Health and Social Services, today we are speaking about the supplementary budget for Health and Social Services for 2021. Before I begin, I would just like to say thank you to the department for doing a great job during this most unprecedented time in our history as we deal with a pandemic that has affected all of us in more ways than we would like to acknowledge, I guess. We have gone through some major trials and stresses over the course of the last nine months.

The Deputy Minister and the Assistant Deputy Minister of Corporate Services, along with the whole department, have been instrumental in ensuring that we develop a budget that supports Yukoners. I want to thank them for their hard work.

It is clear that 2020 is the year that will be remembered by all Canadians and by all Yukoners. Keeping Yukoners safe has been our government's top priority since the COVID-19 virus appeared. It has been difficult and challenging for all of us. We have managed to keep our caseloads low. Although now we have 58 cases, we have made good progress with our contact tracing and public health measures. Our territory is in a good position today due to the ongoing hard work and, of course, the compliance of Yukoners — not just government employees, but all citizens who have followed our public health measures, adapting their business practices and changing their habits as required.

For the Department of Health and Social Services in particular, protecting and enhancing the well-being of

Yukoners during a global pandemic has been both challenging and expensive, but I am pleased to say that, through the dedication and hard work of our front-line staff and social support workers — from doctors to nurses to continuing care workers to personal support workers to cleaning staff — and to all those who support our chief medical officer of health, we have not only protected Yukoners, but we have continued to offer the services and supports that our citizens rely on. Our vision of healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities continues even during this global pandemic.

In addition to all of our efforts combating this pandemic, which I will outline in more detail, we have continued moving forward with the direction proposed in *Putting People First — the final report of the comprehensive health review of Yukon's health and social programs and services*. It has been a year like no other, one that has tested our resiliency, but one where we have accomplished a great deal.

In this budget, we are requesting a supplementary appropriation of \$52.3 million. This additional funding is required to fund not only our pandemic responses, but also the legislated and required services that we provide Yukoners.

The majority of these supplementary funds, nearly 65 percent — or approximately \$33.7 million — is needed for our COVID response. The good news is that, of that amount, all of this will be fully recoverable, thanks to the COVID support from the Government of Canada.

Approval of this funding will allow the Department of Health and Social Services to continue meeting the requirements of essential health and social programs while ensuring that proper support is offered to vulnerable citizens who are significantly affected by the pandemic. It will also allow us to continue leading Yukon's public health response to the pandemic. Specifically, the department is requesting funding to transition from a health emergency operations centre to a smaller COVID response unit.

The COVID response unit directly supports our chief medical officer of health in combatting COVID and developing related plans, policies, communication materials, and epidemiological models. This unit coordinates our health response during the pandemic and is vital in the fight against this pandemic.

Effective testing and tracing are crucial to prevent community spread, which is something that we have thankfully avoided here in the Yukon. We have continued operating the COVID testing centre that opened on July 6. We have introduced mobile testing and drive-through testing to expand testing access for Yukoners.

The COVID testing centre has a staff, including nurse practitioners, nurses, admin support, greeters, and cleaners. Given the current flu season and with the arrival of the second wave here in the Yukon, testing remains essential in our fight against this virus.

We have introduced funding that supports the very successful mass flu clinic in Whitehorse that was held at the High Country Inn over a six-week period. We were able to vaccinate more than 14,000 people. The clinic allowed us to test for the future COVID vaccine implementation.

The infrastructure for this model worked well, and we have been able to determine that it will be able to accommodate the general projected demand for the COVID vaccine. Holding that clinic in one facility allowed community nursing more time to administer vaccines because they did not have to set up and dismantle their equipment and supplies each day. Clinics have also been held in communities. This funding allowed for longer operating hours with the hiring of auxiliary-on-call nurses, greeters, cleaners, and admin staff to support the clinic.

During the pandemic, like everywhere in Canada, we have been paying particular attention to vulnerable populations. These are Yukoners living in our continuing care residences, people living with disabilities, those on social assistance, and those who are precariously housed or homeless.

The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and its client population continues to be greatly affected by the pandemic. As with all of our 24/7 operations, we are mitigating the risk of transmission with this vulnerable population through enhanced cleaning measures and the implementation of social distancing measures.

For example, Health and Social Services is contracting with local hotels to house clients who are unable to be accommodated at the shelter due to the physical distancing requirements. We are also providing additional funding to Skookum Jim Friendship Centre to enhance their youth shelter program. We partnered with the Whitehorse Food Bank to ensure that brown-bag meals prepared at the shelter could be distributed to clients off-site — again, all in order to have proper social distancing measures in place.

As cool weather has arrived, we adapted our distribution plans and partnered with the Stop In Family Hotel and the Coast High Country Inn to address this community need, while continuing our COVID-19 protocols at the shelter.

The pandemic has also had an impact on the ongoing public health crisis related to high rates of opioid poisoning and deaths. Unfortunately, Yukon has not been immune to these impacts, and this is a cause for real concern and deep sadness. The street supply of illicit drugs is becoming even more unpredictable and dangerous as regular supply chains are disrupted. We are working with Blood Ties Four Directions to enable people who use drugs to have their illicit substances tested for a range of harmful components beyond fentanyl.

We have also had to increase our mental health and other supports due to the unintended consequences of self-isolation and physical distancing. It is important to note that the creation of mental wellness hubs in Yukon communities continues to expand mental health services for Yukoners across the territory, including our children and youth.

Due to our vulnerable population and the number of 24/7 facilities that Health and Social Services manages, much of our additional funding continues to be spent on cleaning and screening to ensure that we comply with the best practices and the recommended guidelines from the chief medical officer of health. Continuing Care alone has nearly 300 long-term care beds in total, over 600 home care clients, and over 800 staff. With the challenges and changes to policy, practice, outbreak management, et cetera, Continuing Care will continue to

require resources to maintain screening stations that have been set up at long-term care homes to screen staff, contractors, and visitors. Additionally, Continuing Care has hired additional cleaners for McDonald Lodge in Dawson City and for long-term care homes in Whitehorse to ensure adherence to cleaning and sanitization guidelines.

For Yukoners living with disabilities, we are providing extra support to clients and their families to ease the many challenges that they are facing primarily due to the reduction in client-based services in the community. We are helping clients and caregivers offset their increased respite costs. For Yukoners receiving social assistance benefits, we are ensuring that they did not experience a reduction if they received the Canada emergency response benefit, the Canada emergency student benefit, or the one-time disability payment.

With the downturn in the economy, we are preparing for an increase in applications for social assistance. Furthermore, we have recognized the impact that the pandemic may have had on youth in care, specifically those Yukoners who might age out of care during what is a difficult economic time. Just as parents and caregivers in our communities may be supporting their children while employment and other opportunities are scarce, we are giving these young adults more time to establish themselves in the community by extending their benefits for a longer period.

For all of our vulnerable populations, we have put measures in place to ensure that necessary health care and medical services remain available and accessible. Early in the pandemic, we also provided subsidies to ensure that childcare spaces remain open during the pandemic. This allowed parents and other caregivers to remain at work or return to work or to access any other needed services and supports.

We continue to work with all centres to ensure that they have the necessary supports, including training, to remain operational to serve the needs of children and families. We are also providing funding so that all licensed childcare centres and family day homes can meet the cleaning requirements to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Without these supports, some childcare operators might have had to close.

Of course, we can't talk about COVID without talking about personal protective equipment, or PPE. We have had to not only buy more PPE, but also secure additional places to store enough PPE to ensure that we have enough for essential health care workers and others, including First Nation governments, should there be a shortage in the future.

The PPE procurement is in addition to the allocations that we are receiving from the federal government and the related 12-week reserve that the federal government provided. Every program area is purchasing additional cleaning supplies, sanitation, and soap to adhere to the public health guidelines.

Supplementary funds are also needed to support the Yukon Hospital Corporation, which has not only experienced a loss in revenue due to a decrease in patients from other jurisdictions, but also an increase in expenditures to comply with pandemic health and safety requirements. This includes enhanced screening measures and cleaning to mitigate COVID

transmission through additional staffing or increases in overtime paid.

Of course, within Health and Social Services as well, staffing costs have increased due to the pandemic. We have hired additional temporary health supports and paid increased overtime to ensure that all of our program areas are able to respond to COVID-19 and mitigate the risks of transmission. In addition, the department has hired an infection control nurse, paid for additional physician coverage so that doctors do not travel between facilities, hired additional support for community nursing, incurred additional staffing costs by limiting staff to work at only one facility, expanded Yukon 811 services, hired additional environmental health officers; and paid increased salary costs for Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit staff who conduct our contact tracing and provide additional testing for high-risk cases.

Finally, we are continuing to offer self-isolation options for people who cannot self-isolate in their own homes. Again, this is an important public health measure — one that helps prevent the spread of the virus and community transmission. It is money well spent.

As already mentioned, despite the demands that this global pandemic is placing upon us, the Department of Health and Social Services is continuing to make progress on many other fronts. The final report of the comprehensive health review, of our Health and Social Services' *Putting People First*, provides a road map to transform Yukon's health and social services system into a more integrated, collaborative, and person-centred system that will better meet the needs of Yukoners. We are committed to implementing the report's recommendations. This will make services more effective, it will be better value for money, and it will improve outcomes and experiences for client, patients, families, and health and social services providers.

To improve primary care for Yukoners living in rural Yukon communities, we are — as recommended by the *Putting People First* report — increasing our number of nurse practitioners, first in Carmacks and then in other communities. We are also looking at home care options. We are improving access to vaccines for at-risk and vulnerable Yukoners, including the Shingrix vaccine, HPV vaccine, and the PrEP drug. As well, we are enhancing our medical travel program — doubling medical travel benefits on the first day of travel for patients who remain overnight for medical care.

It is important to note that, while we may not see immediate savings from many of our *Putting People First* recommendations, making these changes will help us bend the cost curve.

Finally, it is extremely important to note that we have set aside funding to support additional needs related to COVID, such as enhanced drug testing and screening. There are also funds available to support the implementation of our vaccination plan.

Ms. McLeod: I would like to welcome the minister and her officials to the House today.

Earlier this year, the government ended drop-in dinner service at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. Then they moved

to a contract with the Coast High Country Inn to prepare the meals. Can the minister tell us how much that contract is worth?

Hon. Ms. Frost: In response to the question, the average per meal is \$5. We produce approximately 40 meals per day. That is covered by COVID-related expenses.

Ms. McLeod: I get that it is \$5 times 40 meals per day. Is that a fixed cost for seven days a week and for what period of time, please?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter meals — providing a bit of an update — the focus early on at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter was to provide low-barrier opportunities for our street-involved individuals. At the same time, we had to follow COVID protocols with respect to safe distancing and cleaning protocols.

With that in mind, Health and Social Services had to take measures under the public health guidelines for COVID to allow physical distancing at the shelter, and we had to start preparing meals in a different way, much like we provided supports in a different way.

Historically — and I have noted this before in the Legislature — we have provided support to approximately 50 to 70 people in a night, and that had to be significantly reduced as a result of the COVID protocols. So, the shelter kitchen began preparing meals for distribution by the Whitehorse Food Bank for shelter guests to pick up and eat meals off-site.

We are in the middle of winter now, and so, the reassessment at the facility with the experts as it relates to COVID and COVID protocols — while still meeting the needs of the vulnerable population group, we had to find an alternative. The best way to serve shelter guests and determine that with additional COVID-19 protocols — we had to resume providing food services within the shelter for those clients whom we were able to safely accommodate on a daily basis.

On the very first of November, the meals provided at the shelter were taken off-site and an existing contract was in place with the Coast High Country Inn, as that's the facility we use as a self-isolation site. The to-go meal service was provided and distributed from there to the Family Hotel. I would like to just note that the clients who pick up the meals are generally those who live elsewhere, and we provide meals currently to the shelter guests, as they reside at the shelter, and we provide meals to the clients who don't reside at the shelter or in one of the hotels.

The objective is to ensure that we provide dinner services through the Family Hotel, and all the other meals are provided through the shelter, with accommodations being made for expanded hours at lunchtime so that we can essentially follow the COVID protocols of cleaning and such. Then, of course, the breakfast is provided for guests who reside at the shelter.

Ms. McLeod: In all of that, I did not get an answer to the question. The minister has said that it is \$5 times 40 meals per day. My question was about what the timing of the contract was, and I believe the minister said that it started on November 1. I don't have an end date on that. I do not know yet what the value of the contract is.

Hon. Ms. Frost: So, 40 a day — of course, \$5 a meal — and you break it down from there. The contract with the High Country Inn includes, of course, the meals that I have mentioned, and the Family Hotel receives \$20,000 to do that distribution. The cost for the meals is already covered through the contract that exists through the Coast High Country Inn. We have to ensure that we follow the necessary COVID protocols as we do the distribution as well. Part of that discussion and part of that arrangement is ensuring that the security and safety of all clients who attend the facility are taken into consideration.

Ms. McLeod: So, \$20,000 is being paid to the Family Hotel for distribution of the meals. I still don't have the value of the contract with the Coast High Country Inn. The minister made some reference to the food provided being already covered by some cost, but I'm unclear where that money is coming from. I still don't have a timeframe for the contract.

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to the contract with the Family Hotel, that is to the end of the fiscal year. As I indicated, it covers a number of things. One is the distribution and the services that they provide and the necessary supports for cleaning and ensuring adequate spacing. The contract for the Coast High Country Inn, which covers the isolation centre — I'm not sure if that's the question that the member opposite is asking with respect to the Coast High Country Inn. That facility was acquired early on in the pandemic. We were able to secure that facility to ensure that we provide a safe isolation centre in a facility for individuals who are not able to self-isolate in their own homes or in their own communities — a place to stay.

At the same time, we acquired the convention centre. The convention centre was used recently for the mass inoculation for the flu. We have used that facility over the course of this pandemic, so the overall budget — which is, by the way, fully recoverable from the federal government under the COVID-related expenses — I have highlighted in here that it was just over \$33 million. The overall costs for that facility to the end of June next fiscal year is \$930,000.

Ms. McLeod: That was not my question. I thought I was quite clear on three occasions that the contract value that I am attempting to garner from the minister is the cost of foods — drop-in dinner service that is being provided through the Family Hotel.

I'm going to assume that the minister does not have that information. Was the contract — and I'm not talking about the Family Hotel and the distribution of the meals. I'm talking about the preparation of the meals by the Coast High Country Inn. Was this tendered out? Was this contract tendered out?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The question was asked about the meals. I gave the member opposite the breakdown of \$5 a meal, 40 meals approximately a day — usually averaging, actually, about 35. So, if the member did the calculation on that, it's really not an insignificant amount. The contribution to the Family Hotel for the distribution was \$20,000 a month; the contract already existed with the Coast High Country Inn. They were already providing meals, and it's incorporated into the budget that was in place and the contract that was already in place with the Coast High Country Inn. They were already providing meals to the clients who were in that facility and who

were self-isolating in that facility, and they were already supporting the department.

So, the \$930,000 covers those expenses under the existing agreement.

Ms. McLeod: All right — let's look at this another way. How much of the contract that the government has with the Coast High Country Inn is associated with the meals? I'm looking for a breakdown within that contract with the Coast High Country Inn. How much of that is associated with the provision of the meals that are being taken to the Family Hotel for distribution — if the minister could break that out for me, please?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The contract — I believe that I have given the member opposite some numbers. A quick calculation — if the overall contract for the Family Hotel is \$20,000 a month to distribute the meals and provide that service — we know that it has come up multiple times in the Legislature that we need an alternative, so we found an alternative.

The other thing — for the record — 35 times five will give you your calculation of what is spent, on average, for meals that are provided for clients who don't reside at the shelter and who don't reside in one of the hotels. These are clients who come in who are not captured anywhere else.

The Coast High Country Inn — the contract of \$930,000 covers a multitude of things and it is not specifically broken down. In that contract, we have complete access to all of the hotel rooms for isolation purposes; we have access to the kitchen facilities to provide services there for that clientele; plus we have access to the convention centre. The member opposite has asked for the numbers — those are the numbers that we have.

Ms. McLeod: So, was the contract with the Coast High Country Inn put out to public tender?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With the early onset of COVID and the imminence of protecting Yukoners — knowing that, come January, February, and March and the closure of the Arctic Winter Games — we had to quickly mobilize and find a suitable facility that would: (1) provide for safe isolation; (2) ensure that we have access to the kitchen; and (3) that we were able to secure a convention-type centre that would help us to do essentially the necessary COVID testing to keep Yukoners safe. The direction, early on, was to acquire the support and services of the Coast High Country Inn. They met all the criteria that was needed to ensure that Yukoners were kept safe and that we were still able to deliver the essential supports for Yukoners.

So, that procurement process did not go out to public tender because, in the city, that was the only facility that was readily available at that time to ensure that we had quick access, quick service, and the necessary infrastructure to support Yukoners and keep all Yukoners safe.

Ms. McLeod: That was almost a million-dollar contract. Have there been any change orders to the contract since it was originally entered into?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm just seeking clarification. As we've extended the emergency measures orders, of course the extension on the procurement and the services of the Coast High Country Inn had to be extended and aligned with that as

well to align with the critical health needs of Yukoners and ensuring that we have the stabilization there. The change order was associated with the extension of the services. The most recent, we'll see going up into June, and at that point, we will reassess the procurement arrangement.

Ms. McLeod: So, this \$1 million that is being sought — sorry, just under \$1 million — being sought in this supplementary budget is to take us to March 31, 2021. Of course, we have no idea what the costs beyond that are going to be.

So, the change order — now I presume that the contract, when it was signed then, was originally to take us to March 31, given the information that I have had today — if the minister could just clarify that the change order has extended it into June of next year from the end of March or just what the contract date was for the \$900,000-plus.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Just for the record, the contract and the procurement arrangements are not held with Health and Social Services. The procurement arrangements are held with Highways and Public Works. The specific details of the extension and such will have to be verified through Highways and Public Works. I would be happy to endeavour to get that information. I don't have it in front of me, seeing as it is an arrangement through another department.

Ms. McLeod: I would appreciate it if the minister would get me those contract details. I mean, we are talking about the contract and money associated with it in this department. I believe that it would be entirely relevant to have that information.

I am going to move on from that. How much is budgeted for the COVID-19 vaccine planning, purchase, distribution, and rollout?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Just for the record, the arrangement — the member opposite had just indicated that they had a question about COVID vaccines. We just now made this known publicly and made that announcement — something that we're very excited and pleased about. Yukoners should certainly know that, as we look at the distribution of the COVID vaccine, the decision was made, in collaboration with northern colleagues and the First Ministers today, that we would essentially look at distribution of the Moderna vaccine in the Yukon, essentially covering off 75 percent of the Yukon adult population within the first quarter of 2021 — great news.

The other thing to note is that, in the budget, we have the capacity of vaccine planning — funding to address additional COVID requirements, including surge capacity and vaccine planning and potentially early implementation. There is \$4 million allocated to that. We are relying on resources from the federal government, as well, in terms of the mass distribution across the country on the select vaccine for the north.

There is a lot of public notification, awareness, and campaigning that needs to go on with respect to supporting this vaccine program in terms of preparation and work. It's important for Yukoners to know that there will be two specific teams supporting rural Yukon communities, and the most recent flu vaccine here in the city, occupying the Coast High

Country Inn — which is covered under the \$930,000 — will be the central vaccine facility.

The trial run of the mass vaccine at the Coast High Country Inn — of the flu clinic — with 12,488 inoculations in one month, on top of the measures that were in place to do the necessary cleaning and have the greeters and such — those are things that are taken into consideration when we roll out the vaccine program. That system at the Coast High Country Inn convention centre will have to be emulated in each one of the communities as we get out with the inoculation and the vaccines to the communities, which means that we have to have the supports in each one of the communities that we go into to do the mass distribution of the vaccine. I assure Yukoners that the resources are in this supplementary budget to cover that. There is \$4 million allocated to address that pressure.

Ms. McLeod: I'm not sure that I heard entirely what the minister said. I'm just going to recap that there is \$4 million budgeted for COVID-19 vaccine planning, purchase, distribution, and rollout, which will happen between January and March 2021 and will cover about 25 percent of Yukon's population. If any of that is incorrect, I would appreciate the minister changing my mind on that.

Now, at the briefing, we were told that the \$4 million was not recoverable from the federal government, but the minister indicated that they are relying on a federal contribution to cover this off. Can the minister confirm that the \$4 million is anticipated to be recoverable from Canada?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Just for clarification, the vaccines are covered by Canada. That's really great news.

The other great news is that, in collaboration with the northern colleagues — the northern ministers — the north is being treated differently, in different respects, to how the rest of Canada is being treated when it comes to vaccines and the distribution and acquisition of the vaccines.

The remoteness factor, looking at the numbers of individuals — a lot of consideration into the health and epidemiology of the north was taken into consideration when acquiring over 52,000 vaccines — so enough vaccines to cover 25,000 Yukoners, which means essentially 75 percent of the population, to hit the herd immunity criteria that has been established here on a national basis.

The other great news for Yukoners to know is that the team at Health and Social Services has been doing an excellent job in acquiring supports and offsetting cost pressures for this government when we are looking at COVID and COVID-related expenses.

Early on, we received a bunch of support to support our airlines — support to ensure that we get our tests to Vancouver in a timely fashion. We had to ensure that we have our supports for the HEOC unit and support to Dr. Hanley. With that in mind, ramping up the pressures that we were seeing here was no different from what we have seen across Canada. The department has done an exceptional job, and that was to acquire necessary resources.

The member opposite is absolutely correct. Early on, during the briefing, the \$4 million was not equated in the resources received from the federal government. But with great

negotiation tools and, of course, the department doing its due diligence and the necessary evidence-based decision-making that was necessary to get us access to more funding from the federal government, the department was able to capture that \$4 million into this \$33,695,000. The \$4 million was allocated for distribution, storage, and COVID vaccines — the Moderna vaccine. The vaccine itself is fully covered by the federal government.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that. Earlier this Sitting, on December 2, the minister was asked about the federal government's purchase of 26 ultracold freezers for vaccine storage. We had asked the minister if the Government of Yukon would get any of them. The response was — and I quote: "I know just recently that the Minister of Community Services met with Brigadier-General Carpentier from a joint task force north on capacity for distribution. On behalf of the federal government, they have acquired low-temperature freezers. We have a process in place to acquire that for the Yukon. We have acquired transportation freezers to ensure and enable vaccines to get to our Yukon communities."

So, can the minister give us an update on the procurement of these freezers, and do we have them yet?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Let's maybe speak a little bit about what we know now and what has transpired most recently. As we are working through the modelling and the announcements that have recently come out with respect to the two different types of vaccines — just recently, the government announced the Pfizer vaccine as a vaccine that would be distributed to 14 locations across the country on a trial basis. They made that known quite a few weeks ago and then made it public just last week.

The requirement for that particular vaccine has to ensure that the product itself is kept at minus 83 degrees in temperature, which requires specialized supports and specialized freezers. Of course, through negotiations and through the good work of the department, working with our northern colleagues and the chief medical officer of health — and as agreed to by the federal government — the decision was to acquire the vaccine that would be best suited to meet the needs of the northern context, which was the Moderna vaccine.

That particular vaccine is only required to be kept at minus 20 degrees Celsius. That is minus 20 degree Celsius once it arrives here, and then it is thawed under the actual process for vaccines — I might be wrong here, but I believe it is to two to eight degrees — once it is thawed, we have 30 days to do the distribution. That means that it is the best product for our northern context with the fact that we have some pretty isolated communities to get to across the north.

Of course, the direction and advisement was to start looking at how we were going to — the services or the supports we needed to ensure that we have on the ground here for the vaccines as they arrive here.

We have acquired — as I indicated — a supply of freezers from the federal government, but we also have these freezers that are expected to arrive here this very weekend, which is far in advance — the vaccines will arrive in January, but the freezers will be here this weekend.

We also have, under our process, acquired 10 portable freezers and 10 additional tube type — I guess I'm not sure what it's referred to as, but there are about 20 units that we have on the ground that are arriving really early in January. So, the freezers will be here this weekend, and all are recoverable from the federal government, so it doesn't cost us anything. But we have also done a freezer inventory to identify suitable freezers currently within our system to support the vaccine deployment with regard to leveraging additional and appropriate supports. We will take that under consideration as we're rolling out the vaccines.

We have, in all of our health centres, the necessary resources — within each one of our health centres and the two hospitals.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you to the minister. How many rapid tests are currently in the territory for our use?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Throughout the pandemic, we certainly had to look at relying on the testing facilities out of British Columbia, but we also had to look at the work that we were doing here in the Yukon, ensuring that we had some portable devices here in the Yukon and looking at the technology to support Yukoners.

The Yukon implemented the use of the GeneXpert devices on September 9. We acquired two of those, and those, I understand, are reserved for hospital patients, critical hospital staff, and could be used in a potential outbreak scenario. But most recently, we've also acquired another specific type of device, which is the Abbott Panbio device — and there are 10 of those. Those devices are deployed throughout the Yukon in specific areas where they are needed essentially to help us contain the spread of COVID. The devices are here in the Yukon and we have two of the GeneXpert devices which are in the hospitals.

Ms. McLeod: So, when we talk about numbers, the minister talks about the number of devices. Is each device capable of an unlimited number of tests?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Due to the limited availability of swabs and the testing reagent, the devices are used very sparingly. They are used in emergency situations and are reserved for backup in case the primary devices fail in any way. The required supporting technology is there if we need it.

Ms. McLeod: Is the government anticipating making the rapid tests more readily available to the Yukon public? What would be the deciding factor there?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With regard to COVID testing here in the Yukon, I have responded to this question quite a bit in the Legislative Assembly. We talked about the gold standard test, and the gold standard test is really about relying on the supports out of BC — which is received by the BC Centre for Disease Control. The GeneXpert device and the portable devices that we have are not used as the first primary point. We rely on our testing — the gold standard testing out of the BC clinic, which comes back within 24 to 48 hours, so a very quick turnaround. Early on, we were seeing longer delays because we were seeing immense pressures across BC and Yukon. Now we have seen that just turn around.

The devices are extremely sensitive and may detect non-active traces of COVID or other viruses, so sometimes we are seeing a false negative. We rely very heavily on our chief medical officer of health and the advice of the health experts when it comes to tests and how we proceed. We, of course, try not to rely on the GeneXpert. That is why it is there specifically only for emergency purposes. Shortly after the test is conducted, we always ensure that we follow up with the gold standard test as directed out of the BC Centre for Disease Control.

Ms. McLeod: I want to move on to the line item of \$33,695,000 that was budgeted for funding for a COVID-19 response just from Health and Social Services. Have any of the areas of funding under this budget amount run overbudget to date?

Hon. Ms. Frost: None to date.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that. I want to thank the officials for their time today. I am certainly hopeful that Health and Social Services will be recalled since we have barely scratched the surface, but I am, at this time, going to turn the floor over to my colleague, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Ms. White: I thank the officials for being here.

The first question that I have is: How many auxiliary-on-call positions currently work within the Department of Health and Social Services?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Health and Social Services has 120 approved FTEs associated with the auxiliary on call.

Ms. White: Can the minister tell me how many of those currently work at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter on a regular basis?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am just seeking clarification. The Member for Takhini-Kopper King is asking a specific question about the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and the auxiliary-on-call employees. I am seeking clarification from the staff. That is not equated for in the budget that we have before us — the \$33,695,000. So, the question specific to the budget — I would be happy to respond to those questions. We will endeavour to get back with the specific information that the member is requesting with respect to the mains.

Ms. White: You know, Mr. Deputy Chair, I didn't think that we would get here so soon. How many staff work a day at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter? What is the staffing number for a day?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Again, the member opposite is asking specific questions about staffing at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. I will endeavour to get that information, but the debate for today — that is not captured in here — so, I would be happy to get that number and will endeavour to do that.

Ms. White: I was under the impression that I was actually having a conversation with the Minister of Health and Social Services who is also responsible for running the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and staffing. I also thought that, with the department officials here and electronic devices, these questions would be possible. It sounds like I might just continue to put them on the record.

So, since the Yukon government took over the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter on January 1, 2019 — that was a calendar year before the pandemic happened, so things changed in the spring. What I want to know is: What kind of training has been available to the staff at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I certainly would like to acknowledge again that the budget that we have up for debate is \$3,695,000 specific to COVID-related expenses. I would be happy to have a conversation with the member opposite around the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — the member has raised this previously — acquired a letter from the union. In that 24-hour period, the questions appeared in the Legislative Assembly. Of course, the department hadn't had appropriate time to respond to the union. So, just as a note for the record, I want to just thank the incredible team at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter for providing the necessary compassionate care to Yukoners during this very difficult time in our history as we are in the middle of a pandemic.

At the same time, as we go ahead and look at recruitment and retention processes and strategies, we work very closely with the support staff of the Public Service Commission and try to acquire the services of staff who have the necessary competencies and skills as we look at recruitment strategies — in particular at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and at any one of our care facilities.

Doing that and doing the recruitment, we've identified that the process for hiring front-line staff — given the sensitivities around the clientele, we always want to make sure that the staff are, first and foremost, protected and have the necessary skills to work with this community group at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

The staffing and the supports for staffing development are taken under consideration and advisement with our team of HR professionals. The member opposite notes some points, and the points that have been raised by the union have been addressed and the department is working very closely with the union to address some of the very directed questions and concerns that have been brought to our attention.

The training identified will be there to ensure that support is in place for the front-line staff and also to ensure that if there are staff there who need refresher courses or training — perhaps it has expired — we would ensure that is fulfilled as well. The policies and procedures that are in place that govern the shelter — we have learned a lot from the exercise of the last 12 months of managing a shelter of this magnitude and we have reviewed with our colleagues at Health and Social Services, colleagues at Occupational Health and Safety, and the Public Service Commission and identified unique training requirements for individuals to work in this complex environment.

We will continue to communicate and work collaboratively with the Yukon Employees' Union and we certainly appreciate their support as we look at including the necessary supports for our front-line staff at the shelter. At the same time, we must ensure that the staff follow the guidelines that are in place for necessary COVID protocols. We are developing a robust training regime and plan. That's done with

the good folks at the Public Service Commission and through the Human Resources branch of the Department of Health and Social Services. At the same time, I just wanted to acknowledge that it has been trying for everyone during COVID and during the intense pressures of trying to balance work and life but also trying to work under the rules that apply.

Of course, trauma-informed training comes to mind when we start looking at staff training and safety training and what's required for front-line staff in all of our departments. So, the department is reviewing its policies and protocols when it comes to ensuring that front-line staff have all the tools that they need to be successful in the workplace.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. Up until fairly recently, the staffing model at the shelter has been different. Can the minister just confirm that a hiring process is in the process of happening now to hire for term positions at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The member is correct in that, early on — as we have recently acquired the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — the services there weren't, of course, fully staffed up. We know that the good colleagues from the Yukon conservative party — the government in power in that day — built a facility smack in the centre of downtown and didn't provide essential staffing, nor were there programming or supports in place. It has posed a bit of a challenge for the businesses in the area; it has posed a bit of a challenge for staffing up and, of course, ensuring that clients are supported as they use the facility.

What we saw early on was 13 people a night. We are seeing now 50 to 60 people a night. That meant that we had to staff up to support the clients who were coming to the facility. So, we had to, early on, bring auxiliary staff on to try to balance the imminent support and ensure that the vulnerable population who was acquiring and utilizing services there was well-supported. Since that time, the department is now looking at stabilizing that workforce and is now looking at more permanency within that unit.

Ms. White: If I didn't know better when I listened to the minister, I would think that this was a recent acquisition by the Government of Yukon. But by the calendar date of December 10 — knowing that the government took over January 1, 2019, I believe — it is 22 days short of two years — 24 months. Knowing that we were just recently putting out for term positions, can the minister let me know how many auxiliary-on-call staff have been running the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Again, I just want to thank the member opposite for her comments. I certainly want to acknowledge that she has made note that this is not recent. In my interpretation, when we speak of recent — they are a start-up. When you acquire a facility of this magnitude that was not planned for in the Yukon government budget in any way, shape, or form other than the \$1.5 million that was given to the Salvation Army to provide supports for 13 people — so one would quickly calculate \$1.2 million to provide services to 13 people — that is a lot of money. During that time, the community mobilized, came together, and looked at services.

We absolutely appreciate that it has been two years. It has been a trying two years working with our partners and working with the community to essentially try to bring a complex facility like the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter into an evolving community centre of sorts that would be a model that would be accepted by all community members.

The member opposite makes note that it has been two years. It has certainly been two years. During that time, the team has worked really hard to try to address an appropriate staffing model, a model of care and programming that would meet the needs of the clientele at the shelter. At the same time, we had to bring more staff in to enhance the amount of guests who we were having on an overnight basis — not to mention that the 20 units that were built specifically as transition units were not occupied. None of those facilities were being used; now they are. Now we have 20 citizens occupying that space.

When the member opposite speaks as if it were something just recent — of course, it's evolving, and every day, we deal with a new complexity. The complexity is — in the middle of COVID, changes had to be made. We had to bring in additional staff to deal with the evolving model, but we also had to deal with COVID at the same time.

I know that the staff we had in place early on were auxiliary-on-call staff to maximize the needs. Since that time, we are in the process of bringing in permanent staff on term positions — that's currently underway, as I understand it, with the department. The number we have right now is about 39 FTEs associated with running and managing the shelter.

So, it's a constant learning environment — the shelter works with an adaptive service process — so looking at managing the clients' needs — meaning that we just recently brought in — last October, for the member opposite — EMR support. We are working with Blood Ties Four Directions. We're trying to do additional testing sites so that we can protect the clientele there from more opioid overdoses — so, evolving initiatives, meaning that we need to adapt the service model so we can better align with the clients' needs.

I want to just say to the member opposite that I know that we have done everything that we possibly can to ensure that we stabilize the workforce there, but at the same time, it has been evolving and we have seen complex pressures within the shelter. In the last nine months, we have seen even more complexity, when it comes to COVID.

Ms. White: I appreciate that answer. So, 30 positions — that is what I believe I understand is required to run it — keeping in mind that it's a seven-days-a-week facility, 24 hours a day. I appreciate all that. I think that the shelter is incredibly important. I think that the people who work there are a critical aspect of that, which is why I was asking questions about training and why I am asking questions about term positions or auxiliary on call.

The reason is that, if you're auxiliary on call, you have no security — you don't. There was a question today in Question Period asking about auxiliary-on-call staff in the Department of Health and Social Services and what would happen if you were sick. Well, the extra \$2 an hour is supposed to be adequate. It's supposed to cover that.

The reason why I'm asking about the staffing model at the shelter is because the last nine months have been difficult. I'm happy to hear that the 20 transitional units are used. To ask about that, it was my understanding that those were going to be left open for people who needed to self-isolate.

If the minister can let me know if that is now permanent housing — so, folks who are there — are they on a longer term basis, or is it for the self-isolation that was spoken about somewhere earlier this year?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With regard to the 20 transition units, those 20 units — as I noted earlier — were transition units and were never occupied. What I understand now is that the department was rolling that up and switched the model. The model that is now in place is no longer a transient unit. It's using the Housing First philosophies. The foundation of that model is to ensure that it's someone's forever home, should they choose to be there.

So, working very closely with the Housing Corporation and looking at the whole business of housing with social supports and ensuring that the clients who are in there and who choose eventually to move out of that facility have, perhaps, the opportunity to move into the Housing First facility, should a vacancy open, or into a Yukon Housing unit — so the departments working very closely together.

During the height of COVID, the collective decision was to set aside 10 of those units in the event that we have an outbreak within that population base. The department made the decision not to fill those 10 — to reserve 10 units — and to set it aside in the event that there was a potential outbreak within that community.

At the moment, the department is now looking at moving very quickly to fill those 10 units. I understand that this will happen more quickly — just with the circumstances with COVID, we are seeing a slowdown. We will always reserve some of those units in the event that we have to self-isolate a client there.

The 20 units are generally for high-needs clients. They certainly require 24/7 services, so we have switched the model up. I am happy to make that note, because that wasn't the original intention.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I appreciate that the model has changed from transitional. The conversation that I had here previously was: transition into where? I think the minister has just answered that question, which is that, in some cases, people will transition perhaps toward the Housing First model or toward something in Yukon Housing when they have been stabilized, but maybe not, and that is okay too. Just to repeat what I think I heard — currently 10 of those 20 units are occupied, and 10 will be filled in the near future. I appreciate that.

With the COVID restrictions, can the minister please let me know how many female and male clients are able to attend per night? How many people are able to stay in the shelter space overnight? Can she maybe tell me what it was when there weren't COVID restrictions?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With regard to the capabilities at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, the shelter itself was built to

actually only accommodate 25 guests a night. To be honest, there wasn't a lot of room for women. Pre-COVID, we were seeing up to 70 folks come there in one night. The staff had to make adjustments to the facility to accommodate everyone. Boardrooms had to be converted to safe places for clients to spend the night.

As of March, once COVID hit the Yukon, we saw an average of about 30 people a night, and that is following the protocols, meaning that the facility has to be significantly adapted to make accommodations. The rest of the clients who present at the shelter and who we are not able to accommodate are given shelter at one of the hotels.

Ms. White: What follow-up has the minister had with the community residents and businesses on the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter community safety plan?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Lots of discussions over the course of the two years around community safety planning — there were even some really great discussions and recommendations from the surrounding businesses about the potential good neighbour agreement, as an example. The move away from the good neighbour agreement because of legal reasons — it morphed over into this concept of a community safety plan for that facility and the surrounding community.

Because it's a community effort, the consideration — as we looked at exploring and expanding security services and at securing community planning for that area, we have to involve the City of Whitehorse in the discussions, along with Justice and Health and Social Services. There was a committee struck to look at developing an implementation model, or a recommended model, of safety for that area. I understand that this is being undertaken by the Department of Justice, and we are partners in that process, along with the City of Whitehorse because this is the city's responsibility.

So, we collaborated our efforts with community agencies and NGO partners, focusing on trying to look at addressing some of the major issues around that facility. Part of the process was to look at bringing in an expert. We have some really good tried models out there, like the one that is at the Kwanlin Dün — the community safety officer program and the wellness safety model there. Selkirk is doing something very similar, as is Vuntut Gwitchin.

This is something that our government is working toward and we are working across the departments to establish an engagement approach with a plan that would work with our community members when we look at additionally collaborating on a safety plan and enhancing safety in and around the shelter. My understanding is that this is underway. Of course, during COVID, things kind of slowed down, and they are now, I understand, being reinvigorated and the objective is to bring someone in who has the expertise in that particular area to assist the advisory committee.

Ms. White: It is just important to note that the report came out initially in May, so I was kind of looking toward actions — and I appreciate that working groups have been struck. What kinds of conversations have happened with community residents and local businesses since that report came out in May?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Just for the record, prior to the report coming out, I know that I and other members of Justice — the team — have met on four different occasions and had some robust discussions with our partners around the planning. Since that time — I am not able to give you any specific results of that. I would have to go back and consult with the team at Justice, as I know that there have been back-and-forth conversations with individual businesses and residents. Of course, it is difficult to do anything in terms of group settings during COVID. The staff have reached out to the businesses and are looking at some of the different pressures that we are still seeing there — looking at considering the impacts and looking at a uniformed approach when we start looking at the types of supports that are required in that vicinity of our city — of course, wanting to just highlight that we have an oversight committee that is working very closely together around the plan — implementing the plan and focusing really on keeping our vulnerable population safe during this time.

At the same time, we still have to ensure safety within that particular area, which means that our partners need to be at the table as well, with the complexities around gatherings and face-to-face type meetings — but there is still work being done behind the scenes.

Ms. White: I feel like, if I just keep asking questions about the issue, I'm going to get similar answers because I can appreciate that the minister doesn't have them right here. What I will ask is for a commitment for her to get me the answers to the questions that can't be answered here today. It's important to have conversations based on coming from the same understanding and the same facts. I think that's really helpful as we move forward.

I do not deny — I was in this House when the initial conversation started happening about that building. I had conversations with the Salvation Army at the time when they were going to be given this building. I was there and I had concerns — I've heard them echoed by the minister — including the fact that the building essentially goes to the property line. There is no room for outdoor space. There is very little room. The building is practically on the sidewalk. We considered that maybe where the benches are right now is actually probably not on the property line anymore but more on city property.

Has there been any discussion within the department to purchase the property next door?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Appreciating that it's complex and the site, as it is located, is not ideal — we're hearing this constantly from the businesses in the area, the school across the street, and the liquor store across the street. There are many challenges in that area. We also know that, at the same time, the city had proposed to do some infrastructure upgrades in that vicinity and on that particular street, which posed another complicating factor for the department.

There were resources set aside. I will venture to say, because I don't have it in front of me — but I think it was \$1 million that we had set aside in our budget to do some upgrading and modernizing in that facility.

We looked at every possible angle to try to mitigate and address some of the concerns. I know that we have had some really robust discussions with the mayor and council of the city to look at the shelter and what options we might have in terms of addressing the challenges of the guests at the shelter — the clients coming and going and perhaps disrupting the businesses and clients going into the businesses. We have looked at many alternatives.

I think that, at this moment in time, I can safely say that the department has put some temporary resources in place to try to mitigate some of the pressures — such as putting the benches in and doing renovations to the exterior — while still not putting any significant money or funding into any exterior retrofits until we get some resolution from the city around what they're going to do with the enhancement in that area. They have indicated now, I believe, that they may be pushing that out to 2024, so that is quite a way down the road.

Meanwhile, we still have the pressure and we still have to address the challenges. The resources that were put there to do the enhancements — you spend \$1 million in a year, but then you have to rip it down anyway because the work is going to get done by the city, which means that the street will have to be dug up and new infrastructure put in place.

So, not only is it just dealing with the surface right now and what we can do with the facility that we have acquired — enhancing, of course, safety for the guests and enhancing supports for businesses. I feel for everyone. I feel that these are challenging times. I appreciate the member's question because we are always trying to find solutions and appease everyone. At the moment, that is what I have to offer.

Ms. White: I appreciate that. It is indeed complex. I was grateful to see the shelter open and low-barrier, and I was grateful to see the Housing First initiative open because I fundamentally believe that a testament to us as a society is how we take care of our most vulnerable.

I know that the shelter issue is complex and that it's challenging. I don't think that necessarily trying to build outdoor space in front of the building is the solution. We might have to look at different ways, but I feel I could spend all my time talking about making space better for both clients and staff at the shelter.

I cannot understate enough how much I value the work that has been done there by the folks who work within that facility, which is why we have asked questions about training and why I ask about AOCs as opposed to term positions. What I would ideally like to see at some point in time is permanent positions so that people have the ability to plan a future around a job that they love. If you're in harm reduction, it is a passion. It is not just a job; it is a calling.

I really admire the folks who work there and always, with that in mind, try to see how I can help make it better.

The minister spoke about how, if there were more than the COVID-safe number of people who would attend the shelter for the night, clients were being sheltered at hotels. Can the minister give me an idea, right now, of how many hotel rooms are being funded by the Department of Health and Social Services?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We don't have that number at our fingertips because it varies from night to night. But if one could consider this for a moment — if we looked back at what we were seeing at the shelter pre-COVID — if you saw 70 clients in a night and we're now getting 25 — the difference of that 70 and 25 — those clients are now in a hotel room if they haven't acquired a space in the Housing First or if they are not in the permanent units at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. So, we are certainly seeing an increase because we can't accommodate, so we are making adjustments on a daily basis. My understanding is that the average we are seeing on a nightly basis varies from 10 to 20, but we do focus on trying to find permanent placements for those individuals.

I noted earlier, as we spoke about permanent housing and we talked about the transition units — which we are now modelling after the Housing First guidelines — the objective is really to find permanent housing for these individuals. The vision of housing transformation through the Housing Corporation, in collaboration with Health and Social Services, is really to provide essential services and supports for the individual so that they can find their forever home on a more permanent basis — rather than putting them in a hotel room every night if they are best suited to be in the shelter or best suited to be in a unit at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter or the Housing First.

Intentionally — as a note — we work with our communities very closely to identify and get those clients back to their communities. We work with our community outreach workers to find permanent housing. I know that Yukon Housing has changed its model as well to ensure that clients are supported in a different way — more social supports and less on focusing on finding housing, but how we can help you to be successful.

Ms. White: I appreciate that. So, anywhere from 10 to 20, for example, Whitehorse Emergency Shelter clients would be in hotels, but under the department — like the social services aspect — how many clients are in long-stay hotels right now? How many? The reason I ask this question is that this was problematic before. The reason why I dislike long-stay hotels is that they typically don't have kitchen facilities, which means that, if you are lucky, you have a microwave; maybe you buy yourself a hot plate — which you are not really supposed to have in your room — and there is also a lack of security of tenure.

Currently, how many social assistance clients are in long-stay hotels?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I thank the member opposite for the question. Clearly, that's my major concern as well. What we have been working very hard on, on this side of the House, is to ensure that we use hotels less. It's not the ideal — especially when we have families living in long-term hotel rooms. It's not ideal and by no means is it acceptable.

The effort and the change with the profile of how we fund projects out of Yukon Housing Corporation — it is more through the housing initiative process, through the partnership build opportunities. I have to say that we have, through that process, brought over 600 units to the market in the last four

years. We've incorporated bringing on — supported and financed in partnership with the Challenge Disability Resource Group — we just are in the process of building the 47-unit facility. We've finished the Housing First project. We changed the model at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter so that we could permanently house individuals.

Just now — most recently — we've announced that the federal government has — in collaboration with the Yukon — looked at the rapid housing initiative project and the Building Canada funding. With that, what we've done essentially is work very closely with our communities.

I made note of this last week — we're working very closely with the community of Watson Lake because it has been a community that really has not been supported. The closure of the Lakeview Manor displaced 22 individuals in that community and some of those individuals were seen here in our community.

We have moved quickly to initiating the rapid housing plan and we are doing that with our partners so that we can quickly make some units available. We have been working with the community of Mayo as well to try to build some units there. This is all to say that we are going to see less long-term stays in hotels. My understanding is that there are, on average — from what I understand from the numbers we are getting — I won't say that it is a number that is solid; it's changing every day — but I understand that there are approximately 30 social assistance clients who are in these long-term facilities. With the shift and the change recently — between Health and Social Services working together on the housing transformation model and working with these clients, the objective is to get them permanently re-housed.

Ms. White: That is my wish as well. I am not a fan of the long-stay hotel. I have seen terrible abuses of folks there being taken advantage of by systems, unfortunately.

Just really quickly — the minister referred to the Coast High Country Inn as the isolation centre. Is the isolation centre being staffed by employees of the Coast High Country Inn or by government employees?

Hon. Ms. Frost: That is a great question. The supports that are provided through the Coast High Country Inn isolation centre and the funding from the agreement that is established with that facility — the Northern Vision Development group covers all of the costs associated with the operations of that facility, including the cleaning staff and the kitchen staff.

There are times when we bring in additional staff from Health and Social Services for mental wellness supports or specialized supports like that, but for the general operation and maintenance of that facility, it's done by the owners of that facility.

Ms. White: I'm just going to veer to 22 Wann Road. I'm looking for a status of what's going on with that facility.

Hon. Ms. Frost: The facility at 22 Wann Road is now referred to as the Nts' aw Chua transitional support program for youth exiting care. The facility is providing outreach services to youth without disruption. Currently, we have semi-independent suites at that facility, a supported housing program. We have staff on-site during the day. I understand that

we have approximately 16 youth who occupy — so this is out of the day programming, in and out, so that number fluctuates.

Following all the COVID protocols, we continue to provide outreach support without disruption during this time.

The facility was intended to provide essential outreach services and life-skills training to youth from 15 to 24 who are eligible for services under the *Child and Family Services Act*. The member opposite would know this very well. Historically, youth at the age of 18 were displaced, essentially, and not given any supports to transition back into the community as young adults — so, lots of changes. What we heard during lots of debate in this Legislative Assembly was "Not in my backyard — they're going to get into trouble, they're going to do this, and they're going to do that".

I can tell the member opposite that it has been very successful. The youth have used the facility and are being well-supported. We currently have seven youth in the facility — three in the semi-independent units, and we have four in the supported-living environment. We have staff there right now who continue to provide the youth with all of the necessary supports so that they can successful transition out of that facility — hopefully into permanent housing. That is the fundamental principle of why we changed how we conduct business here, on this side of the House, in terms of working very closely with Health and Social Services in dealing with individuals when we speak about housing with social supports.

We deal with the holistic approach to the individual — no matter your age — to help you to transition nicely into your forever home, whether it be a supported-living environment or into market housing — rent with employment. So, that is the objective of the Nts' aw Chua facility — to help provide opportunities for our young people in many ways, to acquire and get acquainted with what the community has to offer. That means that we have had significant elders from our community participate in that program. We have looked at working with our NGO partners as well in supporting our youth. I know that the counselling supports there are really phenomenal. Programming, including a variety of development — the university is nearby, and so the young people who are in that facility have their tuition covered, and they are supported so that they can essentially pursue and acquire the dream of their choice.

We also help them with assigning a counsellor to that young person so that they always have the direct lifeline and support when they need it. Social workers are on-site all the time — budgeting with the individual so that they can essentially use their minimal budget to stretch it as far as they can. As we know, I have young adults who are in university, so I know what it is like to get them to stretch their dollar, and it is the same thing in this facility.

We treat the young people as if they were our children, saying, "What do you need to be successful?" The really cool thing about that facility is that there is a lease agreement in place. The lease agreement is with the young person and the facility, so there are parameters that they must follow — upholding the tenancy rules and such. It gives them an opportunity to know what it's like to actually go out in the

world and acquire their own place in the general population and not in a supported environment. The idea is to be successful.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that update. Just to be super clear, the Yukon NDP was never against that facility. We have met young folks who have literally aged out of the program into nothing. This was a critical piece of how to support and continue. I am hopeful and glad that it's there, because it means that we are giving people an opportunity.

When the minister spoke about youth in care, she said that it was up to the age of 24. I think that this is very important.

One of the questions I have is that, if a young person who has been in government care — and it's important to note that any death of a young person is tragic, and it's even more tragic if it's under unnatural causes — what is the department's responsibility at that point — if a young person dies before they turn 25 and has been in the care of government?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I want to just say that the safety of all of the youth in our care is at the top of everyone's mind. We know that 90 percent of the children in care are indigenous. We are working very closely with our indigenous partners to ensure that we have resources in place to provide essential safety nets for children so that we don't ever have to deal with the unfortunate circumstances that the member describes.

Of course, in the event that there is an experience like that, we would work very closely with our colleagues at the Department of Justice and the team to establish protocols, ensuring that any supports within that facility are put in place very quickly — also supporting the rest of the clients and youth there — and always trying to position ourselves so that it is from best practices and what we've learned from experience.

As a child and a product of that system, I can speak from my own lived experience. I know what it's like to live in residence. I know what it's like to try to transition and be supportive and flexible. I know what it's like to deal with systemic, pervasive racism. I deal with it every day. These children deal with it every day. We try to hold them up and support them so that they are successful and that they are well-supported as they move out of these facilities and back into the community with the tools that they need to essentially be respectful adults and successful adults in our society. That's our ultimate goal.

We have a responsibility. The department has the responsibility to oversee the unit there — the facility there. We also have a lot of responsibilities.

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Frost that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Streicker 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

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 79

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, December 14, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
 DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
 DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

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

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Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, December 14, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper as the actions requested in the motion have been taken in whole or in part: Motion No. 367, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party. In addition, the following motion has been removed from the Order Paper as the motion is outdated: Motion No. 374, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition. Finally, the following motion has been removed from the Order Paper at the request of the member: Motion No. 377, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like the House to welcome this afternoon Michel Emery, his wife, Josée Tourigny, and Sasha and Kassia Emery. Please welcome them to the House this afternoon. Bonjour.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Canadian Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: On behalf of all parties, I am honoured to pay tribute to the Canadian Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, better known as UNESCO, and through it, my constituent Michel Emery.

I admire UNESCO and its ideals, and I visit its heritage sites whenever I can. When you are capable of travelling the world again, if you can visit Brú na Bóinne in Ireland or Edinburgh's Old Town and New Town, I encourage you to do so. Closer to home, the Yukon has one UNESCO World Heritage Site, Kluane/Wrangell-St. Elias/Glacier Bay/Tatshenshini-Alsek, and another two on the tentative list: Ivvavik/Vuntut/Herschel Island (Qikiqtaruk), and Tr'ondëk-Klondike.

Identifying and protecting these stunning cultural and natural icons and hundreds of others for future generations does not happen by chance. The Canadian Commission for

UNESCO works to build a common future of peace, reconciliation, equity, and sustainable development. It identifies UNESCO's priorities in Canada, and there are five of them: reconciliation, youth engagement, gender equality, freedom of expression, and the protection of documentary heritage.

Every few years, its executive committee elects someone to represent civil society. The most recent election happened in October. There were 13 nominations, ranked on gender equity, regional representative, racial and cultural diversity, Canadian francophonie outside Québec, and expertise in education, communications, and information. Yukon's Michel Emery was selected and, on October 27, unanimously became UNESCO's latest Yukon icon.

Michel came to the Yukon in 2004, working as a French immersion teacher. He was an education consultant in technology and libraries and a high school teacher and librarian.

When I met him in 2016, he impressed me with an impassioned plea to get students and educators access to better technological tools — something that wasn't hard to sell me on and which took effect in the last year or so. In class, he is an evangelist for students learning science, technology, education, arts, and math. He will tell you of specific students he has inspired through art projects, through 3D printers, or through virtual tours of the world.

A high-tech printer that he bought brought into the F.H. Collins library probably inspired a former student to launch Yukon 3D Solutions, which might be the territory's first such business. Michel sees libraries as something beyond books on shelves — something beyond consumption of the written word. He considers modern libraries as places where students should be able to experiment, innovate, design, and build things.

Human rights and reconciliation are also some things that Michel is passionate about. He was instrumental in the creation of the large wooden panels representing the clans that now hang in the F.H. Collins atrium. He got the wood by recycling large beams pulled from the old F.H. Collins school, an action that will endear him to my colleague from beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. He assembled students, elders, construction and heritage companies in the Northern Cultural Expressions Society, among others, to make them. "Now those trees stand tall again," a Teslin Tlingit elder told him.

In 2018, Michel asked principal Bruce Thomson to allow F.H. Collins to become part of UNESCO's school network, becoming the first in the north. I believe that Carcross is also one of the schools now on UNESCO's list. He worked with the social justice teacher, Meera Sarin, on human rights, climate action, reconciliation, and innovation. Recently, he was elected by his peers to be the Yukon Teachers' Association professional development coordinator. He was also elected to the Canadian Council of UNESCO.

This afternoon, I thank Michel for inspiring his students and for his efforts in advancing reconciliation, climate action, sustainable development, innovation, and technology. I also pay tribute to UNESCO for its work in creating a better future for us all. I'm glad that it has an eye for talent and chose Michel

as its civil society representative for the country. Thank you.
Merci beaucoup.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have some statistics to table — this on the number of sitting days across all provinces and territories.

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

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House:

- (1) recognizes the significance of the historical landmark that is the Keno City Hotel, which represents generations in Yukon's rich history;
- (2) recognizes the economic and tourism impacts of losing this historical landmark; and
- (3) thanks the volunteers, RCMP, business community, and community members at large who helped to extinguish the fire.

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

THAT this House congratulates Dylan Cozens of Whitehorse for making Team Canada as they look to repeat as gold medalists at the upcoming 2021 World Junior Hockey Championship in Edmonton.

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

THAT this House do issue an order for a breakdown of all Government of Yukon advertising expenditures that have featured the Member for Riverdale North in those advertising campaigns.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House congratulates the Yukon Indian community for a peaceful gathering that took place in solidarity with farmers across India on December 13, 2020.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to acknowledge period poverty by providing menstrual-care products free of charge.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tourism relief and recovery plan

Hon. Ms. McLean: 2020 has been an exceptionally difficult year for Yukon's tourism industry. To support this important sector of our economy, our government has developed a tourism relief and recovery plan that includes investments of up to \$15 million over three years to provide much-needed relief and guide recovery of this vital industry.

The tourism relief and recovery plan is based on the vision, values, goals, and pillars of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* and there are several action plans in the strategy that have been prioritized as key initiatives in the relief and recovery plan.

The plan is centred on four themes: providing tourism sector leadership; rebuilding confidence and capabilities for tourism; supporting the recovery of tourism industry operators; and refining the brand and inspiring travellers to visit.

Nineteen key initiatives within the plan will help to provide a balance between the need for relief for operators and the need for recovery efforts to bring tourism visitation, jobs, and revenue of businesses back to 2019 pre-COVID levels. Providing tourism sector leadership is one key initiative that is well underway. The Yukon Tourism Advisory Board quickly came together in March to provide recommendations so that our government could better understand and meet the needs of the sector throughout this pandemic.

The Tourism Industry Association of Yukon has also been advocating for and communicating with their members since the pandemic started. Every time that we have reached out to our industry partners for assistance during the pandemic, they have delivered. I thank them all for the work that we have done together. There is much more to be done, but I'm confident that we have the right plan.

Today, we are announcing several new recovery initiatives in the plan that begin this fiscal year: supporting industry in the adoption of standardized safe travel protocols; rebuilding resident support for tourism; a one-window approach for our tourism partners to access supports and services; and finally, investing in the development of a recovery-specific place brand for Yukon as a whole. These initiatives complete the \$4 million that we have rolled out to provide much-needed relief to the sector through the tourism accommodation sector supplement, the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement, and the tourism and culture non-profit organization sector supplement. We need to be nimble and move between relief and recovery. This plan allows for us to adapt to changing conditions to continue to support this sector.

The tourism relief and recovery plan and the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* represent this government's strong commitment to this vital industry. I am confident in the plan and in the work of the department in partnership with all stakeholders. When the time is right, Yukon will welcome the world again.

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement.

The minister said that it has been an exceptionally difficult year for Yukon's tourism industry. I think that it has been a devastating year, Mr. Speaker. At the beginning of March, we started asking the government to take action to protect the tourism industry. World events quickly put the industry on the brink. Cruise ships collapsed, and it was clear that air travel was going to significantly change.

On March 9, the Liberals used their majority to vote against an all-party committee to monitor and support the economic recovery of our territory. At the time, the Minister of Tourism and Culture told the territory that there was no need to worry about the tourism sector. According to the minister, it was — and I quote: "... business as usual". The minister also was quoted saying that "We've got this".

The Premier at the time referred to us as being "paranoid". On March 16, the Premier even declared in this House — and I quote: "Let me be specific...: There is not a pandemic..." Just for your reference, Mr. Speaker, the World Health Organization declared the pandemic on March 11. It was 280 days ago that we first asked them to take action, and it was clear that the Liberals initially refused to accept the facts and slowed their economic response and supports for tourism, so that is how we need to look at today's announcement. How quick was it? We know that it was very late as they are announcing it just two and a half weeks before the end of the year. How will it work? Well, that second question is a little bit more difficult to answer because the Liberals have refused to share key details.

On October 19, the Liberals announced that the relief package would be \$15 million over three years. At that time, they only told us where \$2.88 million of that was going, leaving many questions for businesses. On November 30, they announced where another \$1.3 million of that was going. That leaves us with a question: There was the almost \$11 million — where is that going?

Now, with today's announcement, the minister told the media in her press conference that they are going to spend \$450,000 on the list of priorities this fiscal year, but that leaves us with a \$10.5-million gap, so I'm hoping that the minister can provide a breakdown of where that money will be spent. Does the minister know? If not, when will she know, and how did she arrive at the \$15-million figure in the first place?

Businesses have been through too much this year to be kept waiting for details, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals have had over nine months to come up with a plan for recovery of our economy, and the fact that they are still only trickling out details bit by bit is very disappointing. High-level concepts and themes are nice, but businesses need details now because Yukoners and Yukon businesses are hurting.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for her statement today with respect to additional information on Yukon's tourism relief and recovery plan.

Mr. Speaker, having attended many of the weekly virtual meetings of the Tourism Industry Association since early spring, I can attest to the tsunami-like rollout of the devastating

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this key sector of Yukon's social and economic fabric, a sector that represents over 400 companies, from large to very small, with 4,000 employees. Amidst the wreckage of this sector, what is really clear is that the folks in Yukon's tourism sector are a resilient and creative force in our territory. As the impact of the pandemic on their very existence worsened, to a person, I heard over and over the value that they place on making sure that tourism businesses are mindful of the environment that they operate in, which for months has been an environment of fear — fear of the unknown and fear that any misstep would create further uncertainty.

A consistent message from the tourism operators has been and is that regaining the vibrant and strong pre-COVID tourism sector must not come, as the chair of the tourism association put it this morning, "at the cost of protecting the health and safety of Yukoners."

The Tourism Industry Association, said Neil Hartling, "are proud to be leading the development and adoption of industry-wide health and safety protocols..." The goal, Mr. Speaker, is to gain and retain both Yukon residents and visitor support for tourism in Yukon.

They were pleased to hear that the proposed rollout of the balance of \$15 million previously announced — that is \$11 million over the next two years — will be done with a one-window approach. I would ask the minister to clarify or to explain how the concierge approach will work. Will the Department of Economic Development be flowing funds for the tourism recovery plan, or is it going to be through Tourism?

As the national and global situation evolves over the coming months into the next year or two, it is imperative that government adopts a strategic flexibility to recovery. There is no game plan for pandemic recovery anywhere, Mr. Speaker. We do have an abundance of talented and creative people in our tourism operators who have global reach. As our thoughts move to the easing of travel restrictions, we urge the government to engage now with the vital work necessary to create a global digital brand for Yukon. We look forward to again welcoming visitors from around the globe to Yukon.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, before I go into further closing comments, I just want to clarify something because the member opposite has been misquoting me out of context for this entire Sitting and it's wearing.

Back on March 9, when I talked about speaking of "business as usual", it wasn't in that context. I spoke directly myself to many operators, particularly in the Carcross area. They indicated to me that it's business as usual. That's what I said. The member opposite continues to misquote me and it's just — I feel like that's very unacceptable in terms of messaging back to Yukoners.

Again, referring to statements that our Premier made at that time when he made those statements about it not being a global pandemic, it had not been declared yet. That was clearly what that was about. The members opposite continue to spread this misinformation, really, because that's what it is when they take things out of context.

In terms of the dollars, the money will come from Tourism and Culture for this plan, Mr. Speaker. I want to just quote the chair of the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon from this morning, Neil Hartling: “The Tourism Relief and Recovery Plan is a strong and sustainable plan Yukon’s tourism industry has been looking for. The plan represents a firm commitment by the government to stabilize and support the territory’s critical tourism sector, and the tourism industry looks forward to working in partnership with the Yukon government on its implementation.”

Back in 2017, we started a *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. At that time, there were those who questioned doing this work when tourism was doing so well. Those members are in this House today. Yukon experienced record levels of tourism in 2017, 2018, and 2019. Then came COVID-19. I am so grateful that, when COVID hit, we already had a strong road map to the long-term sustainability and growth of tourism in Yukon, a shared vision in the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* for tourism to be a vibrant component of Yukon’s economy. With this plan and Yukon’s current state with respect to COVID-19 safety measures and the vaccine plan, we believe that we can get back to pre-COVID levels of tourism within three years, Mr. Speaker. That is at least a full year earlier than most recent projections from Destination Canada.

Some of the COVID-19 initiatives have already begun. There is no additional financial commitment needed, for example, for establishing the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board. The Tourism Industry Association of Yukon has been advocating for and communicating with all their members since the pandemic started, and they have had Zoom webinars every week to provide much-needed information for members and to create a forum where the tough questions can be asked and answered. That is leadership, Mr. Speaker.

Whenever we reach out to our industry partners for assistance during this pandemic, they have delivered every single time. I thank them all for the work that we have done together. I look forward to much more work to come. I am happy to make this statement to Yukoners today.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

Mr. Hassard: So, on October 19, the government announced \$15 million for tourism relief. So far, the government has only told us where \$4.5 million of that money is going.

Can the minister give us a breakdown of where the other \$10.5 million will be spent?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I believe that I just made a statement about that. There are 19 action items in a plan for relief and recovery. Today we announced some specific initiatives that were going to happen and start this fiscal year. Rebuilding resident support for tourism, support industry adoption of standardized safe-travel protocols for the protection of visitors and residents, a one-window approach, and place brand for

Yukon. Those items are moving forward this fiscal year. Other initiatives, as I said in my statement earlier, are underway. They do not require further dollars to be allocated.

We will continue to work with our partners, as we have done since the beginning and through the whole planning for the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* and through the work that we’ve done on the pandemic. We will be continuing to work with our partners and we will make those announcements when the time comes.

Mr. Hassard: Now, we’ve all heard the minister say “We’ve got this.” Unfortunately, Yukoners don’t agree. Yukoners deserve details on this money. Once again, she didn’t answer the question, so I’ll give her another opportunity.

Can she give us an actual breakdown of where the other \$10.5 million will be spent?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think that the really good news today, Mr. Speaker, is that Yukon has a plan. Yukon has the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* that we released in 2018, and we have a relief and recovery plan.

We are absolutely the envy of the country because we had done good planning prior to the pandemic. I released the plan today with 19 very clear, actionable items that we have worked on with all of our industry partners. We will continue to work with them. We will make those other financial announcements as time unfolds.

We have a plan for recovery over a three-year period. We have two more fiscal years following where those dollars will be allocated. The action plans will be developed with our partners. As you saw today in the press conference, Mr. Speaker, we did the announcement alongside our partners. That is how this strategy will unfold.

Mr. Hassard: It is interesting that the minister speaks about good planning prior to the pandemic, yet we have seen an entire collapse of this industry, so maybe the planning wasn’t so great after all.

But again, Mr. Speaker, the question was very simple. I asked about a breakdown of that \$10.5 million — and again, no response, no answer on that from this minister.

So, I will try one more time. Maybe the third time is the charm. Can the minister give us an actual breakdown of where that \$10.5 million will be spent?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, the good news is that Yukon has a plan. We have worked really hard alongside our partners, and we will continue to do that. Tourism is a vitally important industry within Yukon. We planned when times were good, and that is why we have such a solid plan for Yukon that includes the voices of all Yukoners.

I will remind the members opposite that we collected over 12,000 comments when we did the consultation. We had 15 signatories on that tourism development strategy plan — much like what we did last week when we rolled out and did the declarations on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We took a whole-Yukon approach, and that is the strength behind the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. I stand by that plan; our partners stand by that plan. I guess that the members opposite are not standing behind that plan. This is Yukon’s plan, and I would hope that they would stand behind

the voices of this industry. That is what we are doing, and we are proud of the work that we have done with all of our partners.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

Mr. Istchenko: And we on this side are just looking for a breakdown of numbers — asking about numbers that the minister is responsible for. So, on October 19, the government announced \$2.88 million for the tourism accommodation sector supplement. Can the minister tell us how much of that money has flowed to Yukon businesses since that announcement on October 19?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, we announced a number of supplementary programs that are supplementary to the Yukon business relief program. One of them was the \$2.88 million for the Yukon accommodation sector. We announced another one for the non-accommodation sector supplement and another for the Yukon tourism not-for-profit sector supplement.

One of the criteria of that program is that anyone applying for the supplement must have maximized all of their availability through the CanNor program through Canada and the business relief program that is held with Economic Development.

To date, we are continuing to work with that sector, and as we've done all the way through, we're working with businesses to ensure that they are maximizing all of the programs so that, when they get to the supplement that is for tourism-related businesses, we then have that fund in place to assist if they are maxing out of those other programs.

Mr. Istchenko: It doesn't sound like the minister knows the answer to that either.

So, regarding supports for bars and restaurants, the government is requiring them to prove that at least 60 percent of their 2019 revenue came from tourists. Bars and restaurants will have difficulty proving this. We have pointed this out and asked the government to get rid of this requirement. On December 5, the *Yukon News* reported that the government will ask bars and restaurants to make a signed declaration that can be audited in the future. The government knows that it will be difficult for bars and restaurants to prove this but will subject them to red tape and audits.

Again, I will ask the minister: Why is the minister insisting that bars and restaurants go through this needless red tape to get support?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We have gone over this a number of times. These supplements are for businesses that are tourism-related.

We reduced the threshold from 80 percent to 60 percent of revenue attributable to tourism to identify part of the criteria. We continue to work with businesses. I have asked the members opposite to ensure that, if they are speaking to business owners, they are reaching out to Tourism and Culture to ensure that they have the assistance that is needed. Many businesses report to the Yukon business survey around the revenue and where it's attributable to. That is one of the measures. Yes, they can also do a declaration, and our Tourism and Culture department will continue to work with them.

I want to remind members opposite that the Yukon business relief program is available to all businesses, including bars and restaurants. If they find themselves maxing out of those programs and their business is 60-percent attributable — which it likely is — to tourism, then we have a supplementary. That is good news for Yukoners.

Mr. Istchenko: Bars and restaurants are struggling, and they are in need of immediate support. We are seeing layoffs and closures of some of the businesses. They should not have to jump through hoops to prove requirements to auditors. They should not have to wait for more details on the \$15 million, which is something that the minister is unable to provide a breakdown for.

When will the government announce a real, detailed relief package for bars and restaurants in the territory, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat myself again. This fund that we announced is a supplement to the Yukon business relief program. Businesses that are struggling have had that available to them since March, along with a few program through Canada. That allows businesses to access \$100,000 of grant money from Canada — a further \$100,000 from the Yukon government through Economic Development — and this supplementary fund that we have put in place is for businesses that have maxed out of that.

We know that tourism has been the first hit, the hardest hit, and the longest to recover. Other sectors are recovering as we speak. That is why we put these supplementary programs in place so that businesses are supported. We have the experiences and we have the infrastructure in place as part of the plan, Mr. Speaker, so as to be ready when visitors are welcomed and able to come back to Yukon. That is good news for Yukon because we have a really solid plan.

Question re: Emergency services in communities

Ms. White: Less than a month ago, on November 17, I asked the minister about the situation in Keno and Pelly Crossing when it comes to fire safety. Keno has not had a fire truck for over a year, and Pelly Crossing's fire truck was either not working or didn't meet the needs of the community when I visited this summer.

I wish I didn't have to bring this issue back to the House today, but given the painful loss of the Keno Hotel to fire over the weekend, it is a question on many people's minds.

Can the minister explain how a community in Yukon could go for over a year without an operational fire truck?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I just want to acknowledge the devastating news over this weekend for Keno and, in particular, Mr. Martel. We all — I think all of us in this Legislature — are very sad about the fire that happened on Friday night. Our hearts and thoughts go out to the community.

I did go — I was there, actually, with the Premier — to Keno. What we need are volunteers. We need folks in the community who are going to volunteer. We talked to them about that. We had a number of people who expressed interest; we did follow up with the Fire Marshal's Office. Unfortunately, no one put in their application, and we continue to work with them, and it is sad news today.

What I will say is that we also had that conversation in Pelly. The note that I got this morning, I understand, is that eight people had put in their application for the fire hall in Pelly. I think that we need roughly a half-dozen or so in order to make a fire hall, so we will be happy to support getting equipment there. What we need is for folks to volunteer, and we will do our best to support those volunteers.

Ms. White: We understand the challenge of recruiting volunteers for fire departments in small communities, but when this issue is recurring for years, it is not good enough for the minister to simply say “We don’t have the volunteers”. We know that people care about their communities, so we have to question why people are not stepping up for these roles. Are they structured in a way that makes sense for folks in the communities, and are the schedules or requirements hindering people’s participation? I don’t have the answers for these questions, but they must be asked. The consequences of the status quo are painfully obvious today.

What steps will the minister take to ensure that no community ever finds themselves without proper firefighting equipment in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The challenge is not equipment. What I am trying to say is that I am not able to put equipment in the hands of folks unless they are trained. It is not allowed. It is not safe, so we really do need people to step forward. I am very happy to try to focus on how to support volunteers to come forward, how to train them, how to provide them equipment, how to make sure that they are supported in that role, but I do need people in our communities. We all will need people to come forward.

Right now, what I want to say is thank you to all of those people across the territory who do put their names forward to keep our communities safe. I would also like to say thank you to Alexco because they showed up with some water trucks to support. We’re happy to get equipment. That’s not what’s lacking here. What we really need to do is to get volunteers. I’m happy to redouble efforts in Keno.

Just again, I’m very sorry for the Keno Hotel. I think that we were all deeply affected by the news. I just want to acknowledge the heartache that is going through the community right now.

Ms. White: I hope, with that reply, that the minister will work on figuring out what the barriers are to volunteering for fire departments across the territory. One of the worst things that could happen right now would be to deprive one community of resources that they need to assist another community. Robbing Paul to pay Peter is never a good idea, but especially when it comes to fire safety.

We know that there are needs across the territory when it comes to fire protection. Will the minister commit to bringing in proper fire protection safety equipment to communities that need it without taking resources away from others?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will reiterate that I am so happy to put equipment in the hands of folks who are trained to use that equipment to make sure that it is safe. Firefighting equipment nowadays — I went to the Ember Fire Academy this past summer and watched them, during COVID, doing all this

training. Fires are dangerous things. We need our volunteers to be trained. Absolutely, we’ll guarantee that we get that equipment into those folks’ hands as soon as we have volunteers who are going to be able to do that safely. I’m happy to work with Keno and all communities in recruiting those volunteers. Definitely, we’ll support them all with equipment and not take from one community for another. Wherever we have those trained volunteers, we will make sure that they are equipped to fight fires.

Question re: Secure medical unit

Ms. Hanson: Individuals in the secure medical unit are there either under their own accord or under the *Mental Health Act*. They are there to receive psychiatric support and help. Whatever the reason, these individuals have the right to feel safe.

Earlier in the Sitting, the media reported on the experience of being on the secure medical unit from the perspective of patients. These individuals noted that, while staff may be able to secure themselves away from aggressive patients, other patients sharing the unit are left vulnerable. They have nowhere safe to go, except to their own rooms, which cannot be locked from the inside. We know that the Hospital Corporation has talked of adding extra staff and a security guard.

What other specific steps have been taken by this government to ensure the safety of patients on the secure medical unit whose only option is an unlocked room?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I appreciate the question. We have been working very closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the psychiatrist.

Just as a note, the Yukon Hospital Corporation receives a significant amount of support from the Government of Yukon to essentially increase services at the hospital. So, the secure medical unit is intended to provide supports for clients who require the supports. We recently negotiated — the Hospital Corporation — an arrangement with the local psychiatrist. We are pleased to support them in that effort and to support the response when it comes to safety at the Hospital Corporation. As I understand it, the Hospital Corporation is working very closely with the service providers there to address the safety of clients and, of course, the safety of staff. As we heard from the Yukon Hospital Corporation chair and CEO, it’s a high priority for them to ensure that they provide the best services while still maintaining safety in their environment.

I’m happy to respond to further questions.

Ms. Hanson: Well, let’s talk about it from the patient-centred-care approach. One individual who has spent time at the secure medical unit shared some observations. They asked why inmates at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre are no longer allowed to be held in solitary confinement, but patients can be held indefinitely in the seclusion room on the secure medical unit. This individual was placed in the seclusion room not for their own safety, but because of overcrowding on the unit. They shared that it was like being in jail and not helpful to their mental state. Even the chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation commented in this Assembly that there are limited areas to support staff in a safe area. Unfortunately,

it results in some patients spending long periods of time in isolation.

Mr. Speaker, when will Yukoners be treated with the care and support they need when in crisis in a safe and supportive environment?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The Department of Health and Social Services and our community partners, along with the Hospital Corporation, are working toward a new secure medical unit. We have also provided supports to the Hospital Corporation for planning and design. In the interim, we recognize that the secure medical unit has limited space and we are working with the Hospital Corporation to plan for the new SMU and to ensure that it better meets and aligns with the needs of Yukoners.

The objective of the current secure medical unit is to ensure that we provide the best services possible for the clients who use that space and require supports. We rely on external supports as well. That means that we partner when it comes to matters related to justice — of course, we would collaborate with the minister responsible and the department. We are working also to ensure that, if there are any specific issues that come to our attention, it would be noted and raised with the CEO at the Hospital Corporation. The objective is to mitigate and address that, so if there are any specific concerns, I would be happy to bring it forward.

Ms. Hanson: Yes, it is true. We have heard about these situations in the secure medical unit for the last numbers of years. In fact, the chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board stated in this House that, yes, they have plans to move forward with an enhanced secure medical unit to be located above the emergency department. He pointed out that the planning, the costing, and even the initial designs are ready. Now it is back to this government to provide the necessary funding.

When can Yukon citizens finally expect to see funding for the completion of a safe, appropriately resourced, secure medical unit that addresses the concerns raised by the medical community and those seeking mental health care?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am happy to advise Yukoners that this government is working with the Hospital Corporation to address a new secure medical unit. The resources are in place. We have worked under the process that is before us, which is to collaborate with the Hospital Corporation and come up with a plan that aligns with their needs first. The priorities that were put before us as a government were to look at providing additional supports for orthopaedic surgeons and additional supports for the operating room. We had to look at ensuring that we had services that aligned with their priorities.

The secure medical unit is high on the priority list, and we are working with them right now to design, of course, and plan the new unit. The objective is always to ensure that we provide better services and better care to Yukoners, and that is our intention as a government — to ensure that we bring the services to Yukoners and ensure that they are well-supported, no matter the circumstances. That is our vision and that is our goal, and we aim to meet those deliverables.

Question re: Yukon First Nation procurement policy

Mr. Hassard: So, late in the afternoon on Friday, the Liberal government announced a new Yukon First Nation procurement policy. While we agree with the objectives of increasing First Nation participation in the economy and creating new economic opportunities for First Nation businesses, we do have some concerns about the policy. The vast majority of businesses that we have spoken to since the policy was released were seeing this policy for the first time. Some had never even heard of this, as of this morning.

So, can the minister explain what consultation was done with the Yukon business community prior to releasing this new policy?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am really glad to be talking about the First Nation procurement policy on the floor of the Legislative Assembly this afternoon. We announced the policy on December 9, just last week, and a joint announcement was made with Yukon First Nation leaders at that time. The Yukon is leading the country with this procurement policy by reducing barriers and enhancing opportunities for Yukon First Nation governments, businesses, and people.

The First Nation procurement policy was developed through collaborative partnership with Yukon First Nations. Its co-drafting process was a first for our government and could serve as a model for future partnerships. Other jurisdictions across Canada have now taken interest in this rare co-drafting approach and the policy itself and are awaiting the results with anticipation. We have developed strong working relationships with our First Nation partners, who will help us move forward toward our common goal, which is a stronger, more prosperous, more inclusive Yukon.

We have, as well, run the policy — a very high-level draft of that policy — through our Procurement Advisory Panel, with the chambers of commerce, and we have also reached out and had a one-on-one meeting with businesses. Those meetings are going to continue right through to April when we actually implement a large part of the policy.

Mr. Hassard: Unfortunately, the question was about consultation with the entire Yukon business community. Now, one aspect of the policy is that Yukon businesses can make a commitment to hire First Nation labour for the duration of the contract. This means that the business would receive a 15-percent reduction in the price for the labour component of their bid in exchange for a promise to hire First Nation labourers. Reviewing whether or not a business lived up to their commitments cannot be done until the job is complete and the contract is concluded.

How will the government ensure that businesses live up to their commitments if a proper review can't be conducted until the project is complete?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This is a policy the likes of which have not been seen in the country before. It was done in close collaboration with our First Nation partners. We have letters of support from our First Nations across the territory stating that the Yukon First Nation procurement policy is a good step toward realizing the vision of chapter 22 of our final agreement

in achieving equitable and sustainable economic growth and prosperity for Yukon. That's from the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

We've also heard from the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council — in terms of the collaborative process used in the policy's development, we suggest it could serve as a model for future collaborations involving policy areas that overlap with the interest of Yukon First Nation governments. We commend the work of the representatives of the technical working group responsible for developing this policy.

We have worked very, very hard in giving the time that we needed to get this policy right. We're not going to rush it. We're going to work with our business community right now from today, right forward. I already have some meetings scheduled with business groups in the territory to go over the policy in detail. Highways and Public Works has done consultation with the First Nations. We're going to continue that work going forward with our business community because we want this to be a success. First Nations want it to be a success. The business community wants it to be a success. It's time that Yukon works together in our economic endeavours and not work against one another.

Mr. Hassard: So, the new First Nation procurement policy contemplates the establishment of a Yukon First Nation business registry, as well as an ongoing vendor performance review scoring system. It appears that the government will now be issuing scores to every Yukon business that does work for the Yukon government. These scores will dictate whether and how a business can access the advantages available in this new procurement policy.

Can the minister tell us how this new vendor performance review scoring system will work? Will businesses' scores be public? Will they be subject to review?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Having a business review program in government has been something that I've spoken about on procurement since 2017 when I first started the hard work on procurement. We have made huge progress in procurement in the territory.

The latest is the First Nation procurement policy, but if you recall, Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this term of this government, we promised to have the recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Panel implemented within two years. Mr. Speaker, we achieved that.

Mr. Speaker, we worked to get the definition of a "business" refined and improved. We worked with our other business partners. We actually got a new definition put in place, Mr. Speaker. Now, after working with that definition, the businesses have said that they want to refine it further. We're now currently working with businesses to make sure that definition is further refined.

Mr. Speaker, we worked for two years with our First Nation partners on the Yukon First Nation procurement policy. We did that despite intense political pressure to "Get it out, get it out, get it out". We provided the opportunity to get the time to get the policy right. I absolutely will defend this process going forward. We are going to take the time that we need to

make sure that this economy is working in tandem, together, for the benefit of all Yukoners. That is the goal.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 378

Clerk: Motion No. 378, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It is moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Julie Jai and Leah Robinson to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective December 14, 2020; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does reappoint Marius Curteanu and Roxanne Larouche to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective December 14, 2020.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It's my pleasure today to speak briefly to this motion. The Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators is granted its authority by way of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*. That act indicates that the panel of adjudicators shall consist of not less than three members. Currently, there is a roster of nine members, Mr. Speaker, and the term for three of those members will expire on December 14, 2020, which is today.

Advertisements went out to seek new members or returning members if they were interested, and applications were reviewed by the all-party Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees. That committee recommended that Julie Jai and Leah Robinson be appointed as new members and that Marius Curteanu be reappointed as a member of that panel of adjudicators.

The motion before the Legislative Assembly today also includes the option to seek reappointment of Roxanne Larouche as a member.

Mr. Speaker, capacity and experience are always important aspects of any board. Ms. Larouche has served one term on the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators and recently reapplied. She has served on many boards and committees in the past and brings a variety of experience to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators. She has gained experience over this past term, and her reappointment will contribute in a positive way to the roster from which a panel of adjudicators can be formed.

I think that it is important to note that the panel of adjudicators to which we are seeking in the Legislative Assembly to add names operates as a roster when matters come before them. A number of members form a panel that has a hearing and makes a decision on that basis. The wide variety of individuals is, in my submission to the House, a better option

because there are more opportunities for individuals to be chosen from a broader list, and their experiences and skills can be taken into account and also could deal if there were conflicts in a particular situation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the members of the House to support this motion so that the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators will have 10 active members, each bringing a variety of skills and experience. I would like to just take a moment to thank all of the members of the panel of adjudicators for their hard work and dedication to Yukoners and to thank those individuals who put their names forward during this process. Lastly, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees for their careful deliberations and recommendations.

Mr. Kent: Ordinarily, when responding to a motion like this, we would congratulate the individuals who are coming on to the board or being reappointed. Perhaps we would have a chance to thank those who are no longer serving, but the challenge with respect to this motion that the minister has presented isn't about the people who are coming on to the board. It is about the process and the fact that the minister has taken it upon herself to add an additional name to the roster — to her motion — that differs from the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

So, Mr. Speaker, you will remember that, earlier this Sitting, we amended the Standing Orders — specifically Standing Order 45(3.2), which deals with the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees. It says: “(a) shall review nominations and recommend appointments to the following major boards and committees”. So, we formalized and added the Yukon Human Rights Commission and the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators. That was earlier this Sitting, based on a motion for concurrence from the Member for Copperbelt North that he put forward and which was debated as government business.

Again, when we look to the report signed December 1 by the Member for Copperbelt North — the *Twenty-second Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees* — it does mention three of the four names here.

Again, for us, this is a breach of process, quite frankly. It is a challenge for us when the minister puts forward a motion on this that doesn't take into account the Standing Orders and the fact that three members were appointed instead of four. Again, as I mentioned, this isn't about the individuals who are being appointed; it is about the process that this government has taken upon itself and this “My way or the highway” approach to putting additional names on to these panels.

I am not a member of this particular standing committee, but I would certainly be wondering today about the value of the work that I did as an individual on this committee and if it was taken into account by this government and this minister when additional names are placed on there which have not gone through the proper process as set out in the Standing Orders or being reviewed and recommended by the Standing Committee

on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

For this reason, Mr. Speaker, we will not be supporting this motion. Again, as I mentioned, it is not about the individuals going on; it is about the process that the minister has deviated from by adding an additional individual to her motion that differs from the report put forward by the standing committee that is supposed to advise on this.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to echo some of the words of my colleague who has just spoken. I am on that standing committee, and I just want to say for the record that I think it is unfortunate that the minister has chosen to bring this before the House today because there is a committee of this Assembly that is charged with reviewing and making recommendations with respect to the panel of adjudicators and to other boards and committees — we make recommendations. We recognize that we're not a decision-making body, but we're charged with coming together and reviewing the documentation that's put together and trying to either come to a consensus or a majority decision.

I feel somehow that, as a member of this Legislature, it is somewhat incumbent on me to apologize to the person named on behalf of members of this Assembly who do respect the legislative process and the process that we have for the naming of individuals to Yukon's major boards and committees. We respect that it should not be a political issue, nor should private citizens who put their names forward have any fear or expectation that the actions of a minister could be perceived to politicize their willingness to serve their fellow Yukon citizens.

We have had, I thought, a democratic process. The government still has the majority; they can weigh out any concerns that might occur from debate among all members during that committee, but it is a committee of this Assembly. That's what's missing here: respect for the process that we all agreed to do. I feel sorry that the minister has brought forward somebody's name and publicized it without having the committee having the opportunity to address it. We had a committee meeting this morning; it could have been on the agenda. Simple.

I feel compelled to abstain from any vote here because I can say neither yea nor nay; we didn't have the discussion.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate on Motion No. 378.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the accusation of a breach of process, I think, is wholly unwarranted. Both members of the opposition read out that the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees has the responsibility to review nominations and recommend appointments. The boards and committees are listed. Clearly, this is one of them. That work was done. The individual's name and application were there when they made those deliberations. That's all I'm aware of.

Certainly, there is no lack of respect. Actually, the truth is that the recommendations that come from that committee are brought to this Legislative Assembly for debate. This is what we're doing today. This is the place where the appointments are made. I had no information whatsoever that the person named was not a contributing member of the current panel of adjudicators. I made the determination that her expertise would be in addition to a roster of individuals.

I also brought this motion to this House — I don't remember the exact day, but certainly last week — where it was read into the record and the names were available. Nobody contacted me with respect to any concerns about that. The making of recommendations by that board is certainly well-respected, but again, part of the responsibility that I have is to make sure that there is a full roster of individuals who can do that work on behalf of Yukoners if need be. The motion that I brought, I think, is an excellent addition — the names that were recommended by the board, as well as somebody who would be renewed. That was my submission to this House.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Paired: Hon. Mr. Hutton and Mr. Kent

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yea, five nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion No. 378 agreed to

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

Speaker: It is 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 (Mr. Adel): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 205: *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Tourism and Culture

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to welcome our officials to the Legislature today: Valerie Royle and Tim Sellars. Thank you so much for being here to support this debate.

I rise today to present the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for the 2020-21 fiscal year for the Department of Tourism and Culture. In the 2020-21 *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, the Department of Tourism and Culture is putting forward a net increase of \$7,847,000 in operation and maintenance expenditures.

Mr. Deputy Chair, the Government of Yukon acted swiftly and decisively to respond to the drastic impacts COVID-19 has had on the territory's arts, culture, and tourism sectors. On the arts and culture side, we are supporting our creative communities through the expansion of existing funding programs. Arts funding has been a welcome relief for Yukon's cultural sector and has sparked imaginative new ways to engage with their chosen crafts and mediums as well as their audiences.

On the tourism side, the release of the second quarter tourism statistics and the results of a recent needs assessment have confirmed what most of us already knew all too well: Travel restrictions to and within the territory have decimated Yukon's tourism industry. The goal of the department's response efforts to date have been to stabilize Yukon's tourism businesses by developing relief programs to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and prepare for tourism industry recovery.

First, I would like to speak to temporary support for events funding, a \$1.8-million fund included in the supplementary budget before the Committee today. Though absolutely necessary to protect the health and safety of Yukoners, the cancellation of events left many Yukon organizations facing unique, irretrievable financial losses related to perishable goods

and the last-minute cancellation of accommodations and services. This included everything from large-scale events — such as the 2020 Arctic Winter Games, the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament, the Dawson City Music Festival, and the Adäka Cultural Festival — all the way to conferences and any event in Yukon with more than 50 participants.

Transferred from the Department of Economic Development, this program allowed for mitigation of up to 100 percent of unique, irretrievable financial losses due to COVID-19-related cancellation of specific events. Yukon government was pleased to be able to provide this support to the local workers, businesses, and non-governmental organizations negatively impacted by cancellations of these events due to COVID-19. The \$1.8 million has been fully expended in support of accommodation and service providers that lost money due to cancelled events.

Next I will turn to an additional \$1-million investment in the tourism cooperative marketing fund. To help address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Yukon's tourism sector, the Government of Yukon announced a \$1-million increase to its tourism cooperative marketing fund, bringing the total available funding to \$1.7 million for the 2020-21 fiscal year. The scope of the eligible applicants and eligible activities was also broadened so that more Yukon tourism experience and service providers can promote themselves locally and within Canada and internationally when the COVID-19 pandemic subsides and wider scale travel resumes.

To make it easier for Yukon businesses to receive support for their tourism marketing efforts, the funding enhancement removed the requirement for applicants to contribute to the costs of approved marketing activities in 2020-21, enabling them to continue marketing for the future while cash-strapped in the present.

This increased funding and expanded eligibility will allow for greater promotional opportunities from a wider cross-section of our tourism sector and help facilitate a strong resurgence. To date, the department has processed 268 applications, for a total of \$1.4 million in funding.

Now I would like to discuss the additional COVID-19 relief of \$4 million. The largest item in our supplementary budget is \$4 million for additional COVID-19 relief to support Yukon's tourism sector. Investment of this funding is guided by the tourism relief and recovery plan released today, Monday, December 14, and is part of a three-year \$15-million investment in relief and recovery that this government made to the tourism industry in October. Incorporating the values and pillars of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*, the plan is built around four key themes: providing tourism sector leadership; rebuilding confidence and capabilities for tourism; supporting the recovery of tourism industry operators; and refining the brand and inspiring travellers to visit.

The tourism relief and recovery plan is a comprehensive and targeted investment that supports the relief, recovery, and rebuilding of our tourism industry in a way that is safe, economically viable, and will lead to a more resilient sector. Working with our colleagues in Economic Development, we have already launched two important relief programs as

supplements to the existing Yukon business relief program — \$2.88 million to help eligible accommodation businesses through the tourism accommodation sector supplement and \$1 million through the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement for businesses that derive at least 60 percent of their revenue from tourism visitation. Furthermore, we have also announced \$300,000 to provide funding relief to non-profit organizations in the tourism and culture sector — such as museums and arts organizations — through the culture and tourism non-profit organization sector supplement.

The tourism relief and recovery plan will help to rebuild confidence in an industry heavily impacted by the pandemic. This deliberate path to recovery demonstrates the commitment of Government of Yukon to extraordinary measures to enable tourism businesses to not only survive this unprecedented tourism downturn, but to rebuild and strengthen the sector for the future. The plan is now available on the yukon.ca website.

The supplementary budget also includes \$547,000 for border information kiosk staffing. With their experience as welcoming and knowledgeable ambassadors for the territory, we recognize that staff in our visitor information centres and the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre could play a role in providing travellers, particularly those transiting through the Yukon to Alaska, with COVID-19 information and resources.

This past summer, visitor information centre staff and staff from the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre were reassigned as information officers to augment and support enforcement officers at the borders, at the information station at Robert Service Way in Whitehorse, as well as at the Erik Nielsen International Airport. Today, our information officers continue to provide the support at YXY. This decision was made with a mind to the best application of staffing resources and to support the Government of Yukon's overall COVID-19 response and enforcement efforts.

Additionally, employees were hired to meet the demand for information officers during the summer. This supplementary budget item covers the additional personnel costs associated with providing this service. Funding from the supplementary budget allocation is also being provided to Liard First Nation for border-monitoring services at Watson Lake.

Finally, I would like to discuss the \$500,000 in the supplementary budget for enhanced domestic marketing. As a result of our ongoing and long-standing partnership with Destination Canada, we were able to negotiate a \$500,000 investment in our domestic marketing program. The resulting campaigns are part of the nationwide effort led by Destination Canada to restart Canada's visitor economy following the impact of COVID-19. This \$500,000 is a fully recoverable increase to the Tourism Yukon domestic marketing program. It has contributed to the promotion of Yukon in the Canadian market. This funding supported our "Now open" campaign in late summer 2020 that resulted in just over 15,000 British Columbians travelling to Yukon by late November, injecting some much-needed revenues into tourism businesses. We were also able to put some of these funds to work in our "Always on" marketing program through the winter months, which is

designed to keep Yukon top of mind with travellers. They are excited to travel to Yukon once health restrictions are eased.

We were also able to negotiate a \$50,000 disbursement from Destination Canada investments to support the Klondike Visitors Association's marketing program in local and regional markets in late summer and fall.

To summarize, we are putting forward an increase of \$7,847,000 to the Tourism and Culture operation and maintenance budget. These funds represent our ongoing supports to Yukon's tourism and culture sector in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Government of Yukon recognizes the value of our tourism, arts, and culture sectors and is committed to supporting them through this crisis. The work that we undertake using these funds will provide immediate relief to the tourism sector and pave our path to recovery as the COVID-19 pandemic recedes.

We will continue to adapt and respond to the impacts on Yukoners and the Yukon economy as it evolves. These recovery efforts will take dedicated cooperation across government as well as with our partners in the arts, culture, and tourism sectors. I would like to again recognize the department officials for their effort in getting this plan in place in a strategic and expedited manner under challenging and ever-evolving circumstances.

I would also like to thank the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board, the Business Advisory Council, the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon, the Convention Bureau, Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association, the Klondike Visitors Association, the Association franco-yukonnaise, and all other partners and individual operators for their invaluable guidance in making sure that the tourism sector's needs and challenges are known and understood. The pandemic will undoubtedly have long-lasting impacts and will materially transform the way in which these sectors operate in the future, but as we navigate a recovery, this government is committed to supporting our residents, businesses, and communities.

As we work proactively to implement the plan, we recognize the need for flexibility and collaboration, whether through adaptations to existing programs or the creation of new programs. We will work with our stakeholder partners to create a path forward together.

Mr. Istchenko: I do want to welcome the staff here today to support the minister and those who are on the phone working from home or in the offices who are also supporting the minister today.

I'll start off with a few questions right away here. In Question Period, I asked about the \$2.88 million that the minister announced on October 19. With the staff here, maybe the minister could get into a bit of detail.

Can the minister tell us how much of that \$2.8 million has flowed so far — which means how much has been spent so far? Of that \$2.88 million — it only covers until December 31 — how did the department, the minister, or all the partners she worked with — how did they come up with that date of December 31?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Deputy Chair, to date, the tourism accommodation sector supplement has not disbursed any of the funds. We have received inquiries from 27 accommodation providers that would like to explore this program. Our first step, as I have said in the House several times, is to work with CanNor and Economic Development to ensure that each applicant has maximized the funding available to them under the northern business relief fund and the Yukon business relief program. Once we determine eligibility and the amounts applicants qualify for, then we can proceed to disburse the funding.

Mr. Istchenko: So, no funds have been accessed, and it covers up to December 31. Can the minister elaborate a little bit more on why December 31?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes. Again, we are working with our businesses. We are ensuring that they are maximizing the programs. When the member opposite speaks about businesses not accessing funds, that is not correct. Businesses are accessing funds through the business relief program and through CanNor — the northern business relief fund. Again, they must maximize their eligibility under those programs and then they will be transferred into the supplementary program, which was set up precisely for that.

Again, we will extend to March 31. This is a supplementary budget for this fiscal year. We will continue to assess as we go along. We need to have flexibility, which is what this plan is designed to provide.

Mr. Istchenko: I think that we have spent enough time on that.

With the collapse of the cruise-ship industry and international air travel, can the minister tell us what specific action she has undertaken to fill the economic gap that has been left by the shutdown of both of these industries?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Our response has been around relief. I mean, this has been a global pandemic. It has impacted tourism worldwide. This was an unavoidable result of a global pandemic, so we have focused primarily on relief. What we are monitoring right now is a focus on Canada and domestic travel. This may include cruise-ship activity, but we are working closely with our federal partners. We are following our safe reopening plan. We are currently in phase 3 of that, and we will continue to work with our chief medical officer as things evolve. Again, there are always a lot of unknowns.

We have had good news about a vaccine. We are certainly working with our colleagues nationally, and that is great news, but we still have a long path ahead of us, as Dr. Brendan Hanley has talked about. We will continue to work with our chief medical officer to ensure that we are doing things in the best and safest way, taking those recommendations, and making the decisions within government.

Again, we have focused primarily, to this point, on relief. What we announced today was a more wholesome recovery plan that will bring us through the next two years. We are excited — as every Canadian is and probably every person in the world, perhaps — that things may come back to normal within the next year. That will be really welcome, of course, to

our tourism industry, which was the hardest hit, first hit, and longest recovery.

Mr. Istchenko: I had asked about cruise ships and international air travel, and the minister had spoken a little bit about being more focused on travel within Canada, so I will continue on this subject and wonder where it fits into the plan just announced today.

Can the minister provide us with the latest update on what is going on with Condor Air? Has Condor indicated that they're going to start service to the territory again when the border restrictions are relaxed and when the pandemic is under control?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The questions that the member opposite is asking today are really federal decisions. We continue to work with our federal counterparts. Our Premier is working very closely with the federal government. We'll continue to assess and see how things unfold with our great news that we had last week around vaccines and what that means for the travel industry.

Condor is excited to resume service to Yukon when it is safe to do so. Again, that is a federal decision — working closely with all of our partners worldwide. We have not stopped working with our partners worldwide in terms of continuing to ensure that, when travel can resume again, folks are remembering the Yukon and keeping that alive.

The chair of TIA talked about it today — that we're going to be a welcome destination in terms of the wide open, pristine land and air that we have. This is what travellers are going to be looking for. We're positioned so well in terms of inviting visitors back to the Yukon. Condor is selling right now for 2021.

Mr. Istchenko: So, just to confirm for the minister, it sounds like Condor is coming back and they're selling for 2021. Their flights are in the summer, so this summer, 2021, we'll see international travel back to the Yukon for the tourism industry. That's great news.

Hon. Ms. McLean: We did see this early in the pandemic where Condor sold out all of their flights. It was a great indicator that people were still willing to come to the Yukon even during a global pandemic. However, our borders are not open internationally, and so Condor made rearrangements with all of those folks who bought seats on that flight.

If travel still remains unsafe and Canada is not open to international travel, then that is exactly what Condor will have to deal with at that time. The good news is that people are remembering Yukon and they are eager to come back. When it is safe to do so, we will welcome them.

The actions that we laid out in our tourism relief and recovery program clearly are about ensuring safe travel and ensuring that resident support is there. Those are two of the items and actions that we announced today and that we are working on with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon. It is great news when businesses like Condor are selling those seats to come to Yukon. If they are not able to safely travel here, they will deal with that. It keeps the market alive. It keeps it warm, and that is what we want to see.

Mr. Istchenko: Can the minister provide us with an update on what is happening with Holland America and their plans for the Westmark in Dawson City, specifically heading into the busy summer months?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Holland America is a very important partner for Yukon. It is very similar to Condor. They are eager to start working within Yukon again and helping people come to our beautiful territory. Again, international travel is Canada's jurisdiction, and until those borders are open and it is safe to travel to Canada, including our beautiful Yukon Territory, that will not happen until it is safe to do so. That being said, our partners are eager. They are working. When the time is right, we will have them as strong partners again, so that will not change, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Mr. Istchenko: Has the department had any discussions with Holland America in reference to the Westmark?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Holland America no longer is associated with the Westmark. It's now the Sternwheeler Hotel. Of course, our department has been in discussions always with Holland America. It's a key partner for Yukon, and we will continue to have those discussions. When the time is right, they certainly will be a strong partner alongside Yukon as a travel destination.

Mr. Istchenko: So, I was more wondering about the Westmark this year in Dawson City. I'm wondering if the department had any discussions with Holland America about their plans for the Westmark in Dawson City.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, of course, the department is working — again, it's an international border issue, Mr. Deputy Chair. They haven't made the decision to start selling yet, but that's their decision to make. We'll see how things unfold with the vaccine. As things slowly move back to normal, they will be there. We look forward to that day when the Dawson Westmark and all the hotels are open. Those are still decisions that are being contemplated.

Mr. Istchenko: So, the Westmark in Dawson City will only open this summer if the borders reopen and if we can get customers, or does the minister know that?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, again, that's a business decision that they will need to make. If travel restrictions are loosened up and we're able to open — again, that's a federal jurisdiction and not our jurisdiction — they will then make that decision. Again, it's a business decision for Westmark Dawson.

Mr. Istchenko: I just want to ask a quick question and I want to stay with the overseas market. The additional funding for the enhanced tourism cooperative marketing fund — when the department gave us the briefing, they talked a little bit about how many applicants there were and stuff like that, but businesses that had applied for international travel and stuff like that were basically denied because we didn't have any international travel. I am just wondering — with that fund or any other fund, is the department now going to look at accepting that as we try to promote Yukon again?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I said in my opening comments, we increased the fund by \$1 million to make it a \$1.7-million fund. Previously, the fund had criteria where you could not use it for local or domestic marketing, so we changed that criteria

to allow for businesses to be able to use that fund for those purposes. As of December 1, we had 181 applicants — 167 clients — resulting in support for approximately 740 traditional online or travel-based marketing projects.

All projects and activities supported by the tourism cooperative marketing fund must reflect the advice of Yukon's chief medical officer of health and respect orders pursuant to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act*. Applicants for travel-related activities occurring outside of Canada will be declined, given recent developments in national and international COVID-19-related travel restrictions. As an alternative to travel, the department is supporting clients to participate in virtual trade and consumer events, so the work continues — again, working with each individual applicant to ensure that their plans are in line with the current state that we're in.

In terms of additional information about the tourism cooperative marketing fund, of the approved projects, 61 percent are with Yukon-based advertisers, representing 61 percent of the \$1.4 million in approved funding.

A breakdown of the business types that are receiving marketing support — 70 accommodation businesses approved for \$580,000; 38 adventure and outfitting businesses approved for \$327,000; eight transportation businesses approved for \$55,000; 23 restaurants and bars approved for \$45,000; seven attractions for \$64,000; eight destination marketing organizations, First Nation governments, and municipalities for \$203,000; and 13 NGOs featuring tourism product for \$114,000.

The current eligibility for TCMF activities includes: traditional advertising such as magazines, television, radio, et cetera; online advertising; ad word purchases; banner ads; social media ads, et cetera. In Yukon, familiarization tours with Canada-based participants' travel-related activities within Canada including conventions and tradeshow, sales missions, sales calls, sponsorship events, and event bid and destination presentations.

The program guidelines, application form, and reporting requirements — which are available in French and English — have been streamlined and are less burdensome for applicants. The interim changes to the program were developed in collaboration with the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board based on feedback from the industry.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that answer. So, according to the contract registry, the department has given \$2.9 million worth of contracts to a company called Cossette communications this year that covers about 62 different contracts. This is a company that's based out of Québec.

Looking at the contracts, they range from production of YouTube videos, experience guide planning, posters for the Whitehorse airport, and website enhancement. It looks like they also were part of the Explore Your Yukon campaign and enhancement to the website.

Can the minister tell us how they decided to go with this Outside company for these contracts?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Cossette is our agency of record. I know the question that you're asking is — because there is a

new standing offer agreement in place now, but I'm going to refer back and then come back to that, as I think that it's very relevant.

The previous standing offer with Cossette is a Vancouver-based company. It has been in place since 2016. It was awarded through public competition. The previous agency was Outside the Cube, which ceased in November 2015. This standing offer, completed in 2019, was extended for a year to accommodate the review of the Yukon Tourism and Culture governance model as identified by the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*.

Where we are currently is that we have just gone out to competition. That is now completed. Tourism Yukon went through a very extensive process. The deadline for receiving proposals on this new standing offer was September 21, 2020, following a 30-day public tender.

The completion of this has now wrapped up. The current standing offer is now again with Cossette. They were awarded. They were the successful applicant. I'm really happy that it's in partnership with a local company, Aasman. This is really great news.

Again, the technical evaluation committee that went through this entire process consisted of three Tourism Yukon staff members and a member of the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board. As in previous competitions, an independent fairness monitor, Common Ground Mediation and Consulting, was engaged to provide support to the technical evaluation committee and to ensure fairness and transparency. This was headed by Yukon's former Ombudsman, Hank Moorlag. Common Ground Mediation and Consulting has provided fairness monitoring services on more than 100 Yukon government procurement competitions. A total of 11 proposals were received from proponents with five proposals that either included or were led by Yukon companies.

The competition wrapped up, as I said. The technical evaluation of all proposals was extensive, and I'm really thankful for the folks who worked on that procurement.

So, that's really great news for Yukon and for this particular company. I had the chance to go and meet with them during my mandate. They are an exceptional company. I'm really, really pleased that Aasman was able to partner with them and that we have a local company that will be working alongside them.

I know that one of the other parts of your question was that they worked on campaigns for Yukon. That's their job. That's what an agency of record does for destination management organizations.

Mr. Istchenko: It's good to see that they partnered with a local Yukon company. There's a lot of money that left the Yukon for many years on that standing offer.

I want to switch to events cancellation. I know that the Arctic Winter Games had to be cancelled and there was some sort of relief and help for them, but I don't believe that it is there anymore for some of the organizations and some of the events.

Of course, with this worldwide pandemic, our borders still being closed, and nobody moving around much, we have had some major things like the Kilrich Yukon Native Hockey

Tournament and the Yukon Quest that are cancelled and aren't happening this year. So, what sort of relief and help is there for those non-profit organizations?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The events cancellation fund was put in place in response to the sudden cancellation of events. The 2020 Arctic Winter Games is one of them, and as you have mentioned, the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament is another. In response, the Department of Economic Development launched the temporary support for events funding program on April 1, 2020. The program covered events scheduled between March 7 and July 31 that were cancelled due to COVID-19. The purpose of the fund was to cover costs related to unanticipated cancellations. Examples of eligible expenses included food purchases, flight cancellations, and cancelled room bookings. The Department of Economic Development and the Department of Tourism and Culture jointly administered the program. The funding provided timely and effective support, lessening the immediate impact of COVID-19 on Yukon businesses and NGOs. During that time, we were also working on the Yukon business relief program, which is in effect, and we also had the CanNor program so that organizations and businesses were able to access funding from those respective funds.

We in the Department of Tourism and Culture and throughout government extended all of our transfer payment agreements to all of the organizations that we respectfully work with. I have gone over that extensively — previously in other debates in the House. I am prepared to do it again today.

Sporting organizations were covered under a different fund. There was an emergency fund.

I'm sure that folks in the Legislative Assembly were able to ask those questions of the Minister of Community Services during that debate. Each and every minister holds responsibility with different sectors and different organizations. We know that non-profit organizations related to tourism and culture are part of the mix for us in terms of immediate- and long-term impact. We've created the non-profit organization fund where organizations can receive additional dollars, and so we'll work with them to ensure that they have the supports that they need. At the time when this was established, it was under the advice — and in working closely with Yukon business, business council, and the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board. This was in quick response.

The Minister of Economic Development and I, along with the Minister of Community Services and the Premier, met quickly with the business community because it was an imminent issue. Folks had ordered a lot of food and there were a lot of perishables. There was an immediate impact. This fund, as I've said, is now closed because we do have other relief programs in place.

I'm prepared to go through the list of events, if the member opposite would like me to do that, in terms of how much money was expended on each one of the large events. For example, the Arctic Winter Games — we saw \$1,256,753 of relief given because of the cancellation of that event, as an example.

Mr. Istchenko: Can the minister confirm that some of the FTE positions in the Department of Tourism and Culture

are positions that are identified for different regions like the Kluane region or Watson Lake region, Elsa/Keno, and Dawson City region? They are designated a portion of their time to work with the business communities in those regions; is that correct?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In terms of our staff, we cover the entire Yukon. Other than staff who are specific to community visitor information centres and those types of staffing positions, we do not do an allocation or a special assignment to any one community. We look at the Yukon as a whole — other than the VIC staff; those are specific to the communities.

Mr. Istchenko: So, like the Department of Community Services has a community liaison person — there are no staff within the Department of Tourism and Culture that the local chamber of commerce can contact as a representative for their region?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we do not have that allocation of staff to any particular community. It's more by service area. Our department has cultural services and tourism services and heritage. Those positions are shared in Yukon, so it's really their area of responsibility and they cover the entire Yukon. Then there are different organizations that represent the interests of certain areas within Yukon, such as the Klondike Visitors Association, which is a separate association that works with that region.

There is a new position that we're working with TIAY on today, which is the concierge or navigator position. They are going to be posting that position on behalf of Yukon. Again, it will not be specific to any particular community. It will be for the entire Yukon to help navigate services and funding right now and relief and different programs that are available. This was a part of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* and was certainly an important aspect of it in terms of assisting folks with navigating our systems within government and really working toward that one-government approach.

Mr. Istchenko: So, according to the contract registry, since June 1, the department has spent \$121,000 on marketing to Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States. Given that our borders are shut down, I believe that it's good that we're doing this marketing so we can keep the Yukon on their radar. But in my riding and throughout the Yukon, I've talked to many businesses that are fly-in only. They are picked up at the airport off the Condor flight and they are taken directly to the lodge location. Brand new money coming to the Yukon, brand new money from a different jurisdiction — and there's a better portion of them, Mr. Deputy Chair, that didn't open last year. They just didn't open. They had no customers. Some of them are 70- or 80-percent European travel or travel from the United States — a few Canadians, but a lot of them are overseas market. It's new money to the territory. That's what we believe on this side — to see new money to the territory, especially when it comes to tourism so they can explore the wonderful Yukon and check out what we have to offer when it comes to pristine wilderness and the great heritage and culture that we have here.

I'm just wondering what comments the minister would make to the businesses that are asking me now, because they were closed all last year and — please don't tell me about the

programs that you have because they understand what programs they have. They're on those programs. They're hoping that they stay extended or whatever. But a lot of them just tell me: "We don't want the government programs. As soon as we can, we want to get our customers back."

We're seeing the rollout of the vaccine right now. It's worldwide, and that's such a positive thing I think. Today with the minister's announcement, I don't believe I heard her talk about the rollout of the vaccine and how this was going to work toward our reopening of the economy again, especially with the devastated tourism industry.

That's my last question for the day. I would like the minister to comment a bit on that because I have to tell my constituents and the business community — we on this side do have to tell them — what summer is going to look like for them. They're going to have to plan and prepare all winter long.

Hon. Ms. McLean: There was a lot in that to respond to. In the relief and recovery plan, we talk about two pots on the stove.

I'll go through it. COVID-19 has had a paradoxical impact on the tourism sector in that the very measures put in place to keep citizens safe — for example, travel restrictions, limitations on gathering, social distancing — have devastated the tourism industry, making it incredibly difficult or even impossible to operate. We know that.

In 2020, many Canadian jurisdictions turned to staycations, encouraging citizens to stay in their own jurisdictions and take advantage of the local tourism experiences as a way to generate revenue for the tourism sector. Unfortunately, Yukon staycations and the BC bubble cannot come close to sustaining Yukon's tourism industry, which saw over 500,000 visitors in Yukon in 2019.

While many sectors of Yukon's economy have been able to adapt and begin to recover from the impacts of COVID-19, the sectors that rely on visitation and gatherings continue to need ongoing relief and support. Government of Yukon will continue to focus on relief with supplemental programs based on needs analysis for accommodations and tourism businesses, as well as for tourism and culture non-profit organizations. International and national tourism is a long game requiring relationships with the travel trade and various markets built over decades and strong brand presence through various marketing tactics. The future recovery of the tourism industry in Yukon is dependent on maintaining those relationships, marketing initiatives, and consumer purchasing patterns today.

The relationship between tourism relief and tourism recovery is like having two pots of water on the stove at the same time — one on the front burner and one on the back burner. While significant travel and gathering restrictions are in place for Yukon and Canada, tourism relief is on the front burner on high right now; tourism recovery is on the back burner on simmer.

The tourism relief and recovery plan is designed to move tourism recovery from the back burner on simmer to the front burner on boil as conditions evolve over the next three years. We will continue to monitor the situation and turn the heat up and down on the two pots, when needed, as COVID-19 evolves

and travel restrictions lessen. Eventually, when the time is right, we will turn off the tourism relief pot altogether. I think that is a really important analogy to keep in mind.

Yes, we are keeping our markets warm because we need to. They are important to us. To get back to the level of revenue that we had attributable to tourism, the jobs, and the GDP, we need to keep those markets warm, because those are — just like Condor, it is a great indicator. They are selling; they are selling seats right now, and that is going to keep that market warm for us. German-speaking Europe is one of our most important international markets. I know that businesses are wanting this to end. We all want this to end — there is no question — but right now, these are the measures that are in place to keep Yukoners safe.

The relief and the recovery program are going to help us get to that place of being ready for travellers to come back. Everyone has been impacted; everyone feels differently about travel. We are lucky to be where we live, because this pristine, open Yukon is going to draw a lot of people worldwide, and we are going to see new markets as a result of what we have gone through and how we have managed as well.

I think that the values that Yukoners talked about in the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* shone through completely during the pandemic. I think that people are going to want to be part of that. They are going to want to come to the Canadian north where things were managed and people were cared for, and that includes businesses. Yes, we know that folks want to get back to earning revenue, but we can just look not far from where we are today — in other jurisdictions and see the result. I mean, I feel for my colleague in Alberta every time that we are in a federal-provincial-territorial meeting, and my heart goes out because what has happened in their province is devastating. It is devastating. Those are lives lost.

We followed the science and we have governed with empathy, and that is really important to Yukoners. Yukon is for sure in a unique position to closely match many of the attributes that travellers are looking for in the post-COVID-19 travel world — the desire for natural and untouched destinations and a return to values, as I've said. What is important is fresh air, community health and wellness, consciousness of the environment, less large groups and more meaningful events, and authentic local travel experiences. With tourism relief and recovery plan supports in place, Yukon will be ready to draw from our strengths and deliver safe, flexible travel experiences to inspire traveller confidence.

The other part of that is that one of the programs that we are working with our partners on — with our partner at TIAY and Yukon University — is the Elevate program, which is helping businesses adapt. Those supports are in place as well. Businesses can actually receive up to \$20,000 — \$5,000 per business — to do a general consultation and then a further \$15,000 to enact some of that plan. This will go on throughout the relief and recovery implementation. That is exciting, because it is actually helping businesses to look at their business with new eyes and with a new lens.

The global pandemic has caused disruption throughout the whole world, but it has disrupted, for sure, our industry in a way

that — you know, this is a creative industry. I think that there are businesses that are adapting really, really well. Elevate is helping them to get there. Businesses that are struggling with adaptation can really refine and look at new ways of visualizing their businesses and then making that a reality.

Mr. Istchenko: That concludes my questions for today. I want to thank the staff who are here today assisting the minister. I will turn it over to the member from the Third Party.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the officials for their presence here today, as well as for the briefing they provided us on October 14.

I just want to pick up on the minister's analogy with respect to having the pot on simmer. Despite this being an unprecedented pandemic, we do have, within that period of time, a precedent. Can the minister outline for the House what lessons were learned with respect to the July 1 Yukon-BC bubble opening? As we all recall, Yukon got caught short. We announced it, but who cared? BC wasn't ready and didn't have the information. As we saw, there was a catch-up period. Anticipating that we were going to have success, that we were going to be opening borders, that we were going to be — I'm really looking for what lessons were learned for that process. The minister and her officials will know from participating in the weekly Zoom calls with TIAY that there was some real angst and concern expressed about how it was great it was open, but jeez, we missed an opportunity here. How could we have a bit more nimbleness?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, of course. I know that there was a lot of angst among the industry during that time. That was our first opening. The campaigns were ready to be launched, but the decision had to be made. The final decision had to be made at the Cabinet level. That is something — as soon as that occurred, we launched the campaign. We were ready. The Department of Tourism and Culture had the campaign ready. They had the website ready — all the information for folks to look at to ensure that they were travelling safely in the territory. That work was ready to go. We were ready to launch it. We had to wait for the final Cabinet decision to be made. Things were changing rapidly, sometimes on a daily basis. We were really following the plan, following the recommendations laid out by the chief medical officer, but that public health framework that we worked from was what guided us in that decision. Better state, worsened state — there are a number of criteria within that safe reopening plan for Yukon that really guided us.

I know what you're asking, but that was in fact the way that it had to be at that time. Again, this was not the experience of a public health situation that we faced over the last 10 months and was certainly — yes, understatement, unprecedented. We do have lessons learned. We are documenting — what could we have done better? The review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* is going to be a really great discussion to have with Yukoners as we review and talk about how this unfolded. Again, the CEMA act didn't even contemplate Yukon First Nations in that in self-government. There were a lot of lessons learned. What would we have done better? They're from different departments that I'm responsible for. I certainly am

compiling that in terms of: What did we learn? What could we have done differently?

In this case, we could not launch that campaign until the decision was final and was made at the Cabinet level. I don't know what I could have done differently with that, given where we were at with COVID-19 and that this was the first opening that we had. You know what? We've experienced a worsened state and had to retract that BC bubble and that was a hard decision as well, because we know of course what the impact has been on Yukoners and on other Canadians.

Ms. Hanson: Maybe I'm not being clear. I'm not asking the minister to defend the process that occurred. What I'm being told is that we have two pots on a stove — one is on simmer and one is right up there going. So, the question I'm asking is: Based on what we learned — so that simmering in my mind means you have the strategy and you're ready to go when the green light is given so that you don't go simmer, simmer, simmer — oh, now we go to Cabinet and now we seek their approval. Well, actually, your strategy, I would hope, is presuming that you have Cabinet approval and you're ready to go. There are many precedents for government action to be taken like that.

My question is: Subject to other conditions being present — and I can give the minister many, many examples of how Cabinets have operated in the past on this, not just in this territory — the lesson learned in terms of strategically — we have a strategy, I presume, over the next short while — one of the questions will be — and I will ask her now in the context of this — there is a branding exercise and I am hoping that there is a significant element that is going to be pushing a button to be ready to go when you have the green light. That would have been part of what wasn't present in addition to the communication with the other jurisdictions that we're opening up to, whether — ostensibly, the minister can speak most comfortably to the Canadian scene because she and her counterparts in the federal, provincial, and territorial arenas are dealing with the Canadian context. I am not asking nor worrying about international at this stage. In the Canadian context, when we start opening, what did we learn in terms of being ready to be able to go with that green light?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I think with lessons, the issue and the crux of it was the timing between the announcements and legal decisions being made. The department is and will be ready again when we move to that stage. Having discussions with the chief medical officer about these types of implications have been ongoing and they will continue as the back scene unfolds, as things change, and until we get back to a final, full back-to-normal life and state.

We have been working on this all the way through the pandemic, ensuring that we are ready to go when we can get there. We were preparing, just in the off chance — when the BC bubble was established, we started preparing for the potential of Alberta. That is a fact. We started preparing for it. We never did launch because there were no decisions indicating that was safe for Yukoners, so we didn't go there, but the campaign was ready.

We have been preparing, and without agency of record — Cossette — and now Aasman is part of that. Aasman did the local campaign under Cossette during the summer for the travel and buy-local campaign. That was done with Aasman.

So, we will continue working with our chief medical officer regarding that. I am not sure if there was a question — or you wanted me to speak about the Yukon place branding — that you would want me to speak to.

Ms. Hanson: Just to clarify for the minister, I was asking — one element of that certainly will be our branding. As I understand it, it is part of the recovery plan. So, where are we at in that very vital element of the new branding? There has been discussion on some of the meetings with TIAY about global digital branding. Has the work begun on that? Is it halfway through? Is it three-quarters of the way through? When would we expect to see the new branding for Yukon as part of this recovery plan?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, that was a really exciting announcement that we are moving forward on with place brand work. A place brand is really a comprehensive collection of marketing and communication tools that we share to raise the awareness of Yukon as a destination and to attract visitors. The place brand will create the overarching story, the connective tissue that binds together and elevates all economic sectors, not just tourism. This is a really broad, wide-spanning initiative. A strong place brand can help Yukon compete in a global marketplace by articulating our unique characteristics important to attracting investment, people, and capital. A Yukon place brand will not only contribute to Yukon's recovery from the pandemic and grow our economy, but it will also bind us together through collective expression and what makes Yukon so special. In this way, the brand will be a shared public asset for the entire territory.

The initiative involves a community engagement process with businesses, communities, residents, and government to identify and confirm the qualities that make Yukon truly special and unique — geography, history, culture, values, et cetera — and the things that we should celebrate, protect, and promote. A lot of that did come out during the tourism development strategy consultation and the resulting documents. This will not be a Yukon government initiative. This is an initiative that has originated from Yukon's private sector, and we recognized the potential of a strong Yukon place brand. We want to provide funding to support its advancement. Working with our private sector partners, we look forward to providing you with a fuller picture as it unfolds.

We currently have marketing in place. We're not going to wait for the place brand. This is going to be an initiative that will take some time to get it right. We're going to do that work. The marketing of Yukon remains in place. It's strong. We have folks who work for us around the world. All of that is still in place.

I've already said that it will be overarching. It will take some time to get there. We're working with research through Destination Canada on how we need to refine the Yukon tourism brand. All of that being said, we do have strong marketing throughout the world through Destination Canada,

and we have Cossette which takes care of our domestic marketing and Aasman now as a partner with them.

The place brand project is going to unfold over a period of time. It's going to be in partnership; we see ourselves as a partner. This is not a Government of Yukon initiative. I think that this is the most important part of that — this place brand, Yukon story concept that will emerge.

Ms. Hanson: I am confused because a minister just said that this not a tourism — it's a whole-of-government thing, but it says right here on the press release: "4. Refining Yukon's tourism brand and inspiring travellers to visit the Yukon". If it's not a tourism branding exercise, why was it announced as part of the COVID-19 relief and recovery plan?

My rationale for asking the minister to outline for us how this is going to unfold is to try to get a sense of — you usually have a start date and you have a target for completion. You usually have a budget, and you have a sense of how much you're going to put into that. I haven't been able to get that from the minister.

I'm told that it's the private sector as the lead and that the government is a partner. So, who is the private sector lead on this? Who is leading this if it's not Yukon government doing Yukon government's tourism brand and inspiring travellers to visit Yukon? I'm simply asking for the information with respect to when we anticipate this exercise to begin, when we anticipate a target for completion so that we have a sense of what we're paying for in terms of product and who are we paying that to.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Under theme 4 — refining the brand and inspiring travellers to visit — data and insights are essential for destination planning, development, management, and promotion. Consumer behaviours have shifted, and it's virtually impossible for destinations to understand these shifts without conducting relevant and timely market research. Providing updated and timely data is necessary to help the tourism industry evaluate opportunities and to make informed business decisions. With the insights gained by researching current and potential post-COVID-19 consumer markets, the department will use the opportunity to modernize the Yukon brand and brand assets to better appeal to newly defined consumer segments. The current Larger than Life tagline and brand may not resonate as well in a post-COVID-19 world. The COVID-19 crisis will change the way that destinations manage tourism and go to market. The three-year tourism relief and recovery plan takes into consideration the new reality based on updated market research. The four key initiatives under theme 4 are: to invest in research to better understand changing consumer behaviour and new markets; to enhance the Yukon's tourism brand and assets as a result of this work; to enhance investments in a three-year destination marketing strategy; to enhance partnership and key tourism stakeholders and partners; and to invest in place branding for Yukon as a whole.

All of this obviously ties together. We do have a Yukon tourism brand, and this will enhance that brand.

It brings a whole-of-Yukon approach. This year, we have \$150,000 allocated to the First Nation Chamber of Commerce this fiscal as the Yukon place brand project. For this particular fiscal year, they will be hosting the work that is going to take

place. The Yukon place brand project is already over a year old. This is something that has been going on for some time. We are investing in that because we believe in Yukon place brand.

Ms. Hanson: I am beginning to get a sense that we have part of the answer that we proposed. The minister has indicated that we spent \$100,000—some so far to begin the process. The whole of my question was about the target for completion and who is involved. If the private sector is the lead for this exercise — the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce — is correct, the minister could just confirm it. I can read and did read exactly what she just read into the record, so I don't need that. In the interest of time, what I'm really trying to do is move rather quickly through with a series of questions that relate to the financial element of it, not the narrative.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, I know that you are trying to get to the — when does this start? The Yukon story and Yukon brand has already been underway for about a year. This is our government's investment into Yukon's story. The Department of Tourism and Culture — we have a marketing strategy. We have a research plan. We work with Destination Canada. This Yukon branding exercise is going to be overarching. It is going to reach into a lot of other sectors. It is going to help us to be clear about — when we market to whoever it is we are marketing to — that we are consistent and that we are telling the story of Yukon in a way that is common. You can see this in New Zealand, if you want to do some looking into what it is that we are looking to do here in Yukon. New Zealand has done probably the best job in the world. There are currently countries that are doing similar things to meet a need.

We have to manage our brand very carefully, and so it made sense for Tourism and Culture to be the lead on place branding that will be overarching into all aspects, really. It is going to include everybody in this House, and it is going to include every Yukoner, and it should, because it is really defining who we are and how we tell our story and those common tools that businesses can use or the university can use or other entities as we are looking to attract people, investment, and visitors to our territory. So, really, Tourism and Culture has a primary job of protecting and working with our tourism brand, so having it led from Tourism and Culture made a lot of sense. So, that is why you are seeing investment here, but it is a Government of Yukon investment into this.

In terms of the money that we are talking about today and the \$11 million over the next two fiscal years, that is investment, over and above — our current marketing fund is \$7,686,000 for marketing in 2020-21, plus we had, in our supplementary budget today, \$500,000 from Destination Canada for domestic marketing. I've already talked about the partner that we have in place right now for this fiscal year — the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce — working really closely with the private sector and businesses. You won't have to go far to find folks who are well aware of the Yukon story initiative that has been unfolding for the last year and a bit. This is a new, modern approach. You can also look to places like New Zealand that have done an exceptional job. If you look at all of their marketing, it's very aligned with their values and

what's important to them. That's where we're going as a jurisdiction within Canada.

I think that there are a lot of exciting things in the relief and recovery plan that come directly out of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. One of them that really ties to this in a strong way is the sustainability framework. We're working with world — sorry, it just slipped out.

We're working on finalizing that framework, and it will be tied to many of our other strategies in Yukon around the sustainability of tourism.

It's the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories. That's a really exciting initiative, and we're close to being ready to talk about it in more detail. It's in the relief and recovery plan. It has been elevated out of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* and is a really key initiative. It's one of our pillars in the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. All of those things really tie together.

Ms. Hanson: One of the advantages — or disadvantages, I suppose — of being an MLA for 10 years is that I have attended all of those conferences. I have heard the presentations over and over — at least twice from New Zealand. They're wonderful, exciting, thrilling, but that's not our strategy. What I was asking about — and I will cease now because I'm not going to get an answer, just a narrative — and looking for was this: We have some project money that has been provided to one entity. I am curious as to the strategic framework that this will fit into. I haven't heard that articulated, so perhaps it is not ready yet; that is fine.

Can the minister provide this House with an update on the tourism survey that was conducted earlier this year? At one point, there were, I believe, 350 surveys sent out. It would be good to have on the record the number that were returned and found compliant in terms of data sets. Also, if the minister could provide a breakdown of the sectors that are represented within that, and if the minister could indicate to the House, given that we're in part of the marketing thing that we are involved in as a territory and given the difficulty and the possibility of having familiarization tours — is the department engaging in virtual familiarization tours? If so, how many and what targets have there been if virtual familiarization tours have been conducted or are planned for this fiscal?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will start with the — and there is a lot in there. I will start with the familiarization tours; they have been ongoing. We did have in-person familiarization tours up until the BC bubble burst, and now some are virtual. All of the familiarization tours have gone virtual — the big world conferences — so we are providing that now. We will have to get back to you with the numbers in a legislative return; I do not have that in front of me.

In terms of the survey that we conducted with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, it can be found on yukon.ca. I am not sure if you have had a chance to see that; it is there. Tourism businesses were contacted by e-mail to self-complete the survey online between September 28 and October 11. The respondents had the option to self-complete in French, if requested. Operators not on the distribution list were encouraged through tourism non-governmental organizations,

including TIAY, WTAY, Association franco-yukonnaise, and the chambers of commerce as well.

A total of 334 survey invitation links were sent to businesses. A total of 123 responses were received with 116 responses in scope, for a response rate of 34.7 percent.

In terms of highlights — 34 percent fewer tourism businesses will be operating year-round in 2020-21; 86 percent of businesses reported having reduced revenue from earned income — for example, sales and bookings; 38 percent of respondents changed their product offerings; 84 percent of tourism businesses accessed at least one COVID-19 funding support program; 3.1 was the average number of COVID-19 funding support programs accessed; 86 percent of respondents accessed business and/or personal financial reserves; 57 percent of businesses do not expect to have sufficient cash flow to cover business expenses for the next six months; 70 percent of respondents' mental health is worse now than it was before COVID-19. Those are really daunting results and not surprising.

We certainly expected — and that is where we derived our information from to develop the programs. Partly, we gathered the information from this and working with TIAY and working with other associations and, of course, our Yukon Tourism Advisory Board to develop the programs as a result of these numbers that we have before us.

Respondents — 38 percent were in adventure or recreation; 32 percent were accommodation; 13 percent were food and beverage.

There are some of the highlights. It's a 24-page document. It can be found on yukon.ca. I would be happy to — you'll have more conversations and the department will as well.

A couple of other notes in terms of business structure: 43 percent were corporations, 32 percent were sole proprietors, and 23 percent were non-incorporated partnerships. Again, these are some of the highlights, but if the member opposite wishes to have further discussions about this, I think that we can arrange to have some briefings around what the findings were or we could have other discussions in other ways.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. I do appreciate the fact that sometimes those documents are on yukon.ca, but the other part of it is that our job is to put on the record some substantive issues. Sometimes it is important, particularly when we have sometimes abstract questions in Question Period — they may seem to be out of the blue — and when you ground them in the statistics on the record, citizens who are either reading or listening to the proceedings of this House will have a better understanding of why people do raise them.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I just wanted to thank the staff for being here today and supporting the debate that we had. I appreciate all of the questions. We will follow up on any legislative returns that are necessary from the debate today. I thank everyone for your participation today.

Deputy Chair: Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate in Vote 54.

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

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

Deputy Chair: Ms. Hanson has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$7,847,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$7,847,000 agreed to

Department of Tourism and Culture agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Health and Social Services — continued

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I have with me today the DM of Health and Social Services, Stephen Samis, and of course Karen Chan, assistant deputy minister.

I will speak a bit. I know that, at our last time here, I answered a few questions with respect to the supplementary budget before us today. I will speak a bit about that and then I will look at providing — I know that there were some specific questions about the general overall budget for Health and Social Services outside of the supplementary budget today. So, just as a note, I provided to the members the breakdown of the

budget as we presented it. The budget, as it is presented today for the supplementary, is for \$33,695,000. There are specific sections that the budget covered.

Just for the record, we have the expenditures that cover direct client services for our vulnerable population. So, I fielded quite a few questions around that, and that addressed the diverse expenditures to protect the health and safety of Yukon's vulnerable population. I spoke at length about accommodations so that we can look at ensuring that the clients of Health and Social Services are housed appropriately, and we had significant discussions around the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter as well and the parameters around COVID-related rules and parameters when we look at ensuring that the clientele there are safe and supported. There is also funding to augment some of the services that are provided through NGO groups like the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, All Genders Yukon, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and then additional professional staff at Health and Social Services to respond to increased demands in the community with nursing and health professionals and mental health services.

The budget that we're speaking to deals with further pressures that the department had observed and accounted for and social supports. Some of the supports were supplemented and supported by the federal government when it comes to the CERB payments, social assistance, and payments to mitigate some of the financial hardships that were experienced by Yukoners and that supported anticipated increase and demand in social assistance as well during this pandemic. Then we saw some additional pressures on housing as a result of the requirement for social distancing, generally seeing 70 people in a night — 60 to 70 at the shelter. We had to accommodate and allow the individuals an appropriate alternative, and that meant that we had to put some resources into hotels and had to commission out some of that support.

We also ensured that we had sufficient resources in the budget for childcare centres and childcare supports and that the parents and the childcare centres were sufficiently accommodated, meaning that we had to ensure that there were the necessary supplies and supports there so as to keep the childcare centres open, that additional prevention measures and controls were put in place and that the supplies were there — like the disinfecting supplies and the spacing requirements — and that the staff were well-trained as well in the COVID rules and compliance.

We had put in also resources in this particular budget for surge capacity and vaccine planning. That would be of significant importance to Yukoners, given that the budget that we have before us speaks to the additional COVID requirements, including capacity, vaccine planning, and potential early implementation.

Now that we have the decision and are proceeding with implementation, it certainly means that it's not the sole responsibility of Health and Social Services. It will also fall on Community Services — around the planning and capacity to some extent. We have spoken about that work. For the record, Community Services is working with National Defence and looking at the mass distribution and the requirement for the

north to get a higher percentage of the vaccines to cover 25 percent of our adult population, so there is some really good news around that.

Since this budget was put in, we have essentially negotiated with Canada the cost factors associated with the vaccine, which is not covered here. It is mainly about the logistics and the logistical requirements of getting the vaccines out to the communities. We are essentially setting up two teams to travel to rural Yukon communities and one hub here in the city and working through our two rural hospitals and through our health centres. It is establishing and putting the team in place. I know that I have spoken about that ad nauseum here. I have gone back in time to say that we have worked through some of the logistics early on and just recently made the announcement last week. When I actually came in last to speak about the budget, we made the announcement that Yukoners would see the Moderna vaccine in January. I understand that the decision is imminent and will happen soon around Health Canada's endorsement.

I suspect that, as we go ahead in terms of additional supports and implementing this, we will continue to work with the federal government to ensure that we have sufficient resources. We have worked very closely with the communities and with the First Nation communities and municipalities around personal protective equipment, ensuring that they are well prepared to protect themselves against COVID, but also around implementation of the vaccines. We are really focusing on the delivery of the vaccine into the communities and having the communities well versed on what this means, but also having a plan in place for every community. That is being worked out through the Health Emergency Operations Centre with the experts there, with Community Services directly involved and Dr. Hanley's team as well.

We have also recently had the mass flu clinic. The objective there was to see, on a bit of a trial basis, if we can actually establish a centre that will be able to deliver vaccines in a way that is sufficiently following the COVID protocols, delivering the maximum amount of vaccines in a day while still following the parameters of COVID and getting the citizens in and out. I believe that the general rule is that we can see 1,000 citizens come in for inoculation in one day. There is a possibility that we can go up to 1,200. That was the trial at the mass flu clinic.

That is really great. That means that, in a few short weeks, we can get the majority of Yukoners through. We are using the Panorama electronic data system that we use right now to track and monitor so that we can quickly follow back around in 30 days — 28 to 35 days — who had been inoculated, how we can get them back in, and the notifications to get that out. It is already tried and true so we can go ahead and continue on down that path. The team is well versed in that already — just an indication that there is a team of experts on the ground with extensive experience. Having 12,400 — almost 12,500 — vaccinations in one month is a good indication, I think, that they know what they are doing. They have been doing inoculations for a lot of years, and this is no different. It is just a different

vaccine. How you treat the vaccine, how you deliver it, and the logistics around that, I think, have been worked out.

Some comments around — well, it's so different; the flu vaccine is so different from the COVID vaccine. Well, in actuality, the structure is set up to be successful, and so we are putting our good faith in the team of experts to get this out.

At the same time as we were going through this process, we had to establish an additional support for COVID testing, so just making sure that we do the contact tracing and the testing and that it continued on, given that we were in the middle of a second wave.

That linked to the enhancements and supports for COVID and looking at mitigating COVID transmission — additional health supports and additional medical staff, infection control nurses, care providers in long-term care homes, and the Communicable Disease Control Unit as well. We had a bunch of our nurses deployed over to the communicable disease centre to do contact tracing and testing support to the COVID centre.

So, additional funds there were to provide support for the COVID centre and the 811 line as well, which meant quicker service and a quicker response time. There was a requirement for ensuring that we have sufficient and appropriate turnaround in terms of testing, results getting out, and then contact tracing, which is an investigative process. The team that is there is doing an exceptional job in keeping Yukoners safe.

The IHealth — as we went through this exercise and we looked at the Panorama system through the IHealth review, the 30-year-old system at the hospital — the Meditech system — and now the collaboration between Health, Highways and Public Works, and the hospital to modernize — I think that this was a test for doing virtual care and a test for quick access to medical supports. This was considered as we looked at this supplementary and we looked at the supports for technology. The technological supports were looked at for quick delivery and turnaround of correspondence and in terms of virtual care and making sure that our health centres are linked to our physicians who are then linked to the specialists in other parts of the Yukon or outside of the Yukon. I think that this kind of gave us a quick indication of what we needed to do and the additional supports that were required there.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation received an extra \$6,012,000 to support their response. For the most part, the funding, as I understand it, in that we have not had a lot of COVID hospitalization — most of the patients who have contracted COVID were isolating at home and took care of themselves in their home environment.

The support to the hospital was really around bringing in additional staff and additional staff time, as well as salaries, supplies, and equipment, indicating it was really augmenting the loss of their budget, because generally they have clients travelling through the Yukon or visitors coming here who require medical support, which now means that the hospital doesn't have those clients; therefore, they're not receiving that revenue from the clients. The objective here, through this budget submission, was to help support that loss.

What we received in terms of the ask from the hospital for the \$6 million — I believe about half of that went to the lost

revenue. The lost revenue was due to that, but we also had to deal with supports for the hospital as they had to follow COVID protocols as well — social distancing, visiting, and cleaning and such — so it was an added scope of care there.

The self-isolation facility was a huge part of this expenditure — making sure I responded to a whole bunch of questions there as well. We had to keep the facility in place so that we could contain COVID in a centralized place where we had individuals isolating rather than having it out in the community in a contained environment. That's part of what was covered under here. Sufficient supports for that — sufficient social supports and client services — a lot of that I covered already in the questions that were asked last week in the submission to the floor and to the Members of the Legislative Assembly on the budget.

I will stop there and just take the questions from the opposition with respect to the supplementary budget that we have before us.

Ms. McLeod: I want to welcome the officials back to the Legislature today. I want to talk to the minister today about home care supports. We had a fairly lengthy conversation in this regard back in spring 2018 when the minister seemed to understand fully what types of supports were necessary for our older Yukoners to stay in their homes.

Obviously, fiscally it makes a lot of sense to keep people in their homes given that the numbers tossed around are in excess of \$2,000 a day to stay in a hospital, in excess of \$500 a day to be in a care facility like Whistle Bend Place or Copper Ridge Place. We're looking at a relatively small amount of money, I believe, to help older Yukoners stay in their homes and manage their lives there.

I'm wondering — since 2018, when the minister had indicated she would be talking to the Yukon Council on Aging — I believe that was the organization — and working with them to provide some services — it has come to my attention that they're not able to work outside of Whitehorse. I'm getting some calls from concerned Yukoners in rural Yukon who are not able to access any supports. Obviously, two or three weeks ago, we did hear from some senior folks in Whitehorse who were also having those problems. This clearly seemed to be front of mind for the minister and she did indicate that she was working on this. I'm wondering what has changed in the last two years to help these Yukoners stay in their homes longer. By "help", I mean help with clearing the snow from driveways, shovelling snow off their roofs, with some of their summertime yard work that they need, or indeed with washing the walls or windows. Those are activities that aren't accessible through traditional home care routes where time is limited for each of those seniors.

If we can just start there, with the minister letting us know what's being done in the last two years to help these seniors stay in their homes.

Hon. Ms. Frost: There is lots in that question with respect to seniors and aging in place. What have we done from 2018? I would say what we have done since 2016, since taking office with respect to seniors' care, aging in place, and elders. For our aging-in-place action, we clearly don't just work with

the Yukon Council on Aging; we work with all sectors of our community when we speak about seniors. We work in our communities in different regards — having early on recognized that there have been major challenges with historical services for seniors to age well in their own homes, in their own communities, and therefore not being well-supported to stay in their own homes longer.

The member opposite put some numbers out with regard to \$500 in care facilities or \$200 in their homes. I mean, there is a significant difference. In terms of extended care facilities, we are still the lowest in the country in terms of what we charge for care. The idea is to augment, as much as we can, supports for seniors to stay in their homes longer. Early on, we heard very clearly that the seniors needed to be heard — that they have a lot of wisdom collectively, in terms of lived experience, and they wanted a say in how services were provided to them. How and what we do — rather than speak for them, they wanted us to speak with them.

They essentially would tell us what they needed. That took effect through the aging-in-place action plan. We corresponded with over 1,200 senior Yukoners from across the spectrum of Yukon, so some with disabilities and some from indigenous communities. In fact, in the member's riding of Watson Lake, I spent a whole afternoon speaking to the elders from the Liard First Nation and the Kaska Nation to tell me what it is they saw, what they needed, and what they would like to see in their community. Interestingly enough, they didn't feel supported in terms of cultural sensitivity and support. They didn't want to access the Wye Manor and told us why that was — and so what other alternatives could we look at for them?

At the same time, as we went through the consultation and engagement, we had representation from every Yukon community through the aging-in-place document. In the submission, we heard that there were quite a lot of recommendations that came out of that. The seniors want to stay home longer in their own homes. We went and worked through a partnership with the Yukon Housing Corporation to look at the home first initiative, which meant that we had to put resources in our budget to keep the seniors at home longer so that we could support mobility and mobility access. We also, at the same time, looked at creating a rapid response home care team to help individuals leave the hospital and re-enable them to go back into their own homes.

The creation of the 10-bed facility at the Thomson Centre was built to do just that. It was to allow the seniors who come out of the hospital to stop in there for rehabilitation and then go back to their own home communities. The O&M estimate for home and community care in 2015-16 was \$5,833,000. This year, the budget for home and community care is \$9,000,863. That is a significant increase. That included additional care for the home first philosophy and the clients who need complex care. We have seen also, just as a note for the record, an 85-percent success rate in getting people home through the re-enablement unit at the hospital, and that is covered through this home and community care budget. So, it's really around the programming and the supports.

Certainly, we're aware that rural Yukon communities have not historically been well supported, so that meant, of course, that we needed to work with our partners in the communities and work with them — the indigenous communities, the health centres — and look at providing care coordination, social work support, and home support. A part of that was looking at the occupational requirements and doing retrofits and such on their homes. Physiotherapy as well — bringing specialized supports to the communities — and working closely with the Meals on Wheels programming, working with home care across the territory.

The question around 2018 and what we have done to allow seniors to stay in their homes — always a philosophy that we keep the seniors in their homes as long as we possibly can and out of our care facilities unless it's absolutely necessary. That's very exciting. We are also enabling Yukoners to stay in their own home communities.

We have also looked at end-of-life care — a palliative care initiative — so that seniors can go back home into their respective communities and have all of the supports that they need for end-of-life care. We do that with the support of our medical team, the support of the RNs in the health centres, and the support of our communities.

As we respond to the question around what has been improved, I would say that certainly lots of things have improved in terms of creating more capacity, creating more supports, and looking at additional services to all of the communities. Lots of synergy is happening throughout in terms of reaching the goal of having seniors stay in their communities longer and working on the action items together.

Going back to the aging-in-place action plan that was released in 2019, we released the plan just this year — September 2019 — but 2018-19 is when the seniors participated in the advisory committee. Really valuable guidance and recommendations came forward out of that — programs and service infrastructure, housing, transportation, living full and meaningful lives, and necessary actions taken to ensure that they have that opportunity to stay in their own homes, as well as maintain a high quality of life. Any specific concerns that they had with respect to upholding a home base is one that we take into consideration, specifically around the culturally based philosophies and partnership with long-term care.

As of November 30, home care has served 894 Yukoners, 581 in Whitehorse and, of course, in all of our communities. Right now, we have 343 outside of Whitehorse, but that doesn't say that we've only provided supports to 343; that means that those are the ones who are in direct contact with Health.

The partnership with indigenous communities and our health directors in each one of our communities has been, I would say, stellar in that we've had many opportunities to work with the communities on implementing recommendations and ensuring that enhanced supports are there for medical travel and medical supports.

As well, we have additional supports for Meals on Wheels and supports in the budget to allow for that. That is in partnership around making sure that the seniors who are able to

stay home but not able to cook for themselves — that we essentially provide supports to them.

We also provide, in our communities, the support for the First Nation support workers, which is funded by the department and augmented. Partnerships in that — trying to right size the services that were essentially left unresolved for many decades — and part of reconciliation as well in ensuring that we take good care of our seniors and care at the right place, at the right time, and without compromising them in any way.

I can go on until the end of my time in terms of speaking about the success and the accomplishments and why it is important.

The question was asked — and it's not so much a fully Health and Social Services responsibility; we look at the whole of government. We look at housing and we look at what was put into the budget over time. Again, \$5,833,000 in 2015-16 — and today we see a budget of \$9,863,000 to fund home and community supports.

Ms. McLeod: I didn't really get an answer to my question. Perhaps I need to ask this in a different way. How much money is in this year's budget, including this supplementary budget, to assist Yukoners with staying in their homes by way of snow-clearing from roofs or roads and other maintenance issues that they may have?

Hon. Ms. Frost: So, the question specific to the supplementary budget — whether we have funding in the supplementary budget for snow removal and such — I can tell the member opposite that the funding that was allocated in the mains and what was allocated for home and community supports was \$9,863,000 specific to the supplementary budget. As I go through the supplementary budget — and we look at ensuring supports for seniors and we look at ensuring that we provide supports through Yukon Housing Corporation for all of our seniors units that we have — ensuring that snow removal is done appropriately. Given the recent big snowfall, we had some challenges. Granted, we took every effort to ensure that we had quick supports, and I just want to thank members who went out there and supported the seniors.

Meanwhile, we have in our budget \$9 million — almost \$10 million — that is intended to support seniors. Specific to snow removal and yard work, it doesn't really fall under the Health budget. We're here, under Health, to provide essential services — health services — to our clients, but we work with our partners to ensure that the seniors are supported to age well at home, meaning that we put the resources into Yukon Housing Corporation to make sure their home is accessible — mobility accessible. If it is in an indigenous community, then we work with the First Nation.

The objective of the Health budget and the supplementary budget is to ensure that we support our non-governmental organizations that provide the non-health-like services. If there is a gap somewhere that we are not aware of and if there is a need for Health to do a further review of its budget to look at snow removal and yard work — would one capture that to say that it's a Health responsibility? Perhaps we need to have a further look at what "health" covers. Our main objective is

ensuring that we provide the essential services as they relate specifically to the Health and Social Services mandate.

We also know that the Yukon Council on Aging — there are some supports and some matching services that allow seniors to access some resources as well. There are further supports out there. I would be happy to get that out if there are any concerns coming from the seniors community.

Ms. McLeod: Still no answer — the minister stood on her feet here today and said that she had worked out a deal with Yukon Housing Corporation, which she is the minister of, to get some of these services out to our older Yukoners, but clearly there is a miscommunication somewhere between those two ministers.

I'm going to move on since we have almost no time.

We know that there is a shortage of mental health services and that there are people on wait-lists for appointments. In the past, the Yukon has allowed US-trained and US-licensed psychiatrists to practise under a special licence. We know that at least one US-trained and US-licensed psychiatrist has contacted the government expressing a desire to provide services here. Can the minister tell us why the government is not taking steps to help this psychiatrist to provide needed services in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Those are very interesting comments from the Member for Watson Lake with respect to not answering the question. I have answered the question. As Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I have responded under that file as well. My responsibility and mandate as the Health and Social Services minister and the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing is to look at ensuring that both departments work fluidly together to address and augment one another. Why would we work in silos as we have seen historically? So, I will let you do your thing over at the Yukon Housing Corporation and don't talk about housing with social supports or housing with senior supports or even talk about aging in place in the modern context of having a senior age well in their own community and in their own home. That is very interesting.

I am certainly happy to advise Yukoners that all of the supports — I am very honoured and happy to say that we have had significant dialogue with seniors. I have met with them multiple times. I have spoken to the communities. We made efforts around aging in place.

I see that the Member for Kluane may have some questions as well, so I will take those questions later. For now, I think that the Member for Watson Lake has some specific questions that she wants to ask about what we are doing for snow removal. What are we doing for yard work? I tried to provide a narrative that might resonate for the member with respect to how important it is to work through the departments and ensure that we work with our NGO communities.

With regard to the question around US psychiatrists and whether or not we are going to give an exemption to a US psychiatrist who wants to work here in Yukon — give that individual a licence to practise in Yukon — as we look at the Health and Social Services budget and we look at the service delivery model and services here in Yukon, I am happy to say

that, most recently, we were able to acquire the services of four psychiatrists here in the Yukon.

Historically, that was not here in the Yukon. This is brand new, by the way. These are new services that didn't exist previously, much like the mental wellness hubs are new, the supports and counsellors in each one of the communities are new, and the child psychologists are new. The services that we provide in the hubs in four communities — in fact, there is one in the community of the Member for Watson Lake — are to provide direct services to the community members there and, of course, in the surrounding region.

The question around the psychiatrists — in the supplementary budget, the supports that we have requested in the supplementary budget for services were actually related to mental wellness supports, and that was to ensure that we provided additional resources and supports to our mental wellness hubs so that we can essentially provide virtual care. Because of COVID restrictions, we are not able to provide in-person supports.

The member opposite is asking a question that is outside of the parameters of the supplementary, but to appease the member opposite, the reason that an exemption is not granted for a psychiatrist from the United States to work here in Yukon is because we currently have sufficient psychiatrists in the Yukon to provide services to the Yukon, plus we have the mental wellness hubs. We have many services.

The member finds it humorous.

I just want to say that psychiatric services have now been expanded in the Yukon — for over 18 months. With 17 psychiatrists — local and visiting — currently registered all this time, we have not identified a need for an additional visiting psychiatrist. We have sufficient services here now and therefore cannot justify initiating a process of requesting the Yukon Medical Association to issue a special licence to an out-of-country physician — a psychiatrist. So, those are the parameters within which we work, and signing off on another psychiatrist would not add value. We have 17 currently; we have four within Health and Social Services who we finance and support, plus we have the mental wellness hubs across the Yukon that support Yukoners, broadly speaking.

Ms. White: Just to follow up where I left off on December 10, I was asking about the death of children in the care of Family and Children's Services. More to the point, I just wanted to know if the funeral costs would be covered by the Department of Health and Social Services if a young person, up to the age of 24 who had been under the care of government, passed.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Great question — thank you for that. For funeral costs associated with youth who are in care, my understanding is that the costs are covered by the department for children who are in care. Now that we've made some new rulings around supporting youth who age out of care and who are still part of our system, the director has the discretion to cover those funeral costs. We've done that recently. But also, keeping in mind that maybe 80 to 90 percent of the children who are in care are indigenous children who come from one of our communities — when one of those children should pass on,

then the First Nation covers the costs. It's their customary practice to cover all funeral expenses, and the department would work with the child's family or the child's First Nation and look at working through NIHB, which would cover \$1,000 of those expenses.

We have to work with our partners to make sure that we don't put any undue burden on any of the families that maximize the services that are there.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that answer. It is an exceptional situation, but it's about trying to remove as much stress as possible while supporting those folks through that loss. I just wanted to make sure that we could have it there so that it was more understood.

I have a question about social assistance payments. I am going to use an example and hope that the minister can help me understand this. If a person collects social assistance and it goes into one bank account — because now they are able to get it directly deposited, which is fantastic — and they take out, say, \$300 from that amount and put it in a separate bank account, why is that money viewed as a gift and then used in the calculation of the next social assistance payment?

Hon. Ms. Frost: That is a great question. I honestly don't know the answer. I will certainly endeavour to get back to the member opposite with regard to income support and how it is calculated from month to month. It is a great question, so thank you. I will get back on that one.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. That would be really helpful as I am trying to support someone through an appeal process right now, but when they move money from one account to another and then it is viewed as a gift, they are being penalized and it makes you ask why. I thank the minister for that.

Moving right along, what kind of outreach has the department done for doctors as far as CGM coverage? In some cases, people are having quite an easy time applying, then being accepted, and being able to get their CGM within a short amount of time, whereas at other times there are multiple follow-ups, multiple weeks, and long delays in the process. What kind of outreach has the government done toward medical professionals, assuring them that the CGMs are now covered and making that as easy as possible?

Hon. Ms. Frost: So, with the recent announcement of the supports for constant glucose monitoring and flash monitoring covering adults and youth, which is very exciting — it is a new initiative that was recently announced through this government. It is a huge opportunity for quality of life for Yukoners. It is the only jurisdiction in the country that is funding this, which is absolutely amazing.

Early in my mandate, I sat with — I have family members who are diabetics as well, and it makes it very difficult when you are seeing challenges. You want to make life easier. In particular, the emphasis really early on, as I started meeting with the families, was to say, "What are your concerns? What recommendations would you have? What options are there out there?" That has resulted in this really great announcement. That announcement, I think, is a new endeavour. We wanted to ensure that we communicated this broadly to all of the clients

that were T1D recipients and that they were well-supported and notified that this is available and here is where they should go to get it. Of course, you need to get into your physician.

So, the member opposite is absolutely correct in that insured health — and perhaps the physician's turnaround time is not always so quick and the services are not there. A bit more communication needs to happen. We have communicated with the Yukon Medical Association about the changes to the program coverage.

How it works is that the patient presents to the physician and gets a referral. The physician has to make the referral. Some are quicker than others, so there have been some delays. We will certainly need to do more work on that. I appreciate the member opposite asking the question. Just for the record, as of today, we have had 20 people who have been referred, which is a significant uptake, which is really great.

I'm sure that there are others. We want to try to get the message out as much as we can and as broadly as we can so that every person who wants or needs the devices can have the devices. We also need to communicate and ensure that the physicians are not lagging and that the turnaround is much faster and consistent across the board. Thank you for the question.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. I appreciate that, for folks with type 1 diabetes, life has just become substantially easier and we should celebrate that — first jurisdiction in Canada, absolutely.

In June of this year, the press release says: "Disability Services families to receive additional support". I wanted to know how the department decided that it would be based on families as opposed to individual children. If you have three children with complex disabilities and you get \$400 a month, it means that you're trying to support those kids with — separating that \$400. If you're a family with one child with a disability and you get \$400 a month, it's easy to see where that goes.

How did the department decide that it was supporting families as opposed to individual children?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thanks for the question. It is a great question. Of course, as we were in the middle of COVID, we saw that there were some barriers. The federal government made an announcement that they would fund individuals for the disability services additional supports as a result of COVID. Here in the Yukon, we saw — exactly as the member opposite noted — that, during the response to COVID, some concerns that were brought to our attention around family groups. In an effort to ease the disproportionate impact felt by individuals with disabilities, we also had to look at family groups. Additional temporary funding was provided automatically in a one-time payment to all families and caregivers of disability services clients. The feedback from families for this initiative was overwhelmingly positive.

The funding is available to support family-related costs for such things as housekeeping, childcare, respite, or specialized equipment. I want to just emphasize that, really, the support as we look at — when we were in the middle of COVID, families had additional stressors. Young adults or children were no

longer in their care facilities; they were now at home with mom and dad. That burden of 24/7 care was acknowledged by families and by the department.

We had to come up with a way to support them, so augmenting and looking at the federal program that didn't provide supports there, we decided to put in additional support to look at respite care, which is primarily for mental wellness and supports for the families. At the same time, we had to provide some cleaning services and extra supports because the families are now caring for a disabled child or adult 24/7. This meant that they didn't have a lot of free time or flexibility in their schedule.

Disability services will continue to work with all families to identify and support their needs going forward. Every exercise that we go through and that we have learned from during COVID will help us to better serve Yukoners so that collaborate care models and additional supports that are required will only lead us to a better Yukon, to better programs, to better collaborate care models, and better health care programs for all Yukoners, much like we learned from the health care system IHealth, which links to Panorama, which then links to COVID vaccinations, tracking, monitoring, and documenting.

Everything that we've put in the supplementary budget and are debating today is intended to provide supports, but it doesn't end once COVID ends. Good lessons that we've learned will carry us into the future so that we have a better Yukon and we have a system. All of this will lead well into *Putting People First*. It will lead well into our polyclinics, our expanded clinics, our communities, and our nurse practitioner models. All of the efforts that we put in during this time — this is no different — are best practices and best lessons learned.

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Frost that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Streicker 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

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

**Written notice was given of the following motion
December 14, 2020:**

Motion No. 387

Re: Yukon Energy Corporation's *10-year Renewable Electricity Plan Technical Report* (Adel)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 80

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, December 15, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, December 15, 2020 — 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: I would like everyone please to welcome today — je vous présente: Émilie Dory, directrice, Les EssentiElles; Maryne Dumaine, présidente, Les EssentiElles; Nancy Power, Communications and Policy manager — pour la direction des services en français — et André Bourcier, directeur, direction des services en français.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Les EssentiElles 25th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Aujourd'hui, je rends hommage à l'organisme francophone Les EssentiElles, qui célèbre ses 25 ans d'existence cette année.

Cet organisme engagé et inclusif offre une multitude de programmes et de services pour aider les femmes et les personnes trans ou non-binaire du Yukon à s'épanouir au quotidien.

Les EssentiElles portent bien leur nom. Elles font un travail indispensable pour faire avancer la justice sociale et le féminisme au territoire.

En plus de promouvoir l'inclusion et l'égalité de tous, elles travaillent à abolir des problèmes de société comme les inégalités économiques, la violence fondée sur le genre, ainsi que les agressions sexualisées. L'implication sociale des EssentiElles se traduit également auprès des jeunes familles yukonnaises. Avec le programme Mamans, papas et bébés en santé, les nouveaux parents bénéficient de ressources et services gratuits pour préparer l'arrivée des nouveau-nés.

La mission des EssentiElles va jusque dans nos écoles. Elles livrent des cours sur l'éducation sexuelle et le féminisme à nos élèves francophones et d'immersion. Les EssentiElles contribuent ainsi à former une jeunesse tolérante et informée. En cherchant à abolir les discriminations, elles participent à créer un territoire plus sécuritaire pour tous les Yukonnaises et les Yukonnais.

Du 25 novembre au 10 décembre dernier, elles ont contribué à l'initiative internationale Seize jours d'activisme pour mettre fin à la violence basée sur le genre.

Je les félicite pour cette campagne de sensibilisation menée avec succès malgré les défis de la COVID-19. Je salue les

EssentiElles pour 25 ans de soutien et d'action, ainsi que pour l'inauguration récente de leurs nouveaux locaux au centre-ville de Whitehorse.

I congratulate Les EssentiElles for 25 years of support and activism as well as for the recent opening of their new location in downtown Whitehorse.

Merci à la présidente sortante, Jocelyne Isabelle, ainsi qu'aux membres du conseil d'administration pour votre leadership, et bienvenue à la nouvelle présidente.

Thank you to outgoing president Jocelyne Isabelle and the entire board of directors for their leadership, and welcome to the new president incoming.

Merci aussi à Émilie Dory, au personnel et aux bénévoles de l'organisme pour votre dévouement.

Thank you to Émilie Dory, all the staff and volunteers for working so hard every day.

Au cours des 25 dernières années, vous avez contribué à faire du Yukon un endroit inclusif et bienveillant, où toutes ont une chance égale de réaliser leur plein potentiel.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I will do mine in English, but congratulations — that was well done.

I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Les EssentiElles as they celebrate their 25th anniversary. Since 1995, their mandate is to support and advocate on behalf of francophone women, youth, and families and to build awareness around a number of community-based issues. The many programs include, but are not limited to, the well-being of women and encouraging a healthy quality of life among all francophone Yukoners. It has many well-thought-out and deliverable products. There are education and youth programs that educate youth about sexuality, the feminist movement, and non-traditional professions for young women, and there are social justice programs to prevent and raise awareness of violence against women and to fight poverty. As well, workshops and themes of elder abuse and child abuse have been organized. These issues affect all walks of our society and are not owned by any one race or culture.

As with other minority groups, they strive for representation and promote the rights and interests of francophone women in Yukon.

Les EssentiElles provides support to many during the holiday season. We commend them for gathering gifts and raising funds to help those in need. Their flagship program helps new parents with various workshops and assistance. The pandemic has forced changes and adaptation, such as delivery of meals now boxed and handed out as opposed to in-house dining.

Shortly after its formation, from 1996 to 2001, Commissioner Angélique Bernard worked as a development officer with Les EssentiElles and was one of the first employees. As with many who just came for a short period, Yukon caught her spirit and she stayed. Today we are honoured to have this lovely francophone woman represent all Yukoners. Well done, Madam.

We would like to commend this organization for their incredible dedication to our vibrant francophone community. Congratulations on moving into your new office space and know that this will only enhance what you have already achieved. Good works should be lauded, especially at the giving time of the Christmas season. The joy of sharing and helping others is what Les EssentiElles does, and it does it well.

Thank you Émilie Dory, executive director, all the staff, and those who have made Les EssentiElles a vital and strong organization within our community. It will be a quieter holiday for many of us. Take care of each other, and best wishes.

Applause

Ms. White: Ça me fait plaisir de prendre la parole pour souligner les 25 ans de l'organisme les EssentiElles. Je veux saluer le travail de nombreuses femmes qui ont contribué au fil des ans à faire de cette organisation un pilier des communautés francophones et féministes du Yukon.

Les valeurs de féminisme, d'autonomisation, d'ouverture et d'inclusion sont au cœur de toutes les actions des Essentielles.

Les Essentielles portent la voix collective des femmes francophones du Yukon et travaillent activement à améliorer leurs conditions de vie, et je dirais même les conditions de vie de l'ensemble des Yukonnais parce qu'une société plus égalitaire bénéficie à tous et toutes.

Le travail des Essentielles est vaste et comprend l'organisation d'activités sociales, les campagnes de sensibilisation, la représentation des événements artistiques, et un programme d'appui aux jeunes familles pour ne donner que quelques exemples. Mais par-dessus tout, Les EssentiElles, c'est une connexion et un sens de communauté pour les femmes francophones.

Alors, pour tout votre travail, je tiens à remercier celles qui, hier comme aujourd'hui, ont contribué à faire des EssentiElles une histoire à succès. Tout particulièrement, merci à Maryne, Julie, Isabelle, Jocelyne, Mélodie, Émilie, et Camille qui composent le conseil d'administration et le personnel des EssentiElles cette année.

Applause

In recognition of Salvation Army Christmas kettle campaign

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the House to pay tribute to the Salvation Army in support of their annual Christmas kettle campaign. For more than 100 years, the annual Christmas kettle campaign has been an easy way for people to contribute as little or as much as they are able to through the Christmas kettles positioned throughout the community. Money raised goes directly to support local programs and organizations through the work of the Salvation Army volunteers.

This year has posed many challenges for many organizations throughout our community. Fundraising in a pandemic has proven to be difficult. Organizations are seeing a major reduction in donations, and fewer volunteers are able to help. These challenges are affected in this year's Christmas

kettle campaign. There are restrictions on how local kettles are deployed. In response to COVID-19-related concerns, the Salvation Army has found options to reduce the risk of transmission. Kettle locations will be sanitized and, in keeping with the guidelines, there are devices at a couple of the kettles where people can tap their cards to donate.

This season, the Salvation Army has also set up a virtual kettle for those who may prefer to donate online. Your donation will help vulnerable people in our communities during this Christmas season and throughout the year. By filling the virtual kettle, you can help to restore hope and dignity to those most in need.

This year, the Salvation Army will be donating a portion of their funds collected during the kettle campaign to the Share the Spirit Yukon organization by the Whitehorse Firefighters Charitable Society. The program has grown immensely over the last five years. Share the Spirit Yukon has become the biggest geographic Christmas support program in Canada, and here it is covering communities across the territory. They have managed to cover over 2,000 kilometres and 11 Yukon communities, delivering gifts and food to 460 families before Christmas. It takes a lot of elves to organize and execute the delivery of all the gifts, working closely with Santa Claus to ensure that all goes smoothly — no doubt, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the Whitehorse Firefighters Charitable Society for your work year after year, to the many donors throughout the community, and, of course, all of the volunteer elves for giving their time and energy to the program. Again, most importantly, we want to thank all those who volunteer with the Salvation Army on their annual kettle campaign and all those who donate.

If you are able, please visit the kettle this year or visit the Salvation Army website to make a donation online to help fill their virtual kettle.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the Yukon Energy Corporation's *10-Year Renewable Electricity Plan Technical Report*.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table, first of all, a letter to the Minister of Community Services, dated December 21, 2018, regarding improving support for Yukon's EMS volunteers. I am also tabling one from February 19, 2019, regarding EMS, as well as a reply from the Minister of Community Services dated March 27, 2019, regarding EMS.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling further statistical analysis of the Legislative Assembly comparing this Assembly with the 33rd Assembly.

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

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide the following information:

- (1) the average wait time to see a psychiatrist in the Yukon;
- (2) the number of patients who are currently waiting to see a psychiatrist; and
- (3) a list of who she has consulted with, if anyone, before deciding that the Yukon doesn't need another psychiatrist.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
 Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon Energy Corporation grid-scale battery renewable electricity project

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to share that the Yukon Energy Corporation has advanced another renewable electricity project in Yukon — a grid-scale battery in Whitehorse.

The new seven-megawatt battery is a critical investment in Yukon Energy's ability to meet the growing demand for electricity and to secure Yukon's energy future. The battery will help maximize the use of renewable electricity to meet peak demands for power, burn less diesel fuel, and improve the reliability of our grid. The battery will also provide stability to the grid as new intermittent renewables are added. It is a critical building block to support future renewable electricity projects in the territory and Yukon Energy's goal of generating an average of 97-percent renewable electricity by 2030.

Today, Yukon Energy Corporation announced that it has issued the first stage of a two-stage competitive procurement process for a battery vendor. This process invites battery vendors from around the world to take part in this exciting chapter of Yukon's history. Kicking off the competitive procurement process for the battery is a critical milestone for this project.

When complete in 2022, Yukon Energy's battery in Whitehorse will be the largest grid-scale battery in the north and one of the largest in Canada. A great deal of work has gone into the project to date, including early engagement with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council. This past fall, Yukon Energy also set out to gather public feedback about the battery and the three sites being considered for the project. I am happy to share with members of the House that, based on the public feedback received, Yukon Energy Corporation and Kwanlin Dün First Nation have decided to remove the proposed site on the north Klondike Highway from consideration. The final site for the battery is expected to be announced once lease terms have been finalized.

I would like to recognize and thank Yukon Energy Corporation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council for working together to advance this very important project. I would also like to recognize and thank the Government of Canada which, through the green infrastructure stream of the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan, is helping to fund this project. Their investment of \$16.5 million in the battery helps cut the cost of this project by about half and helps the Yukon get one step closer to meeting our emission reduction targets.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to the battery storage project today. I do have a couple of questions for the minister. He announced that the government has issued the first stage of the competitive procurement process for the battery project, so we're curious if the new First Nation procurement policy will apply to this.

With respect to the battery project, I also had some questions about the budget for it. On November 20, 2018, the minister told this Legislature that the cost of the battery project would be \$19 million. A September 5, 2019, press release from the Government of Yukon says that the total cost of the battery will be \$25 million. However, the general rate application that the Yukon Energy Corporation submitted to the Yukon Utilities Board last month states that the total cost of the project has now gone overbudget to \$29.4 million.

Finally, today the minister, at the end of his statement, said that the federal investment of \$16.5 million cuts the cost of this project in half. Perhaps the minister misspoke, but that would mean that the total cost of the project is actually \$33 million, not the \$29.4 million that the corporation has included in its submission to the regulator. Hopefully, the minister gets a chance to clarify that for us in his response.

Does the general rate application to the Yukon Utilities Board underestimate the total cost of the project by several million dollars? Or was he wrong in his earlier remarks?

In any event, it appears that the project is now significantly overbudget from original estimates. Why has the project gone almost \$10 million or more overbudget from what the minister told us two years ago and over \$4 million overbudget from what the minister told us over a year and a half ago?

I also have a question with respect to timelines. The 2017-18 general rate application states that construction and commissioning of the battery's storage was supposed to start in 2019. In today's ministerial statement, the minister stated that the project will be complete in 2022 — three years late from the original forecast. When will there be an announcement on the final location? How are negotiations going with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council? When does the minister anticipate a submission going toward YESAB?

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, when we look toward a greener and more environmentally conscious future, I, like many others, believe that the future lies with technology.

A new report co-authored by energy expert Tony Seba predicts that the combination of solar and wind energy, with batteries, could undercut and disrupt the existing global energy

system of what they call the “cheapest power available” over the next decade. Seba and co-author Adam Dorr released their report *Rethinking Energy 2020-2030 100% Solar, Wind, and Batteries is Just the Beginning*. Their independent think-tank RethinkX uses data to analyze and forecast the scale and speed to technology-driven disruption and the implications that these disruptions have on society. They believe that, with the cost reduction and proficiency increases in solar power, wind power, and lithium ion battery energy storage technologies, these three key technologies together have the potential to have the fastest, deepest, and most profound disruption of the energy sector in over 100 years.

Change is uncomfortable, and it can even be intimidating. When we look at expanding Yukon’s energy grid and moving away from what we know — hydro and fossil-fuel generation — to what we know less, well, this change can be uncomfortable.

Installing a lithium battery to our grid isn’t about storing weeks or even days of energy. It’s about storing enough energy to bridge temporary gaps. When planning for the location of this battery asset, we believe that effects on the individuals and the environment should be considered. We appreciate that the north Klondike Highway option has been taken off the table. We understand hydro generation and we understand fossil-fuel generation. As we better incorporate our budding solar knowledge into a mixed set that includes what we know and what we are learning, the future is very bright. So, I look forward to the day when we have a combination of hydro, wind, solar, and storage solutions that displace our dependence on fossil-fuel generation to bridge any energy shortage that we may face.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the opposition. I’m not shocked at the tone from the Official Opposition. I think there is going to be great opportunity today when we have the president of the Yukon Energy Corporation as well as the president of the Yukon Development Corporation here with us. We’re going to have an opportunity to really demystify some of the misinformation that we’ve heard over the last 40-plus days here concerning generation or some of the backup generators that we’ve rented — why we rented them, our plan going forward.

This particular theme of misinformation — we’ve seen it of course throughout the last 40-plus days — whether it has been attacks on the Minister of Health concerning the good work that she has been doing — and the data shows that we’ve been making the right decisions — myself working with the Minister of Tourism on putting programs out — again, being attacked on those programs — again, those programs being very effective — then the whole energy file.

I think today we’re going to have a real opportunity. We’re looking for good questions there. Concerning a couple of points that were made, we can clarify today with the presidents. Usually, there’s a procurement policy that’s used by Yukon Energy that is separate from government, but we’ll talk to the folks who lead that corporation. We’ll talk about pricing and what has happened in the battery market, what the demands

have been like, and what that has done to pricing. We’ll find out again. Again, as we move through this process and we learn more — this is something that’s very new technology — I’ll leave it at that without going into the other pieces on long remarks.

I appreciate the Leader of the Third Party and her comments. I mean, inevitably, this is a building block. If you want to have wind, you want to have solar, you want to maximize the use of it, you want to be able to store it because that’s intermittent power and this is a key to all of that work. First there was the IPP that we did and then we have moved into this. So, I appreciate the support.

Our government is very pleased to announce progress on another renewable electricity project — a grid-scale battery. The new seven-megawatt battery is critical to investment in Yukon Energy’s ability to meet our growing demands for electricity and to secure Yukon Energy’s — just to think about the size of this, Mr. Speaker, the battery energy storage system is expected to be about the same width and half the length of a CFL football field and the height of two people — just to give you a sense. We’ll have an opportunity to find out when the YESAB application goes in, but I think that will probably be after we actually source the battery that we’re looking to use. The battery will help maximize the use of renewable electricity and meet peak demands for power, burn less diesel fuel, and improve the reliability of our grid. The battery is a key project in the corporation’s 10-year plan, which we have tabled today — just a fantastic plan that really has a road map on how we are moving toward a clean energy future.

Again, as I noted earlier, this is a two-stage competitive procurement process for a battery vendor. When complete, Yukon Energy’s battery in Whitehorse will be the largest grid-scale battery in the north and one of the largest in the country. I feel that, from what I have heard, negotiations are going well, as I was asked. I want to thank Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta’an Kwäch’än Council for their work on this particular process. I think that what we have said is that we want to make sure that it is finalized, and then we can announce the location for this very exciting project.

Again, I urge media and others today to please take a listen to some of the comments and questions that will happen today at 3:30 p.m., because it really gives an opportunity for the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation to talk about the multitude of projects that we are working with First Nations on out in the communities and other private sector players, as well as the portfolio that is being enhanced by Yukon Energy Corporation itself.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Crime rate statistics

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, according to the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, Yukon’s 2019 police-reported crime rate increased by over 21 percent, compared to the previous year. As a result, Yukon’s crime rate is now the third-highest in the country.

Will the government give the RCMP increased resources to help address this surge in crime?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the question is an important one for Yukoners. I think that the RCMP resources question and the connection to Yukon crime rates aren't exactly matched, but they are an important response to Yukon's safety.

The Department of Justice works very closely with the RCMP to ensure professional, efficient, and effective territorial policing services that represent a worthwhile investment and promote the principles of public trust, transparency, and accountability. Through significant ongoing investments in police resources by the Government of Yukon, the territory has one of the highest police-per-capita ratios in Canada, averaging one RCMP member for 306 people.

Through our partnership with the RCMP, our multi-year financial plan is updated on an annual basis, and the five-year plan highlights the RCMP's forecasts related to the human resources requests, funding requirements, and capital planning here in the territory.

Ms. Van Bibber: The crime statistics indicate that reported sexual assault crime has increased by 95 percent in just a couple of years. What actions has the government taken to address the issue of sexual assault in the territory?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, in March of 2020, the sexualized assault response team was implemented in Whitehorse with expanded and improved services available to victims of sexualized assault, including emotional, medical, and legal supports. Key components of SART include: a 24-hour confidential toll-free Yukon-wide support line for all victims of sexualized assault; victim support workers available for after-hours support on weekends; and a roster of on-call physicians specifically trained to support victims of sexualized assault. All SART agencies worked closely together to ensure that services continued throughout the pandemic as well, with some modifications where necessary to accommodate the public health measures.

This has taken a tremendous amount of one-government approach efforts. We have worked closely with Justice, Health and Social Services, and our community partners to ensure that we have complete wraparound services. Last week, we also saw the release of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-spirit+ strategy that will go a long way to addressing sexualized assault and violence against women in our north.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, drug-related violations have also increased by over 42 percent in the last couple of years. Additionally, as we have discussed, several elements of criminal and violent activities have increased over the years. Yukon has, again, the third-highest crime rate in the country. More needs to be done.

When will the government take action to address these drug-related violations?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the RCMP provide an amazing service here in the territory to Yukoners. We have a territorial policing agreement that funds the RCMP as our police service here in the territory.

They have been working extremely hard with respect to targeting specific types of crimes — as those mentioned by the member opposite. They have participated in our development of the sexualized assault response team. They have major crime units and they have a historical case unit that are funded in partnership with the Yukon government for the purposes of investigating crime, investigating serious crime, and making sure that the streets of the Yukon are safe.

There are additional programs and policies coming through the federal RCMP. There are national policing priorities as well as our local policing priorities. As a matter of fact, I was on a call this morning where police services and policing priorities — in particular, indigenous policing priorities — were a topic with ministers from across the country. The opportunity for the national police service and for the Yukon RCMP to serve our community well is here and supported by this government.

Question re: Emergency services in communities

Mr. Cathers: In most Yukon communities for both fire protection and emergency medical services, we depend on volunteers. They need the government to provide the proper equipment and training. A few days ago, we were reminded of what can happen when there are gaps in emergency services when a Keno City hotel was destroyed in a fire. As reported by CBC this morning, some community residents are now calling for a public inquiry into the state of fire protection. The residents state that the fire truck was removed from the community without notice in April 2019.

Will the Minister of Community Services tell us his response to these reports?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would just like to begin by expressing our sadness about the fire in Keno and just that we are happy that no one was hurt. We are just thankful that there wasn't any injury or loss of life.

I said yesterday in this House — and I will say it again — that I am perfectly willing to work with the community of Keno and to talk with the folks there. They wrote a letter asking for us to get an independent investigation. I wrote back and said, "Yes, let's do that."

I also think it's important that we understand that, in order to have a volunteer fire department in our communities, we do need volunteers. I said yesterday and will say again that certainly we will support with equipment and with training, but we will need to have folks who are willing to step forward as volunteers in order for us to get a volunteer fire department — to make sure that, when people go and try to protect our lives and to serve us, they are able to do so in a safe way.

Mr. Cathers: In recent years, we've seen a growing problem in rural communities with gaps in fire protection and emergency medical services. Gaps in emergency service coverage are becoming more common. Service in some of our communities literally depends on a few dedicated people. Our volunteers cannot shoulder the burden alone. It is clear that government needs to do more to recruit volunteers and support them. Instead, we've seen government failing to ensure that volunteers have uniforms, not meeting training commitments,

taking the four-by-four ambulance away from Tagish EMS, and the list goes on.

Today I tabled letters that I wrote to the Minister of Community Services two years ago about this. One step that would help is being more open and sharing information about gaps in coverage.

Can the minister please tell us which fire halls managed by his department are currently not at operational status due to either a lack of equipment or a lack of volunteers?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'll note that I'm having a tough time hearing the member opposite, so I'm going to do my best to respond, but it's challenging on some of the things.

First of all, I don't know of any volunteer fire hall where the problem is lack of equipment. I will certainly check in with the branch to make sure that I'm correct with that statement.

There are places — I mentioned yesterday in the Legislature. Pelly has not had volunteers for some time, but recently, several volunteers stepped forward. We're working to get them trained up now.

So, there are challenges at all times. It's also true that some of our populations are aging. With that, we get people who retire from even the volunteer fire service and volunteer EMS, and that's a challenge.

We also know that nowadays we have to put in place more rigorous training requirements because safety is so paramount. If people are doing us the great service of coming forward to support and keep our communities safe, we must also support them and make sure that they're going to be able to be safe.

I'll respond further in the final question.

Mr. Cathers: The Minister of Community Services has been in his role for four years. We've raised concerns with him on many occasions about the strain on our fire and EMS volunteers and have called on the government to do more to support our volunteers and to do a better job of ensuring that our rural communities have emergency service coverage. The minister keeps telling us how much he appreciates our volunteers, but talk is cheap, Mr. Speaker. We're looking for action.

Has the government now realized that they need to do more to support fire protection and EMS in rural Yukon? If so, can the minister tell me what he plans to do about it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I hope that I always show appreciation for all of these volunteers. I think that they deserve it from all of us.

Also, I have said many times and I will say again that I am happy to try to do more. I think that it is always important that we look at ourselves to make sure that we are doing all that we can and to assess the work that we are doing. So, I don't claim that there aren't places where we can be more supportive.

The member opposite, in his second question, asked me about the Tagish four-by-four. What I will say to the member opposite is that, in the background, I was getting correspondence from multiple folks from the Tagish fire hall saying yes to that piece of equipment and no to that piece of equipment. What we really want to do is follow the lead of our communities and try to support them in the way that they direct,

but it isn't always so straightforward with respect to which is the best piece of equipment.

What I will say is that I don't think equipment or training should be the barrier, and it is not, as far as I understand. Right now, what we need to do is to support our volunteers, and the best way that I can do that is to say thank you to all those volunteers who are working to keep our communities safe. So, thank you to them, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Wage top-up program

Ms. White: Canada is funding a wage top-up program for essential front-line workers who make less than \$20 an hour, but the program has to be accessed by employers, which means that workers are penalized if their boss doesn't apply. I have raised this concern with the minister before, but he dismissed the concern and questioned if there was a problem at all.

So, last week, I asked on Facebook — for anyone who didn't get the benefit. With a single Facebook post, over a dozen employees and even one employer reached out. I directed them to contact their employer or the department, but many employees indicated that they already did and that their employer refused to apply.

So, will the minister do what is right and ensure that essential workers can access the wage top-up program that they deserve, even if their employer doesn't apply on their behalf?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I appreciate the efforts of the member opposite. Again, I urge anyone who is having challenges with this particular program or with their employers to reach out to the department. As I offered before, we can do this in an anonymous fashion. We spoke about this in the House at length. I appreciate that there were some remarks on social media that the Leader of the Third Party received. I think that what we really need to do is to have those individuals reach out.

I think I heard that this happened last week. I will check with the officials once we conclude Question Period today. I have not heard of any updated information where folks have reached out. I am not saying that this hasn't occurred, but in my bilateral meetings where I am updated on all these programs on a weekly basis, there was no new information that individuals were frustrated with not being able to have their employers reach in and use that program.

I will endeavour to get some information from the department, and I urge the member opposite, if she is talking to folks, to have them reach out.

Ms. White: I have. What the minister doesn't seem to understand is that, if a dozen people contact me because of a single social media post, there are likely many more essential workers out there who have not received the benefit that they deserve. The Government of Canada has allocated over \$7 million to Yukon for this program. The latest available figures show that Yukon has so far left \$3 million on the table. It should be the minister's top priority to make sure that any essential front-line worker who has been excluded from the program through no fault of their own receives this benefit. Instead, the minister is standing in this House and denying that the problem even exists.

What is the minister's advice to a worker who has approached their employer and the department but still can't get the wage top-up because their employer won't apply?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to set the record straight. We received the money from the federal government for this particular program and put a particular cashflow in place, which then, of course, wasn't as utilized to the level it could have been. We went back and looked at the best way to maximize the amount of money that we still had in place based on the top-up up to \$20 — the \$4 top-up — and then projected that we would max that out and use it to the best of its ability. Money that might have been on the table is now the money that we are using to extend this particular program.

Again, I have to say for the record that the only person whom I have heard from about problems with the program is the Leader of the Third Party. What would I say to her question? I would say, as I said in the press conference and as I have said here in debate, that if folks want support or for us to lean in, please reach out to the office. They can approach us as they wish. We will reach out to particular employers. Maybe they need more information. Maybe they were concerned about some of the costs that would be incurred in providing this program. We can let them know that we have upped it from \$50 to \$100 per employee. Again, we are here to help, but anecdotal doesn't help — we need the data.

Ms. White: Sadly, the minister is trying to make this about me, but it's not. It's about his program that is not working for workers, yet he still refuses to fix it. I have absolutely zero doubt that the minister's department is full of competent, hard-working people who can find a fix to this problem. The only thing missing here is the political will and leadership by this minister. We are not asking him to change the program. It's working for many people and that is great, but out of fairness to essential front-line workers, there has to be a way to access the wage top-up for those whose employers are not cooperating. It makes no sense to penalize workers for something that they have no control over.

Will the minister do the right thing for essential workers and direct his department to create an avenue for essential workers to access the wage top-up when their employer will not apply?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It's always interesting when the question that is posed starts off by saying that I'm making it about the member opposite, and then you get a personal jab with the next sentence.

We have had the ability to provide a tremendous amount of opportunities for folks to be respected for the work that they're doing by giving them that top-up. What we get today is the member opposite saying that I'm lacking leadership but, in response, it's: "I got a note on Facebook; you need to change your program." I need more than that. I think that anyone would say —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Fantastic — the member opposite said that it's coming, so we'll leave it for today. We will get that information and then we will proceed.

Question re: Early learning and childcare programs

Mr. Kent: Access to quality, well-designed early childhood education programs enhances the academic and socio-economic outcomes of young children. For children, access to such programs can lead to increased earnings and better health and social behaviour as adults. It also helps to mitigate early developmental challenges.

One way to ensure that these programs are well-designed is by assigning responsibility for young children to one department that combines policy-making, funding, and regulatory powers. It is clear that a single department with oversight for childcare as well as kindergarten and other Education-funded preschool programs is optimal.

Will the Minister of Health and Social Services commit to shifting early learning and childcare services from Health and Social Services to the Department of Education?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am always happy to rise to speak about children, particularly the early learning childcare program that we have here in the Yukon. It is an exceptional program that invests in children. Certainly, a priority of this government is ensuring high-quality childcare, early stages of children's learning and development, success in school — which contributes to productive adults and families — and supporting the whole family.

I'm very excited about the extension of the early learning childcare program. We've essentially negotiated a multilateral agreement with Canada. We are currently in negotiations. In fact, today we are having a further discussion to have a meeting with the federal minister to speak about the synergies between education and early learning — always of consideration for this side of the House — and efforts that we've already put in place. I'm happy to know that the Official Opposition is finally catching up and thinking about something that should have happened years ago. We're moving in that direction, and I'm very pleased about that.

Mr. Kent: So, the challenges of COVID-19 have certainly shone a light on some of the inadequacies of our current childcare model. Here's what the Yukon Child Care Board said in their report this fall — and I'll quote: "Very early on, ELCC was named an essential service, but not in the sense of early cognitive, motor, emotional and social development of children. Instead, it was frequently mentioned that child care is imperative to enabling parents, especially essential and critical service workers, to get to work. The development piece seemed to fall away leaving many that we spoke with feeling discouraged and under-appreciated."

Mr. Speaker, we believe that transferring childcare programming from Health and Social Services to Education would better entrench childcare in its rightful place as an important aspect of developing and educating our children. The minister, in her first response, indicated that this work is underway.

I'll ask her: When will the transfer from Health and Social Services to Education begin? When will Education fully take control of early learning and childcare?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We certainly recognize that high-quality early learning opportunities support improved long-term outcomes for children in all aspects of their education and development. That is absolutely key to a strong and vibrant Yukon.

You will know, Mr. Speaker, as will members opposite, that the independent expert panel in its final report, *Putting People First*, made recommendations with respect to the conversation that we are having now. The panel also recommended that authority over early learning transfer from Health and Social Services to Education. This is something that we have been talking about for quite some time. This will ensure that early learning services are coordinated at all levels, including the transition into preschool and primary school years.

The departments of Education and Health and Social Services are working collaboratively on an affordable childcare model for Yukon that will encompass early childhood learning and the importance of having a coordinated approach to those programs.

Mr. Kent: Perhaps the minister didn't hear the question, but what I asked was: When will the transfer from Health and Social Services to Education begin, and when will Education fully take control of early learning and childcare?

So, housing early childhood programming in the Health and Social Services department has not allowed early childhood learning to fully link with the education system and kindergarten.

In addition to hopefully being able to respond to that second question that I asked, I'm going to ask the minister as well: What steps will the government take to integrate early learning and childcare programs into the education system and to ensure that there is a seamless link from childcare to kindergarten?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to early learning childcare and the bilateral agreement with the federal government, the member opposite knows that the funding agreement generally ends at the end of March. In that time frame, we are working with the department to essentially transition.

We are collaboratively working also on an affordable childcare model for Yukon. That means considering, of course, the model of universal childcare. We are extremely pleased about the direction that we're going in. The renewal of the agreement carries forward a number of important initiatives to support Yukon families and childcare providers, increasing capacity for further education. We have integrated a K4 model. We continue to work with the Department of Education.

Most importantly, we have also integrated an initiative with the communities of Watson Lake and Dawson City on programs that were not supported historically. We're really excited about that initiative.

Some of the other things that we should speak about include the fact that we are now working with Yukon First Nations and stakeholders on implementing the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report and, of course, some of the recommendations that we received back from Yukoners.

Question re: Yukon First Nation procurement policy

Mr. Hassard: So, with respect to the First Nation procurement policy that the government announced last week, yesterday, when we asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works what consultation was done with the Yukon business community beforehand, the minister said — and I'll quote: "... we have also reached out and had a one-on-one meeting with businesses."

Can the minister tell this House how many businesses he or his department has had one-on-one meetings with before the policy was announced?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The First Nation procurement policy is the latest in a long line of procurement improvements that this government has implemented during its time in government. The procurement policy announced last Friday is the completion of a commitment to Yukon First Nations identified in the self-government agreements. These are legally binding agreements signed between the Yukon government and First Nation governments. I am going to repeat that — these are legally binding agreements signed between the Yukon government and First Nation governments.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, they didn't get done by previous governments. More than 25 years ago, the *Umbrella Final Agreement* identified this as a commitment. Every subsequent final agreement included this commitment. This was not a new concept by our government. It was a long-standing commitment that had not been achieved for decades.

This policy will strengthen Yukon companies in their bids for government contracts. It will work to keep dollars in the territory, and it will be for the benefit of Yukoners — all Yukoners — in the years to come.

I know that the member opposite is going to repeat his question, and I am happy to answer it in a rebuttal.

Mr. Hassard: It is pretty bad when the minister knows that I am going to have to repeat my question because he didn't answer it.

We are talking about the process here, and the minister has told us that he has reached out and had one-on-one meetings with businesses. I asked if he could tell us who those businesses were and how many of those businesses these meetings have taken place with. So, I guess, while he is on his feet answering that question — hopefully, this time — maybe he can tell us also if he consulted with the Yukon Contractors Association before this policy was announced.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will say — and I thank the member opposite for his question — that we know that this is a new approach for this government; it is a new approach for this territory. I understand that there are some jitters in the business community. That is one of the reasons why, when we approved the policy just last week — this Cabinet just approved the policy last week — the First Nations across the territory just endorsed the policy at the Yukon Forum on Friday, and as of Monday, the Department of Highways and Public Works was scheduling meetings with businesses.

That is after the policy had been implemented. However, we had spoken to the business community on this First Nation

procurement policy for more than a year. I have spoken to it at the various conferences of Highways and Public Works and reverse trade shows. I have been questioned on the policy here in the House.

Mr. Speaker, the Procurement Business Committee had detailed discussions about the policy in July and October. In October, the committee was provided with a summary of the actual policy, a presentation, and an opportunity to ask Procurement Support any questions they may have had. In October and November, we held several virtual information sessions for the business community. I am happy to go on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hassard: We certainly didn't hear how many businesses the minister had spoken to. We also didn't hear about the consultation with the Yukon Contractors Association, so hopefully, the next time he is on his feet, he can give us some clarity about that association.

Section 11 of the policy is called the "Bid Value Reductions". It states that a First Nation business could receive a reduction of up to 15 percent off the price of its bid on a competitive tender. From my understanding, this means that, on a project, one company can bid \$10 million and another could bid \$11.5 million, and even though the high bid is \$1.5 million more than the lower bid, the government could favour the more expensive bid.

Can the minister confirm if my understanding of this section of the procurement policy is, in fact, correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have a lot to say on this subject. I appreciate the member opposite continuing to ask questions because I have a lot of things to say. In October and November, we held several virtual information sessions for the business community, industry associations, and chambers of commerce. These sessions were well-attended and represented a variety of sectors.

Last week, Cabinet approved the policy, as I said. The policy was endorsed by all First Nations attending the Yukon Forum on Friday. We have staged the rollout of the policy to involve the business community. The full implementation of this policy will not happen until the end of April. That decision was taken for a very good reason. We wanted — after the policy was endorsed by Cabinet and the First Nations — to actually go out to the business community, and that is what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. I have had conversations with business leaders yesterday and today. The department itself has been speaking with business leaders and will continue to speak with them this week. In January, we are having public meetings on this policy. There will be lots of opportunity for conversation.

Mr. Speaker, this policy is going to provide a bulwark — a defence — for local companies to actually have some competitive advantages against Outside firms that do not have partnerships with Yukon First Nations. This is a great policy for the territory. It is going to improve the lives for all citizens in this territory.

May I remind the Leader of the Official Opposition that he said that the Teslin bridge did not get built in 2014 because they could not form the proper partnerships with First Nations.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the government private members to be called on Wednesday, December 16, 2020. They are: Motion No. 350, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, and Motion No. 387, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: The Government House Leader just called Motion No. 387 for debate tomorrow. I believe that may be in contravention of the Standing Orders, particularly in reference to Standing Order 19(f). That is, of course, because the subject matter of the motion is regarding Yukon Energy Corporation's *10-Year Renewable Electricity Plan Technical Report*. The plan mentioned in the motion is currently in a rate application that is in front of the Yukon Utilities Board which, as you know, is a quasi-judicial body. The application by Yukon Energy Corporation to the Yukon Utilities Board was made November 20, with a Yukon Utilities Board order regarding the process for public input on the rate application issued yesterday. The rate application does refer to the renewable energy report that is the subject matter of Motion No. 387.

I would also like to briefly quote the *Public Utilities Act* regarding this, in terms of the act, in section 52 — and I quote:

"Subject to the other provisions of this Act and the regulations and to the need to abide by the fundamental principles of justice, the board in respect to any inquiry or hearing

(a) has the exclusive jurisdiction and authority to determine any question of fact, law, or mixed fact and law required to be decided;

(b) may receive any evidence or other information that it considers appropriate, whether or not the evidence is given under oath or affirmation, and whether or not it would be admissible in a court of law;

(c) has the powers, privileges, and immunities of a board of inquiry under the *Public Inquiries Act*;

(d) may determine the persons to whom notice of the proceedings shall be given; and

(e) may determine its own procedures."

That, of course, is a reference from the statute from which the Yukon Utilities Board gets its authority, the *Public Utilities Act*.

It also notes in section 66 of the *Public Utilities Act* — and I quote: "Enforcement in the Supreme Court

"An order of the board becomes an order of the Supreme Court immediately on filing with the clerk of the court of a certified copy of the order, and the order may then be enforced in like manner as any order of the Supreme Court."

So, with regard to that, Mr. Speaker, as you'll be aware, the Annotated Standing Orders in explaining the application of

Standing Order 19(f) says — and I quote: “This convention was adopted to ensure that legislators did not exercise undue influence on legal proceedings.”

It is our concern that calling this motion for debate in the Assembly when, in fact, it is part of an active process in front of this quasi-judicial board scheduled for public hearings on January 8 may either interfere or have the appearance of interference by the Legislative Assembly with that quasi-judicial process.

Just in concluding my remarks, for your reference, Mr. Speaker, I will just cite briefly from the rate application made by Yukon Energy in November. The 2021 general rate application makes specific reference to the 10-year renewable energy project. On pages — including the example I have, supporting documents, tab 5, Capital Projects, page 526 makes specific reference to the 10-year renewable energy plan. There are also, throughout the rate application — although I will not take up your time with reading other references — a number of references regarding specific projects that are laid out in the 10-year energy plan.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I will briefly reference the order issued by the Yukon Utilities Board yesterday, noting:

“NOW THEREFORE, the Board orders that: 1. YEC will hold a public workshop on the Application on Friday, January 8, 2021, at 1:00 p.m. at a location in Whitehorse, Yukon, in a format to be determined by YEC; 2. Persons intending to intervene in the proceeding must register in writing with the Board’s Executive Secretary by no later than Wednesday, December 30, 2020, indicating the nature of their interest and the issues that they will address or that are of interest to them in relation to the Application.”

It also notes above in that order, which is Board Order 2020-04: “WHEREAS: A. On November 20, 2020, Yukon Energy Corporation (YEC) filed an application with the Yukon Utilities Board (Board), pursuant to the *Public Utilities Act*, and Order-in-Council 1995/90 requesting an order approving a forecast revenue requirement for 2021.”

It also notes that — quote: “... YEC is seeking approval of an interim refundable rate rider...” and further, “YEC is seeking approval of forecast revenue requirements of: \$75.135 million, representing an increase of \$10.971 million for 2021 over revenues from existing rates and riders...”, and it goes on to note that this constitutes a 17.1-percent increase, with a total increase of \$25.34 million for 2021 over the 2018 approved revenue requirement.

I hope that reference will explain why we believe that this may not be in order to call Motion No. 387, since that motion standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North is specifically with regard to the Yukon Energy Corporation’s 10-year renewable electricity plan, and it is our view that discussing a matter that is currently in an active public hearing process in front of a quasi-judicial board may either directly interfere with the authority of that board or have the appearance of doing so.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I think it’s important to go back to the Standing Order. I think it was Standing Order

19(f) that was quoted. It, of course, makes reference to a matter that is pending in a court or before a judge. Presumably, in the event that the Standing Orders were to broaden that requirement, or that exception, they would have done so. This matter is not before a court and not before a judge. It might be before an administrative tribunal that will make a decision.

I can also indicate that this is the House in which the purpose of debate on the 10-year energy plan is the place in which it is debated. We have heard nothing from the opposition, and rightly so, but the fact that they want to debate these important issues — here is an opportunity to do that — and for some reason an objection is being made.

We’re not suggesting during this debate that any of the evidence or comments with respect to what may come before the Yukon Utilities Board by way of a rate application — which is frankly, in my submission, unrelated to the motion that has been brought to the floor here. Despite the objection, it is properly brought here as a motion for debate among the Members of the Legislative Assembly. It does not qualify as a point of order or in the category of Standing Order 19(f) that should be excluded from debate. As a result, I say to you that there is no point of order despite the gymnastics of trying to get it into the Yukon Utilities Board’s realm.

This is the place for such a debate. It should be brought tomorrow. I ask for your ruling with respect to that. My colleague might also have a comment.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, quite simply, it is a tremendous amount of work to build the case to not debate clean energy. I think everyone sees that. Secondly, we’re not talking about support for the plan. It’s going through a rate process. Even if you went down the road of that argument, the rate process is about who is paying for this. That is not the conversation right now. We are asking: Do you even support it?

We know that, in the past — from the actions of the previous government — \$4 million spent on next generation hydro hadn’t gone to rate yet, and \$6- or \$7 million spent on Southern Lakes didn’t go to rate yet — usually pretty good about taking on some pretty significant actions before things go to rate. The relevancy to this is simply this: We are not asking about how it’s going to get paid; we just want to know: Do you even support the work that has been done? Do you even support all of the work that has been done and what we have heard from Yukoners? At the end of the day, if they don’t even want to debate this, that will be telling enough.

Speaker’s statement

Speaker: Sorry, I have none of the information, obviously, before me that was referred to by the Member for Lake Laberge, so the Chair is immediately obviously completely hamstrung in making any determination on really any of the materials that the Member for Lake Laberge has put forward.

I find it somewhat compelling that Standing Order 19(f) does refer to “... any matter that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination where any person may be

prejudiced in such a matter by the reference". In plain language, it is no more expansive than that. However, if it is still the government's intention for private members to debate Motion No. 387 tomorrow, I will require a brief amount of time to confer with the Clerks-at-the-Table in order to provide the House with my ruling on this matter, which should probably be done right now. I could come back at 3:15 p.m., assuming that the motion for witnesses is passed.

Hon. Mr. Silver: With your conundrum in mind, I would ask for unanimous consent from the Members of the Legislative Assembly to give you the time necessary now if you want a motion put forth.

Speaker: So, the two options I'm providing to the House are: a recess now of approximately 15 minutes, or that the Chair will return at 3:15.

I'll put it to the House, then.

Is it agreed that the Chair will return at 3:15 to provide the reasons with respect to the point of order raised by the Member for Lake Laberge as to whether this motion ought to be debated tomorrow?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Thank you. I will return with reasons at 3:15.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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 (Mr. Adel): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Motion re appearance of witnesses

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 7

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 15, 2020, Justin Ferbey, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Development Corporation, and Andrew Hall, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Energy Corporation, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 15, 2020, Justin Ferbey, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Development Corporation, and Andrew Hall, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Energy Corporation, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to the

Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation.

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 7 agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 205: *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Education

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly today Deputy Minister Nicole Morgan, from the Department of Education, and Jackie McBride-Dickson, who is the director of finance for the Department of Education. I look forward to questions regarding the supplementary budget for the Department of Education. Prior to entertaining those questions, I have a few remarks that I would like to make at the beginning of this Committee.

I'm very pleased to rise in the House to present the Department of Education's first supplementary budget for 2020-21. This continues to be an unusual and very challenging year for everyone. We are living through a moment in history when, every day, there is uncertainty, anxiousness, but also courage and opportunity and when, every day, we are learning and adjusting to new routines. It is with patience, kindness, and mutual support that Yukon communities are working to keep us all safe and resilient.

Thanks to these conscious efforts, we have been able to adapt and resume classes in schools for students following the advice and the guidelines of Yukon's chief medical officer of health. The supplementary budget reflects how the department is adapting and responding this year to address the priorities for education during the pandemic, which include: ensuring the health and safety of students and staff; ensuring that learning continues for all students; supporting students with diverse learning needs and those in need of additional supports; and supporting students, teachers, and support staff for flexible learning, including access to technological tools and training.

The department has worked to reallocate existing funding and resources to meet these priorities to support learners of all ages here in the territory. One example is redirecting funds last spring to provide a \$250-per-student payment to Yukon

families to support them while students were learning from home. The department has worked to allocate the recent safe return to class funding from the Government of Canada to support the safe return of students and staff into Yukon schools.

In this supplementary budget request, the Department of Education is requesting a decrease of \$644,000 in O&M expenditures and a net increase of \$10,000 in capital expenditures. I look forward to being able to explain those.

I will now go over the changes to capital and the O&M funding in more detail and explain how the department is using its budget to support current priorities in Education.

Mr. Deputy Chair, a total increase of \$10,000 is requested for capital school-based equipment. This increase is to purchase a 3D printer with funds won by F.H. Collins Secondary and is 100-percent recoverable through their Best Buy award.

With respect to O&M in general, a total decrease of \$644,000 is requested for operation and maintenance. This reflects a number of changes to adapt and respond to COVID-19 to improve accounting practices and to implement measures supported by the federal safe return to class funding.

This year, the department has added a new budget line for its COVID-19 response in order to effectively and efficiently support the implementation of measures to support the health and safety of Yukon learners during the ongoing pandemic and to keep track of those funds in a way that is accountable.

This new budget line includes the department's requested interval transfers of \$1.28 million to support the one-time \$250 financial support per student to Yukon families while students were learning from home, as I said, in the spring of 2020 and the department's requested increase of \$4.16 million for the safe return to class funding, which is 100-percent recoverable from Canada.

This federal funding is being allocated on an ongoing basis, based on the priorities for education during the pandemic. This year, health and safety has been the first consideration for adapting learning programming and spaces to mitigate risk and prevent transmission. We have had to make some programming adjustments as well to follow health and safety guidelines for schools and safely return students and staff to classes.

COVID-19 health and safety costs for schools will be supported by the safe return to class federal funding, as well as some internal funding from the Department of Education. Since August 15, the department has spent and has committed \$783,117 on health and safety costs related to COVID-19. Those expenses were for things like: sanitation costs for schools and buses; cleaning supplies; personal protective equipment, such as reusable masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, et cetera; replacing water fountains with water filling stations; enhanced custodial services in schools; and health and safety training for school staff and for teachers on call.

Ensuring that learning continues for all students is the goal for Education. We are pleased that the majority of schools have been able to return all students to full-time, face-to-face classes and that all schools are following the chief medical officer of health's guidelines for K to 12 school settings and providing their students with daily time with their teachers at school. The costs associated with COVID-19 to ensure that learning

continues for all students will be supported, as I have said, by the safe return to class federal funding and the Department of Education.

Since August 15, the department has spent and committed \$2.013 million on adaptations to ensure that learning continues. That was spent on things like: preparations and support for principals, teachers, and EAs; adapting field trips; materials and equipment to adapt learning spaces, such as additional desks, whiteboards, technology, et cetera; and costs associated with the relocation of the F.H. Collins grade 8 and Wood Street programs.

It is also a priority for Education to provide supports for students with diverse learning needs and those in need of additional supports. This work includes ensuring that special education programming and supports are adapted to follow the health and safety guidelines for schools — for example, ensuring that this program is available full time and in school for these students and that staff working in close proximity to students have the appropriate PPE. It also includes ensuring that school meal programs continue to be safely delivered and that schools offer a range of supports for students. It includes work that school administrators are doing with staff to gather information on impacts to student learning and well-being, which will inform additional measures to support students.

Funding initiatives were previously allocated from within the department's existing funding to provide additional learning supports for students. For example, while in-person instruction was suspended last spring, the department redirected its existing funding that became available during the suspension of the in-person instruction from its K to 12 general programs to provide the one-time \$250 payment per student financial support to Yukon families while students were learning from home. This expenditure is reflected in the transfer request of \$1.28 million from the K to 12 general programs to the Sport Yukon transfer payment agreement for this initiative.

I would like to highlight the department's contribution of \$478,000 toward the partnership initiative with Yukon First Nations and Yukon University to provide access to technology and mobile devices for Yukon First Nation students in kindergarten to grade 12. It was announced recently. This initiative reflects our ongoing collaboration with Yukon First Nations to improve First Nation student outcomes, as identified in the joint education action plan and the recommendations from the 2019 Auditor General of Canada's report on K to 12 education in the Yukon. It also ensures that students have the supports that they need for flexible learning and access to technology.

Further costs associated with COVID-19 to support additional supports to students with diverse learning needs and those in need of additional supports will be supported by the safe return to class federal funding. Since August 15, the department has spent or committed \$699,336 in other costs to support students this year including online professional learning for educators on trauma-informed approaches to support students as they returned to school during the pandemic — from supporting them to learn about new health and safety routines to connecting with youth who may be struggling and

tutoring supports and study halls for grades 10 to 12 students in Whitehorse.

In addition to our surveys to check in on student learning during COVID across the pandemic, Yukon schools just recently surveyed students in grades 4 to 12 about their well-being so that school staff can hear directly from their students and plan appropriate supports and strategies. This survey includes questions about mental health, healthy behaviours, well-being, emotions, relationships, sense of belonging and safety, and returning to school during the pandemic.

Another priority for Education is providing supports for students, teachers, and support staff for flexible learning, including access to technology, tools, and training. There are additional costs and expenditures for bandwidth and other digital learning supports to provide flexible learning environments and access to technology this year. Since August 15, the department has spent \$218,922 to support flexible learning environments and identified further supports, such as: staffing support for a technology infrastructure specialist; term positions for the next two years to support and enhance blended learning approaches in schools, with \$88,259 spent; professional services to support cybersecurity enhancements for mobile devices for learning, with \$100,000 allocated; and materials and equipment to support flexible learning activities, such as the installation of whiteboards, et cetera, with \$30,663 coming from the federal funding.

This supplementary budget also includes some O&M requests for ongoing initiatives and programs to support Yukon learners in the public education system from student attendance to labour market agreements. An increase of \$95,000 is requested for the Every Student, Every Day attendance initiative. This funding supports community-based projects to improve student attendance and engagement at school. It is 100-percent recoverable from the Victoria Gold Yukon Student Engagement Society.

An internal transfer of \$219,000 is to address a significant shortfall in personnel for human resources to support service levels. This unit provides services to support the approximately 1,400 employees of the Department of Education, including central administration and school staff with the second-highest number of staffing transactions. An internal transfer of \$85,000 is to support a project officer position in facilities and transportation — a total decrease of \$5.41 million for the French programs, which reflects a change in accounting practices to remove a net zero transfer to and recovery from the Yukon francophone school board for teacher salaries.

Previously, Mr. Deputy Chair, the practice was that the department would transfer the funding for the CSFY teacher salaries to CSFY. The department would pay the teachers' salaries and then bill CSFY for those salaries. CSFY would then transfer this funding back to the department. Going forward, the department will pay the teachers' salaries directly without the transfers and the duplication of funding. This change in practice does not impact the amount of funding for CSFY or the amount of funding or amounts of teachers' salaries.

There is a net increase of \$360,000 for an additional 5.23 FTEs for the Yukon francophone school board for additional school staff to support an increase in student enrolment, and an increase of \$400,000 is requested for student financial assistance for the Canadian student loan program, which is 100-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada.

An increase of \$112,000 is requested for labour market development agreements, which is 100-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada.

This supplementary budget demonstrates the department's ongoing focus on keeping the well-being and success of Yukon learners of all ages at the centre of decisions about programs and resources, from managing the pandemic response and recovery in education to continuing its core business and services to Yukoners and Yukon communities.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I would like to close by acknowledging and thanking Yukon school communities in the territory for their dedication and their conscious efforts to support all Yukon students and families during this truly unparalleled time in our society: educators and the Yukon Teachers' Association; families, school councils and associations; the CSFY and school communities; Yukon First Nations and their education directorates; the chief medical officer of health and his staff; staff and colleagues from across Yukon government; Standard Bus; and, of course, our students. We are weathering this storm together. We will continue to take your advice to ensure that the department's resources are directed to effectively support Yukon learners with safe, high-quality programs and services.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for her opening remarks. I thank the officials for attending here today to provide support to the minister in the brief time that we have here this afternoon.

The briefing on the supplementary estimates for Education took place in early October. The department officials provided us with a breakdown of the federal funding priorities — the total cost to September 30, 2020. I found it very helpful and I appreciate it. I'm just hoping that the minister can commit to an updated sheet for me and the Third Party so that we have updated information when Education comes back before the House in the remaining days. Hopefully, it comes back.

I will start with a question as well with respect to one of the things that has been on the minds of a lot of Yukon families, and that's the grades 10 to 12 schedule here in Whitehorse. Students are in class half time and then supported through online or study hall learning the other half of the day. I know that the minister made an announcement earlier this fall with respect to that arrangement continuing on through to the end of the school year.

I have a couple of questions. There are obviously three school communities that are very much affected by that: Porter Creek, Vanier, and F.H. Collins. I'm just curious if there was consultation with those school councils prior to that decision being made.

With the recent good news announcement about the Moderna vaccine potentially coming to the Yukon in sufficient numbers — of course, pending Health Canada approval — I'm curious whether or not there would be any consideration given to returning those students to full-time in-class learning,

pending some change in guidelines from the chief medical officer of health due to the vaccination program that we're expecting in the first quarter of 2021.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member opposite for the question. The first consideration, of course, with respect to having grades 10 to 12 return to full-time class has been the health and safety of students and the staff — ensuring that all schools remain low-risk learning environments. As the member opposite will have heard me say before, the assessment and work being done with respect to determining what space would be needed to return grades 10 to 12 to school full time, as well as the number of teaching professionals who would be required for that, is simply not something that can be achieved at the moment. The work in making that determination was done through consultation with the chief medical officer of health — with spacing and health and safety guidelines — with a team of individuals, including the principals and administration from the three high schools that are affected by this decision — by reviewing their operational plans and what services they could provide. Also, the administration of those schools worked with their school councils — and teachers and spaces, as I have said, were simply not available.

As I said a month or so ago, it's not a matter of "We just can't find space for that to happen". I think that the estimate was that we would need somewhere between 40 and 60 professional teachers to provide that. One of the major deciding factors as well was the fact that, should, let's call them, "satellite schools" be set up for the other half-day for grades 10 to 12, it would also mean that, even with those 40 to 60 additional professionals, they would be basic courses only. They would not be able to access elective courses, and that is an extremely important aspect of their high school experiences.

I can indicate that, with respect to school councils, we have consulted with school councils in relation to the survey that went out recently — in November — and was completed by November 30. It's now being reviewed for the purposes of gathering information from families, students, and education partners to determine what additional supports could be put in place, particularly for grades 10 to 12, and what we can do with respect to providing those kinds of additional supports.

I will move to the second part of the question regarding news about vaccines and the territory's benefit from those. We have a pandemic framework that has been built at the Department of Education for the purposes of managing and determining how decisions can be made and the effect and the reaction when things change. With the positive news — we hope that it is positive news — coming with respect to vaccines, we hope that we will make access to schools — having all students return to full-time.

But I cannot speculate about that at this time. The framework is our guiding document, as well as the information and recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. When we see how vaccines are distributed and their effect, we hope that it will be a positive turn for the future of all students being back in school for full days.

Mr. Kent: I know that there were a number of parts to that question, so I'm hoping that the minister can just let us

know if she will provide us with an updated Department of Education federal funding priorities document with more recent costs. As I said, the one that we have is costed to September 30, 2020, and has approximately \$733,000 allocated to that point. I'm sure that those numbers have increased since that time. I think the overall allotment for us was \$4.1 million.

Back to the consultation piece, when the announcement was made over the summer and leading up to the start of the school year with respect to grades 10, 11, and 12 here in Whitehorse, it was open-ended, and then in November, there was a decision made to extend that until the end of the school year. That is where I am wondering if there was consultation with school councils prior to that decision being made.

With respect to the pandemic framework that the minister referenced, I am wondering if that is a public document that we can find on the website. If not, is she willing to provide that to members of the opposition?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes, we can provide an updated list of the costs of the spending — either what has been spent or is projected to be spent from the federal funding.

I think that the one the member opposite referenced was from September. We can provide a more updated version of that. I won't say what the date is because I don't know what the end date will be, but it will be more recent than September — into November, I think.

With respect to the pandemic framework, it is an internal document. I don't have any trouble providing that to the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

With respect to the decisions and school councils, I think that it might be a language issue, but I can indicate that we seek advice from our education partners, of which school councils are an incredibly critical one at every turn.

Did we sit down with the plan and say, "What is your input here?" No. The administrators and their operational plans were a key component in making the decision going forward to extend — at least at this time — the grades 10 to 12 half-day education — half-day attendance in class, not education, half-day attendance in class.

We really believed — and all of the advice from school administrators and central administration officials at the time as well as other education partners — First Nation governments and some school councils — and their working with us in this way was that parents and families needed certainty. They needed certainty with respect to how to plan, how to adjust, how to help their students adjust, and — more importantly, perhaps — if this was the plan going forward, how could we augment services for students who were not doing that well or who were finding it challenging in that timetable? It was important for that to happen as soon as possible so that the decision wasn't being dragged out and then result in more uncertainty for families.

We have completed two surveys with our partners seeking advice, including school councils. In addition to the surveys seeking advice from school councils, we actually sought advice from the school councils on what the survey should be asking

and what kind of work it should be targeting. We got great feedback from that as well.

We also set up a bi-weekly meeting with department officials — almost always including the deputy minister, sometimes including me with chairs of school councils — so that during the summer months and early fall with respect to responding to COVID, that seemed like a good idea. We have continued those. Of course, we're still dealing with managing through COVID, but the indications we've had from those school council chairs and from other partners — AYS, CDC, the Catholic school councils, and others — was that this work together was extremely important, and as a result, we will continue those meetings as well. We've met with individual school councils. Again, I'm not sure if it's a language issue about consulting, but we certainly give as much information as we can at every one of those meetings and give as much detail as we can about the kinds of advice that we are getting from administrators and the chief medical officer of health — again, with the entire goal being to have as many students as possible return to class safely and to protect their health and safety.

Mr. Kent: I know that we just have a few minutes left — 10 minutes left or so — but one of the other topics that I wanted to touch on is with respect to student transportation and the busing. I know that three more buses were ordered, have arrived, and have been inspected. My understanding is that we are ready to go, but we are waiting on the routing and scheduling information from the Department of Education. Obviously, with just a few days left until the Christmas holidays, we are not expecting those buses to be on the road before Christmas, but does the minister have any idea of the timing in January? Will they be ready to hit the road after the Christmas break is over, or is it later on in January that we are expecting those buses to be activated?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thanks for the question. Certainly, it is a question that I ask every day, and I am sure that many families do as well — and our officials have been asking every day. There are a number of moving parts — as I have said before — with respect to this matter. We will be making an announcement this week about some routes and minor changes and additional buses. We had hoped that it would happen so that kids could be on those buses this week, but — as the member opposite notes — there are a few days left. Due to driver availability, we are confirming that those buses will be ready to go at the beginning of the school year in the new year.

Mr. Kent: I don't have the exact quote with me from the Blues, but during one of the responses during Question Period, I think that the minister mentioned that additional registrations were being received in September, October, and even into November. I am curious — I guess I am looking for a commitment and not the numbers, unless she has them right now — as to what the breakdown of the registration numbers would be. How many were registered at the start of the year and then what did they get in the balance of August, September, October, and November for new registrations for the buses?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't actually have those numbers. I have some from memory and I will tell you what those are, but we will clarify those if we can.

The original registration for buses was advertised to close on June 19, 2020, but we knew on June 19 that we did not have the full registration because we regularly know roughly how many students will register. There are now — as the member opposite has heard me say before — 1,907 eligible students on and assigned to school buses.

Back in June, when we didn't have enough registrations by history, we extended that registration date to the middle of August — to August 19. In the beginning of August, my recollection — and please don't quote me on this — is that we received some 600 registrations in that early part of August. They were additional to the ones that we had seen up until June. Ultimately, we made the decision to not close bus registration because we were keen to make sure that we were assisting families.

We knew that it was an extremely unusual year. There were many questions about whether families and parents wanted to send their kids to school or whether school was going to open at all. It's hard to remember how uncertain that time was because things with this current state of affairs change every day.

Back in the summer, it was unknown to us how many kids would come to school and whether or not — at that time, the decisions were still being made about how classes could safely open in consultation with the chief medical officer of health's assistance and recommendation.

I understand the question to be: Can we tell you when the kids registered or the families registered for school buses and what those numbers were sort of roughly throughout that time period? I don't have those numbers. Certainly, there is somebody who can put those numbers together and I will ask if that's a possibility.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that. I look forward to receiving that information because I think, when we were talking in Question Period, that was one of the moving targets that affected the ability of the department officials to work on the new routing and scheduling while the buses were on order and then finally being approved. I think that was one of the things that the minister talked about at the time.

With respect to the Sport Yukon funding and the funding for families that took place in the spring, the number in the budget is \$1.28 million. Can the minister tell us what the uptake was on that program? What percentage of families or students applied for the funding? What was the administration fee for that program paid to Sport Yukon out of that \$1.28 million?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The initiative supported 4,595 students from K to 12. The initiative was made available to all students or families — per student — to all students who applied — or their families or parents applied for them — and the only application requirement that they indicate that they attend full time, whether they attend school, and what school they attended so that records could be kept — for 4,595 students. The funding was administered by Sport Yukon for a total fee of \$130,875, which was approximately 11.39 percent of an administrative fee.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and I thank the officials for coming in here today. We are receiving witnesses,

of course, and as well, the Speaker is coming back for a ruling, so with that, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Kent that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee 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

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report progress.

Also, Committee of the Whole adopted Committee of the Whole Motion No. 7, which provides for witnesses to appear before Committee of the Whole at 3:30 p.m. to answer questions related to the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation.

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.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge has asked me to consider a point of order pursuant to Standing Order 19(f) as to whether a certain motion is orderly and can be properly debated tomorrow.

I can advise the House that I and the Clerks-at-the-Table require a little more time. My proposal is that I will return at 5:30 p.m. My reasons will be relatively brief — I imagine five minutes or less.

Are you in agreement with that?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Thank you. The Chair will return at 5:30 p.m. with reasons on that issue.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 7 adopted earlier today, Committee of the Whole will receive witnesses from Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation at 3:30 p.m.

In order to allow all witnesses to take their place in the Chamber, the Committee will now recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

Recess

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

Appearance of witnesses

Deputy Chair: Pursuant to Committee of Whole Motion No. 7 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation.

I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witnesses.

I would also ask the witnesses to refer their answers through the Chair when they are responding to the members of the Committee.

Witnesses introduced

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the witnesses today from the Yukon Development Corporation as well as the Yukon Energy Corporation. The witnesses appearing before Committee of the Whole today are Mr. Justin Ferbey, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Development Corporation, and Mr. Andrew Hall, president and CEO of Yukon Energy Corporation.

Mr. Mike Pemberton sends his regrets. He is not with us today — the chair of the Yukon Development Corporation Board of Directors — but in attendance today is our chair, Lesley Cabott of the Yukon Energy Corporation Board of Directors.

Because of our COVID restrictions, it's a bit of a different situation today. Only two witnesses are here, but Ms. Cabott is also here supporting her colleagues.

I would like to take a brief moment to thank the members on both boards whose terms have ended. I would like to thank Mr. Peter Kirby, Ms. Skyler Hougen, and Mr. Darren Kates for their commitment as corporation directors to the Yukon Development Corporation. Thanks also to Gina Nagano and Gary Jones for their contributions as directors to the Yukon Energy Corporation.

Again, I would like to thank the officials for both corporations for being here today. These folks have done a tremendous amount of work over the last year and look forward to seeing questions from the opposition on the tremendous amount of work that they've done, both in the communities and here with Yukon Energy Corporation.

Deputy Chair: If the witnesses would like to make opening remarks, I will remind them that they have five minutes between them.

Mr. Ferbey: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, for the opportunity to provide information for the Members of the Legislative Assembly with respect to the Yukon Development Corporation.

Developing new sustainable sources of electrical energy is becoming increasingly important as an enabler for reducing our carbon emissions associated with heating our buildings and in the transportation sector. Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation are working together to ensure that we have the electrical generation, distribution, and storage systems in place to meet the needs of Yukon's growing population and economy now and into the future.

Meeting our territory's growing energy needs will require a broad, collaborative approach. Yukon Development Corporation is actively working with all levels of government, as well as utilities, to identify and support new energy projects that best meet Yukon's increased demands for power. For example, through the independent power production policy, the innovative renewable energy initiative, and the Arctic energy fund, we are encouraging development of First Nation and community-led renewable energy projects to offset the use of fossil fuels in generating electricity across the territory.

As well as supporting investments in renewable energy, we must also continue our focus on ensuring that we have the energy and that we use the energy wisely. The least expensive megawatt of capacity is one that we have saved through managing our demand-side management for electricity.

We have committed to providing direction to the Yukon Utilities Board that would support delivery of cost-effective demand-side management programs through our utilities. This will give them access to the tools that they need to encourage households and businesses to reduce their demand of electricity.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Yukon Development Corporation's behalf. I would like to turn over the mic to the president and CEO of Yukon Energy Corporation.

Mr. Hall: Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to provide information for the Members of the Legislative Assembly with respect to Yukon Energy Corporation.

In July 2019, Yukon Energy released our five-year strategic plan and our bold vision to be a Canadian leader in sustainable energy by 2030. I'm proud to report that, since the release of that strategic plan, Yukon Energy has made great progress toward achieving that goal.

This past January, we released a draft of our 10-year renewable electricity plan. The plan identifies three new renewable electricity and infrastructure projects needed to address growing demands for clean electricity in Yukon and help us reduce carbon emissions in the territory.

The three new projects — sourcing renewable electricity from the planned Atlin hydro expansion project; building a new pump storage facility at Moon Lake; and expanding and

upgrading the Southern Lakes transmission network — account for 46 percent of Yukon government's carbon emission reduction targets by 2030.

I am pleased to report that yesterday, after more than six months of sharing information and collecting feedback about the plan from Yukon First Nation governments, electricity stakeholders, and the public, we released our final *10-Year Renewable Electricity Plan* document, the technical report, and associated with that, the "what we heard" report from the public and stakeholder engagement. Those documents can be found on our website.

Moving forward, collaborative partnerships with First Nation governments and development corporations will form the basis of each of these projects. Federal funding for these investments will also be critical to keeping Yukon electricity rates affordable. Given Yukon's small population and small rate base, a portfolio investment of over \$500 million into our electricity system is too much for Yukoners to bear on their own. Over the next several years, we will continue to work with Yukon Development Corporation, the Yukon government, and the project proponents to obtain the federal funding needed to advance these projects, minimize costs for Yukoners, and minimize project risks.

Renewable sources of electricity will be critical in setting us all on the path toward a stronger, more sustainable future. Yukon Energy is committed to working with First Nations, all governments, and the public to ensure that projects in the *10-Year Renewable Electricity Plan* are developed with the best interests of Yukoners in mind.

Mr. Kent: I would like to welcome the witnesses, Mr. Hall and Mr. Ferbey, as well as Ms. Cabott, here today as well.

I have a number of questions. The first one that I wanted to start with is with respect to the current general rate application. So, in the documents, in the news release and the announcement by the minister in the Legislature, and with his ministerial statement, it says that we are asking for an 11.5-percent rate increase in 2020-21. I am looking for an explanation of the discrepancy here. The board order from the Yukon Utilities Board yesterday says — Board Order 2020-04, dated December 14, 2020 — says: "WHEREAS: B. YEC is seeking approval of forecast revenue requirements of: \$75.135 million, representing an increase of \$10.971 million for 2021 over revenues from existing rates and riders of \$64.164 million (a 17.1% increase), with a total increase of \$25.342 million for 2021 over the 2018 approved revenue requirement..."

The way I read it, there is a discrepancy. There is a 17.1-percent increase identified by the Yukon Utilities Board, but an about 11.5-percent increase identified by the Yukon Energy Corporation.

Could I get the witnesses to explain to the Legislature the discrepancy between those two numbers?

Mr. Hall: I am going to have to come back to the Legislature via a submission on this question. I don't have the information readily available.

Mr. Kent: For the witnesses' reference, the document that I was reading from was: "IN THE MATTER OF the *Public Utilities Act* and General Rate Application by Yukon Energy Corporation for Approval of Revenue Requirements for 2021". It was dated December 14, 2020, and this is Board Order 2020-04. That is a reference for the witnesses.

I am going to move on and ask some questions with respect to the decision to cancel the new thermal plant and instead focus on renting diesels to provide power — or to provide a portion of the power that we need in the territory — for the foreseeable future. The corporation did a fair amount of public consultation on this issue — in particular, I would like to direct the witnesses to a document produced by YEC entitled "what we heard" from October 2019. I am going to quote directly from that document on page 6 where it says — and I quote: "Given the limited amount of days the facility was also expected to run (about 10 days a year with average water conditions), greenhouse gas emissions from the facility were also expected to be minimal."

How many days did the rented diesels run in 2020?

Mr. Hall: I don't have any data on how many days they ran. We provided information on the total fuel consumption, for example, on the rentals for the winter of 2019-20 — two million litres of diesel.

My general comment in response would be that, when we looked to that permanent diesel facility, we would have looked at it over the long term — so particularly its average conditions, because that's all we can really point to when we looked at our long-term forecasts. I will point out that this past winter was extraordinary in the sense that we had low water conditions, principally in our Mayo hydro facility. The Mayo reservoir — as members may recall — hardly filled up last summer, which meant that, when we got to this past spring, for example, we were very low in water and had to run diesel to compensate — LNG and diesel.

I would comment that this past winter was almost a drought condition for us. It's not really an average year at all, and that would explain why we ran more diesel than perhaps had been indicated in the prior communications.

Mr. Kent: The witness mentioned that he does have data on the amount of diesel used. I apologize if he provided that, but if he could just provide that again just for my reference here this afternoon. How much diesel was consumed in 2020 from the rented diesels?

Mr. Hall: Mr. Deputy Chair, the number I have here is 2.1 million litres. I will check on that, but that's the number I have right now.

Mr. Kent: Later on in that same report in appendix A, there are a number of questions from public participants and answers from Yukon Energy Corporation. I would like to ask about some of the answers provided.

On page 26 — but also in several other places — the Energy Corporation says that they conducted a detailed analysis of the three fuel choices: diesel, LNG, or a blend of the two. Can the witnesses — if they don't have them with them today, can they commit to providing us with a copy of that detailed analysis? In the meantime, can they provide an answer from

purely a cost perspective: Which of the three fuels was the preferred choice?

Mr. Hall: I would just like to clarify perhaps a bit of a misunderstanding about what the purpose or primary driver of these investments in thermal assets is — and it's to provide capacity.

With the growth in the Yukon economy and population, our peak demand for electricity, in particular, continues to grow. We see that on cold winter days when the temperature gets down to minus 30 or minus 35. Those peaks continue to grow. The principal driver of that capital investment decision at that time was to provide capacity to cover off a worst-case event where we lose our largest generator, namely the Aishihik facility. The decision before us last year was around an investment in an asset that's there largely to cover off your worst-case contingent event.

It's a capacity investment, so the cost of that capacity is your primary economic metric. When we compared the cost of a new LNG plant to a new diesel plant, on a pure capacity basis — and I'll use a metric that folks can relate to, so dollars per megawatt — the cost of the diesel option came out as the most cost-effective.

Mr. Kent: Just to go back to the question then, as I mentioned, there was a reference that the Energy Corporation conducted a detailed analysis of the three fuel choices. I'm hoping that the witness can commit to providing us with a copy of that detailed analysis or direct us to the website if it is on the public website.

I think that he mentioned that, from a purely cost perspective, diesel was the preferred choice as a result of that analysis. I'll ask the witness to confirm that just so there is no confusion.

In appendix A, on page 28, there is a question that reads: "What is the cost of rentals?" The answer from the corporation was — and I'll quote: "Showed the participant the summary panel that outlined that rentals are more expensive than owning the LNG or diesel generators." I have just a couple of questions from that.

Can we have a copy of the document that compared the cost of renting to owning? Can the corporation confirm that renting the diesels is indeed more expensive than owning a new thermal plant?

Mr. Hall: Yes, I will commit to getting the cost information for the member opposite.

In terms of the cost of renting versus owning, if you take it over the full life cycle of the asset — the metric that we used was levelized cost of capacity, and that is akin to that dollar-per-megawatt number that I talked about in my previous response. The levelized cost of capacity of a greenfield thermal plant is \$157 per kilowatt year, and the range for diesel is around \$240 per kilowatt year.

But I will point out an important consideration here. If you look at these decisions in the context of the 10-year renewable plan and the projects that are talked about under that plan, then your lifespan becomes a lot shorter. If you assume, for example, that the Atlin hydro project is going to get connected to the grid in 2024, followed by Moon Lake toward the end of the decade,

then your whole driver for needing that capacity — the timescale — shrinks, and the option of renting, say, over an eight-year period becomes more attractive. So, it depends entirely on what sort of time frame you view these investments over. If you take it over the full lifespan that the data supports — what we said in the response is that the rental option is more expensive than greenfield.

Mr. Kent: In Appendix A, again, page 36 of the same document that we have been referring to, the corporation said the following about renting — and I quote: “Renting anything comes with risks. Think of it like renting a house vs. buying one. Will there be enough rentals available when you need them? Will the cost to rent increase? What state will the rentals be when you get them? And at what point does it make financial sense to invest the money you spend each year on a rental into an owned asset.

“By investing in an owned solution we can ensure that this additional power is always available when we need it. By owning the facility, we’ll also be in a position to make sure that it is always maintained and ready for service.”

That ends that portion that I referred to.

So, my question for the witness is: Based on that comment, it certainly seems to us that the preferred option of the corporation was to purchase the thermal plant rather than continue to rent the asset. Can the YEC president confirm this for the House — if that was the preferred option of the corporation?

Mr. Hall: When we presented the decision to our board to make a final decision on whether to move forward with the plant — obviously, there are a number of different pieces of information that are brought forward. There is cost information, but critically, there is feedback from the engagement that we had done with both the public and the First Nations on whose territory the potential sites for the diesel plant were located. I think that the principal driver of the decision was really that there was no support from those First Nations, nor did we feel that there was social licence from the public nor an interest in developing a new permanent thermal asset. I would say that this was the principal driver. When all the risks and all the attributes of the different options were put on the table, that drove the decision.

Mr. Kent: I’ll move on. I might come back to that point. I just want to digest that answer and that response a little bit.

I wanted to touch on the cost of renting diesels in the current general rate application — particularly what those rented diesels will cost ratepayers.

The current GRA includes a number of aspects related to the rental of diesels. There’s the cost of the rentals and the fuel, which are captured in the non-labour O&M costs, as well as capital costs for the infrastructure set-ups in Whitehorse and Faro.

What is the total amount attributable to the rented diesels in the current GRA?

Mr. Hall: I don’t have the GR application in front of me, but the information that I do have shows that the rental cost of the 17 units is \$4.1 million. The set-up costs — which, again, provide a facility that will be useful for our expected duration

of the rental, which is up to eight years — that set-up cost is \$2.1 million. The fuel costs are approximately \$450,000. That will depend principally on the weather. We have good water in our reservoirs this winter, but of course we can’t forecast what the temperature is going to be, so the estimate that we have is \$450,000 for fuel.

Mr. Kent: Those numbers provided by the witness line up with the document tabled on October 28 by the minister responsible regarding the expenses on the rentals of diesels, but they seem to be at odds with the breakdown of what we have seen here in the general rate application.

The witness has said that he doesn’t have a copy of the GRA with him, but I guess I would ask then for him to commit to get back to us with what the costs are in the general rate application versus what the costs are in the table that was tabled here in the Legislature on October 28. The research that we have done shows a discrepancy there, so we would like to just reconcile that discrepancy.

The GRA also makes clear that the decision to cancel the new thermal plant — whether diesel, LNG, or a blend — and focus on other diesels is not strictly a switch to rentals. It appears in several spots in the GRA that the decision to cancel the new thermal plant will actually mean that YEC needs to construct several new diesel plants, but just on existing locations. When you look at appendix 5-3 on page 5-34 of the GRA, YEC states that they are focused on three near-term diesels, five megawatts of new capacity at the Whitehorse plant, the replacement of a 5.1 diesel in Faro with a new 5-megawatt diesel unit, and the installation of a new 2.5-megawatt diesel unit at Callison, which is in the Dawson City area.

Can the witness confirm that they are planning approximately 12.5 megawatts of diesel in the near term and also confirm that the spending — which looks to us to be just under \$7 million on diesel — is not included in this GRA, but will need to be included in a future GRA?

Mr. Hall: We are planning to replace 12.5 megawatts of diesel that has either retired or will retire. Those are located at the three locations at the member pointed out, namely Whitehorse, Faro, and Dawson. Those are replacement projects — no new capacity.

I think you’re comparing apples and oranges if you’re then compare that to the 20-megawatt project which was incremental capacity. That’s where the rentals are getting used — to provide new incremental capacity.

Mr. Kent: I just wanted to go back for a second to the question about the preferred option of the corporation, just having digested the witness’s response.

It seems to me that the preferred option of the corporation was to proceed with a new thermal plant, but there was no social licence. Is that what the witness had explained to us? I just want to confirm that for the record here this afternoon.

Mr. Hall: I believe my comment was that there was no social licence for a new greenfield plant, not a replacement in an existing facility.

Mr. Kent: That was the project that I was referring to with respect to that comment.

There has also been some considerable attention paid to the availability of fuel for the Energy Corporation. I'm sure that witnesses are familiar with the questions that we asked earlier this session about contingency planning and backup fuel options.

On October 14 of this current Sitting, the minister told us that — and I'll quote: "I'm going to make that commitment to the members opposite to come back and work with Yukon Energy to ensure that they do have a contingency plan so that we're ready in case something like this happens in January 2021." Of course, that was with reference to a pending fuel shortage due to some challenge with the road from here to Skagway.

I'm just looking for a few answers with respect to that commitment by the minister. Can the witnesses tell us what has been done since the minister made that commitment? Was that work underway already, or did it commence following direction from what the minister mentioned in the Legislature here and subsequent meetings?

I'll just leave it at that for now and we'll look for that answer.

Mr. Hall: In terms of contingency planning, we certainly have been engaging with the fuel suppliers in town to understand what storage is available. The Energy Corporation is also in the process of tendering its fuel requirements across the territory and we will be breaking that out by location — so it will be separate tenders for Faro, Dawson, Mayo, and Whitehorse. Particularly for the Whitehorse tender, our intention would be to enter into negotiations with the winning bidder around what minimum storage volumes they might be able to commit to. I would point out that it's a fairly complicated analysis because, at this time, we really don't know what the cost of that guaranteed storage might be. So, we need to get some feedback from the suppliers as to what they would charge — sort of a standby fee, almost — to guarantee minimum storage allocated specifically for Yukon Energy. We would then need to make a decision on whether that is an appropriate cost to pass on to ratepayers or if we would look to securing something less than that firm commitment if the costs are deemed not to be acceptable. We are certainly engaging in that process, but we don't yet have an answer on that.

Mr. Kent: Off the top, we asked about fuel consumption and the witness mentioned 2.1 million litres for the rented diesels. We are looking for some broader numbers, then, with respect to the permanent diesels that are in the system, as well as the amount of natural gas that is burned at the Whitehorse Rapids LNG facility. Does the witness have a total amount of fuel that was burned — I guess, the stats for the most recent year?

Mr. Hall: I don't have litres of diesel total or gigajoules or deliveries of LNG. If it's the quantities of fuel that the member is looking for, I'll have to revert on that. The data is clear on how many gigawatt hours of energy we generated from both sources: LNG gigawatt hours was 66, and diesel gigawatt hours was 3.8.

Mr. Kent: Before I ask a couple of questions, I just have one quick question for the witness. Is the Yukon Energy

Corporation subject to — do they pay the carbon tax on fuels, or are they exempt from that tax?

Mr. Hall: Fossil fuels used for electricity generation are exempt from the carbon tax.

Mr. Kent: I don't have to ask if there has been any planning then for the recent increase announced by the Prime Minister to the carbon tax of up to \$170 per tonne by 2030.

I have a number of other questions then. I'm just going to ask about the 2019 rate application. I'm wondering if the witnesses can tell us why that application was pulled.

Mr. Hall: I think that the simple answer is that, when we took the decision to our board, the rate application to the final rate increase from the prior 2017-18 GRA had just kicked in and it was a material bill increase. The board felt, at the time, that the timing was such that it just didn't work. It wasn't fair on Yukoners to burden them with the rate increase right on the back of what had just transpired.

Mr. Kent: My colleague just slipped me a note, so I have a question that I should have asked when it comes to the carbon tax impacts.

With respect to the trucking contract and the fuel that the trucks burn when they're hauling either diesel or LNG, I don't believe that this expenditure is exempted from carbon tax. Can the witness confirm that for us and let us know if they have started planning for the increase to \$170 per tonne of carbon tax by 2030 as announced by the Prime Minister?

Mr. Hall: I believe that the transportation fuel used in those trucks would be subject to the carbon tax. I don't have an analysis yet on what impact that may have. I would point out that one of our LNG suppliers has recently tested a much larger B-train configuration with great success. I believe that they have up to four of those running on the road right now, so we are looking forward to a reduction, actually, in our transportation piece of the LNG cost.

Mr. Kent: So, I guess we will look to get a sense of some of the work — recognizing, of course, that this increase was just recently announced by the Prime Minister. Obviously, some work will probably have to go into planning around what the carbon tax would be on hauling diesel or LNG.

The minister mentioned this in the Legislature, and I am curious — he mentioned the idea of fixed-date GRAs. I am just curious where the Energy Corporation is with respect to that — so that there is predictability, I believe, to the application timing and no gaps. So, has that been under consideration? If so — obviously, there is a GRA before the Yukon Utilities Board now — when can we expect the next one from the Energy Corporation if this fixed-date application work is underway?

Mr. Hall: I would say that, in general, the Energy Corporation would be supportive of a more regular frequency cadence to GRAs, because we have suffered from the fact that we went several years without a GRA. We built up a lot of costs, which weren't taken to rates, and then ratepayers were hit over the head all at once by substantial costs passed on.

In terms of the process, that is not a process that Yukon Energy has any role in. That would be a process that Yukon government would have to work through to provide instruction to the Yukon Utilities Board.

Mr. Kent: I certainly understand if the witness isn't in a position to answer this question, but I am curious if there is any anticipation of ATCO doing a GRA at some point in the near future. They haven't done one in — the research that I have done — approximately five years.

Again, if the witness doesn't have an answer to that question, that's fine.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just to go back to the last question, and then Mr. Hall can speak to the ATCO GRA. Just for the House today, I think it's important to table — I mean, we're going through a rate process now, and the discussions that I've had with Yukon Development Corporation have been around trying to get to rate every two years. That's the time frame, so I just wanted to answer that question for the opposition. That's the sense of what we're getting.

It does cost a significant amount to prepare a rate application. At the same point, if you leave it for a long period of time, it also has significant costs. So, it's about how to get that process as efficient as possible. For the Assembly today, that's something that I think would be acceptable, and it would give more certainty for business as well. I think that an ability to try to keep costs consistent over those 24-month periods would give more certainty to all involved.

Mr. Hall: I don't have any intelligence of what ATCO's plans might be in terms of a GRA.

Mr. Kent: I thank the witness. I can appreciate that.

When it comes to the current application, how much of the planning for the permanent new thermal plant that was cancelled is in this GRA? If the witness can provide us with a total amount spent on planning that new LNG, diesel, or blended-fuel plant before the board cancelled it, I would appreciate that as well.

Mr. Hall: I'm going to have to revert with a number. I don't have that number available.

Mr. Kent: I guess I'm looking for a couple of numbers. How much of the planning for that permanent plant is in the general rate application? Is that the total amount of the planning of that abandoned initiative, or is there an additional amount still outstanding?

I'm going to focus on a couple of other issues. The Aishihik water licence — I'm looking at the status of that renewal and where we're at right now — if it has been extended or if it has expired and what the current status is — working with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations on that.

Mr. Hall: Earlier in Q1 of this year, we were granted a three-year licence to operate the facility, which allowed for further negotiations and discussions with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Yukon government about the long-term licence application.

Since that time, we have been in active dialogue, both at the technical level with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and also at the negotiating table, to talk about the terms of the long-term licence application. We did file the YESAB application in July of this year for the long-term licence. The YESA process is underway. The "seeking views and information" stage of that closed on December 4, so the Haines Junction DO is going about its work.

In the meantime, we are hopefully in the later phases of a tripartite negotiation between ourselves, Yukon government, and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations around a framework agreement, which talks about the long-term Water Board application but also the benefits package for the First Nation and other sort of non-regulatory work that we will do with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations going forward.

I don't want to prejudice those negotiations because they are in, I would say, the final stages, hopefully. I think that we are optimistic in reaching — signing that framework agreement in the new year.

Mr. Kent: The witness can correct me if I am wrong — I am writing stuff down as he speaks — but there is a three-year licence that was provided in — I think he said the first quarter of 2020. That is an extension, and then there is a longer term licence that is currently going through or has just emerged from the YESA process. What would the term of that longer term licence be?

Mr. Hall: Right now, the contemplated term of that licence is 25 years.

Mr. Kent: I want to touch on some of the projects that are in the 10-year renewable plan. The first one that I wanted to talk about was the Moon Lake project. I'm curious if the witness can tell us how much that project will cost. What's the total cost estimate for it at this point?

Mr. Hall: I believe that the current cost estimate is around \$300 million.

Mr. Kent: I'm curious about the regulatory process that it will have to undergo and what milestones need to be met. It's a project that's located in British Columbia. Will it need approval by the BCEA process? Will it need federal approval because the transmission line will cross the BC-Yukon boundary? What would the role for YESAB be as well as a potential role for the utility boards not only here in the Yukon, but also in British Columbia?

Mr. Hall: You would certainly have a multi-faceted regulatory approval process. It will have to go through the BC permitting process. We've actually completed some early work on the first stage of that, which is called the "investigative use" licence that needs to be filed. There are further discussions required with the relevant First Nations before we file, but we're ready to file that application once the First Nations are on board with that filing. That's the first step in the BC regulatory process.

In terms of YESAB and the Yukon Water Board, that will depend entirely on what impacts there might be on Tutshi Lake, which is the lower reservoir and is partly in British Columbia and partly in Yukon. Our sense is that it will need to go through the YESA process as well, which is entirely appropriate for a project of its nature.

In terms of the federal approval for the transmission line, at this time, I won't say that we're certain about that, but it's not a foregone conclusion. I would view that as a spur line that connects the project to the Yukon, and certainly the comparable spur line for the Atlin project is not going through our federal process.

Mr. Kent: So, it will have to go through a BC process and a Yukon process but potentially not a federal process, so I appreciate that from the witness. What will the ownership of Moon Lake be? Will the Yukon Energy Corporation be the owner, presumably with potential First Nation partners — but will the Yukon Energy Corporation be the primary owner?

Mr. Hall: At this point, I would point out that this project is in the very early stage of conversations with the two First Nations in terms of kicking off any work together on, for example, the environmental and field work. At this stage, in terms of ownership structure, we have left that quite open in terms of being in full negotiation with the two First Nations. I think that we would be open to a range of ownership models, ranging from a Yukon Energy-owned project through to a completely stand-alone IPP and all the hybrid options in between. At this point, I think it is far too early to say.

Mr. Kent: Obviously, this is one of the projects identified as a potential future project in the 10-year renewable energy plan. When do the witnesses anticipate this being completed? Obviously, it would be sometime before 2030, so I am just curious what date they have established to have this as part of the energy mix to reach the percentage of renewable energy generation for the territory?

Mr. Hall: The development timeline for a project of this scale is typically eight to 10 years. In the final version of the 10-year renewable plan, we show Moon Lake coming online in the winter of 2028-29. That is currently what we are showing, but as I said, that timeline will get clarified as we progress through the project. Development will be approached in a stage-gate fashion where budgets and timelines are clarified progressively through each stage gate.

Mr. Kent: With that eight- to 10-year time horizon — it shows 2028 or 2029. I won't ask that question. I thought that I had a question, but I won't ask it.

There are some third-party interests in this area, though — outfitters, trappers, perhaps mineral claim holders, and others. We received some concerns from one of the outfitters in the area. We would be looking to get some confirmation that the Energy Corporation would be negotiating some level of compensation or mitigation for any disturbance to what those third-party interests have in there, whether it would be financial or other compensation. I just wanted to make sure that this is on the radar when planning this project. There are a number of third-party interests in the area as well, including the outfitter.

Mr. Hall: Mr. Deputy Chair, yes, absolutely. Engaging with any interests, particularly business interests, in the area that have provable losses, there is a well-established process for how to address that.

I would point out that, for example, in our transmission construction projects, there are trappers compensation agreements that are entered into with trappers. That is just an example of how this works. There is a well-established methodology for how to reach those settlements if they are required. We have been in communication at least with one of the parties who has a business interest on Moon Lake.

Mr. Kent: Just for a quick clarification, talks will initiate with those third parties at the outset of the planning and

continue until some sort of a reasonable solution is reached. I just wanted the witness to confirm that.

Mr. Hall: Yes. The idea would be to reach out to them early in the process. Obviously, some of the design features of Moon Lake have yet to be determined. Those could well have bearing on whether those businesses are affected or not. I think that it is reasonable that you have to wait until a certain point in the engineering when the nature of the project is better understood before you can really determine what, in some cases, are the impacts.

I would say that it is an ongoing conversation over the next few years with those individuals and businesses up there.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that. I am going to move on to the Atlin project. I am just wondering if the witnesses could tell us — I will start with the same question that I asked about Moon Lake — what the anticipated cost is? How much will that be on a cost-per-megawatt basis?

Perhaps if the witnesses could tell us, just going back to Moon Lake — I forgot to ask that question — if there is a cost per megawatt of the \$300 million cost that was identified.

Mr. Hall: In both cases — and I referenced this in my opening remarks — the role of federal grant funding will be important in terms of providing financial support to both projects, because the reality is, with our small rate base and small population in the Yukon, to burden ratepayers with those kinds of expenditures — we have to think about rate impact. It was very deliberate, in developing the 10-year renewable plan, that an assumption around that federal funding was made. I would point out that, historically, this federal funding has always come to the table. The Mayo B project was the most recent example of a major infrastructure project that did garner a significant combination of territorial and federal funding, which again helped protect ratepayers. Really, I would say that it's a requirement of both of those projects, moving forward, that substantial federal funding be secured.

In terms of the capital costs, I would point out that Atlin will be an IPP — an independently developed project. We have some information on what that capital cost is, but, ultimately, what we've negotiated — or are in the process of finalizing in the negotiation — is the price that we will pay for the power.

Two key principles apply when we negotiate that price: (a) we don't want to drive rates relative to the next best alternative, which, in the YUB's world, is our benchmark cost of thermal; and (b) we will not pay for energy that we can't use, namely any energy bought in the summer when we have a surplus. Those two principles are driving the negotiation around what price we will pay to Atlin for that energy.

We will also pay for capacity because, as I outlined earlier, we are short on dependable capacity in our system, and so there will be a separate charge that we will pay for dependable capacity in the winter. That again is driven by the benchmark cost of capacity of our thermal generators.

In terms of what the cost of the Atlin project is, I think that it's sitting at around \$190 million to \$200 million before federal funding. But again, that is not a number that we are directly in control of. We are certainly working on securing and working with Yukon Development Corporation, Yukon

government, and the proponents in securing the federal funding to offset a substantial part of that capital investment.

Mr. Kent: So, with the Atlin project, it would be a power purchase agreement that is negotiated with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation. Will the First Nation also be constructing the transmission line, I guess, that is needed from Atlin to essentially Jakes Corner? Is that going to be their responsibility, or will that be the responsibility of the Energy Corporation?

Mr. Hall: Yes, the transmission and also the substation at Jakes Corner will be part of the project scope that the Taku River Tlingit development corporation will be responsible for.

Mr. Kent: So then, with respect to the line that goes from Whitehorse to Teslin, my understanding is that this infrastructure is owned by ATCO, essentially. They constructed that, I believe, in the mid-to-late 1980s here. Is that infrastructure able to be upgraded to take on the additional capacity potentially provided by the Atlin project? Will it remain under ATCO ownership, or will there be a new build? I'm curious about the infrastructure, essentially, from Whitehorse to Jakes Corner, or the Atlin Road junction there with the Tagish Road.

Mr. Hall: The topic of the upgrading of the line from Jakes Corner, essentially, back to Whitehorse is something that we're working on right now with ATCO and the proponents, the Taku River Tlingit. It looks like some upgrades will be required. Again, they will be budgeted as part of the project, and that line — it's ATCO's franchise area, so it will remain their — if there's an upgrade required, it will become their asset.

Mr. Kent: Just to close out the questions with respect to the Atlin project, I'm curious if the witnesses can tell us where this project is at right now. With the power-purchase agreement, will there be any reliance at all on Yukon ratepayer financing, or is it all rolled into the power-purchase agreement with the Taku River Tlingit?

Mr. Hall: In terms of the negotiation of the power-purchase agreement — or electricity-purchase agreement, as we call it — we are in negotiations with Tlingit Homeland Energy LP — THELP — which is the corporate entity down there. I would expect that, in Q1 of next year, we should be able to conclude those negotiations. It is a bit contingent on how things turn out on the funding side. There is still lots of active work going on there. In negotiations themselves, we should be able to conclude in Q1.

In terms of the negotiation costs, there will be some modest costs relative to the value of the deal over the term. In terms of how these are treated from a rates perspective, I am not sure, but I would think that they would be pretty immaterial to the larger piece of what this project brings to Yukon in terms of benefits.

Mr. Kent: With respect to the battery project that the minister provided a ministerial statement on today, I have just a couple of questions about it. Has this technology ever been used in the north? I think he mentioned that it would be one of the largest ones in the country, but has this technology ever been used in northern Canada?

Mr. Hall: Mr. Deputy Chair, there is one current operating battery facility that we are aware of — at the Diavik diamond mine. It is integrated with a small wind farm that they have there that has been operating for several years now. I believe that Hydro Québec just came out with an announcement around several batteries that they are deploying in their remote northern areas of Québec.

Mr. Kent: During the ministerial statement today, the minister mentioned that half of the cost would be covered by the federal government. I think that the number he referenced was about \$16.5 million. I am just looking for confirmation. Obviously, we expanded that to conclude that the project would be \$33 million. That difference from the number that is in the general rate application — I just wanted to get confirmation from the witnesses of the capital costs of purchasing this and then the \$16.5 million coming from the federal government. Will the entire balance come from ratepayers, or is there a Yukon government contribution as part of that remaining balance?

Mr. Hall: Mr. Deputy Chair, the current total cost estimate for the project is \$27.5 million to \$30 million. For the portion that is not covered by the federal grant, the plan at the current time is that this would be added to the rate base. That would be, on the high side, \$13.5 million.

Mr. Kent: Will that entire amount go into the rate base, or would you be looking for some measure of contribution from the Yukon government for that outstanding balance beyond what the federal government is committing?

Mr. Hall: At the current time, the plan is that the \$13.5 million would go into the rate base.

Mr. Kent: I guess the other question that I have with respect to that project — there were three sites being considered. The one on the north Klondike Highway — it was announced today — is no longer under consideration. There are two in Whitehorse. I think that the minister mentioned in his statement today that he is still negotiating leases with the potential landowners. I think that the Kwanlin Dün First Nation owns one parcel and the Ta'an Kwäch'än owns the other potential parcel. Are there O&M considerations, including leasing costs, that are being put into this for the longer term planning? If so, what are those estimates at this point?

Mr. Hall: Yes, there will be lease costs. Obviously, we are going to be signing a 25-year lease, possibly with an option to extend. I think that, at this time, given that we haven't signed a lease deal and the negotiations are still ongoing, I can't really speak to what the financial numbers are. We will have to see, once the deal is signed, whether the parties — both the lessee and the lessor — are comfortable disclosing that.

That does appear in our financials as operation and maintenance costs in due course.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There were some questions today here in Question Period, so I think we have a good opportunity now. I know that the member opposite had asked — there were some fluctuations or differentials in pricing. I didn't have all of the documents, but inevitably there are questions that come up in the House about the costing of the battery infrastructure that we're looking at. The member opposite may touch on that or, if

not, the witnesses could today maybe share with folks here what they've experienced on the pricing toward our battery project.

Out of the gates, looking at what type of battery — and I know they have done a bit more research. I'm not sure of all the variables that have affected that project pricing. It could even be other infrastructure that is required or even sites. So, that might be good because it was a topic today during Question Period.

Mr. Kent: It was actually during the ministerial statement response today. We didn't touch on it in Question Period, but there were some moving targets with respect to the costs of it. If the witnesses have some information with respect to that, it would be great — as far as the cost increases that have come up since this project was first announced.

The witness mentioned that there will be some leasing costs. I'm just curious as to what the potential O&M costs are for the unit. Are there any estimates that the witnesses can provide on an annual basis or throughout the lifetime, I guess, of these units?

Mr. Hall: I don't have any data on the O&M costs. I would point out that we are working with Yukon government on providing some instruction to the Yukon Utilities Board to hold a part 3 hearing on this project. Our board felt that it was appropriate. The member opposite pointed out that there were potentially \$13.5 million of costs going into rate base, so we felt that, for that quantum of rate base addition, it was completely appropriate for the YUB to take a look at those costs and look at it from a ratepayer perspective.

Assuming that it goes ahead, there will be full and ample opportunity to scrutinize the economics of the project, and then the Yukon Utilities Board will take a close look at it. We're confident that they will conclude that the economics are indeed significantly favourable compared to either a permanent or a rental diesel facility in terms of cost to capacity.

Mr. Kent: Just before I leave this project, the witness, at the outset with my initial question about the cost, mentioned that it would be \$27.52 million. I just wanted him to confirm that.

Also, information that I have is that, in the GRA, it says that the total cost of the battery project is \$29.4 million. That would be a discrepancy between the number that he provided today and what has been submitted to the Yukon Utilities Board. I'm just curious about which number is correct.

Mr. Hall: So, the member opposite is correct. On page 5.1-5 — of appendix 5.1 of our GRA — which is a page of our GRA application that I do have, we listed the budget at \$29.4 million. I probably just rounded that to \$30 million in the interest of nice round numbers. I wouldn't view that as a discrepancy because, at this point, as folks would have perhaps seen, we are still to go to market for vendor quotes for the battery hardware, and so I wouldn't say that we have the accuracy that perhaps the member is looking for at this stage in the project. It really depends on the quotes that we get back from the market.

I'm certainly hoping that we'll have a good competitive process and yield competitive pricing on the scope and supply,

but I think if folks can keep a number of \$30 million — a round number — in their heads, I think that it is probably appropriate, given where the project is at.

Mr. Kent: I just have a few more topics to touch on before I turn the floor over to my colleague, the Leader of the New Democratic Party.

Obviously, there are a number of long-term projects contemplated here: Moon Lake pump storage, electricity purchase from Atlin, and Southern Lakes transmission network.

As the witness mentioned, Moon Lake, for instance, isn't contemplated on being in service until later on in this decade — perhaps 2028 or 2030. So, what is the contingency plan based on the current power demand trajectory? If we don't get these renewable projects up and running, will we be renting additional diesels to cover the gap in what we need for power? Not taking into account the goals of how much we'll generate from renewable, but what's the backup plan or the contingency plan to make sure that we have enough power for the system and for the Yukon as we move throughout this decade?

Mr. Hall: Mr. Deputy Chair, I think I would point out that our utility planning process isn't a one-shot deal. The plan is renewed and reviewed at least on a four-year basis. It could be more frequently than that if required. I think the approach right now is that if one of the major components of the plan — and that would be either the Atlin or Moon Lake pump storage — fell through for whatever reason, we would catch that as part of a future planning cycle. I think our plan A right now is very much focused on making these projects happen, which again boils down to, in large part — certainly, with Atlin securing the required funding.

In terms of what else is in the contingency plan — I mean, there are a number of other projects in the near term that will reduce the number of diesel rentals that we have and also contribute additional renewable energy to the system. Those would include the IPP standing offer program which was expanded to 40-gigawatt hours of energy supply. There are two enhanced storage projects — Southern Lakes and Mayo Lake. There is the microgeneration policy of Yukon government which continues to grow. There's the diesel replacement project — replace those retired diesels that the member opposite referenced. Then, of course, there's the battery project which we spent some time talking about.

There are elements of the plan that are nearer term and will be a matter of significant focus for us in the next few years.

Mr. Kent: I'm glad that the witness mentioned those retired diesels because I wanted to just come back to that based on some new information I received while we were here this afternoon.

So, page 5-3 of the GRA refers to the diesel retirement replacement. It states that the replacement of the new 20-megawatt greenfield plant was the initial option. In that same section which Yukon Energy Corporation submitted to the Yukon Utilities Board, it goes on to say — and I quote: "In October 2019, it was determined that considering the results of the technical environmental and socio-economic research, as well as public feedback, YEC would focus potential options to

add or replace capacity at existing generation facilities on an incremental basis as diesel engines are retired.

“This includes consideration of the following near term activities: Installation of 5 MW of thermal capacity at the Whitehorse Diesel Plant (P126); Replacement of 5.1 MW of diesel to be retired at the Faro Diesel Plant with a 5 MW diesel unit; Retirement of the existing 2.5 MW of diesel capacity in Dawson City with installation of 2.5 MW of diesel capacity at the Callison Substation.”

Earlier on, when I asked the witness if the corporation was planning approximately 12.5 MW of new diesel construction in the near term, he said that this was “comparing apples to oranges”. However, the GRA lumps the 20-megawatt plant and these smaller projects together, so that is what drew our attention to it. So, I am wondering if perhaps he would like to clarify those comments about these two projects being apples and oranges.

Just going back to my earlier question, can the Energy Corporation confirm that it is planning this 12.5 MW of diesel in the near term, and can the witness also confirm that this spending, which looks to be just under \$7 million, will need to be included in a future GRA?

I am just going to ask one final question, which was the very first question that I asked, to see if the witness has any further information on the 11.5-percent rate increase that was advertised and again mentioned by the minister in this Legislature and mentioned publicly versus what we see in the board order from the Yukon Utilities Board. I’m just curious if the witness has any further information on that.

Mr. Hall: Maybe I will answer those in reverse order. I don’t have any additional information on the GRA. I don’t have any means to get that while I’m sitting here.

In terms of the costs of — going through in reverse order there — the costs of the diesel replacement project, those are being held in WIP. They only are added to the rate base if and when the project gets put into service. I would also point out that the final investment decision on that project has not yet been made. With a project like that, we advance it through stage gates. Our board of directors has approved a certain amount of money for us to advance the project to the next stage gate where a subsequent decision is made on whether to proceed. We are working on the assumption that it will go ahead, but that is always at the discretion of the board at those stage gates to make that decision.

In terms of apples and oranges — again, certainly from the way we view the projects, they are very different. A diesel replacement project — where you are operating under an existing air permit, for example, in an existing brownfield situation — is very different from a greenfield project for 20 megawatts, where you have to go through a YESAB executive committee assessment and get a brand new air permit. I think that, practically, they are very different projects.

In terms of where they leave us in terms of how much capacity we have on the system, a diesel replacement project just catches up for capacity what we would have lost. It doesn’t look to significant additions to fill that gap that we have. In

terms of the way we view how it moves the dial, they are very different.

Mr. Kent: I would like to thank the witnesses for their time here today. I appreciate the exchange that we have had. I left a few questions on the table, but we will work our way through those perhaps with the minister in the remaining days that we have, so again, thank you to Mr. Hall and Mr. Ferbey. I will turn the floor over to my colleague, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, the Leader of the NDP.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just have a quick point that I think is important and that was touched on at the end. There has been a tremendous amount of focus on the diesel generator rentals over the last 40-plus days. Mr. Hall spoke a bit about the standing offer as well as other pieces of the renewable plan. We have talked a lot about the 15 key rentals. Just for clarity today, if Mr. Hall or Mr. Ferbey were comfortable, could they talk about just having our standing offer, which is all of those different renewables — wind, solar, and all the ones that are coming on board, plus the battery with Atlin — what would our reduction be in rentals in the short term versus where we are now?

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for his questions and of course welcome the witnesses here today. Mr. Deputy Chair, it will not surprise you to know that I have a difference of opinion with the Yukon Party when it comes to purchasing diesel generators or renting them because I believe that technology will get us where we’re needing to go, which is going to bring me over to my first question.

The president of the Yukon Development Corporation talked about developing renewable energy projects and partnerships with First Nations. My first question is: What is in the pipes for us as far as new renewable energy projects coming online and relationships with First Nations in developing those?

Mr. Ferbey: Mr. Deputy Chair, I’ll speak about the innovative renewable energy project. We are working with a number of First Nation development corporations, and I will give you a sample of some of the communities that we’re in partnership with in providing support. An example would be Beaver Creek — they’re working on a solar and storage project. Carcross is also looking at a storage and solar project. Dawson City is doing some work on the North Fork, which is potentially a run-of-river hydro project. Destruction Bay and Kluane First Nation have long been working on a wind project. Of course, we’re familiar with Old Crow’s project. They’re also starting to get into the early stages of potentially looking at wind. Pelly Crossing also is looking at wind. Teslin, as we know, has incorporated a biomass project. Watson Lake and the Liard First Nation are looking at solar and storage. Of course, we have heard of the work that is being done by Chu N’iikwān, which is a wind project up on Haeckel Hill. Solvest is also working with a number of First Nations, particularly in the Mayo area, also on solar projects. So, a number of these projects are in the works and people are busily moving them forward to bring them online.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that answer. In that reply, there was mention of the wind project on Haeckel Hill,

which was talked about a number of years ago. Where is that in its development right now?

Mr. Ferbey: That's a project of Chu Níikwān. We understand that they're advancing it and looking at a timeline of this spring. If the timing is different, I would have to talk to the proponent. I would be willing to do so and bring any information if that timeline is different from what I'm saying today.

Ms. White: With the recent announcement that the Yukon Energy Corporation was taking the Southern Lakes enhancement project to YESAB, I wanted to know what has changed. What has changed? I say this in terms of — in 2006, in a *Whitehorse Star* article, the then-president said that they were leaving the project behind. I asked questions between 2011 and 2016 trying to figure out where we are.

How much money has been spent since 2006 when it was said that this project was going to be dropped to date? What has changed? Why is this going to YESAB now?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to clarify a key point on the last question about the Chu Níikwān project. We spent a tremendous amount of time ensuring that funding that is available in the Yukon could be used by development corporations and the First Nation governments and, as well, that those monies could be used on grid. That's key. There has been a lot of work done on the Haeckel Hill project, but I had to work with my colleague, Minister Streicker, in order to make changes at the highest level within the financial structure of the federal government. That work was done, and now Chu Níikwān can access those dollars.

Mr. Hall: Just to respond to the question around the Southern Lakes.

What has changed? I think that a couple of things have changed. We have declared a climate emergency. We've heard very clearly from Yukoners that they want us to develop new sources of renewables, and so we have some urgency around that.

As I've said before, the first place we look at is our existing facilities and maximizing the output of those. This is just one example. Another example would be the operating of the Whitehorse No. 2 turbine that we're currently undertaking, which installs a higher efficiency turbine and gets us more energy and capacity. If that operating is successful, we would look to roll out that kind of incremental increase across our fleet.

What else has changed is — we did go out late last year and into this year and did a further round of public engagement, including conducting, I would argue, a very rigorous survey of not only Southern Lakes residents, but also Yukoners in general, with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics. The information that we got back gave our board some comfort that there was support for this project broadly. Of course, there are residents of the Southern Lakes area who are not supportive of the project. That is quite clear. But overall, if you look at the Southern Lakes property owners, 62 percent were in support of the project. We found that to be very helpful information in terms of making a determination.

I will just point out that the decision that was announced last week was just to prepare the YESAB application. The decision on filing will be a separate decision that will be made in the spring sometime, because we do have a lot of work to do, including work with the relevant First Nations, principally Carcross/Tagish First Nation and Kwanlin Dūn First Nation, to confirm that there are no showstoppers on the project from their perspective.

It's a decision to start preparation of the YESAB application and also to advance the other work that's required to get us to a potential filing next summer.

Ms. White: How many people were contacted by telephone through the Bureau of Statistics? How many people filled in comments?

Mr. Hall: Great question — I don't have the details on the survey. I can certainly revert with those. I believe they should be in the "what we heard" report.

I will comment, however, that the Yukon Bureau of Statistics confirmed that it was a statistically relevant survey. In fact, I think that we sent out two more Yukoners than would be required for statistical significance. In addition, it was sent to every single property owner in the Southern Lakes, so there was no statistical sampling of Southern Lakes residents; it was sent to everyone.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Acting Chair. I apologize for not looking up the first time I said something.

I guess one of the reasons why I'm asking about the Southern Lakes — and I definitely understand the bit about climate, but going through the "what we heard" document and it talking about a thousand responses and then it being an overwhelming amount of Yukoners — I mean, an overwhelming amount of Yukoners are probably not counted from a group of a thousand. So, there are concerns there.

Some concerns that I heard throughout the entire process — having gone to many meetings previously, including the recent ones last fall — it wasn't to do so much with where people's property was; it was concern around the mitigation of erosion around the lakeshore where people didn't live — recognizing that we're talking about Bennett Lake, Tagish Lake, and Marsh Lake. I was curious as to what has changed in that regard. What will the application include, and how will that be addressed?

Mr. Hall: When you take an application like this forward — in terms of looking at where mitigation will be and where we will invest in mitigation — that's based on the science that we have done — the studies of wind and wave erosion patterns, et cetera. There is a scientific basis that drives the identification of those shoreline units that would be, in our view, subject to additional erosion. I mean, there are many areas of the lake that are experiencing natural erosion, so it's all about what is incremental if the project goes ahead. Those properties have been identified.

In terms of other property owners who are not on the list, let's say — what we have committed to is setting up an independent adjudication process. So, if a property owner who didn't get mitigation initially observes some erosion that they believe is related to the project, there would be a process and

they could come forward with a claim. That claim would be adjudicated — and it is best if that's not done by Yukon Energy, obviously — and then a determination would be made as to whether, yes, this is valid — or not.

That is one of the commitments in terms of process that are, we believe, important as an avenue for those concerned residents going forward.

Ms. White: To date, what has been spent on the data collection and the engagement of the Southern Lakes enhancement project?

Mr. Hall: It's approximately \$9 million to date. That goes back about 10 years, I believe.

Ms. White: How much is expected to be put toward the mitigation for lakeside or water shore property?

Mr. Hall: The budget, going forward, is approximately \$8 million. There is some variability around it that will be confirmed through the period between now and when we go in to YESAB because we are going to re-engage with those shoreline unit owners just to confirm their selection of mitigation choices, et cetera, because it will have been a couple years since we last spoke to them. In some cases, we have new property owners who were not part of that process that happened a couple of years back. The number that I have is about \$8 million to complete the project, and that would include the regulatory process, which is both YESAB and the Water Board.

Ms. White: Typically, how much would the corporation look at spending on a consultation process of a project before walking away?

Mr. Hall: It's a very hard question to answer. We have not made a decision to walk away, so I can't really respond to that question in this context.

Ms. White: What we could do is that we could compare it to other programs or other projects, for example.

The reason why I'm asking is that it has been since 2006 that the engagement has been ongoing. Through an entire process, except for this last one that happened in 2019, it has been overwhelmingly not positive. Knowing that the final number that the witness has just said — \$17 million — would involve the mitigation of the shore properties and that includes the \$9 million in engagement that has happened so far, I'm just wondering — \$9 million — is that kind of a number that I can expect for the Moon Lake project, prospective wind projects, or the battery project? Is that the kind of money we can look at the corporation spending to get the community to yes?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just for clarity, I will leave the witness to answer the question, but one thing that we have debated in the House — me and the member opposite — has been around the fact that there was absolutely millions and millions of dollars. I think the number I quoted today was \$6- or \$7 million previously; it might be higher. I was asked this by the member — as I understood it, and the witnesses can clarify it: The Energy Corporation had an obligation to go back through this process in order to finalize this with rates — so there has been millions of dollars spent, as the member opposite has said, but when those costs were brought to the Yukon Utilities

Board, the board said to go back and complete this process to conclude this project. I think that is key to this.

The money that was spent by the previous government is sitting there. It is sort of in a place where it is either booked or not booked, but the work that is underway right now is key to that. Of course, there are the concerns that were touched on by Mr. Hall around where we are in climate change, the state of emergency, and other items. That all has to be contemplated through this process.

Mr. Hall: Just to pick up on the point that was just made, in the 2009 GRA, the YUB did instruct us to go back and continue work on the project. They kind of viewed it as a good project — economic versus the next-best alternative, which, as I pointed out earlier, is the diesel or thermal benchmark. It continues to be an economic project. That provides some context to the sandbox that we are playing in from a regulatory perspective.

I would just point — I just want to confirm that the members are aware of these numbers. We hold the Yukon Bureau of Statistics in the highest regard in terms of the way in which they conduct their surveys. When they say something is statistically significant and relevant, we believe them, so I will just reiterate the numbers: 62 percent of Southern Lakes property owners support the project as do 77 percent of Whitehorse residents and 61 percent of residents in other Yukon communities. In terms of looking at an energy project in the Yukon context, we thought that there was very important information to take into account, and to characterize and say that the majority of Yukoners oppose this project — I don't believe that there is any data evidence in the numbers — data-driven evidence — to suggest that.

In terms of the broader context — yes, climate change emergency — we hear routinely that Yukoners want us to develop new sources of renewables. There are a number of different avenues that we are exploring. Mr. Ferbey outlined some that are coming through the IPP program, but here we have one that we have spent a significant amount of money on already. It doesn't require any significant infrastructure investment other than the shoreline and groundwater mitigation that I spoke about. We don't have to go out and build a new dam or flood a new valley. So, from a number of perspectives, as long as it is economic and we have First Nations — who are decision bodies in front of YESAB on the project — are supportive, it has a number of attractive attributes that really explain the decision to move forward and prepare the YESAB submission.

Ms. White: So, the \$17 million — between the \$9 million that have been spent to date and the millions in mitigation — what is the payback time that is expected in savings? How long will it take before we are even?

Mr. Hall: Mr. Deputy Chair, the way that we present those economics to the regulator is in terms of what is called the "levelized cost of energy". We don't typically work in payback terms, but it is all around what is the cost of the energy that you get from the project. Again, the benchmark and our regulatory framework — the cost of thermal generation — the

current analysis that we have is lower cost energy than the thermal benchmark.

Ms. White: Moving to Faro and the generators that have gone in there — one of the concerns that has been brought out of the community of Faro is a concern over noise. As an example, in this YESAB application, it says: “At the beginning of the question period, an attendee brought up the issue of noise, ‘it sounded like a jet engine,’ and stated that this would likely be a big concern for the community. Yukon Energy said 1 decibel difference, and even if this is to be believed, it is significant...” They said, “The non-math result: Generators could be heard inside the house when the windows closed.” Outside, they got the feeling that they were living near an airport.

How does Yukon Energy plan on mitigating the issue of noise in the community of Faro?

Mr. Hall: At this time, the estimates that we have are that the noise compared to the current engines that are in Faro are within one decibel, which I would argue is probably within the measurement area of the devices used to measure that noise — I think equivalent to the current diesel plant we have in Faro.

In terms of mitigation, we don’t have any firm plans around mitigating noise. I think it’s important to point out that, other than — what’s the frequency that we’re going to be running these units at up in Faro? They will be subject to monthly run-ups. Every month, we run them for probably an hour just to make sure that they’re operable.

Then, the only other case would be extreme cold weather. If we have minus 35 in Whitehorse, we would probably be running the units in Faro, but it’s not a foregone conclusion. Then, of course, if we have an emergency situation which is really the primary driver of why those rentals are in our fleet to begin with.

Ms. White: That’s helpful. Having spent time in Faro, it’s a super quiet community and you notice the noise. It was brought up by a resident there.

One of the questions or discussions that we’ve had often — the witnesses and I — is around smart meters or a smart grid. I know that one of the challenges has been in front of the YUB for that. With the peak smart program that has gone out with the residential demand-side management, I’m just wondering if that is maybe a step toward a smart grid or smart meters?

Mr. Hall: Mr. Deputy Chair, I think at this time we don’t have any firm plans to roll out smart meters. I think what’s interesting is that technology is evolving to the point that maybe smart meters aren’t really required to get a lot of the benefits that we’re looking for in terms of utility control of devices.

For example, the member referenced the peak smart program. There, we are using Internet-enabled devices and technology to essentially control — the people who sign up — their hot water tanks and baseboard heaters — no need for a smart meter. So, it could be that a lot of these programs or the DSM programs that we are planning to roll out could be executed without going to the formal route of a smart meter. What smart meters do help with is something like time-of-use rates and more advanced rate schedules, which we’ve looked at from time to time, but again, we don’t really have any plans to

move forward with. Getting a new rate schedule is an extremely complex regulatory process to go through. But I think our focus right now is on DSM programs that we can execute through Internet-enabled control.

Ms. White: With that peak smart, there was the hope that there would be 400 homes for each — the baseboard heaters and the water heaters. Was that program fully utilized?

Mr. Hall: Yes. Actually, through COVID, we had an amazing response through the summer, and we are fully subscribed. Obviously, when you get to that number of volunteers, not everyone follows through, and actually, in some cases, folks have had legitimate concerns around granting access to their homes through COVID to the contractors. So, I wouldn’t say that we have 400 installs right now, but there are certainly 400 people on the books to roll it out to.

Ms. White: Fantastic; thank you. I thank the witness for the answer. I can say that it was a painless process when they came to install the meter on my hot water tank. I believe that, if you want to figure it out, you have to participate. So, that is why I was there.

With the two-year pilot program, what is the plan for once that program is finished? How will the data be utilized to plan future decisions?

Mr. Hall: Yes. The whole idea of a pilot is to gather data on a whole range of things but focusing on two areas. What is the quantum of the peak that we can avoid? And ultimately, you get to a per-household reduction, but then you multiply that out by how many households you think you could sign up.

What is the user experience? Because what you’re doing is essentially — when that evening peak is arriving, you are pre-heating the home by a few degrees and then letting it cool down as the peak comes and goes — which is a user experience at the end of the day. There is an important piece of data around — is there any discomfort through that? Likewise, with a hot water tank — do you notice any cooling off of the water, or is it really imperceptible? So, we’ll take those two bits of information together and look at if you can build an economic case for a permanent program. What that would look like is basically a permanent installation in your home and then potentially some financial compensation for participants to sign up. There would actually be a financial incentive to participate in a permanent program.

Ms. White: The witness mentioned other demand-side management prospects in the future. Can he share with us what some of those might look like?

Mr. Hall: The specific design of the programs is still to be done, so I can’t say for sure what that suite will look like. As outlined in *Our Clean Future* — the energy and climate change strategy — there is a requirement for us to collaborate with Yukon government’s Energy branch of the delivery of those programs just to make sure that there is no duplication of programs, just to be efficient.

But in general, the Yukon government’s programs broadly are focused on energy — so reducing energy consumption — whereas our programs will be focused on, again, that peak mitigation — so reducing peak demand. Basically, they are going to involve programs that switch off devices at certain

times of the day — that would be the easy way to understand it. What those devices are and how it works remains to be seen, but that's the general idea. Every megawatt of peak that we can avoid is a megawatt that we don't have to go and build somewhere else.

Mr. Ferbey: Maybe I will add one piece because it's important to the demand-side management work that YEC is doing. One of the constraints in the past — and they saw that in the 2017-18 GRA — was some of the demand-side management costs not being included. The utility spoke about it in the decision — not prudently incurred. This is one of the pieces that YDC has been tasked to work on — an OIC amendment that will address renewable energy costs and, of course, demand-side management. We're looking at having that in place — most of the drafting is done — very early in the new year to present to the minister for that OIC potential amendment and government's consideration on demand-side management.

Ms. White: That is exciting news. Is Yukon Energy Corporation or YDC working at all with the Yukon Conservation Society with their electric thermal storage pilot project?

Mr. Hall: There is potential to add a utility-control component to that pilot. I actually had a call with YCS this morning just to get an update. Right now, I believe that they're just starting the rollout. I think that there are three installations with another five scheduled for the next few months. Right now, they're just on a fixed time of day that the ETS charges and discharges. Eventually, we can get more sophisticated than that and actually trigger the charge-discharge from our control room. That would be the idea, but it's not part of the initial — I would say — year, at least, of the pilot.

Ms. White: There are some exciting things happening on the east coast of Canada where the utility owns the ETS system, so they're used as battery storage in the interim — fascinating things that can happen on that side.

In 2012, YEC said that the increase — when they were talking about an energy rate increase — will allow us to continue our work securing a sustainable energy future for Yukoners. That was in 2012. Unfortunately, I would suggest that there hasn't been a huge amount of renewable energy brought to the grid since then.

What is driving the current energy rate increase? We talked a bit about the general increase application. It is 441 pages, to be fair. It takes quite a bit of time to go through. We've heard the number "11.5" and then we've heard "17.1". Within that concern is the question of rate shock and what that is.

If, in 2012, YEC said that it was to allow us to continue renewable projects, what is included in this rate application?

Mr. Hall: If you look at the breakdown of the rate drivers of this current GRA, about half of it is related to capital investments. Those are driven by two things. The one is what I call the "sustaining capital". It's the capital that we need to invest just to keep our system running.

As we all know, we have an asset base that was built starting in the 1950s and through the 1970s. Those assets are getting to end of life, and we have very concrete examples of

what that looks like. It's not particularly sexy stuff, but it's absolutely critical. Some examples of projects that are going into rate base and that are significant are — over the last three years, we have been refurbishing our transmission line backbone. That would be the transmission line from Aishihik through to Whitehorse-Carmacks-Faro. That transmission line was built in the 1970s. Those poles don't last forever. The insulators don't last forever. We have been chipping away at that over the last three years, but they are significant dollars in terms of investment. There is a piece of the capital that we don't talk about a lot, but it is significant to what we are essentially bringing to rate.

In terms of on the new supply side, one of the key projects that is being brought to rate in this application is the Whitehorse No. 2 operating project. I talked about that earlier. That is an example of trying to squeeze more energy out of our existing facilities. I would argue that this turbine is getting old as well, so you get a bit of a double benefit. You can get more output and replace it with a brand new turbine. That is a significant project. It has been completed and will be brought to rate next year.

I think that capital is about half of the driver of this rate increase. It is a feature that we see across Canada. A lot of utilities are in a position similar to us where not only do they have aging infrastructure, but they are also needing to invest in more generation, either for growth or just to bring more renewables online. That combination really does put us in a tough spot. The capital investments are significant, and in the absence of federal funding, ratepayers pay for that.

Ms. White: When we look at Yukon Energy and supplying energy to mines, it says that Yukon Energy has an obligation, within reason, to serve all customers who hook up to the grid. When we are talking about mines, what does "within reason" mean? We have the example today of how Diavik was put on wind generation — that was an example that I have used for years — and now knowing that they have put in a battery, which north of the 60th parallel is a pretty big deal.

So, that is an example of an industrial user that is actually producing their own energy, so what is within reason when we talk about Yukon Energy having an obligation to supply customers?

Mr. Hall: That's a really tough question to answer. If I look at our existing industrial customers — Minto has been a customer for several years now. Alexco is looking to re-enter operation, but they have an existing power-purchase agreement, so that's a legal contract between us and them around the supply of electricity.

Certainly, if you want to focus on the Victoria Gold grid connection, they paid for the spur line. They will pay, through the fixed charge, a contribution toward the Mayo-McQuesten cost, as will Alexco. Those mining customers pay toward that infrastructure billed out to serve them.

We went through the analysis and presented that to the Yukon Utilities Board in terms of what that was going to do to rates. It certainly wasn't the rate driver in terms of incrementally for Victoria Gold to join the grid. Perhaps the next mine will be a tough situation, but frankly, with three

hardrock mines prospectively connected this year, it's hard to know what that next mine is going to be. There's nothing immediately on the horizon. There are a bunch of off-grid mines that seem to be moving through the regulatory process, but nothing on grid that we have seen — at least in the next 10 years, because it really takes 10 years to permit and build a mine. I would argue that there's not really an on-grid mine out there that's even in that 10-year cycle right now. But the next mine that joins the grid may be a more challenging conversation, depending on how much in renewables we have on the system at that time.

Ms. White: I have just one last question and then I'll stand down. Has the LNG facility been living up to its expectation? Has it run smoothly? Have there been any large repairs? What's the status of the LNG facility?

Mr. Hall: I think I relayed some of the data on the LNG plant. In 2018, 30 gigawatt hours out of that plant versus seven out of diesel, and last year, 66 gigawatt hours versus 3.8 from diesel.

I think that just shows the point that it is our first-on thermal facility, and we run it in preference — that is what that means — and then the data shows that. We really run diesel when the LNG plant is already on.

In terms of the reliability of the system, we have had some issues with the engines. We had some issues earlier this year when one of the valve stems, which is a piece of the engine, broke and dropped into the cylinder and caused some damage. We had a couple of units out of commission for quite an extended period. I will comment, however, that the units are long out of warranty, and yet the supplier is picking up about 75 percent of those costs. We have had very good support from Jenbacher and their subsequent new owners in terms of aftermarket support for the engines. They have been very supportive in terms of financially not exposing us to significant costs.

Deputy Chair: The time now is 5:30 p.m. The time designated for the appearance of witnesses, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 7, has now expired.

The Chair shall, on behalf of the Committee, offer our thanks to Justin Ferbey, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Development Corporation, and Andrew Hall, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Energy Corporation, for appearing as witnesses today.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to thank the witnesses for coming in today and being available to the opposition, as well as our chair, who is here — Ms. Cabott — as well as Mr. Pemberton, who is following us today — a thank you to him. These folks have worked tirelessly on behalf of Yukoners. As well, Yukon Energy Corporation staff and the team there — when things are as cold as they possibly can be and weather is as bad as it possibly can be, those are the folks inside and outside of that organization who are out there ensuring that we are looked after. Thank you to those folks today as well.

Witnesses excused

Deputy Chair: The Chair shall now rise and report to the House.

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

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 7 adopted earlier today, witnesses appeared before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation.

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.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The Chair will now provide a ruling respecting the application of Standing Order 19(f) of the Yukon Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders. I thank the House for your indulgence. I had received a fair bit of information from the Member for Lake Laberge, which had to be processed, and I received some research from the Clerks-at-the-Table.

Earlier in today's proceedings, the Member for Lake Laberge raised a point of order regarding whether Motion No. 387, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North, should be debated in this House as the member contended that it would be contrary to Standing Order 19(f), our sub judice rule.

Motion No. 387 reads as follows: "THAT this House supports the Yukon Energy Corporation's *10-Year Renewable Electricity Plan Technical Report*."

Sub judice conventions across Canada, including in Yukon, exist so that matters before the courts are not discussed in the Legislative Assembly in order to not prejudice matters before the courts. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states that the sub judice convention maintains the "separation and mutual respect between the legislative and judicial branches of government." However, interestingly — and I quote: "The interpretation of this convention is left to the Speaker since no rule exists to prevent Parliament from discussing a matter which is sub judice." In Yukon, as in all legislatures across Canada, no attempt has ever been made to strictly codify the practice.

In the matter I am deciding today, an application process is held before the Yukon Utilities Board, established under the *Public Utilities Act*, where the applicant — in this case, the Yukon Energy Corporation — has a general rate application before the board. The question is whether the Yukon Utilities Board is, in fact, a court as contemplated in Standing Order 19(f) of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

It is the Chair's view that this would be a significant and dramatic expansion of the definition of a "court". The Yukon Utilities Board does not function as trial court or really as an appellate court either, as the matters before it are largely those of public policy and the setting of a reasonable rate of return on equity.

I note, as well, that the matters which the Yukon Utilities Board considers have been debated extensively in this Chamber during periods when general rate applications have previously been before the board and, in fact, at various times during this Sitting, including today.

I am therefore of the opinion that the Standing Order 19(f) sub judice exclusion does not apply in this case. Motion No. 387 can therefore be debated tomorrow.

Speaker: The time being 5:36 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

The following documents were filed December 15, 2020:

34-3-42

10-Year Renewable Electricity Plan Technical Report — December 2020 — Yukon Energy Corporation (Pillai)

34-3-43

Improving support for Yukon's EMS volunteers, letter re (dated December 21, 2018) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Community Services (Cathers)

34-3-44

Yukon EMS Rural Coverage and Issues, letter re (dated February 19, 2019) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Community Services (Cathers)

34-3-45

Yukon EMS Rural Coverage and Issues, letter re (dated March 27, 2019) from Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Community Services, to Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge (Cathers)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 81

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, December 16, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, December 16, 2020 — 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

Ms. Hanson: I ask my fellow members of the Legislature to join me in welcoming Mary Whitley, Hilary Wilkinson, Laura Beattie, Linda Stratis, Chris Rider, Jan Stick, François Picard, along with family and friends who are listening online for the tribute to Gerry Whitley, another familiar visitor to this Legislative Assembly.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon I would like to welcome: Greg Paquin, the eastern area superintendent; Greg Eikland, the acting western area superintendent; Rick Neumann, lead hand, Whitehorse grader station; Dan Shevchenko, foreman of the Whitehorse grader station; and Shelby Workman, director of the Transportation and Maintenance branch. They are joining us here for the tribute to highway crews this afternoon.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Gerry Whitley

Ms. White: I rise today on behalf of the Legislative Assembly and all Yukoners to pay tribute to Gerry Whitley.

Gerry will be remembered by many in this Assembly for his dedication to the House and, more importantly, to democracy. In my first five years here, he sat in the gallery to listen to Question Period. Gerry was particularly passionate about protecting the Peel and believed that democracy was at risk. For those five years, sitting with various friends, he proudly wore his “Protect the Peel” T-shirt while observing and taking notes. He knew that it was important to be here and bear witness to the work of government and of all parties in the people’s place. His presence and persistence meant a great deal to me, as I truly never felt like I was alone at work.

If our caucus had questions about aerodromes, water, or anything in his wheelhouse, Gerry was our go-to guy. He was happy to share his knowledge and insights to inform discussions that could result in better decisions.

The oldest of four siblings, Gerry was born in Vancouver and raised in the Kootenays. He came to the Yukon in the late 1960s, first as an assayer for the Faro mine and then as a water

quality specialist for the federal government in Whitehorse. He immediately fell in love with the raw and fragile beauty of the Yukon and her people. He shared that love with his wife, Mary, and daughters, Moriah and Rebecca. Avid outdoor enthusiasts, Gerry and his family traversed much of the Yukon, Alaska, BC, and the Northwest Territories on foot, by car, by ski, by canoe, and often by air.

A dedicated husband and kind father, Gerry embodied service to others in all that he did. He was incredibly proud of Mary and her many accomplishments — often adding his efforts to her interests, such as bird-watching and her own conservation interests. He and Mary travelled near and far seeking out birding experiences and were always happy to share knowledge and to encourage others to contribute citizen science through events like the breeding bird survey and bird counts.

His service values inspired both of his daughters to public service and volunteerism, and they carry his strong ethics and deep love with them always. His calm and pragmatic approach led them through the challenges and opportunities that life brings as he helped them to work the problem and always looked to find the bright side of any situation.

His intelligence and analytical mind are evident in his contributions to many publications, studies, articles, and reports focused on improving and preserving water quality in the north and across Canada. His body of work is still used professionally and academically, and he was honoured to mentor many students and junior staff to pursue environmental protection through science.

In 2019, he was honoured by the Yukon Conservation Society when he received the Gerry Couture award. His work in the early days of water regulation in the Yukon as well as his conscientious approach to doing the right things, no matter the resistance, should be an inspiration to all of us. Likewise, he was inspired by those around him, and he followed a career path of many colleagues and friends, including myself, expressing his pride in their passions and progress in their chosen fields.

When looking back at Gerry’s life, I am struck by how many facets there were to him and his huge contributions to the Yukon over his lifetime. Many will know Gerry from his volunteer activities around sports — particularly biathlon, cross-country skiing, and orienteering — or maybe recognize him from his regular attendance at the Canada Games Centre.

Maybe you or someone you know benefitted from some of the prostate cancer support work that he undertook, creating and maintaining peer-to-peer supports and sharing information.

Perhaps you know him through his efforts and interest in astronomy, in particular, his excitement about and research into local First Nation knowledge about astronomy. He participated in every opportunity, such as those through the Beringia Centre, to engage both adults and children in learning about the universe.

Maybe you came to know him through his tireless work with the Civilian Air Search and Rescue Association where both he and Mary volunteered in many searches and exercises over the years. The Civilian Air Search and Rescue Association and all Yukoners had the benefit of his flying prowess and of

his and Mary's knowledge of the Yukon landscape and their keen eyes. His legacy continues with both his plane and his co-pilot, Dave Downing, now leading the charge.

Perhaps you have heard of his connection to flying through Operation Mike and his significant efforts to revitalize a search for a downed plane and the 44 passengers lost in 1950. He successfully marshalled public, private, and military involvement in redoubling these efforts. This event is now being covered by a documentary filmmaker in a work called *Skymaster Down*.

Maybe you have seen photographs taken from his plane, either by himself or by the conservation photographers whom he flew through LightHawk to document the environmental impacts of development and exploration. These images helped us all to understand the real impacts on areas like Eagle Plains and the Faro mine site and understand the potential downstream effects on areas like the wetlands north of Watson Lake and ice at M'Clintock Bay. Making science real and accessible was truly one of Gerry's many gifts.

You may know Gerry through one or more of these things, but you might not know that he loved Greek mythology and the universal lessons that it conveyed, that he followed economics, politics, and medical science developments among others, that he read science fiction, military history, and biographies — he especially loved the works of great scientists and thinkers — and that he homebrewed beer before it was cool and often made sourdough bread for friends and family — in true Gerry fashion, embracing each endeavour with curiosity and interest.

Everyone who met him will know his warmth, wit, and keen mind, which perhaps shone most brightly when delivering his dry and on-point one-liners — all with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. With all of his tireless efforts, it was an honour and a joy to receive his impromptu office visits, his easily offered insights, and, most of all, his friendship.

Last year, shortly after learning about his diagnosis, Gerry and his family attended our office Christmas party, and he proudly showed off his new tattoo — a black-capped chickadee to match the one that his daughter Rebecca has in his honour. This was a “bucket-list thing”, he said with his wide smile, and just one of the many things he had to do. Next on his list was inspiring the Yukon Transportation Museum to install a bench in honour of all the pilots who have flown and been lost in the north — another check mark on a very long list of achievements.

In true Gerry fashion, he wouldn't have listed these as his accomplishments, but rather simply service to the greater good, and we are sincerely grateful for his efforts and generosity. Like the water that he fought so hard to protect, his spirit runs through the Yukon, and we join Mary, his family, and his friends in mourning his loss.

Applause

In recognition of highways maintenance crews

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: 'Twas the night before Christmas
when all through Yukon

Not a road crew was sleeping, just doing some recon

The mountains were swaddled with snow from the storms
that risk to our highways is often the norm

Our crews had been bracing all through this winter waiting
and watching for snow-caps to splinter

Come early it did with speed and a mood ferocious and
angry

Really quite rude

Snow tumbled and drifted piled on high

Some even say it reached the sky

But without hesitation, misstep or a doubt

Our crews hit the road

Rah rah with a shout

Today, on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government, we celebrate everyone responsible for keeping our territory's roads and highways safe and clear. Last year, I mentioned the challenge that our changing weather is posing to road crews. Unfortunately, more erratic and extreme weather events may be the new norm. Recently, parts of Yukon received more than 40 centimetres of snow, breaking records. Then, two weeks ago, we saw another 20 centimetres. Then temperatures soared, creating a slippery, soupy mess. Then it got cold again.

Territorial and Whitehorse road crews rose to these challenges, as they always do, dealing with the snow, slush, and ice without pause. These crews keep our remote northern highways and roads in tip-top shape around the clock all winter long.

I want to highlight the highway crews working the mountain passes on the roads to Skagway and Haines. It is always challenging and dangerous work throughout the winter. This year, however, has been especially crazy, with huge amounts of snow accumulating quickly, triggering 12 avalanches in the process. The pictures from the department would make you gape.

So, thank you to our road crews, drivers, mechanics, labourers, and other support staff for keeping our territory's road network open and safe during the coldest months of the year.

They work day and night

Their lights all aglow

Pushing through heaps of heavy white snow

Ice black as night, snow tough as rock

Limited light, the coffee was not

As they do daily throughout the year

Our road crews head out to give the all-clear

This year has been harder, pandemic and weather

Partners in crime, plotting together

But the crews work hard, no matter the conditions

While we all sleep soundly, they work the transmissions

So, Mr. Speaker, alas, I will take another second or two

To thank our incredible road crews

They matter, they count, they're tough as can be

And it's thanks to our crews we get to see thee.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: It is an honour to rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition as well as the Third Party to pay tribute to the men and women who work tirelessly to maintain our roads throughout the year.

This work, of course, ensures that we and our visitors alike can travel safely throughout our beautiful territory. These folks have persevered through these unprecedented times of COVID and, of course, the crazy weather. From record snowfalls followed by days of rain, the roads for the most part were kept open and passable. The opposition parties thank you for your dedication to Yukoners and the Yukon roads.

To show our appreciation, I previously put forward a motion to enact “slow down, move over” legislation to help protect you and others on our roads. Unfortunately, the government chose not to proceed with this legislation. We have asked the minister to ensure that you are equipped with more four-wheel-drive pickups to make your job safer on the treacherous roads — but again, no interest.

We have pressed the minister on what he calls “efficiencies” and I call “cuts”, but to no avail. We have asked the minister not to close Central Stores so that your time could be better spent maintaining our roads rather than going on trips to town for supplies — but yet again, road blocks. Yet even with these unnecessary challenges thrown your way, you continue to push on and dedicate your lives to keeping our roads open, ensuring that we can travel in comfort and safety, and for that, we thank you.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling a legislative return in response to questions from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Again, today I have for tabling another document outlining ministerial travel to communities over the previous four years.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I have for tabling three legislative returns in response to questions that arose during Committee of the Whole on November 24, 2020. The first is in response to questions from the Member for Kluane regarding the creation and expansion of campgrounds in the *Yukon Parks Strategy*. The second is in response to questions from the Member for Kluane regarding special guide licences. The third legislative return is in response to questions from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King regarding the Yukon wetlands strategy.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House condemns the comments made today by federal Conservative leader Erin O’Toole regarding residential schools; and

THAT this House calls on the Yukon Party to tell Yukoners whether it continues to support Mr. O’Toole, given these troubling comments.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Hon. Ms. Frost: The relationship that indigenous people in northern Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Alaska have with the Porcupine caribou herd is an essential part of indigenous culture that has provided immense value to communities across the north for thousands of years.

The deep cultural importance of the Porcupine caribou herd was recognized in a 1987 agreement between Canada and the United States that helps define a collaborative approach to ensure the herd’s conservation. For many years, the Porcupine caribou herd represented a growing example of international collaboration. Unfortunately, I can no longer say that this is the case.

The record of decision released in August 2020 by the United States Secretary of the Interior has opened the entire 1002 area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, or ANWR, for oil and gas development. This decision goes against the spirit of the Canada-US agreement and significantly reduces protection measures. It does not work to avoid or minimize activities that would significantly disrupt migration of the herd.

The Government of Yukon, along with our Canadian counterparts and our partners, has consistently maintained that development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge poses a significant risk to the Porcupine caribou herd and its habitat. A 2009 report indicated that development within the 1002 area could result in a 17-percent decline in the Porcupine caribou herd’s population size over 10 years.

Now the United States has received the first application for exploration work on the coastal plain. It is going through a permitting assessment, and we are submitting our comments into that process. The Government of Yukon will continue to stand in solidarity with our indigenous partners, advocating for the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd’s sacred and sensitive calving grounds on the Alaskan coastal plain.

I would like to acknowledge the great strength of indigenous leaders, partners, and partner organizations in gaining commitment from international banks to stop oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This week, we learned that all major Canadian banks have committed to not funding exploration or drilling in ANWR. They join major international banks, including JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, Barclays, and Royal Bank of Scotland. I want to thank these banks for hearing the call of the

indigenous people who have relied on the Porcupine caribou herd for millennia.

As a government, we continue to provide support and financial assistance to Vuntut Gwitchin to support their advocacy efforts to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, including our continued support through this year's fiscal budgets and, as well, through our continued support through the Department of Environment and through the Executive Council Office.

Additionally, the partners of the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* continue to undertake important work to support protecting and conserving all critical calving, post-calving, and summer habitat in Yukon for the herd.

Despite the setbacks with the current US government, we will continue to work with our partners to advocate for the conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd and the critical habitat that they depend on.

Mahsi', Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this important issue today. I thank the minister for this update and keeping us in the loop on this.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this House unanimously passed a motion on May 3, 2017, expressing our support for the Vuntut Gwitchin on this issue. We were happy to support the motion then and speak in support of the Vuntut Gwitchin on this issue at the time, and I am happy to do so again today. When we passed the motion three years ago, I felt that it was a strong sign of support from the House. I felt that we had a very good discussion that day on the topic. This is an area of great importance to the Vuntut Gwitchin, both culturally and historically. That is something important that we all agree on in this House. They have maintained a healthy, balanced dependence on the herd for thousands of years, Mr. Speaker.

The previous MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin many times — to me in private and in this House — eloquently described this relationship in the words of many elders — and I quote: "Caribou are our life. Without caribou we wouldn't exist." Those are great words, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, there is a lot to say on this topic and on the importance of the Porcupine caribou. I don't have enough time today, so, in closing, I would just reiterate that we support the government's efforts here. In the spirit of working together, I know that my colleagues and I would be interested in a technical briefing with department officials on this topic and the Yukon's efforts to date and going forward.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition supported in 2017 the unanimous motion to support the Vuntut Gwitchin in their efforts surrounding ANWR and the protection of the Porcupine caribou, and I would like to reiterate that support today. This was an important issue to be unified on in the spring and it is just as important today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for updating the House today on this issue.

Ms. White: There is a beautiful history in the resiliency of the Gwich'in people and their conviction to protect the

calving grounds and the migration routes of the Porcupine caribou herd not just for themselves, but for the entire human family. Any oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would also have significant and devastating impacts in Canada, as the Porcupine caribou herd transcends borders created by governments.

For millennia, the Porcupine caribou herd has moved across the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Alaska. Just as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has sustained the Porcupine caribou herd, the herd in turn sustains Gwich'in communities across the north in Alaska, Yukon, and the NWT. With the news coming out of the US this week, it is more important than ever to join our voices to the already powerful chorus of opposition to oil and gas development in the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We must not allow this wild place to be destroyed for short-term gains.

We applaud the sustained effort of those, along with national and international allies — that today include not only environmental organizations, but also major financial institutions in Canada, the US, and Europe — who have refused to give in to the pressure to allow the fossil-fuel industry to open the sacred area to drilling. As we welcome the words of the Yukon government's minister extolling the support shared by the Yukon NDP for the preservation of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Porcupine caribou herd, we also note that, despite calling on other governments to stand down on oil and gas development in environmentally sensitive areas, this Yukon government continues to deliver contradictory messages.

What is good for the planet and good for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is apparently not necessary in Yukon.

So, as we look toward the actions of our neighbours with distrust around their oil and gas actions, when do we turn that lens inward? One clear example of this is the Premier's mandate letter to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, which sees him promoting oil and gas development outside the Whitehorse Trough. This simple directive from the Premier raises so many questions. Does this government believe that the promotion of oil and gas development is good as long as it's not in populated areas? Does the promotion of oil and gas development by Yukon preclude the completion of the constitutional obligations to complete land use plans? Is the promotion of oil and gas development in Yukon consistent with this Yukon government's stated commitment to renewable energy?

We encourage the government to demonstrate unassailable solidarity with the Gwich'in peoples by clearly stating that Yukon is not open to oil and gas development. Failing this, the Yukon government's words ring hollow.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to thank the members opposite for their comments today, keeping with the solidarity and keeping with the vision of the Gwich'in Nation. As we go ahead and proceed to try to protect the most pristine wilderness area in North America, we want to ensure that we look toward our partners in not politicizing the effort. I think that what we're trying to do here is to deliver a message to indicate that this is

not just a Vuntut Gwitchin issue; this is a national and international issue, and that's demonstrated in what we're seeing now — historic times, for sure.

We have indicated historically the significance of the Porcupine caribou herd to the nations and the lifeblood that it provides. With respect to keeping in the loop, I would suggest that the issue is very much alive and well and has been in the media consistently. We have been advocating and working very diligently with our partners with respect to environmental values and significance.

What we are doing here is not to impose any contradictory messages with sustainability and development. What we are looking toward, in our mandate, is to look at ensuring, first and foremost, that we protect our environment and that we protect the iconic Porcupine caribou herd, and that is the objective of the ministerial statement — to speak about the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, not to put a mandate forward that the Third Party perhaps wants to put on the floor today.

I would like to just reiterate that we have an opportunity to work together and to counter the position that was just recently put forward by the United States government and now, just recently, Governor Dunleavy, who introduced legislation to try to protect Alaska's economy and promote oil and gas development — just this week, in fact.

So, the objective is that the Arctic Refuge — it has been 60 years since the refuge was established as a protected area. We have been closely involved in the efforts to protect this sacred area and have been advocating for that for over 30 years. I am pleased to say that, during my year of advocacy and my time on the file, I now have young people from my community taking up the leadership role and advocating for protection of the Arctic Refuge.

Back in the 1990s, when I was travelling to the United States seeking support from legislators to protect the Arctic Refuge, my fellow Gwich'in citizens and I had support from environmentalists and conservation groups. That still continues today, and that is what we are seeing in terms of resistance on potential development — significant importance there.

It has been encouraging to see the growing support from various groups — including banks — who have declared that they will not be supporting oil and gas extraction of this precious area. The recent actions of the United States government and the State of Alaska's response to the banks, however, are very disappointing.

It is essential that protection of this sacred land is respected, valued, and honoured. Oil and gas drilling would have devastating effects on the wildlife and threaten this fragile landscape. The Porcupine caribou herd is already feeling the impacts of climate change on their migratory patterns. It is imperative that we band together and take full leadership and move to protect the Arctic Refuge.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Ombudsman request for information

Mr. Cathers: This morning, CBC reported that the Yukon's Ombudsman is taking the government to court for refusing to hand over documents for an investigation. The Ombudsman is seeking documents with respect to a complaint at Family and Children's Services, yet the government has so far refused to provide that documentation.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us why she will not hand over these documents to the Ombudsman?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Government of Yukon has received notice of this petition. I think that it was maybe even the member opposite yesterday who brought up the concept of a court matter and how it's not appropriately discussed here in the Legislative Assembly, so, as the matter is before the courts, we will not be providing any further comment. We have full confidence that the matter will be resolved through the process that has been chosen.

Mr. Cathers: As mentioned, Yukon's Ombudsman is taking the government to court for refusing to share information. The Ombudsman is an independent officer of this Legislative Assembly, and the Minister of Health and Social Services is named in the legal action. This Liberal government has developed a well-earned reputation of secrecy, withholding information, and a lack of transparency.

Will the Liberals stop their policy of hiding information from Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I might graciously ask that you would ask the member opposite to speak up; I'm not sure I heard all of the words in his question. We've said before — I think it's the tone of his voice that's difficult to hear sometimes on this side. That being said —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Apparently, he can talk just well enough through what I'm saying.

The government has received notice of this application — the notice of the petition that has been filed with the court. The court is the appropriate place for this matter to be resolved. That has been chosen by the plaintiff in the matter. The matter, as it's before the court — it is not appropriate, pursuant to our Standing Orders — and any other comments that might somehow influence that situation — for this matter to be discussed on the floor of this House, so I won't be providing any further comment.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, the minister can cite all the excuses she wants, but the fact is that the Yukon's Ombudsman, who is an officer of this Legislative Assembly, is taking the government to court for refusing to share information with her. The Ombudsman is an independent officer of this Assembly. The Minister of Health and Social Services is named in the legal action.

We know that this Liberal government has developed a well-earned reputation for secrecy, withholding information, and a lack of transparency, and we just saw it from the minister again.

Will the Liberals stop their policy of hiding information from Yukoners, and rather than going to court with this

independent officer of the Assembly, will the government just agree to share the information with her?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will repeat again, for the benefit of Yukoners, that the Government of Yukon has received notice of this petition. There is clearly a dispute. It has been brought before the courts of this territory, appropriately so, by the parties. The matter will be resolved in those courts. As a result, we won't be providing any further comment. It would not be appropriate to do so. In fact, it would be contrary to the Standing Orders for us to comment any further or for me to comment any further. The matter is before the Yukon courts and it will be resolved there. We have great confidence.

Question re: Yukon First Nation procurement policy

Mr. Hassard: I have some further questions for the Minister of Highways and Public Works about the Liberals' new First Nation procurement policy.

Over the past few days, we've heard from dozens of contractors and businesses that were surprised to see this policy for the first time over the weekend. Many Yukon businesses will be significantly affected by this and are wondering why the government would not consult with them before the policy was complete.

Can the minister confirm that the details of this policy have never been shared with any local businesses or business organizations before Friday?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The procurement policy announced last Friday is a completion of a commitment to Yukon First Nations identified in self-government agreements. These are legally binding documents signed between the Yukon government and First Nation governments. We introduced them to the Yukon Forum on Friday, and I was gratified to hear the support from all First Nations at that gathering on Friday.

It didn't get done by past governments, Mr. Speaker. More than 25 years ago, the *Umbrella Final Agreement* identified this as a commitment. Every subsequent final agreement included this commitment. No government has ever delivered on this commitment to First Nations. This was not a new concept by our government; it's a long-standing commitment. It had not been achieved for decades.

This policy will strengthen Yukon companies and their bids for government contracts. It will work to keep dollars in the territory, and it will be a benefit to every Yukoner in the years to come.

We have been working with our First Nation partners on this for two years. In the last year, we have worked with our business community as well. We have had several meetings. I chronicled them yesterday, and when I get up to answer the next question, I'll be happy to go into detail again about all the work that we've done with our business community. That work is not done. That work is going to continue.

Mr. Hassard: Unfortunately, one more time, we don't get an answer to the question. I asked about what was shared with local businesses or business organizations before Friday. We have also heard conflicting reports on how this policy will be applied. Some have heard that this policy will be

implemented over time and only on certain tenders; others have heard that it will apply to all Yukon government tenders.

Can the minister clarify, when this policy comes into force in February, which tenders it will apply to? Will it only be used on contracts of certain sizes, or will it apply to all government contracts?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We suspected that the Yukon Party would be against this First Nation procurement policy. Now we are seeing that they are.

Mr. Speaker, I will say again that, in the last year — since October/November — we held several virtual information sessions for the business community, industry associations, and the chambers of commerce. In November, we shared a draft of the document with all of the business people who were in attendance at that meeting. For the last year, we have had meetings with the chambers of commerce, which are a procurement business group, and we have had several meetings where this has been the sole item on the agenda.

Since Monday — since the policy was announced on Friday — we have started one-on-one meetings with business leaders throughout the territory. Those meetings are going to continue throughout December and January and into February. We have meetings with citizens that will be scheduled in January as well. We have set the date for the implementation of this policy for the end of April to give lots of time for us to talk and work with our business community on the implementation of this very important policy for Yukon.

Mr. Hassard: It really is unfortunate that the minister has such little knowledge of his own file and is unable to answer such very basic and simple questions that have come to us through contractors throughout the territory. The Liberals have always enjoyed talking about how many public engagements they have done through the engageyukon.ca website and how they always listen to Yukoners before developing a policy. In this case, it's clear that they did not consult with many of the affected stakeholders prior to the development of this policy, and the minister appears to be admitting to that — saying that they are going to do that after the fact.

So, why did the government not actually consult on this policy before they developed it?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have said, and I will say it again, that we have spoken to the business community on First Nation procurement for years. The Procurement Business Committee had detailed discussions about it in July and October. In October, the committee was provided the summary of the actual policy, a presentation, and an opportunity to ask questions. In October and November, we held several virtual information sessions for the business community, industry associations, and chambers of commerce. These sessions were well-attended and represented a variety of sectors. We will continue to work with our business community going forward until the policy is implemented and well beyond, because, as I have said many times on the floor of this House, procurement is a journey, not a destination.

I will tell the House this afternoon — I know why the member opposite brought up engagement: because they don't know how to do it, Mr. Speaker. I will tell you why they are

talking about First Nation consultation: because they never did it. We saw that on the Teslin bridge project when the member opposite couldn't get 'er done because he didn't consult with his own First Nation in his own community. We are doing things differently. I will put our record on the record any day.

Question re: Dental health care

Ms. White: Dental health is often overlooked as part of general health and well-being. Poor dental care can have serious, long-term impacts and even lead to heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. I say that dental health is overlooked because, when we raise this issue and despite the evidence, this government refuses to help struggling Yukoners.

In Yukon, dental operations can range from hundreds of dollars for a checkup to thousands of dollars for complex surgery like a root canal. Without dental coverage, these costs are impossible to cover, and this has long-term consequences on people's overall health.

When will this government commit to providing universal dental coverage for all Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am happy to speak about universal supports. I am going to talk a bit about the Government of Yukon's *Putting People First* efforts. What we have seen historically was a lack of services and supports for rural Yukon communities. We have seen the discontinuation of the dental therapy program through the schools.

We have seen the elimination of supports. What we intended with our *Putting People First* report is to work with our partners to look at further collaboration on ensuring that services are provided in our communities. So, I am happy to say that we will continue to push those efforts forward and work with the association to ensure that we have collaborative care models across the territory.

Ms. White: Yukoners in grade 8 and younger get dental coverage and Yukoners 65 and older get dental coverage, but everyone in between is without coverage unless it is provided by their employer. This leaves thousands of Yukoners to make the decision between paying for housing and feeding their families or paying for the health care that they need. The long-term consequences of poor dental health come back in our health care system as aggravated issues that the government then has to pay for. The minister often talks about how important prevention is. Leaving folks without coverage is short-sighted, affects Yukoners' quality of life, and costs our health care more in the long run.

When will this government offer dental health coverage to all Yukoners who are left behind by public and private dental insurance plans?

Hon. Ms. Frost: That's a great question for sure. There is no doubt about it that Yukon communities have not had supports historically. Part of the reason for that is that dental care is not provided under Medicare in Canada. We do have the children's program as well as access to dental care for people on income support and for seniors. We also have an itinerant dentist travelling throughout the Yukon, providing supports to our communities. We also have more coverage than most other jurisdictions in the country. What the member opposite is

speaking about is universal coverage. At this point in time, I can't commit to that, but what I can say is that our *Putting People First* report and the recommendations speak about collaborative care. We will continue to work with our partners to expand supports where supports are needed.

We have had lots of successes for sure to support our government's efforts to support all Yukoners as they have historically encountered challenges. It is all about preventive care. I agree with that for sure. We will look at further questions.

Ms. White: We will be debating the *Putting People First* report this afternoon, so let me quote from that report: "Canadians without access to regular dental health services use more health services, including visits to physicians' offices and the emergency department, to deal with dental conditions that would be better treated in regular oral health care settings such as dentists' offices."

The report recommends that government should develop a public plan for every Yukoner who has no dental coverage. Yukon's health care system is already stretched thin, yet this government has not taken any steps to reduce the load on our health care staff by providing dental coverage to all Yukoners.

When will the government implement this recommendation of the *Putting People First* report and make sure all Yukoners have access to dental health coverage?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I want to just reiterate that implementing the recommendations of *Putting People First* — looking at a road map for a people-centred approach to health and wellness is more effective and sustainable programming going forward — the recommendations clearly outline for us a pathway for it in terms of how we look to and how we provide services — in particular, to rural Yukon communities.

We have looked at the panel's work and their recommendations and identified gaps in health care across the country. We are going to work on the recommendations and put some of that into more action. I want to just say that the former Leader of the Third Party would well know that there's a two-tiered system. As a former federal employee, it's very difficult when we have a two-tiered system in Yukon and we're trying to bring individuals out of the communities and services are limited. So, we're trying to address that huge gap in Yukon with respect to how services are provided for those who fall under the non-insured health benefit initiatives and those who fall under Yukon medical care.

I want to just say that, collectively, the effort through *Putting People First* is to allow us to work together to find solutions that better align with Yukoners' needs.

Question re: Psychiatric treatment in Yukon

Ms. McLeod: Earlier this week, we discussed the Minister of Health's decision to not allow a psychiatrist to get a special licence to practise psychiatry in the Yukon.

In defending this decision, the minister stated that she will not allow this because — quote: "... we currently have sufficient psychiatrists in the Yukon..."

So, can the minister tell us the average wait time to see a psychiatrist in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I believe that I addressed that yesterday, but I'm certainly happy to speak to it again today.

Historically in the Yukon, we had one psychiatrist. The one psychiatrist who was licensed perhaps was endorsed by the former Minister of Health and that individual didn't even have a licence to operate.

We now have four resident psychiatrists. We have 17 psychiatrists in total who provide supports to Yukon. I'm very excited about that. Why? Because it fills that gap that we've seen historically.

We have mental wellness hubs now. We have clinical support throughout the Yukon in every one of our communities. I'm very pleased to say to Yukoners that you have shorter wait times. You now can have access. If you need supports, you are directed through your mental wellness hubs or through your local supports and we will quickly ensure that you get the supports. Priority is always given to those individuals who need imminent support.

I would be happy to respond to another question.

Ms. McLeod: I asked the minister the average wait time to see a psychiatrist in the Yukon and did not get an answer. As indicated, the minister has stated — and I quote: "... we currently have sufficient psychiatrists in the Yukon..."

Can the minister tell us the number of patients who are currently waiting to see a psychiatrist?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I can say to the member opposite and I can say to Yukoners with the utmost confidence that psychiatrists now, through our private practice and through the management of their own time, can provide in-time services as they are required.

On top of that, we have 17 supports in total. The objective is to reduce the wait times that we've seen historically under the former government. The fact that we didn't have any resident psychiatrists is a positive step forward to collaborative care and to the care of Yukoners. Imminently, we have the psychiatrists who are embedded in our mental wellness support units with ready access and rapid counselling.

I'm happy to say to Yukoners that, if you require service, we can get you service within 24 hours. That's important for Yukoners to know. As I said, if it's a priority, we will get you the supports. There is a counsellor in every one of your communities. Please, if you need support, access the support through your counsellors identified in your communities. From there, you will get directed into the right hands of support and services. That's the objective of collaborative care in Yukon.

Ms. McLeod: So, I asked the minister the average wait time to see a psychiatrist — and no answer. I asked the minister the number of patients currently waiting to see a psychiatrist — no answer.

The minister has stated — and I quote: "... we currently have sufficient psychiatrists in the Yukon..." So, can the minister tell us who she consulted with before deciding that the Yukon did not require an additional psychiatrist?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I might talk for a moment about the Yukon Medical Association and how medical professionals are endorsed in Yukon. In order for endorsement of psychiatrists or health professionals, it ideally runs through the Yukon Medical

Association. Politically, perhaps historically, that was the case, in terms of interfering and making appointments without going through that process. We on this side of the House follow the protocols of the health profession — the Yukon Medical Association.

With respect to mental wellness supports in Yukon, as I indicated, we have mental wellness hubs — four of them. In fact, we have one in the Member for Watson Lake's riding, and that hub has direct access to the clinical supports that are needed. If an individual requires support, they can walk into the office today.

What I am addressing is the connection from that office to access psychiatry supports. The psychiatry supports — you can get a direct referral within 24 to 48 hours. We work with the psychiatrists. They manage their own time. Just so the member opposite understands: Psychiatrists are private; they run their private practices. We don't dictate their time, but we do work in collaboration with them to ensure sufficient support.

Question re: Yukon Energy Corporation general rate application

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, on November 23, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources told Yukoners that they are seeking to increase the energy bills of territorial residents by 11.5 percent. However, on Monday, the Yukon Utilities Board issued a public notice indicating that the government is actually seeking an increase of 17.1 percent.

So, can the minister explain this discrepancy and tell Yukoners if they are actually seeking a 17.1-percent increase to power bills?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we had the president of the Yukon Development Corporation as well as the CEO and president of the Yukon Energy Corporation. The member opposite had pulled the general rate application documentation and had asked the CEO of the Energy Corporation to speak to a delta within the number that he was reflecting on in a document that he had versus any of the public comments that we had made.

In that exchange, the CEO committed to coming back to the Legislative Assembly, reviewing the GRA documentation — getting access to that, which I don't have with me — and taking the opportunity to come back and explain if there was an administrative error or if there was an edit that had to be made. I thought that was a pretty fair approach to it yesterday. Again, the CEO was here and spoke to that. So, we are committed to getting that done. As soon as the documentation is ready, I will bring it to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Kent: This document that I'm referring to is a public document issued by the Yukon Utilities Board and it mentions a \$17.1-percent increase instead of the 11.5-percent increase that the minister announced in a big announcement. In a ministerial statement, he proudly announced that the energy bills were going to increase by a further 11.5 percent.

As I mentioned this week, the Yukon Utilities Board issued a document that says that the corporation is actually seeking an increase of 17.1 percent. The minister is correct; I did ask the CEO of the Yukon Energy Corporation this question yesterday.

He was unable to provide an answer. I would have thought that the minister would have looked into this within the last 24 hours because it is quite a discrepancy. I am just hoping that the minister can explain what the reference to the 17.1 percent is.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Once again, we concluded the exchange between the opposition and the witnesses yesterday. I know that there was a commitment to ensure that any questions that weren't answered in full — there was an opportunity to go back and work with the senior management team at the Yukon Energy Corporation. That would include, of course, their financial team and other vice-presidents to identify that information. It has been less than 24 hours; I apologize that it's not here yet.

My experience with the Yukon Energy Corporation has been that they are very efficient in getting information to us. I know that we have a couple more days in this Sitting. There is nothing that we have that we're holding back. We will make sure that we bring that to the House and we can have an opportunity for the opposition to review that documentation. Then, if there are any concerns afterward, we can debate that in the House.

Mr. Kent: Again, on November 23, the minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation made a big announcement where he bragged that power bills would go up by 11.5 percent. Then, on December 14, the Yukon Utilities Board issued a public notice that states — and I quote: “YEC is seeking approval of forecast revenue requirements of: \$75.135 million, representing an increase of \$10.971 million for 2021 over revenues from existing rates and riders of \$64.164 million (a 17.1% increase)...”

I just want to give the minister the opportunity once again to clarify: Are they asking to increase our power bills by 11.5 percent as he bragged about in the ministerial statement, or are they actually asking to increase those power bills by 17.1 percent?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, I think if Yukoners are listening and the folks in the Legislative Assembly — I have been very fair in our approach to this. We're going to get the information. We'll bring it back. If I was wrong, I'm sure the opposition will highlight it.

I'll tell you what we're not going to do: What we're not going to do is we're not going to run up the credit card of Yukon Energy year after year. Yesterday, what we heard from the witnesses was about the challenges that led to the Energy Corporation — after the Yukon Party ran the credit card up, we saw a 40-percent increase — a 40-percent increase in 2020. We're not going to do that.

Again, we saw, during the exchange between the witnesses, the Yukon Party being corrected time after time on their understanding of our backup generators. We saw a lot of misinformation corrected for the record. I asked the media: “Please ensure you look at the exchange between the Yukon Party and the witnesses yesterday.” I think it's great to finally get misinformation corrected and I look forward to an exchange if there's anything on the GRA that I have misrepresented here. But again, we'll get that information to the House and we'll have an exchange if there's anything that is inconsistent.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 350

Clerk: Motion No. 350, standing in the name of Mr. Hutton.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun: THAT this House supports *Putting People First — the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services* and the recommendations contained within.

Mr. Hutton: I rise today to speak to Motion No. 350:

THAT this House supports *Putting People First — the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services* and the recommendations contained within.

In 2018, the Yukon government appointed a five-member independent expert panel to conduct a review of health and social services in the territory, with the mandate to identify ways to improve upon efficiencies and effectiveness of the services provided.

Contained within the comprehensive review is a total of 76 recommendations for changing how health and social services are delivered in the territory. Several areas for improvement identified are: the health care experience; community wellness and healing; First Nation cultural safety, health outcomes, and land-based healing; supports for lower income Yukoners; building a new health care system; improving the health of the population; and ensuring the financial sustainability of the health and social system for Yukoners for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, as you and the other members of this Assembly may have guessed, I'm a passionate individual when it comes to public health. Whether it's mental health, support for those struggling with substance abuse, or the general well-being of Yukoners, I stand firmly in my belief that the systems in place can and should be improved upon.

It's our responsibility, as government members, to ensure that the services provided represent the needs of our community, our constituents, and Yukoners as a whole, and that's exactly what these recommendations do. They put people first.

These recommendations will help to improve the lives of everyone, not just a few. They will improve the lives of our health care workers, our nurses, our doctors, and our specialists. They will improve the lives of our vulnerable peoples, our rural communities, my constituents, and everyone else who calls themselves a Yukoner.

When I talk about investing in people, it's recommendations such as connecting every Yukoner to a primary care provider that come to mind. We know that there

are people who have been without a primary physician for years due to extended wait-lists or unavailability. This government is taking action to resolve that. We have created a program that connects patients in need with available doctors. We continue to pair many Yukoners with family doctors to ensure that their needs are being met.

I have spoken many times about my desire to see improvements and growing resilience in my communities to combat long-standing trauma faced by our First Nation people and our rural communities. This review outlines a need to work more closely with our First Nation partners and rural communities to define trauma-informed practice so that we may work toward trauma prevention and mitigate trauma reoccurrence for everyone, with an emphasis on youth. Steps like these ensure that we make positive progress in addressing the long-standing issues that many Yukoners face — issues like substance abuse and alcoholism, which have plagued our people for too long. Systemic racism and under-representation of our minority people in our health care system creates unnecessary hardship. We need to take steps to address these issues so that our communities can heal.

I'm also passionate about supporting our elders and aging population. Our communities have been frequently left out in the past, and I'm happy to see that change is coming our way. My own father did not want to die in a hospital in Whitehorse. He asked me to take him home to die so that he could be with his family. That's exactly what we did, Mr. Speaker. These aren't easy decisions to make, but it's important. We support families while they manage end-of-life care because it's already a difficult time and we should make it as easy as possible for people. Expanding palliative and end-of-life care programs and supports will help to ease the transition between life and loss for all of us.

In a world that continues to suffer so much loss, this type of compassion and support is absolutely necessary. Yukoners need to know that we are with them from beginning to end and not just when it's convenient, because it is never convenient for them. It's important to provide support and care where it is needed and to meet Yukoners where they are at.

Advancing reconciliation is another important component within this review. Working closely with Yukon's First Nation governments to address inequalities that our First Nation peoples face is an important step forward in creating a brighter and more equitable future.

Mandatory cultural safety and humility training and a continuous education process for all health and social service providers, managers, and leaders as a condition for funding from government is a vital step in ensuring that our First Nation people feel comfortable and respected when receiving services through Health and Social Services.

Establishing a First Nation health component within the Department of Health and Social Services that supports cultural safety and humility across the system and focuses on advancing reconciliation within the department will ensure that our services remain up to date, that our standards for Yukon First Nations are consistent with their needs, and that they don't lag behind everyone else.

Fostering community wellness by refocusing the health and social system to deliver care as close to home as possible is something that many of my constituents will appreciate. For many of us, the communities are where we feel most safe and at home. Having access to care with a focus on prevention in our communities will go a long way in improving our quality of life across the board. I am proud to see a community focus and the adoption of a universal approach to mental health and substance use prevention for children and youth. Providing the younger generations with the tools to help navigate the challenging life that lies ahead of them is essential to their success and, by extension, the success of all Yukon. We must support our youth so that they can become the next generation of leaders in our territory.

The list of recommendations laid out in this plan will redefine Yukon's health and social services for generations to come. It will elevate Yukon and Yukoners to new levels of health care, streamline services, and ultimately save taxpayers' money while delivering better care and a better tomorrow for all of us. I hope that the members in this Assembly will support these revolutionary recommendations and recognize their necessity in restructuring these services to deliver a better quality of life for all of us to enjoy.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a sincere and heartfelt thank you to all of our medical professionals who continue to deliver a quality of care in our territory that many other jurisdictions envy. Our health is quite literally in their hands, and I thank them for their dedication.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise here today in speaking to this motion.

I want to note as I begin my remarks that the comprehensive health review does have some parts in it that are worth considering; however, we believe that the government's announcement that they would be accepting all 76 recommendations was quite premature and very ill-advised. We will not be supporting the motion as worded.

We know that the government failed also in their process, including failing to consult properly with key partners in health care delivery, including the Yukon Medical Association. I think that it is important to emphasize that the government — especially considering some of the dismissive remarks that the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services have made in the past regarding this point — doesn't seem to recognize that the Yukon Medical Association is not just a stakeholder to check the box and consult with, as it seems to be in their mind. In fact, physicians are integral to the delivery of health care across the territory. In fact, for most Yukoners, physicians through privately owned medical clinics are providing a large portion of our primary health care services here in the Yukon.

It is fundamentally important that, if you are envisioning a sweeping change to the health care system — and this report has some very aspirational goals that do not seem to be well-grounded in reality and have skipped many important steps in the process of actually understanding what they mean. To do that and to fully consult with the Yukon Medical Association

properly before promising sweeping changes to our health care system is quite simply irresponsible, Mr. Speaker. One of the recommendations in the report would seek to replace privately owned medical clinics with government polyclinics.

We don't disagree that there are opportunities for improving collaborative care, including multiple health professions working together, but we need to recognize the parts of our existing system. To make such a sweeping commitment without talking to the people directly affected by it or having even the basic understanding of the costs and implications of service delivery is quite simply something that every Yukoner has the right to expect that their government would have done better.

Unfortunately, they were focused on talking points and announcements rather than on actually getting it right. I am going to quote from a few parts of the report as well as from comments made by the Yukon Medical Association, as well as from the testimony of the panel during this Assembly.

I want to note that although, in some of my comments, I am going to be spending a fair bit of time talking about physicians and the Yukon Medical Association, we also believe that it's fundamentally important that all health professionals be involved in any process that makes major changes to the system and that they understand — and that government fully understands — both the logistical implications, the service delivery implications, and the full costs before making a decision to make major changes. It's quite simply irresponsible to decide to make major changes without costing out what the impact of those changes will have financially. If you don't know the cost of it and you don't know the logistical implementation, then you can commit to implementing it, but you can't realistically make that commitment — because quite frankly, the Liberal government has committed to implementing this report. They have no idea whether they can actually do it — absolutely no idea.

There is a reason why government has processes for considering both capital submissions and financial submissions and operational submissions through processes such as Management Board. We know that this hasn't even begun to go through the most basic vetting process of that nature.

It's notable as well — I'm going to refer to some of the remarks that were made by the panel members during debate in this Assembly that my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, our Health and Social Services critic, asked the panel members who appeared here on October 19 a number of questions. I'll just reference those here.

My colleague, the Member for Watson Lake — and I'm going to quote from Hansard, October 19, 2020, page 1461. The Member for Watson Lake said — and I quote: "Just before I carry on with that line, I would just like to go back to one of the four goals that the panel was addressing, which was fiscal sustainability. Is the panel aware of what it would cost to implement all of the recommendations?"

Mr. McLennan, the chair of the panel, said — and I quote: "I guess the upfront answer is no."

I'm going to repeat that. The chair of the panel, when asked if the panel was aware of what it would cost to implement all

of the recommendations, said, "I guess the upfront answer is no. We weren't able to go through a complete costing of all the recommendations, but that is why, in chapter 6, we made our best efforts to show where savings could be made."

Then Mr. McLennan went on to say, on page 1462, October 19, 2020, in that same response to my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake — and I quote: "... we expect that the department will have to grapple with that and that will be the responsibility of Management Board and Cabinet in terms of making the decisions and costing out fully the changes as we proposed."

It's clear from the remarks of the panel members when they appeared in this Assembly that they were expecting that government would actually cost out decisions — as part of making those decisions, that they would understand that this is the typical process that occurs here in the territory.

We are aware of the problem that the government has gotten itself into with their decision to shove aside the Salvation Army and take over the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, the former Centre of Hope, without going to Management Board first. We know that the cost ballooned out of control. We know that the government has spent at least \$4.8 million this year, and they will not tell us how much money they have moved from other programs into that area, but we know those costs have ballooned by more than double of what that shelter previously cost to operate.

We know that it has created unanticipated negative effects on people around them, because the government did what I characterized before as "back of napkin" planning — or if you prefer, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' "Ready, fire, aim" approach to making decisions.

Before making any decisions, it's important that you understand the implications. That is no less true in the area of health care. In fact, when making a decision that could profoundly affect health care delivery for every Yukoner, it's absolutely and vitally important that government have a good understanding of the implications of that — not just the conceptual understanding of what those implications would be. It's very important that government, before making decisions of that type, does a thorough job of consulting with health care professionals who would be affected by it. If they fail to do that, they risk creating a situation where, even with good intentions, they have restructured a system without understanding its implications on health care service providers, and they could potentially create a situation where — albeit with good intentions, but a lack of proper planning — they could be in a situation where we actually have physicians or other health care professionals leaving the Yukon because of the government's half-baked approach to planning and the government's failure to consult properly.

I have to reiterate that, when making major changes — especially to our health care system — it is very important to have a good understanding of what those cost. We know, from the panel and the government's own admission, that they don't know what implementing these 76 recommendations will cost. In fact, they haven't even provided us a ballpark figure or a rough estimate of the cost implications. How is that

responsible? Well, Mr. Speaker, it is not responsible. Yukoners deserve better from their government.

We see, as well, a government that is neglecting fundamentals in health care delivery now and is focused on photo opportunities and talking points instead of fixing the problems that are affecting the lives of Yukoners now. We know that, at the end of the last year, according to the Hospital Corporation's own year-end report, the government left them with a \$3.9-million hole in their funding. They were in a \$3.9-million deficit, and they didn't get all of their money for the last fiscal year until after the start of the current fiscal year. Literally, Mr. Speaker, this government didn't provide the hospital with the funding that it needed to provide our health care last year in full until we were right in the middle of a worldwide pandemic. That is not responsible.

When the witnesses for the Hospital Corporation appeared, we heard about problems with wait times. That includes that the wait times for MRI are quite significant. I am just going to find the exact reference to that in this. I am going to quote from what the CEO told this House on November 19, 2020, on page 1969: "Right now, as of October — so just a slight lag in the statistics — it is a 180-day wait for an MRI. To put that in context, we are not meeting our standards..."

We heard as well about significant wait times for cardiac care. As well, we understand that there are a number of procedures where Yukoners are waiting longer than what is considered medically appropriate for those services. It should be noted that, while some of those are within the area of responsibility of the Hospital Corporation, there are others as well that are directly within the hands of the government. We have seen the government failing to take the action that is necessary to provide Yukoners with that care.

I'm going to again refer to the area of cardiology. Again, for the reference of Hansard and media and anyone else listening, I'm quoting from page 1971, November 19, 2020, from the CEO of the Hospital Corporation. He said: "I want to back up just a little bit on how access to specialty services like cardiology is provided and put cardiology in context of that.

"Obviously, YHC is part of a broader health system that supports access to specialist services. When we talk about something like cardiology or any specialist, it can be provided in essentially four different ways. One way is to have resident specialists here in the territory who live here, work here, provide the specialty. We're blessed to have OB/GYNs here; we're blessed to have orthopaedic surgeons, general surgeons, a psychiatrist, and pediatricians. Those are some of the specialists that we do have here.

"In addition to that, we host what's called a 'visiting specialist clinic' and those are physicians not resident here, but they visit here. Our job is to basically provide space and support to these physicians so that people don't have to travel and can access them here.

"Other ways that access to specialty services is created is through virtual technology and also medical travel and medevac, which essentially means people travelling out to access specialists.

"So, when I speak about the cardiology wait-list, I can only speak about the wait-list here for visiting specialists. I can't speak to anything that is related to medical travel for cardiologists. That is handled through Insured Health."

Then the CEO went on to say: "What I can tell you about cardiology, though, from our perspective — and again, this is from the perspective of visiting specialists — our current wait time to see a visiting cardiologist is approximately five months. Right now, there are approximately 74 people on that wait-list."

So, again, 74 Yukoners are on a wait-list to see a cardiologist with a wait time that is expected to be typically five months according to the hospital CEO. Again, we know that this, like many other areas, is a problem.

We heard as well from the hospital CEO about the fact that the physical location where specialty services are provided is constrained. He made reference to that again on page 1972. Then he said something very important in the overall context of health care delivery for Yukoners. While the government is focused on photo ops and talking points and platitudes, I am talking about care for Yukoners and wait times. In response to my questions on November 19, the CEO of the Hospital Corporation said: "We host approximately 13 specialties, and that's only a fraction of the number of specialties and subspecialties available in the medical field. Because we are physically constrained, wait times for accessing specialties, basically for most specialties, are not where we would like them to be from a benchmark perspective."

I am going to reiterate what he said. I will remind you that he said that "... wait times for accessing specialties ... are not where we would like them to be from a benchmark perspective." Instead of government focusing on the fundamentals of our system, we see what has amounted to four years of delays by this Liberal government in taking action and a lengthy report where they have failed to do key work with the Yukon health care professionals in determining what its implications would be and whether it is even feasible or even a good idea to do — instead, they have presented this almost 200-page document that, right now — almost at the end of this Liberal government's mandate — is doing absolutely nothing to reduce wait times for Yukoners who need care. They are out of touch with Yukoners and out of touch with the health care needs of Yukon citizens.

I should also point out that this is a government that has committed to sweeping changes in our health care system, yet with much smaller initiatives, they have failed to implement those commitments. All three parties in this Legislative Assembly have committed to supporting midwifery. This Liberal government has also said repeatedly that it is a high priority. In their Speech from the Throne in April 20, 2017 — their first throne speech do-over — they said in the throne speech, on page 3 — and I quote: "Midwifery can and should be a safe, supported childbirth option in Yukon. Your new government has already started to work on regulating and incorporating midwives in the Yukon health care system. Working with midwives, doctors and other medical professionals, the government anticipates licensing the practice of midwifery later next year."

That was April of 2017. The next year was 2018 — and that's now two years behind us in the rear-view mirror — and this government had not only failed to regulate midwifery, but they failed to deliver regulations, they have failed to finalize the service delivery model, and they haven't hired a single midwife or created the opportunity for a single private contractor. Midwifery — after four years in office and one of their top health priorities, and it appears to have stalled. In fact, as the government knows, they received a letter from the Community Midwifery Association either yesterday or today — I'm just trying to find the letter; I have it somewhere in the stack in front of me — asking government about the progress on this and expressing their concern.

For a government that can't even deliver midwifery regulations to promise that they're going to transform the health system — that's simply laughable. If it took them four years and they can't deliver midwifery, how long would it take them to deliver the 76 recommendations in the comprehensive health review? Twenty years? Twenty-five years? It's just ridiculous, and as I pointed out, they haven't costed out those promises.

I do want to note that, while I have been — and will continue to be — critical of some parts of the report, there are some good pieces of information in it. Some of them reiterate things that are not dramatically new concepts within the health care field, such as taking steps to act proactively and reduce the likelihood of problems becoming more acute, a people-centred care approach, et cetera. Those aren't really new concepts. It has been well-known for many years across the country, as well as in other areas, that there are a number of areas where, without upfront investment, potentially you can reduce the acute care costs long term.

But I want to talk again about the government's failure to work with one of the most important partners in health care delivery. I know that government likes using platitudes like "partners" and "collaboration", but they're really bad at working with partners. There is a lot of talk about collaboration, but we don't see much of it.

Mr. Speaker, we know that in fact, as we heard from the panel, it was quite obvious that some panel members were surprised, according to their public statements, that the government committed to implementing all 76 recommendations. It was clear when the panel members appeared that they were expecting government to do a costing of the recommendations.

Unfortunately, this government was so eager for an announcement that they didn't take the steps necessary to determine if it was even possible to implement this report. They didn't take steps to determine if it was a good idea. They didn't have the courtesy to work with physicians to understand what those impacts would be.

It's notable that even the panel's report talks about things such as how many Yukoners do not have a regular care provider and many still have trouble getting appointments that are timely and long enough to address their needs. There's a reference, as well, that "Staff in different parts of the system (e.g. hospital, home care, primary care providers, social services, and

housing) often are not able to work together to make sure Yukoners using these services get the support they need."

"Decisions by providers and system managers often do not take into consideration the cost of the system as a whole, or the whole-person effect on Yukoners who are receiving multiple services across the system.

"There is too little coordination and understanding of the needs of communities and the roles of various players in the system, including non-governmental organizations and First Nations service providers."

As well: "The Department of Health and Social Services does not have the necessary data, tools and procedures to effectively evaluate, improve and plan for a system that is coordinated and continuously improving in terms of its efficiency and outcomes for Yukoners."

That — just for the reference of Hansard — is in the executive summary of the comprehensive review report on pages 2 and 3 of the document that I have.

What I would note is that, for a report that talks about the importance of collaboration, for the government to turn around — I think it looks like they may not have even read the report before they committed to implementing it — to make the announcement, have the photo opportunity, and say that they are going to get it done but not work with the Yukon Medical Association or other key stakeholders in doing so, it is concerning. If it weren't such an important matter to Yukoners — that being our health care system — it would be laughable. But since it is so important, it is really not funny — the level of the Liberal government's failure to consult on this file and their failure to cost out the recommendations before promising people that they would implement them while they still had not the foggiest clue of what it would actually cost to do that.

So, again, the government that couldn't deliver on midwifery after four years is committing to a sweeping change of our health care system while failing to consult with key partners, much less understand what the implications of implementing those changes would be.

I am going to refer again to, as I have previously in the Legislative Assembly, the press release that the Yukon Medical Association sent out this summer after the government made this announcement about the comprehensive health review. I should also mention that, for a government that has talked about reducing silos and creating a one-government approach to come up with a recommendation that they want to create another silo — this "Wellness Yukon" silo of bureaucracy — it is questionable how well that would work.

I note that the Yukon Medical Association had something to say about that, and they had a constructive suggestion that I think the government should consider and be talking to them about — as well as to the YRNA and other stakeholder organizations, as well as health care professionals — and considering the constructive input from the Yukon Medical Association. But first, before I get to that, I want to talk about what the Yukon Medical Association said in response to the government announcing the comprehensive health care review and their commitment to move forward with implementing it.

In August of 2020 — and I'm going to quote from the *Whitehorse Star* story that you'll find online, dated August 18: "The Yukon's doctors are 'surprised and disappointed' by a government promise to overhaul the territory's health system without proper consultation, according to the Yukon Medical Association (YMA).

"Last Thursday..." — then it says the name of the Health and Social Services minister, which I can't do in this Assembly — "... committed to implementing all of the recommendations laid out in an independent review of the Yukon's health and social services.

"The doctors of Yukon are very concerned about the announcement to accept all 76 recommendations contained in the report without properly consulting first with the YMA," Dr. Ryan Warshawski, the acting YMA president, said in a statement this morning.

"The 207-page Putting People First report, released last May, provides a road map for improving health and social services in the Yukon.

"The recommendations include a plan for establishing a network of polyclinics and changing doctors' payment structures.

"The report envisions that the Yukon's current system of private doctor's clinics will be replaced with the polyclinic network, managed by the territorial government."

Just an aside from the YMA statement, the government proposed replacing private doctors' clinics in Whitehorse and they decided to accept that recommendation without working with the doctors to understand the implications. It has been passed on to me from physicians the point that — how many times has government taken over something being run by the private sector and done it more efficiently? Especially for a Liberal government that talked about reducing the growth of government and getting out of the business of doing business when in fact they went the other direction. They have added 568 government positions during their time in office, which is the equivalent of adding a town larger than Carmacks or Mayo and giving everyone a government job. Their solution, as part of their vision of not growing government more, is to grow it more and to take over from an area that has been run by physicians through private medical clinics for decades in the Yukon, and, of course, that is a model common throughout the country.

Again, it's very clear that they don't understand the costs of that. They don't understand the logistical implications. They don't know if that will result in doctors choosing to leave the territory because they're unhappy with the model. They don't know if it will result in doctors suing the government because they feel that the approach being taken is unfair. The list of things that this government doesn't know would fill a rather large encyclopedia — one much bigger than the comprehensive health review report. A big part of why they don't know it is that they don't believe in talking to the people who are affected by their decisions before they make them.

We see "check the box" consultations, the biased Engage Yukon surveys that come out with often leading questions, and the ridiculous situation — we saw another example featured

earlier today during Question Period — where the government makes a decision and then holds consultation meetings after the fact to tell people how it is going to be. We saw the laughable excuses from the Minister of Highways and Public Works on that, just as we have seen with the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. This government has implemented dozens of ministerial orders and steadfastly refused repeated requests over the past nine or 10 months — since the pandemic started in March — to actually consult with the people it is affecting, even if it's after-the-fact consultation, asking the people directly affected questions as simple as: What is working? What isn't? What can we do better? This Liberal government does not believe in doing that because they simply clearly do not believe that they need to consult with Yukoners affected by something before they make a decision if they have decided that they are right.

So, back to the Yukon Medical Association and their comments on the comprehensive health review. Again, for the reference of Hansard, I am referring to the *Whitehorse Star* article from August 18 of this year. Here is what the Yukon Medical Association had to say — and I quote: "Many of these recommendations will have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of all Yukoners, not just doctors, and we have not yet had a chance to discuss the implications of the report with the government," Warshawski said.

"The YMA says a joint committee between its organization and the government to review the recommendations was recently established. That committee met a few days before last Thursday's announcement.

"The government's plan to publicly accept all the recommendations wasn't communicated at that meeting, the press release said.

"The YMA is currently compiling perspectives on the report from the Yukon's doctors.

"We have been consulting with our members and preparing a detailed critique of the expert panel report and its recommendations as it relates to health care which we had planned to share with the government as a basis for future discussions,' ..."

Now, I want to acknowledge that there are other health professionals who we know have concerns with the report and recommendations. I'm not going to make reference at this point — at length — to individual concerns I've heard from people, since the associations representing those groups have largely chosen to not make those concerns public in the way the Yukon Medical Association has, but those concerns are out there, and the government should treat their concerns and their suggestions just as seriously as the Yukon Medical Association's concerns, which they should treat a lot more seriously than they have to date.

I would note that the Yukon Party Official Opposition respects all of our health care professionals and the organizations representing them and believes that it is very important — especially if any significant changes are being contemplated to the health care system, much less sweeping changes — for government to do a thorough job of working with those health care professionals and the organizations representing them, jointly working together to understand the

implementation, the problems with any draft plans, and the cost of doing so. It's vitally important that this work be done before government simply commits to taking specific actions, when they have not done even the most basic review of what it would cost.

I find it somewhat humorous that this government — notably through the Minister of Community Services — seems to spend more time poring over old Hansards and counting words than they do actually working on understanding the implications of the comprehensive health review or consulting with Yukon health professionals and patients who would be affected by it.

It would be funny if it wasn't such an important issue, but this is important to Yukoners.

I want to talk about what the panel said in terms of their engagement with the YMA. We know that there are over 70 physicians here in the territory. I think that the number we were provided with earlier was 76 with hospital privileges. The government didn't meet with all of them. The reference was — again, quoting from Hansard, October 19 — that some of the panel members also met with a group of — and I quote: "... around ... 12 YMA members, including the Yukon chief medical officer of health, in an evening session — again, very early in the first round of our panel consultations — where we had a broad general discussion." That was from October 19. As well, I read that particular quote on November 5, on page 1794.

For a profound change affecting the system, every medical clinic in the Yukon has its own unique situation they're dealing with. It's probably even fair to say that no medical clinic directly understands all of the operational impacts on other clinics of a significant system change. That's a good example of why it's important to work with all of those people who are affected by it and all of those physicians and clinics, rather than simply saying — without doing that vital groundwork first — that government is going to accept the recommendation without really knowing what its costs or effects are.

I want to return to some of the feedback that the Yukon Medical Association has provided after the government brushed over the need to even talk to them. In response to the comprehensive health review, one of the things that the Yukon Medical Association has done is call into question the government's approach on developing the new "Wellness Yukon" silo that, I would note — and these are my words, not theirs — is going to add bureaucracy and red tape, as well as ballooning the size of government further, while reducing the operational efficiency by creating just one more silo of bureaucracy and another board.

By the way, supporting a board and another corporate structure has significant cost implications just to do that additional work that is required to run another entity to operate the office and so on. Those cost implications — while I don't have a cost estimate, I know that it would be in the millions of dollars. I also know that it's a pretty safe bet that none of the ministers have any sense of even a rough cost estimate of what that would cost because they simply didn't do that homework.

I want to again return to some of the feedback the Yukon Medical Association provided when they passed a resolution at

their AGM this year regarding the *Hospital Act*. I'm going to quote from the resolution, which is entitled *Resolution: Recognition of the Hospital Act*.

"Whereas the Yukon Hospital Act defines the role of the independent arms length institution known as the Yukon Hospital Corporation to supply hospital care, supervised residential and continuing care, and rehabilitative care; and whereas the preamble of the hospital act identifies the Legislature and Government as responsible to integrate hospital and medical services with other health programs and services;

"and whereas the Hospital Act outlines the ability and mechanism to transfer services, activities, personnel and property from the Government of Yukon to the Yukon Hospital Corporation;

"we move that the YMA formally recognize the hospital act of the Yukon Territory and advocate to the Yukon government the integration of continuing care and home care with the Yukon Hospital Corporation as defined in the Yukon Hospital Act."

The *Hospital Act* excerpts that they included with the motion are as follows:

"Objects of the Corporation

"2 The objects of the Corporation are to supply (a) hospital and medical care and services; (b) supervised residential care and continuing care; and (c) rehabilitative care and services so as to meet the needs of people in the Yukon."

"3(2) For reaching its objects the Corporation may

"(c) establish and administer programs for providing medical services to patients in their homes or in places other than a hospital or facility operated by the Corporation;

"(d) generally do any other things necessary to conduct its operations and its objects."

"Transfer of programs ... to Corporation

"31(1) Subject to any Act of Parliament and limitations that the Government of Canada can impose, the Commissioner in Executive Council may make regulations respecting the transfer of programs, activities, personnel, and property from the Government of the Yukon or the Government of Canada to the Corporation and from any other person or group to the Corporation."

I will just ask our staff who are listening to ensure that Hansard is provided a copy of that document as well so that they can reference it. I want to be clear that, in reading that in, I'm not suggesting that government should simply accept that input from the YMA and immediately do it. But it is a reasonable suggestion and that is one of the things that they should be considering before reaching the point they thought they reached in August of committing to changing the health care system. They should actually be listening to the input from health care providers and the organizations representing them and considering it and talking about it — talking about the implications. What I would suggest with that is that the Yukon Medical Association made a reasonable suggestion. The government should not only consider it but share that suggestion with other health care providers and hear their thoughts on it.

That alternative, suggested by the Yukon Medical Association, would be a way to use existing legislation, actually fulfill the original vision of the Yukon *Hospital Act*, and provide a way to respect some of the objectives recommended by the panel without creating a new silo of bureaucracy. There would be arguably some efficiencies achieved operationally through that type of move, but again, I would like to emphasize that what I'm saying to the government is that this is a suggestion that should be on the table for discussion with others who would be affected by the Yukon Medical Association's proposal. Government, unfortunately, with its own proposals, did not see the need to do more than basically pay lip service to the health care professionals and the organizations representing them. That is one of the reasons why we won't be supporting this motion.

I want to refer again to some of the comments made by the Yukon Medical Association. I should note that previously in debate, including on November 5, I raised these issues with the Premier. I asked if he could elaborate on the costs of implementing the 76 recommendations and explain why the government had come to the stage where the Yukon Medical Association issued a press release expressing disappointment with the government's decision.

First, I should mention something that I intended to mention at the start of my remarks, which is that I think we see where some of the problem is in terms of the government's lack of homework, their reliance on talking points, and their failure to even understand the structure of our current system before committing to those changes.

During Question Period, my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake — our critic for Health and Social Services — asked the Minister of Health and Social Services questions about a psychiatrist. The minister, in her response, not only misstated the facts and mischaracterized how the process works, but the minister actually confused the Yukon Medical Association with the Yukon Medical Council. If the government is in a situation where key ministers don't even understand the difference between the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Medical Council, you have a problem. When those same ministers and their colleagues commit to transforming the system and they don't even understand key elements of how our current system operates, it's ample demonstration that they have made a commitment without having the foggiest notion of what implementing those recommendations will do, what those implications will be, and how it will work.

Perhaps when others — I think the Minister of Community Services looks like he is preparing to respond in debate. I would be interested in hearing if he can tell us the difference between the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Medical Council. I can. I was reading the *Medical Profession Act* last night. I was looking at other regulations in preparation for this debate, and I would also ask if the minister could indicate if he has read the *Medical Profession Act* or the *Health Professions Act*.

I'm just trying to find the next spot in my notes here.

We believe that there are elements in this report that are worth talking to more with health care professionals, but it's really premature to be committing to implement them.

The other point that I intended to mention was that the Yukon Medical Association issued a press release expressing disappointment with the government's decision to implement the recommendations, noting — and I'm quoting from a CHON-FM article from August 18, 2020: "The YMA notes that it has a longstanding positive relationship with the Yukon government but that this can only be maintained if there is trust and open communications between both sides." The acting president also noted that — and I quote: "The doctors of Yukon are very concerned about the announcement to accept all 76 recommendations contained in the report without properly consulting first with the Yukon Medical Association." That is a quote from the acting Yukon Medical Association president at the time, Dr. Ryan Warshawski, who is currently the president of the YMA.

For others who are listening, we also want to emphasize the fact that we believe government should be consulting with other health care providers in addition to the Yukon Medical Association. I have spent a lot of time focusing on their comments, because they were the organization that chose to come out publicly with specific comments and concerns about the process, and I respect that others have chosen to express some of their concerns internally, at this point in time, and allow them to choose when they wish to make comments of that type public.

Before I move on to talk about some of the details and the content of the report, I want to mention — as we saw with the issue that my colleague asked about in Question Period earlier — services and wait times for psychiatrists, as well as how many Yukoners were waiting for the care and how long they wait — that the minister not only didn't have answers, she dismissed the question and indicated basically that the government doesn't really deal with that. But ultimately, whether it is psychiatrist services or other speciality services, one of the things that is most important to Yukoners is wait times. The issue of whether you have access to the health care that you need when you need it is very important. That includes being able to see the right health care professionals — those you need to see for your particular situation — when you need to and in a timely manner. Whether it is a five-month wait time for cardiology or the wait times — as I mentioned, the hospitals themselves acknowledged a long list of specialties where we are not meeting the national benchmarks.

For a government focused on creating new silos in the system instead of focusing on the fundamentals — providing health care services to Yukoners, improving access to services, and so on — it is quite concerning and it is coming from the same government that couldn't deliver midwifery or have a single person practising that under regulation after four years in office, yet they somehow expect Yukoners to believe that they are capable of implementing the 76 recommendations in the comprehensive health review, for which, again, they haven't costed or consulted with health care professionals on what the operational and logistical implications would be.

So, there are goals in this report that I don't disagree with. They talk about improving patient-client responsiveness, experience, and outcomes — again, a reference from page 1. They talk about fiscal sustainability. They talk about their belief that some of these recommendations will improve care and reduce the growth of system costs. They also noted that they found that some parts of the system are working well in the Yukon and other parts are not. I quote: "More importantly, there is a lack of coordination across the system. This makes it hard to deliver services in a person-centred, holistic, preventative, safe and respectful way."

And they said: "To fix this, we believe that major, system-level changes need to be made. We have explained those changes in this report."

The panel themselves noted the importance of coordination. The important first step in coordination is that you actually have to work with and talk with your other partners in health care delivery. By that, I don't mean paying them lip service; I mean actually consulting with the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, other health care professions, and the groups representing them. It means, as well, working with the Hospital Corporation, working with other care providers such as Emergency Medical Services, working with the medevac provider and, last but not least, working with people who are part of our health care system, including our EMS volunteers across the territory.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government ran on an election slogan of "Be Heard", but in four years, that has changed to "Be Told". They are good at holding photo ops and telling Yukoners how it is going to be. They sometimes have good talking points — sometimes not. Ultimately, actually working with and listening to the Yukoners who are affected by their decisions is a major, major weakness for this Liberal government. Unfortunately, the results of that are showing across the territory.

As a side note that relates to the government's handling of the pandemic, I noticed a reference to that in the comprehensive health review report. They noted, as well: "A note on the final report after COVID-19 continued..." Again, this is from the panel's report and appears to be in the preface on page III — and I quote: "It would be tempting to focus only on emergency response at this time. But think about how much easier it would be right now if:

"Every Yukoner was linked with a regular care team and could access high quality services — virtually or physically — when needed.

"You could access care closer to your home and community, reducing the need for medical travel, making it easier to access services for other health problems during a pandemic, and enabling access to screening, vaccination, mental health, substance use, and other health promotion and public health services where you live.

"You, your regular care team, and any specialized services were connected with each other, with services integrated to avoid gaps in care.

"There was a made-in-your-community health plan to strengthen community ties and address its unique health and social needs."

It also talks about ensuring that all care providers were empowered to use their skills and experience, practising up to their full professional scope.

Those general goals are ones that I don't disagree with. However, there are impacts to their implementation and it is important that government actually works with the people affected by it in doing that.

They also talk about — in the pandemic — the fact that — I quote: "There will be successes and failures in the territory's response. Times of crisis often result in rapid innovation, and Yukon needs to sustain and scale the best innovations that emerge. Yukon should also be honest and open about what did not go well when reflecting on the response. Despite the best efforts, there will be failures and many areas where Yukon can say 'it would have been even better if...' Strengthening the ability to do better, to be a system that learns and adapts, is at the heart of many of the panel's recommendations."

Again, not a bad point — but we've seen this government be very resistant to listening to suggestions. We've seen them steadfastly refusing to even consider public consultation on the ministerial orders that are affecting the lives of Yukoners. The approach that is taken by the government — whether it's on the comprehensive health review and the response to that or whether it's on the response to the pandemic — it's a very top-down approach. It's unfortunate that they don't seem to recognize that there's a problem with doing that.

I'm going to talk about some of the other details in the comprehensive health review report. Again, there is a lot in this and a lot that government decided to accept without consulting with Yukoners on its implementation.

There is another reference on page 2. In making their case for change, they talk about — and I quote: "Staff in different parts of the system (e.g., hospital, home care, primary care providers, social services, and housing) often are not able to work together to make sure Yukoners using these services get the support they need."

I notice — and I have to point out to the government — that they talk about working together, and that is what the government didn't do with the Yukon Medical Association and other health care providers before deciding to accept everything in this — I believe it's a 207-page report. Here is another fun excerpt from page 2 of the executive summary — and I quote: "Decisions by providers and system managers often do not take into consideration the cost to the system as a whole, or the whole-person effect on Yukoners who are receiving multiple services across the system."

Clearly, that also applies to decisions made by Cabinet, because they haven't done the costing to the system as a whole, they haven't considered the whole-person effect on Yukoners, and they haven't worked with the partners that they needed to in deciding whether they could implement this report and doing that important groundwork before actually making a commitment.

A further excerpt from the report — it talks about — and I quote: “There is too little coordination and understanding of the needs of communities and the roles of various players in the system, including non-governmental organizations and First Nations service providers.

“The Department of Health and Social Services does not have the necessary data, tools and procedures to effectively evaluate, improve and plan for a system that is coordinated and continuously improving in terms of its efficiency and outcomes for Yukoners.” Another interesting quote.

So, if the panel, in its report, acknowledges that the Department of Health and Social Services doesn’t have the necessary data, tools, and procedures to evaluate, improve, or plan for a system that’s coordinated and improving, they don’t have the data to make the decision. How can you possibly think you’re ready to make the decision?

I’m going to go through some of the specific areas in this report and talk about some of these recommendations. They talk about creating a new vision for wellness in the Yukon, including “... a new organization to manage and deliver the redesigned, integrated approach...” That’s a reference from page 4.

In doing that, again, I personally look at the proposed creation of “Wellness Yukon” as something that proposes creating another silo and more bureaucracy when, in fact, there are better approaches to that. They should consider other approaches, such as the proposal made by the Yukon Medical Association and perhaps there are others out there.

When it talks about things in the executive summary, such as where they would like to improve the health care experience, community wellness and healing, cultural safety and health outcomes, support for lower income Yukoners, building a new health care system, improving population health, and ensuring financial sustainability of the health and social system for Yukoners for years to come, those are things where I don’t disagree with the overall concepts, but the details really matter. This is a government that is unfortunately known for skipping getting the details right, not working with the people whom they need to work with, and doing stuff like — the fact that the Minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation professes not to know why the government claimed that the rate application was only an 11.5-percent increase and then got caught by the Yukon Utilities Board which says that it is 17.1 percent.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I believe that Standing Order 19(b) — “speaks to matters other than the question under discussion”. Maybe I missed it, but I am just trying to see what a differential in information about an energy rate hearing has to do with the *Putting People First* report. I am sure the member opposite will do a long stretch to draw some connection, but I would think that, at this point, they are two separate topics.

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

Mr. Cathers: On the point of order, I explained how it connected to the *Putting People First* report and the decision to implement it. I know that the minister just walked into the House partway through my response and he didn’t hear that, so I don’t believe that there is a point of order.

Speaker’s ruling

Speaker: There are two issues. The first is that members should not be commenting on other members’ presence or absence in the Chamber. All members know that very well.

With respect to what seemed like a fairly abrupt tangent to energy rates, the Member for Lake Laberge might be able to loop that back into the *Putting People First* final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon’s health and social programs and services motion, but it does seem quite tangential at first blush.

Mr. Cathers: Just to explain since it wasn’t clear, what I was talking about is the process of actually understanding costs and getting the numbers right. I was making a comparison with regard to the government’s lack of understanding — indeed, their own admission that they don’t know what it would cost to implement the comprehensive health review, even though they have committed to implementing it, and making a comparison to the application of Yukon Energy to the Yukon Utilities Board. The minister previously had indicated in a ministerial statement that it was an 11.5-percent increase. The Utilities Board this week corrected the minister and the corporation, telling Yukoners that it is in fact a 17.1-percent increase — not an 11.5-percent increase.

Again, returning to other parts of the report and the recommendations — just as we saw with this government that, in just one small part of the social services system, the decision to shove aside the Salvation Army, take over the former Centre of Hope, and replace it with a government-run shelter, which the government initially claimed was temporary. They claimed that they were looking for another NGO to do it and actually said, in their press release announcing the decision, that it hadn’t gone to Management Board before they announced it. That type of sloppiness, in thinking that it was somehow even remotely a sound process — to decide what you are going to do and figure out the costs later. We are seeing the effects of that inadequate review process — the failure to consult with key partners, the refusal to work with NGOs, the difficulty in working with the Yukon Medical Association and others. It has cost implications.

That includes, simply put — if you don’t get things right in the first place and if you don’t understand how much it will cost to implement your report, your idea, or your proposal, that often leads to costs ballooning out of control later on.

Unfortunately, just as we saw with the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, it appears that the government is headed down the same track with the commitment to implementing the recommendations of the comprehensive health review and

making that commitment before they had the faintest clue of what it would cost.

One thing that I want to note on behalf of our caucus and party is that, with any of the recommendations that are in this report, they do need a thorough costing before the decision is made to implement them. That doesn't mean that every single one of them is a bad idea, but even the good ideas need to be properly costed and appropriately consulted on first before a decision is made to go down that road.

"Reorient Yukon's health care system from a traditional and fragmented medical model to a focus on population health accompanied by integrated, person-centred care across the health and social system." That is one of the recommendations. That's on page 6, I believe, in the executive summary. However, what should be noted with that is that there are a number of different ways to do that. It should be noted that, in fact, population health and improving public health — there are areas within the Yukon government where that has been done before. It's not a profoundly new concept.

There are also interconnected areas, such as sport and recreation, where — though they don't deal directly with the acute health care issues — exercise, as members opposite will know, is something that is known to be part of living a healthier life. Exercising regularly, eating well, and avoiding too high a consumption of alcohol and other substances are all things that contribute to living a healthier life, and living a healthier life reduces those costs.

As well, I would also point to steps that have been taken in the past — for example, in the area of smoking cessation. This is just one example where there have been steps taken by the Yukon government in the past — including when I was Health and Social Services minister — to make more resources available to Yukoners seeking to quit smoking, as well as taking steps to help them become better informed of the impacts that smoking can have on their lifelong health.

I don't disagree with those concepts, but suggesting that you need radical changes within the system is premature, and committing to setting up — I want to quote from this excerpt where it talks about creating "Wellness Yukon". In effect, what they're talking about is not only a new bureaucracy, but a bureaucracy over another board and bureaucracy. It talks about — and I quote: "Create Wellness Yukon, a new, arms-length government agency that delivers basic health and social services in the territory and contracts with NGOs or other providers to deliver specialty services on their behalf. This includes managing the hospitals currently under the Yukon Hospital Corporation and primary care, long-term care and treatment facilities under the Department of Health and Social Services."

It does beg the question: Why is creating this new board, bureaucracy, and silo a better approach than considering alternatives including, but not limited to, the suggestion made by the Yukon Medical Association of simply fulfilling the original vision of the Yukon *Hospital Act* and allowing the Hospital Corporation to manage continuing care and home care?

I want to emphasize that I'm not saying that's where government should ultimately land, but it's an idea that's worth considering and discussing with not only the Yukon Medical Association, but also with other health care partners.

The report also talks about, in chapter 2, creating "... a holistic, expanded primary care system built on relationships between providers and their clients. In this system, Yukoners are empowered to take control of their care and actively share responsibility for their and their families' health and wellness." It also talks about connecting "... every Yukoner to a primary care provider (physician or nurse practitioner) who provides care as part of an integrated health care team."

Well, Mr. Speaker, again, there is some merit to the concept, but when you talk about creating a system based on relationships between providers and their clients, yet the government hasn't even done the proper consultation with the health care providers before locking in the decision not just on the concept, but on the fact that they have decided that they want to replace physician clinics with polyclinics — that is a decision that could be very expensive, both financially and in terms of potentially seeing a loss of physicians and other health care providers in the Yukon, because if the government is putting through something that creates problems for those people, the unfortunate reality is that we may see physicians or others simply choosing to practise elsewhere because of those implications.

I want to emphasize that I am not suggesting that government can't consider those changes, but before locking in the decision, it's really important that you work through the details — the operational impacts and the financial impacts — with those health care providers before you get to that point in time. I will also note that, while I think that there is definitely room for improved collaboration within the health care system, I don't think it's a good idea to simply get rid of every medical clinic in the territory and replace it with a government-run system. I do not believe that will result in better health care for Yukoners.

It is unfortunate that this Liberal government has such a low opinion of our physicians and the Yukon Medical Association that they have barely involved them in the development of this report and saw fit to announce a commitment to implement all 76 recommendations without actually understanding what those impacts would be or even consult with those physicians.

I want to go back to references from what the panel themselves said regarding this. On October 19, page 1462, the chair of the panel said that — and I quote: "... we expect that the department will have to grapple with that and that will be the responsibility of Management Board and Cabinet in terms of making the decisions and costing out fully the changes as we proposed."

It is very clear that the chair was not expecting that government would simply implement it without doing the proper costing. Then my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, went on to ask Mr. McLennan and Mr. Marchildon — I may be mispronouncing his name, and my apologies if I am — my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake said: "So, given

that the plan hasn't been costed to any great degree, how can you say or how can you know that implementing all of these recommendations will achieve a goal of fiscal sustainability?" Mr. McLennan said: "To be honest, we can't say that."

Again, the previous reference — I have it somewhere in my notes here — my colleague, the Official Opposition Health critic, asked the chair of the panel twice about the costing of this. She asked the chair about fiscal sustainability — and I quote: "Is the panel aware of what it would cost to implement all of the recommendations?" Mr. McLennan said: "I guess the upfront answer is no. We weren't able to go through a complete costing of all the recommendations..."

On the next page, he went on to say: "... we expect that the department will have to grapple with that and that will be the responsibility of Management Board and Cabinet in terms of making the decisions and costing out fully the changes as we proposed."

Later on in questioning, the Member for Watson Lake, our Health and Social Services critic, said — again, questioning the chair of the panel — the government's hand-picked panel — and I quote: "So, given that the plan hasn't been costed to any great degree, how can you say or how can you know that implementing all of these recommendations will achieve a goal of fiscal sustainability?" Mr. McLennan said: "To be honest, we can't say that."

So, Mr. Speaker, the real question is: How does this Liberal government — even in their own view — think that they are possibly in a position to commit to implementing 76 recommendations when their own panel, who made those recommendations, says they don't know what it costs? We heard, as I quoted earlier, the panel reflecting on the lack of data that the department actually had about the system to make decisions.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, again, this is yet another file where this government was so focused on rushing for a press conference and a photo op that they didn't do the hard work of governing. They didn't work through the issues and the problems with the committee's recommendation with the people who would be affected by them, including health care providers. One of my colleagues just added, "That's normal." Yes, unfortunately, that has become normal under this government, but it is not a very cost-effective way of governing. It's not a very democratic way of governing. It is not a way of governing that meets the needs of Yukoners.

Just moving to other areas, the committee members themselves also talked about the importance of evidence-informed policy and legislative changes — that includes, on page 8, where they made mention of "... evidence-informed policy and legislative changes..." Well, again, government can't provide the evidence to show that it knows what this report will mean for the Yukon. They just have a theory, a photo op, a press release, and now, today, a motion in the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we aren't suggesting that the report be scrapped in its entirety, but there are parts of it that we believe are problematic and parts of it, in my view, that are not ready for prime time, so to speak — nor will they ever be. There are other parts that deserve thorough consideration and discussion.

But ultimately, the Liberal government's top-down, "go it alone" approach has led to problems in the past and it would lead to even more in the future, including the very real possibility that we could actually lose health care professionals from the territory due to them rushing through changes without knowing how they'll impact the lives of people.

As I mentioned — lest members suggest that this is an exaggeration — the president of the Yukon Medical Association made a similar reference to that and was mentioning the impact that this has on the lives of Yukoners. Just to quote briefly from what the Yukon Medical Association said, when they criticized the government for rushing forward with this commitment without properly working with them first, it talked about how — and I quote: "The report envisions that the Yukon's current system of private doctor's clinics will be replaced with the polyclinic network, managed by the territorial government."

It goes on to note: "'Many of these recommendations will have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of all Yukoners, not just doctors, and we have not yet had a chance to discuss the implications of the report with the government,' Warshawski said." Again, that's quoting from the *Whitehorse Star's* August 18 article.

It is worth members, and especially ministers, pausing and thinking on that point for a moment. I agree with what the YMA said. The recommendations in the report will have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of all Yukoners, not just doctors, and it's very important that those implications be properly understood and that government does the hard work of working with health professionals and other key players in the system before even reaching the conclusion to implement these recommendations, let alone all 76.

It's unfortunate that their goal, as outlined in chapter 8, of ensuring financial sustainability would create a situation where, due to their sloppy approach in making the decisions around this report, even their own panel acknowledges that they just don't know whether it will actually achieve financial savings in the long run.

In the executive summary on page 14, in chapter 8, about ensuring financial sustainability, along with the recommendations, I also want to talk about one that I have concerns with, as it was prompted by a situation raised by a low-income Yukoner during my time as Minister of Health and Social Services.

2006 was the last time that the medical travel subsidy for inside the territory and the out-of-territory per diem was increased — that was when I was Minister of Health and Social Services. It has not been increased since then, despite the government's rhetoric on that. We do have a commitment to increase it. We are pleased to see that. I would note that this is after years of the Yukon Party Official Opposition urging the Yukon government to increase medical travel rates.

Back in 2006, one of the changes that we made was to move from what had been a model where previously, if you were travelling from certain recognized communities to Whitehorse, you could get a per diem for travelling there for special services. The concept for that was never a bad one, but

there was inequity in that approach. That included that, if you were not in a recognized community, you could literally be the same distance from Whitehorse or further from Whitehorse as someone who was in a recognized community and they would receive the medical travel subsidy, but you would not receive a subsidy when travelling to the same specialist for the same type of care and driving farther. That concern was raised to me by a low-income Yukoner who was having difficulty financially and found that the need to travel in for special services was making it tougher for him. I thought that was a reasonable request. I made that proposal. My colleagues agreed to it. After working with the department, we found a model to implement that, which was the zone system.

I don't take issue with the concept of government perhaps adjusting that model. I am not saying that it is a perfect model. We were trying to improve it from a system that created inequity and replace it with something that wasn't administratively complex or expensive for the department to run. But when they talk about improving access to care and population health — and even in other parts of the report, they talk about the importance of supports for low-income Yukoners — who did they consult with in deciding to end the medical travel subsidies for Yukoners residing in zones 1 and 2 outside of Whitehorse? Do they know the implications of that?

There are many parts where there are some ideas in here that are worthy of consideration and do not need massive systemic change to implement. It does not require a sweeping change to the structure of the system to reduce pharmacy markups and fees to a level closer to the national average. It does not require putting in place a prescription monitoring system for the Yukon modelled on the Nova Scotia prescription monitoring program and does not require massive systemic change.

I would argue that to make the sweeping structural changes that the government wishes to do will in fact interfere with dealing with some of the smaller aspects of the system that actually do more to directly affect the lives of Yukoners.

They are going to get so focused on creating their new silos and a new level of bureaucracy that will add god only knows how many government employees, because the Premier and his colleagues sure don't and we know that the panel doesn't. We have that situation where adding another board and adding more bureaucracy — it is highly questionable, in my view, how this can possibly make a system more efficient, more financially sustainable, or how it will improve coordination between parts of the system that don't communicate well with each other now. Introducing another silo, another entity, another level of bureaucracy, or another board is something that is very questionable.

When there is reference in the report to — quoting page 23, the panel says: "We heard from a number of other providers that there is a strong sense that the Yukon Hospital Corporation is operating in isolation as a stand-alone entity, rather than as a contributing member of the health care system." Well, that is a very interesting statement. I would also wonder what the view is of the Yukon Hospital Corporation and its staff regarding that claim. How is it that the government can be certain that the

solution to improving communication is to add yet another board on top of the existing board and corporate structure? It really is something that is very questionable and — I'll be blunt — it just does not make sense.

I want to make another point on medical travel. We were calling for increases to the medical travel program for years, including presenting specific suggestions of doing that earlier during this term. The government insisted on punting it off into the part of the overall system of the comprehensive health review. Then, years later, they ended up agreeing to do what we had been calling for anyway.

While they were telling Yukoners to wait for increases to medical travel, there were increases to the travel benefit for MLAs and government employees each year to adjust with the CPI and inflation, but this Liberal government has refused to do even a rate-of-inflation increase to medical travel for four years, and only now, on the eve of an election, have they finally agreed to take action on this issue and increase the subsidy and the per diem for Yukoners needing medical travel. This is a government that, again — when they talk about financial sustainability, the government found money to give the Premier a raise, but they haven't found money to help Yukoners who have been calling for more supports for medical travel until we're in the twilight days of this Liberal government, and they realize that Yukoners are still calling for increases to the medical travel program, which hasn't been increased since I was Minister of Health and Social Services and the government implemented increases at that point in time.

I would note that, even at that time, those increases were based on the limited amount of money that we had. They did not fully cover all costs for out-of-territory hotels at that point in time. Now, some 14 years after they were implemented, they certainly do not meet those needs. This Liberal government waited four years before acting on an area that is important to Yukoners, and they heard repeatedly from the Official Opposition that Yukoners wanted to see those changes made earlier.

There are a number of parts in the report where the panel talks about what could be done better. They talk about Yukoners' relationships with health care providers, doctors, and nurses.

They also talked about — here is a fun one, Mr. Speaker, on page 25 — and I quote: "They want to feel heard and want the health system to focus less on the number of patients served and more on the quality of care delivered." Health care professionals also want to be heard, and this government's approach has not listened to them on this and has rushed to conclusions without understanding the logistical implications, the operational implications, or the cost implications. Certainly, it is very clear from the Yukon Medical Association's public statements that they did not feel heard at all by this government and were not told by government — that, after a quick meeting on the topic, the government was actually planning on announcing that they were accepting all recommendations despite the fact that the Yukon Medical Association, I understand, had very clearly and specifically conveyed to government that they had concerns and would be providing

specific comments and feedback regarding the report. But the Premier didn't care, the Minister of Health and Social Services didn't care, and the Liberal government didn't care.

Another thing that is missing in this — when they talk about some of the changes that the panel proposed — they have proposed some changes that have been pulled from models in other jurisdictions, but they haven't really done the work to understand how they would work in the territory. In fairness to the panel, they acknowledged that there was more work to be done and that they were expecting government to do it, including, as I mentioned — we heard very clearly from the panel in response to questions by the Member for Watson Lake — that they didn't know what it would cost, but they did expect that government would do the work of figuring it out. Unfortunately, the government has not done the work of figuring it out.

In concluding my comments here, I do need to note — as I have in the past to repeated dismissive remarks from the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services about it — that this Liberal government has spent most of its mandate neglecting the needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

We know that, according to the hospital's own year-end report — I think that it is on page 14 of that report, if memory serves — there is a graph showing very clearly what their funding was for the last fiscal year and showing that, when you look at their funding before the pension adjustment — which is, of course, dedicated to that pension fund — it can't just be used for other matters — for the hospital, there is a \$3.9-million hole in its budget. There is a \$3.9-million deficit in the year ending March 31, 2020. It wasn't until after the start of the fiscal year that the government provided them that funding retroactively as well as a 2.5-percent increase after the fact for that year and then another 2.5-percent increase for this year's funding. Again, the funding that was provided — the millions of dollars that they needed — didn't arrive until we were literally in the middle of a global pandemic. It took a pandemic to get this Liberal government to treat the Hospital Corporation seriously. That, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, in my view, is profoundly unacceptable.

I would remind members that they can refer to the comments that the Hospital Corporation witnesses made when they appeared here in this Assembly earlier during this Sitting. As well, despite me asking the question back on November 21 — I asked questions about why the government had a provision of a loan to the hospital to cover a portion of their pension requirements. I asked about the term of that loan and the interest provided on that loan. Now, almost a month later, what we have heard from the government is crickets. In fact, we know that they are charging the hospital interest on some of the money provided for the pension amount instead of simply providing that cash to meet their pension obligations, pursuant to federal legislation, as has been the past practice. It is nickel and diming an important part of our health care system.

We know, based on past comments from the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services, that this Liberal government doesn't really value the acute part of our health care system. They are dismissive of the model and suggest that

a preventive approach can simply replace it, but the Yukon will always need both acute and preventive parts of our health care system. For Yukoners who now have highly preventable diseases, such as certain diabetes cases or other health conditions — for the people who have those problems now, they still need care. I don't disagree at getting better at preventive health and reducing the number of people who develop preventable problems due to factors such as poor diet, lack of exercise, or poor health, but for Yukoners who have those problems here and now, they need that care. You may be able to reduce a future need for hip and knee replacements by doing things — including improving nutrition and exercise — but for people who need it now, there's no substitute for getting that acute care.

When they're waiting an unacceptably long time for many specialties — in fact, as we heard from the hospital, they're waiting longer than the benchmarks for most specialties in the Yukon. Those real-world health implications on Yukoners need to be treated seriously. This is not just a theoretical debate; we are not in some practice parliament; this is the real world. The health effects are real.

When the hospital doesn't get the money that it needs to meet the needs of Yukoners, there are real-world impacts. If a government rams forward major changes to the health care system which have a negative impact on physicians, there are real-world implications. Unfortunately, we see a government that, for some reason that I can't quite fathom, just doesn't get those real-world implications on the lives of Yukoners and those real effects on our health care professions and the real risk to our health care system, which results from committing to an approach that you haven't costed out and don't understand the implications of.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Cathers: Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in the interest of improving the motion that is presented by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, I move:

THAT Motion No. 350 be amended by:

(1) inserting the phrase “being fully costed by the Government of Yukon” after the word “services”; and

(2) inserting the phrase “the report being consulted on by the Government of Yukon with all affected health professionals” after the phrase “recommendations contained within”.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, as per the protocols that we have been adopting for COVID, I would request the opportunity to have a brief recess to go over the amendment, once you have had a look.

Speaker: Yes, if I could just confirm with the Clerks-at-the-Table that the proposed amendment is procedurally in order, and then I could address the request that has been made by the Minister of Community Services.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Pursuant to COVID-19 protocols which allow the members to meet, confer, and discuss their respective

positions with respect to a proposed amendment, the House will recess for 10 or 15 minutes.

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: The House will recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

Speaker: Order, please.

As indicated prior to the recess, the proposed amendment is procedurally in order. It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT Motion No. 350 be amended by:

(1) inserting the phrase “being fully costed by the Government of Yukon” after the word “services”; and

(2) inserting the phrase “the report being consulted on by the Government of Yukon with all affected health professionals” after the phrase “recommendations contained within”.

Therefore, the proposed amended motion would read:

THAT this House supports *Putting People First — the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon’s health and social programs and services* being fully costed by the Government of Yukon and the recommendations contained within the report being consulted on by the Government of Yukon with all affected health professionals.

Mr. Cathers: It probably goes without saying that this amendment is intended to improve the motion and address what we see as some of the fundamental weaknesses in the original motion as well as the approach taken by this government in deciding to implement all 76 recommendations from the comprehensive health care review.

The inclusion that I have proposed on behalf of our caucus — of requiring it to be fully costed, as well as having the report consulted on with all affected health professionals — is based on what we see as being improvements to that motion.

I hope that the government will consider it to be a constructive amendment, but I expect, based on past practice through this Fall Sitting due to the changes brought on by COVID — there has been a practice where the government, if we propose an amendment, asks for a recess of either 10 or 15 minutes to discuss the amendment, and then they always come back and disagree with it.

So, while we didn’t disagree with the recess, unless the government is going to suddenly become a lot more collaborative and interested in hearing from others than they have been during this Fall Sitting, we can safely assume that they took 15 minutes to consider how they were going to tell us no rather than actually consider an amendment that, in my belief and in our belief, would improve the motion, because it would include the requirement to do a full costing of the recommendations and, secondly and very importantly, to consult on the report with all affected health professionals.

Until that work is done, in my view, it is very premature to commit to implementing a report. I would say that it’s making a commitment that the Liberal government wants to make. They think it sounds good to make the commitment, but they

don’t have the foggiest clue whether they can deliver on the promise or how long it will take to do it.

As I noted in referring to this, the importance of costing also relates to understanding how long it would take to implement changes, if you decide to do them. There are changes in there, as I have made mention of in speaking to this before closing the amendment, that, in my view, should be reconsidered, and they should definitely consider the input of health professionals.

We have heard the Yukon Medical Association’s public statements. I know that there are other health care professionals who have expressed concern with the content. Not all have chosen to speak publicly, and we’ll leave it to them, as well as the organizations representing them, to choose whether they want to provide those comments directly to government or weigh in on them in a public forum.

In my view, however, I would just note that, while respecting their ability to make that decision, I believe that Yukoners would benefit from knowing the concerns that health care professionals and the organizations representing them have. I think Yukoners benefit from knowing what their concerns are and what their suggestions are regarding this government’s proposal of making sweeping reforms through these 76 recommendations, because, while there are good things in the recommendations, there are problems in there as well.

I do have to note as well that I find it somewhat gratifying — in looking at this report and considering things such as the references on page 41 and 42 — that it talks about the increased use of telehealth and that 36 percent of respondents said that they preferred to use telehealth or a similar system rather than travel. Not only is that not a new concept, but when we expanded the telehealth network during my time as Minister of Health and Social Services, that was part of the vision. When we made the announcement at the Whitehorse General Hospital that telehealth — we had become the second jurisdiction in the country to implement the telehealth network at all of our hospitals and community nursing stations. The vision at that time was to improve access to care. It was reducing travel and providing more accessible services to Yukoners.

So, the recommendations that are talked about on pages 41 and 42 with regard to that are not ones that I disagree with. They are ones that we very much agreed with — and we very much had the vision that — not just myself, as Health and Social Services minister at the time, or the Yukon Party government of the day, but in fact the health care professionals whom we were working with across the territory in implementing that — believed that there was an opportunity to improve access to services through that telehealth system. “Virtual health”, as it is referred to in the report — it says that it is underutilized. It says that, in 2006, the government invested in telehealth, installing stations in every community. It referred to challenges with uptake, access, and outdated equipment. Again, that is on page 42 for the reference of Hansard.

Again, the government has focused on the photo opportunities and sweeping changes to the system which would, in my view, create significant delays, logistical

challenges, increased costs, and increased bureaucracy associated with a new board and a new corporation.

There are a lot of things in the report, such as making better use of virtual care options, that I agree with. Those, like other parts of the report, should be discussed with the Yukoners who deliver these services and the people who depend on them. The details matter, and the Liberal government has an unfortunate pattern of not working with health care professionals — as I noted in the amendment to the motion and earlier in debate — and not recognizing that “check the box” consultation is not the same as actually showing people the details of what you’re talking about, hearing their input, considering it, and allowing the opportunity — seeking the opportunity — for real input on the details of what you’re doing.

A high-level survey that asks people about concept does not always directly align with the actual details of it and the real-world impacts of government decisions. Of course, the proposal to include the requirement for it to be fully costed by the Government of Yukon is something that we shouldn’t have to propose in an amendment to a motion. It should have happened in the first place, but it didn’t. As I mentioned, it is not just us saying that. The government’s own panel acknowledged that they couldn’t say what it cost, but they also made it clear that they expected government to do the due diligence in costing it out. Unfortunately, after the panel delivered their report, the government skipped more than a few steps in making the decision to accept all of the recommendations in the report.

As a result — as I mentioned before but I have to reiterate again — they are missing issues that they would hear from health professionals and patients, such as the need to reduce wait times. We heard that from the Hospital Corporation. We heard that our wait times for most special services don’t meet the national benchmarks. We heard that the problem is that the hospital doesn’t have space to provide those services.

That is part of the problem, but instead of focusing on those fundamental issues that are affecting the health care of Yukoners today, the government is focused on this 207-page report — and really on the executive summary for the report — rather than dealing with these real issues affecting the lives of people across the territory here and now.

Working with health care professionals, as I mentioned in the amendment, is an important part of understanding what parts of the report should be implemented and what parts should not. Understanding the costs will give government and the health care professionals a better understanding of what the costs are of each concept. The reason why I say it that way is that there are some ideas that sound good until you fully work them out. Once you fully understand their costs and their implications, that may cause people involved in health care to say, “Yes, we like that idea, but once we actually look through the full costing of it and its implementation, this shouldn’t be a priority anymore.” Government should do XYZ instead, because every time there are increased costs associated with a new bureaucracy, hiring more employees, and creating more silos, as the government intends to do, all of those costs mean that the money isn’t being spent in other areas.

Just as with using the work that has gone on in the past of setting priorities for new services and equipment at the Hospital Corporation — just as that has, in the past, involved health professionals working with the corporation and the board in deciding which items are the highest priority for meeting the needs of Yukoners — in all of these areas, that detailed discussion of the impacts of the government’s concepts will lead to people saying that the plan needs to be adjusted and that the concept sounded okay before it was costed, but once the costs were known, there are higher priorities than the original concept.

I should also note that, in the area of wait times, another one that has come up recently — but the government has still failed to act on — is the issue of spirometry. I’ve heard that from a constituent of mine and another Yukoner. We know that this care was provided previously by the hospital. Then it was provided by a contractor. My understanding is that it’s currently not being provided to Yukoners who need it, including those whose health is at risk if they are forced to travel to Vancouver during a pandemic.

That discussion with health care professionals on both the contents of the report and other priorities would naturally lead to government getting a better understanding of specific areas where there are gaps in services, unacceptably long wait times, or procedures such as spirometry, where Yukoners don’t have the care that they need.

As we heard earlier in Question Period today, as well as previously in debate, the Minister of Health and Social Services seems to confuse the number of people on the registry for psychiatry with the issue of the key question of how long Yukoners are waiting for access to a psychiatrist — and how long it takes for people in need, especially during a pandemic when we know that mental health problems across the country have increased as people grapple with issues, including increased isolation, loneliness, depression, and other issues.

At that time, by not working with the health professionals, government has made a decision that they think there are enough names on a register, and they don’t even know how long Yukon patients are waiting for those services before they reach the decision that the Yukon doesn’t need another psychiatrist and is simply going to revert to the government’s talking points about mental health, which conveniently forget the existence of Many Rivers and the mental health services that they provided to Yukoners for 50 years and don’t deal with the key question: Are Yukon patients in need getting the health care services — including psychiatrist services, including cardiac services, and many other wait times — are they getting those services in a timely manner when they need them, or are they waiting?

As we heard from the Hospital Corporation, for a great many specialties — for most specialties — Yukoners are waiting longer than the benchmarks for those procedures, and their health care is suffering while this government focuses on photo opportunities and talking points and is constantly trying to make partisan comparisons to the past government instead of focusing on the real needs of Yukoners today.

After four years in government, they are still not acting like the government that Yukoners expect or the government that they deserve, and they are focused on partisan arguments instead of on realizing where there are problems, taking suggestions wherever they come from — including from the Official Opposition, including from the Third Party, and including from others — and then actually taking those steps to improve what they are doing and recognize that, regardless of our party differences, we are all MLAs representing Yukoners.

We all hear issues and concerns from Yukoners who are affected by the decisions of government. With issues like medical travel, we have heard from Yukoners and raised those issues, and the Third Party has heard from Yukoners with similar concerns with medical travel. While we are not always going to agree in this Legislative Assembly, the absolute, stubborn resistance from the Liberal Party to take good suggestions that emerge from members on this side is notable and unfortunately Yukoners, including the health care needs of Yukoners, are suffering as a result.

Again, referring back to the specific amendment that I have proposed, the government's insistence on rushing to the photo opportunity instead of costing out and understanding the cost implications of implementing the 76 recommendations of the comprehensive health care review is unacceptable. It is sloppy decision-making, and it is completely unrealistic to tell Yukoners that they are going to implement these recommendations when they don't have the foggiest notion of how much the bill will be for implementing those recommendations.

The panel themselves admitted that they don't know that it is actually going to cut costs. The government's failure to properly consult the affected health care professionals is leading to areas where some of the recommendations that they have committed to implement simply were not ready for prime time. They don't know the implications. They don't know the effect it will have on physicians and physician clinics — their commitment to replace medical clinics, which certainly do not work perfectly but have been providing the bulk of primary health care to Yukoners across this territory for decades — for the government to make the commitment to replace those clinics without understanding what it would cost to buy out those clinics — or if they're not committing to buying them out, dealing with the litigation costs that might be brought forward associated with it. There are a lot of issues that they haven't thought through. They don't understand the costs. They clearly don't care about the input of health care professionals, including and especially physicians, as it comes down to the impacts of this report. They spend time — they are fixated in their talking points on talking about things like preventive care instead of acute care and failing to recognize that the acute care needs of Yukoners will not go away if government simply fails to address them.

While preventive measures can improve the health care conditions of people down the road and reduce the demand for certain acute care over time, for the people who have those problems now, they need the health care and hospital services to help them here today.

Again, in wrapping up my remarks — as you advised me that my time to speak is running out — I would commend this to the House. I would hope the government will break their perfect record from the fall of shooting down every suggestion for constructive improvement that has been made by the Official Opposition and actually recognize that they didn't get the job done right and agree to consult with Yukon health care professionals and fully cost out the implications of this report before proceeding with it.

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to the amendment and the changes proposed, I know that, as I listened to some of the comments today, it appears — and I understand that change is hard — change is extremely hard for the Yukon Party, but leadership means vision. Leadership means moving Yukon to a better place. Collaborative care models — the objective of *Putting People First* — and the report provide our territory with a road map to transform our health and social services system.

The Member for Lake Laberge talks on about foggy minds and he talks on about costing out. I can say with certainty that the steps we have taken to implement the actions and making strategic investments in our children — the strategic actions and the investments that we have made in senior care, the investments that we have made in collaborative care — I would ask the member opposite what his vision would be. What would be the vision of the Yukon Party? What would be the cost of doing nothing? What would it cost us to do nothing? I would ask that question. Because if we didn't do anything, we would not have preventive care.

Often, we get questioned in the Legislative Assembly about prevention and about preventive care. Well, I would suggest that, when we are looking at the greater good and we're looking at the greater good of Yukon, in particular, when we speak about care — collaborative care for Yukoners — and we speak about the vision of rural Yukon and providing care — no longer are we apprehending children. We don't have many group homes.

The member goes on in the submission about wasting time, wasting resources. I would suggest that this is not a waste of resources, nor is it a waste of time.

Greg Marchildon is a professor at the University of Toronto. He was a professor at the University of Regina, executive director of the Romanow commission in health care reform. We have Jennifer — and I will have to quickly grab her name. She is the president of the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement. We have Bruce McLennan; Bruce was the former Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services. These individuals are professionals. They had a mandate and they had clear direction. That clear direction they received was to go out to Yukon, do the collaborative consultation and — my apologies, Jennifer is Jennifer Zelmer, for the record — to do collaborative consultation. Their objective was to look at increasing and enhancing supports and increasing and enhancing programs.

Historically, I can state with certainty that the former Yukon Party government — the cost for delivering social and health care was a biggest cost driver in this government — \$3

to \$1. You spent \$3 and you bring in \$1, so therefore, you're addressing — in terms of trying to look at continuing to provide essential services and collaborative supports across the territory, looking at leadership and looking at medical travel.

For an example, the member opposite mentioned that, well, we haven't increased medical travel, but yet we increase MLA travel. Well, that opens up a window of opportunity. Maybe the member opposite doesn't want to have that conversation, but what I can say is that this side of the House has taken into consideration the recommendations. Do the member opposite and the Yukon Party not want us to implement a nurse practitioner model in our communities — meaning that we need to bring better supports and programming?

The motion as it is amended and presented to us speaks about consulting — further consultation of health professionals. I can tell you that we had a bunch of health professionals, experts in their field, doing the analysis for us, consulting with the Yukon Medical Association, engaging with the Hospital Corporation, engaging with our community partners.

In that process, they came up with the recommendations. The objective of accepting the recommendations is accepting the voice of Yukon. What that report essentially does is it gives Yukon a perspective. It gives Yukoners a voice in looking at a road map — a road map to a better Yukon and a road map to a better health care system.

Many of the recommendations do not have a cost associated with them, and that's true, because it requires us to collaborate and work with our partners. However, when we look at the recommendations and we move it forward over the course of time, the analysis and the detailed analysis will be done — much like we're having a discussion on universal childcare. I'm sure that every working mother, every working parent in the Yukon in a marginalized situation who wants access and needs access to childcare — a community, like Ross River, that has no childcare will want universal childcare. Those are the recommendations and the analysis that is happening right now as we speak.

We have seen the federal government enacting universal childcare and putting legislation forward. We are the first in the country, after Québec, to say that, in the north, we want to universalize childcare. We want to provide equity, fairness, and transparency.

What we have seen under the Yukon Party government — we have seen childcare centres, NGO childcare centres, that had to do auctions and bake sales to try to raise funding to pay for childcare subsidies and support — Watson Lake being one, for sure, and the Little Blue Daycare in Dawson City. Those two daycares are now a part of the new vision, going forward. That's part of the recommendation from *Putting People First*.

As we look at the system and the fundamental system overhaul, it means that we need to look at improvements in outcomes. We need to look at the experiences of our clients — our patients. We need to look at the experiences of Yukoners. We need to look at bringing our health professionals together.

The member opposite speaks on and on about how he has read the *Yukon News* and how he has seen some notes around

the Yukon Medical Association and how perhaps we are not working with the Yukon Medical Association. Well, I can say that we have a very good working relationship. We have now progressed to having a collaborative medical services committee that the president — Ryan Warshawski — co-chairs with the DM of Health and Social Services. That is important to note for the record. The member speaks about how terrible it is. It is not terrible. I can tell Yukoners with all certainty that we are advancing in the efforts going forward.

He speaks a lot about silos and how we all work in silos. I can tell Yukoners that this government is advancing in more ways than I have seen in my time with respect to the advancements.

So, in terms of changing the motion on the floor to suggest that perhaps we need to do more consultation — well, I can say that the expert committee, which I just identified, travelled to every Yukon community. They met with health professionals. They met with the hospital association. In fact, the hospital association submitted recommendations to that panel. Their mandate was not to go out and start doing the job of government — and the departments to start doing the cost analysis around how much it was going to cost for universal childcare. How much is it going to cost for medical travel and such things? They made some recommendations, and the obligation of this government — and the internal supports, the professionals who work in Health and Social Services and all across the government, are working hard behind the scenes to do the good work in terms of the cost analysis and making the best decisions and putting those recommendations forward.

What I heard in this two-and-some-odd hours of commentary was not very respectful. It was not respectful of the public servants, suggesting — "...not the foggiest idea of what it was going to cost". These are professionals; these are people who dedicate their lives to making our Yukon a better place. They choose to work within the public service and to work for Yukoners. Suggesting that sweeping changes within health care — well, the changes that are being made, I would venture to say, are being made to enhance and support the lives of Yukoners.

Furthermore, as we look at the project, it is near and dear to many Yukoners' hearts. It speaks to rural Yukon communities. It speaks to the long-standing harm, inequities, and neglect experienced by our rural Yukon communities and our indigenous communities. It speaks about the neglect by the Yukon Party government for 14 years.

So, we are here to speak about the motion and perhaps the proposed amendments to the motion on the floor of the Legislature, but we want to talk about the fundamental principles of why we are here and the objectives, rather than speaking about what a terrible job they did, what a terrible project it is, and what a terrible initiative it is. I would say that this is a beautiful, well-thought-out initiative because it represents Yukoners.

The Member for Lake Laberge laughs and chuckles because it is about LGBTQ2S+ individuals who have a voice and representation in collaborative care, which perhaps the member doesn't support. On the record, we know individuals

who come to us to say, “What about me?” What about the young people who never had a voice, who were kicked out of our system? Now they have a place to go. They have supports.

So, I would say that this is no laughing matter. It is very serious. It is serious in the sense that we are looking at reducing wait times for specialist services. By doing that, we reduce costs. We have brought specialized services to the Yukon. Speaking continuously about psychiatry, talking about orthopaedics, talking about pediatricians — well, we have pediatricians in the Yukon. Historically, we haven’t.

We have orthopaedic surgeons here now; we have ophthalmologists. We have more supports in Yukon, and the vision of *Putting People First* is to try to enhance a better model of care and a better system. It has to incrementally increase the supports in rural Yukon communities by integrating nurse practitioners so that they can augment the supports of the specialists and also by doing some of the heavy lifting in the communities, rather than bringing in individuals to see a physician in Whitehorse for an hour or two and then sending them back home; then they come back in two weeks. We can do the work now through the nurse practitioners. So, the wait times have been significantly reduced.

Collaborative medical services and the input of implementing *Putting People First* — I have to say that the good work of Dr. Warshawski and the DM of Health and Social Services — they are working together to look at collaborative medical services, and they have been doing that good work for quite some time.

It’s really about a whole system change, and system changes are hard for people generally, but it appears to be extremely difficult for the Yukon Party to accept the change to a better Yukon by resisting the recommendations being put forward. I want to focus on some of the comments with respect to leadership and standing here and speaking about how we are doing a very good job, what is it costing, and about a greater tomorrow.

I can tell Yukoners with certainty that we now have mental wellness hubs and supports in their communities. We are looking at land-based initiatives, which haven’t historically been there, and that’s a preventive care model — leaving system changes and looking at palliative care options that matter to people in Old Crow and to people in Pelly Crossing, which weren’t there historically but are now there as part of this *Putting People First*.

We know and believe in cultural understanding as it will address and provide a vision for us, seeing through two lenses — about systemic pervasive racism and about inequity in care.

It is about moving forward in our indigenous communities and bringing a voice. It is about equity in health care. It is about believing in our communities, who deserve better access to mental health, who have been dealing with long-systemic traumas associated with being suppressed. It is about the vision of reconciliation. It is about ensuring that individuals in our communities are given opportunities. I can say that we now have social workers in every one of our communities. As I have said many times, it is about replacing what we have heard in the past, and sending a social worker in to apprehend a child

and putting them in a foster home or a group home is no longer the case today.

I can say with a happy heart that every child matters, every senior matters, and every elder matters. We provided extended care. We have our IHealth system that we have implemented and we are working together with the Hospital Corporation on — that is part of the *Putting People First* recommendations. It is part of working on direct access to virtual care. It is about bringing down additional hurdles and bringing down additional hurdles to accessing essential services.

Thank you so much for the notice. I want to just conclude by saying that much of work that is already underway — as a result of COVID — allows us then to contain COVID. Why? Because we have an exceptional system in Yukon. We have exceptional employees within Health and Social Services and within our health care systems. We continue to hold up the teams of Health and Social Services who have moved forward — who have worked so hard to move forward and put the good work into *Putting People First* throughout managing the pandemic response. The resiliency is astounding. I will hold my hands up to them, always. I want to just extend my sincere appreciation to the experts who sat on the independent expert panel — in particular, our indigenous voice and our indigenous vision, former Chief Diane Strand. I want to say thank you to our territory for contributing to this report and joining the movement for change. Their voice and their vision were heard loud and clear and integrated into *Putting People First* and I am very honoured about that.

Ms. Hanson: In speaking to the proposed amendment to the main motion, I have to step back for a second because I have to say that it feels like there is a two-word phrase that I’m not allowed to use because of parliamentary language, but it sort of talks about a contest between adolescents who are rivals.

It’s unfortunate because the subject matter at the core of the discussion this afternoon is incredibly important. As my colleague, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, had made clear when the panel members came to present here on October 19, the Yukon NDP had initially been very sceptical about what outcome might be achieved as a result of this exercise by the Yukon Liberal government. We came by the scepticism quite naturally because we had watched, in 2008, the health care review and the corresponding *Taking the Pulse*, which was a reflection on how to implement it, and then watched as those recommendations were not implemented over time.

I have to say that we were surprised and very, very appreciative of the work that was done by the panel and by the scope of the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon’s health and social programs and services. I want to remind us all here that this was intended to be seen and to be read and to be implemented as a system change. It’s not ad hoc. It was repeated several times by the witnesses here on October 19.

Mr. McLennan, as the Minister of Health and Social Services noted, is a former deputy minister. He self-identified as a former bureaucrat and said, “You know, I was resistant to

making the kinds of changes and thought that we needed to go step by step.” Maybe that was how he viewed it, as he said, when he was involved in the previous review — as he was. But he said that, by the time they had completed their research and by the time he had the evidence before him, he realized that it was system change that was required and he said — and I quote: “We, in the report, recommend that the recommendations that we make are not one-offs; they need to be done in a comprehensive manner.”

Mr. Marchildon equally said that it needs to be taken as a whole. You won’t gain the benefit of those easier recommendations without doing some of the harder things involved in the report, and the challenge — who knows where this particular motion is? My concern is that the history of debate in this Legislature on Wednesdays is one or the other — the government or the Yukon Official Opposition — talks it out. If anything, the notion of the motion — and I can see the Minister of Community Services probably anticipating that the concern I have is that we see the vague language of supporting something — well, so what? What I’m looking for is the action. Is this government committed to implementing this report? That’s not what is said.

So, on one hand, we have one party saying, “We don’t support the ideas in the report; we don’t value the recommendations.” It’s interesting, as the minister sort of quickly alluded to, that one of the members of that report — in addition to having been the executive director of the Royal Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada 2001 — so probably 20 years of basic experience before — that was after he had his PhD in public health and numerous other degrees. He has done the fair academic research into public health and the costing of it. He also went on to write some of the main text on the costing of public health care and the fiscal sustainability of health care in Canada. So, I would suggest — in terms of having an understanding of what the costs are and the cost drivers — that’s not an issue. I find that the inclusion of that in the proposed amendment is not necessarily valid, and I also look at the — if we look again at the comments made by the two members from the panel who did appear before the Legislative Assembly virtually, they talked about basing it on evidence and they talked about the kinds of models of health care that they were recommending — the model that they are recommending here being based on an assessment, not just an assessment within Canada, but an international assessment of where models have been tried and where they have worked.

I would urge the Member for Lake Laberge, and perhaps the minister as well, to look at some of the work and the evaluations that have been done on the Nuka model. My colleagues and I said this to the panel: We are astounded and pleased to see them referencing Nuka. We have been trying, as the New Democratic Party, for the last 10 years to get someone to pay attention to what was happening with Nuka with respect to the work and the demonstrable changes in population health that have come as a result of the implementation of that.

We could look at the fact that, even a study done by Ted Ball in terms of looking at it in the context of changes being proposed in Ontario — there is another peer-reviewed study in

the *British Columbia Medical Journal* by a psychiatrist based in Duncan who came and looked at the integration of psychiatry into the Nuka model. As part of the review a few years ago of Nuka, they found a 50-percent reduction in urgent care and ER utilization. Those are all related to cost. There was a 53-percent drop in hospital admissions and a 65-percent drop in specialist utilization, and customer and staff satisfaction rates were over 90 percent.

We all recoiled a bit when we heard the notion of the use of the language of “customer” in terms of public health, but it is the notion of ownership of the outcomes and being the owner of it. As a way of explaining it, and perhaps — for the Member for Lake Laberge, because I know that he likes military analogies — I will just quote from this March 25, 2013, review of the customer-owner model. It says — and I quote: “There’s a story about President Lyndon Baines Johnson emerging from the White House on to the lawn in the Rose Garden where there are two helicopters warming up. ‘Your helicopter is over here sir’, says the spiffy young uniformed cadet as he snaps to salute his Commander-and-Chief. ‘Son,’ says LBJ with his sun-beaten crinkly face smiling broadly, ‘They are all my helicopters.’”

It goes on to make the analogy that the people of Ontario, the people of Alaska, and the people of Yukon own the component parts of our health care delivery system. What we are trying to do is deliver that ownership. What our concern is, as the New Democratic Party, is that the ownership of the decision to implement the whole of these health care recommendations — because I am concerned every time I hear the minister talk about a little piece here and a little piece there — it’s the fragmentation of it. It’s whether or not the Government of Yukon is prepared to take the courageous step of implementing the recommendation with respect to “Wellness Yukon” and to resist the pushback, as we’ve seen from various sectors of the health care community.

I refute the notion that, as put forward, there wasn’t any consultation with the Yukon Medical Association. We heard from the witnesses in response to the questions from the Member for Watson Lake that they did meet with the previous president of the Yukon Medical Association. They did meet with 10 to 12 members of the Yukon Medical Association in Whitehorse and two in Dawson City when they were there. You can’t drag or force people to the table.

I’ll contain myself now with respect to the proposed amendment to the main motion. I think I have made it clear that I think the main motion is weak in the sense that it doesn’t speak about implementing it; it just says to support it. Support can be a long way, and 15 years from now, we’ll still say, “Geez, we supported that, but we didn’t do anything about it.” I want to see something active. We need to see, as Yukon — not just with the financial trajectory that the health care system is on, but for the fact that we’re not getting value for money on the non-sustainable system that we have right now — nor providing quality care.

We find it difficult and will not support this proposed amendment.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am pleased to be able to stand to speak to the amendment proposed by the Member for Lake Laberge to this motion. I would just like to acknowledge the words from the Member for Whitehorse Centre; I appreciate them. One of the things — when we first saw the *Putting People First* report and when the Minister of Health and Social Services came to speak to us, colleagues of hers, and to talk about our position on the report, it was exactly that. She spoke about it as a whole-of-system change, about needing to be courageous about adopting a reformation of the health care system as a whole with Yukoners at the centre of it — not with one of our health care professionals at the centre of it, but rather, Yukoners. That was really key in the whole of the exercise.

Of course, there had been high-level costing done. There were as well, I think, questions raised about the cost of not taking these actions because we can tell that the cost drivers are significant around health care provision here in the Yukon.

There was a real conversation about: “Well, if we stay with the status quo, what is the long-term cost — and not just economic cost, but the health outcome cost to Yukoners?”

I appreciate that the Member for Whitehorse Centre states that she was originally sceptical. There was a date; it was on November 15, 2018. It was during the portion of the day when members here table returns and documents. The member stood up and then her colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, stood up, and they went back and forth, and they tabled 22 documents that day.

I remember going off after that day and, in typical fashion of mine, I hunted down as many of those documents as I could to try to have a look at them to understand some of the history that was being tabled here in this Legislature. That history was really talking about past attempts to look at something — but no action. I think that was the point that was being made.

When I heard the member speak just now, it’s about how we get to that action. What I want to say is that, on the amendment as it’s proposed, the amendment would say, “No, let’s not get to the action. Instead, let’s go off and do a costing exercise, and let’s go back and do engagement” — which is what we just did. That was the whole point of the panel of *Putting People First*. That was the whole idea of how they did that work. They talked with Yukoners — yes — and health care professionals — of course — but also Yukoners, because it is ours. That is this whole notion. What I think is the heart of the motion prior to the amendment that is proposed is to find out whether other members of this Legislature agree on whether we should go for the courageous decision, what the vision is, to go with health care here.

I think that I have heard from the Member for Lake Laberge that he doesn’t support that. I’ve certainly heard from the Member for Whitehorse Centre that she would prefer us to move faster and further and have more commitment to that action, but what we were trying to do here today with this motion was to ask colleagues from all parties whether or not they share that vision.

When the Member for Lake Laberge referenced the panel members — when the witnesses were here in the Legislature

from the *Putting People First* panel — there were some things that I felt he missed in his references. I would like to quote as well from them but give the full quote because I feel that it gives more context. I am going to quote and I will also share with the folks from Hansard. I am quoting from October 19, 2020, and I am on page 1472, and I am talking about a response from Mr. McLennan. I begin my quote now: “Physicians were, first of all, members of the comprehensive review steering committee. As I mentioned before, they were, if I’m not mistaken, the only caregiver group represented on that committee.

“We did have meetings with Dr. Katharine Smart, who is the former head of the YMA, and we met with the panel early on and had discussions and talked about, as well, issues of determinants of health, the primary health care models, and the collaborative care model with her — not into specifics, because we hadn’t formulated any recommendations at that time.

“Some of the member panels also met with a group of physicians early on in the consultation process — approximately 12 YMA members and the chief medical officer of health, Dr. Hanley — and we had some discussions there in terms of where we were going and what we were planning to do. As was mentioned earlier as well, the YMA did have an opportunity to come to a presentation of the Alaska Southcentral Foundation to see how the Nuka model worked and to get a sense of that before we had actually embraced that model, but I am told that no physicians actually attended those sessions. We did meet with physicians in Dawson on two occasions to talk about how their model works — which is quite different from the fee-for-service model of other Yukon physicians. As was mentioned by Greg, there were numerous group sessions that were held through phase 1 and 2 of the consultations, but to my knowledge, no physicians actually came to any of those meetings — at least, not that I’m aware of.”

Earlier in their submissions to us, they said how they certainly were invited, and there was a reference to those invitations.

Another thing that I would like to talk to — to try to clear up a little bit when it comes to quotes — is around costing. The amendment is asking about costing, and when the panelists were here, they talked about that. I will just read that quote more fully into the record.

I’m quoting from Hansard from the same day, starting on page 1461. I’m quoting Mr. McLennan: “I guess the upfront answer is no. We weren’t able to go through a complete costing of all the recommendations, but that is why, in chapter 6, we made our best efforts to show where savings could be made. In speaking to people from the Southcentral Foundation, it was clear that, by bending the cost curve or changing the cost curve, there is opportunity through the recommendations we have made in terms of organizational change that would have a dramatic benefit in terms of bending that cost curve downwards. I guess that, in other areas — as outlined in chapter 8 — we did cost out what we could for specific proposals, but they are limited. The other ones, as I have just mentioned, were more broad-based or holistic in terms of potential projections.”

So, Mr. Speaker, yes, there is more work to be done — definitely. I don't disagree with the Member for Lake Laberge that we'll have to do costing and then more detailed costing and continue to work.

Included in that, we will continue to work to engage with medical professionals — and not just doctors, because medical professionals are so much more than just doctors. My wife is a nurse and she would not be happy if I didn't mention nursing — but let's just talk about the range: occupational therapists, physical therapists, dieticians, dentists, optometrists, social workers, respiratory therapists, home care workers, midwives, pharmacists, the Hospital Corporation — so many in that list. We want to be talking with all of them.

I was pleased to note that we are in collaboration with the Yukon Medical Association, and as the Minister of Health and Social Services pointed out, there is an actual committee which is struck with them which is co-chaired by Dr. Warshawski as the president of YMA and the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services — working to have that engagement as an ongoing process, but not as the amendment would suggest, to stop and back up and not get to action, to not begin to develop the programs and introduce them.

I remember, when the Minister of Health and Social Services first spoke to us about the plan, that part of it included the things that we've already started working on because we had already begun to work on them. Here are things that we can get working on right away because they don't need as much prep work or the prep work has been ongoing. Here are things which are going to take more time, have more engagement, require more costing. But we need to go for the whole of change here because we can see that the system is not sustainable right now. We're worried that it will not serve the broad health and wellness of Yukoners.

For me, I am surprised because the members of the Yukon Party have stated often that they want to see more dollars put toward medical travel and yet today, when this report comes and we ask whether they are supportive of it, the members opposite are saying, no, they're not supportive of it — which is effectively saying, no, they are not supportive of increasing medical travel; they are not supportive of the Nuka model; they are not supporting aging in place or moving more into telehealth. The list is long. As the Member for Lake Laberge has noted, the report is a couple of hundred pages, so there's a lot in there to digest — there is no doubt.

I was surprised when they said that they didn't support those things because I thought to myself, "Well, hold on; you've been asking for it all along." But apparently, they want to slow it down. When I look back at the history — when I looked back through those reports that the Yukon NDP tabled, I started to see that there was a pattern — a pattern of "Do a study and let's now talk about that further; let's have more study and let's study a bit more." I think, no, we need to actually, as a territory, make this change.

One of the arguments that the Member for Lake Laberge put forward was around: Oh, if we start focusing on prevention, we will ignore acute care. I don't know why — there is no logic to that statement in my mind. Of course, we still want to deal

with acute care. We will want to deal with emergencies. We will want to deal with investments in our hospitals which deal with acute care.

What I understand is that we have increased the investment in our hospitals. I'm sure we will invest further. We're not trying to take away from acute care; what we're trying to do, Mr. Speaker, through this motion is see whether members of this Legislature support the notion that what we ought to do is to shift our thinking toward prevention so that rather than putting all the cost at the critical moment, if we invest upstream toward things like home care, that would result in better health outcomes over time and alleviate the pressures on critical care and acute care.

If we move further upstream to get to wellness, that will alleviate those pressures even on home care or improve them. That whole notion of us as wellness and that whole notion of citizens, of Yukoners, being the centre of their health care model, rather than our health care providers being the centre of the health care model — we believe that we will get to better health outcomes for all over time.

A little over eight years ago — before I was an elected official — I had been writing monthly columns for the *Whitehorse Star*, and I remember writing a column about wellness and health. I remember talking with the chief medical officer of health, Dr. Hanley, to talk to him about health outcomes and how we improve them over time as a territory. He did this great thing for me. He wrote a prescription for me — and I still have a copy of that prescription — which was: "Take a walk. Walk half an hour every day." He wrote it on a script, he signed it, and I scanned that and put it against the article in the paper.

What it said to me was that, if we can move upstream and if we can invest earlier in our citizens, then we are going to improve the health outcomes. It doesn't mean that we will no longer need a hospital and that we will no longer have a need for acute care, but it does mean that we will have fewer people needing to go. One of the things that I'll just note is that, with the way that the amendment is written, we wouldn't get to those actions, but the way that some of those actions had, for me — the ones that I was really excited about were focusing on our communities, focusing on aging in place, and focusing on wellness.

One of the groups that came forward to offer their support to the Minister of Health and Social Services was ElderActive Yukon. This is a group that has been doing tremendous work to keep people active for life. I absolutely hold up my hands to the work that they're doing because it's one of those tangible actions that is just an improvement on every front. As we age as a society, there needs to be more focus on our citizens, our seniors — I call them our "north-of-60" folk — and how they shape and contribute to our society.

One of the things that I have always thought about is how we can die — well, my mom, bless her, started the Saskatchewan committee for advance health care directives. She helped to get the legislation in place in Saskatchewan that allowed for advance health care directives. Ever since then, I have thought about this — about quality of life rather than

necessarily quantity of life. I was so surprised when I learned through my wife, an amazing nurse, that when you focus on hospice and palliative — which is a focus on quality of life — you increase the quantity of life as well. This is one of those times when some smart investment up front improves the health outcomes for all so that we don't need as much acute or critical care.

In the amendment that is proposed by the Member for Lake Laberge, what we would do is again table that. We would say, "Okay, thanks everybody. Let's start again. Let's go back and talk it over some more." I agree that, as we move forward through *Putting People First*, we should have continuous engagement — costing, working at all times — but I don't want to get away from the actions, which is what I feel the amendment is trying to suggest.

Again, I am a little surprised because the members opposite have often said, "Okay, here are the ones that you need to do, Yukon Liberal government. You need to increase the travel subsidy for Yukoners" — and here we have a plan to do that. What we said at the time when that was brought forward was: "Yes, we think that this is an important thing to look at. Let's look at it as a whole-of-system" — because one of the fundamental principles of this plan is that it is holistic, that it looks at the whole, and that the centre of that whole is Yukoners.

When we started the *Putting People First* panel, we understood that it needed to be that type of thinking. We didn't want to start piecemealing it. We even talked with them, and here it is. It is back here and yet now the opposition is recommending through an amendment, basically, to table it — to just put it on the shelf. I don't think that this is the right choice. I think that what we ought to be doing is rejecting this amendment.

I hope that we get to a vote on the amendment.

Mr. Hutton: I wasn't going to speak to the amendment, but it is such a terrible amendment that it needs a little speaking to.

It is pretty rich to get direction from across the floor, from the opposition, about fully costing things. The first thing that comes to mind for me is Whistle Bend — \$38 million a year in O&M costs that weren't costed out by the previous government. That is the benchmark. You could go under a limbo bar and get over that. It's absolutely ridiculous.

The report not being consulted on — there is evidence all through the report about the consultation that took place. The words are there. The member opposite refuses to believe them.

I was honoured to bring forward this original motion on *Putting People First*. It is probably the most important change in health and social services that has ever happened in this territory in the time that I have lived here. That's just a short 64 and a half years so far, Mr. Speaker.

The amendment would take away all of that good work that was done by so many knowledgeable health care professionals. There was a tremendous amount of work done by my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services. I have listened in my community for years to people complain about the travel

subsidy and how it doesn't meet their needs. People on pensions — two of them — who have to come in to see a Whitehorse doctor. They get \$75 a night to cover their room costs. That's after they pay the first night themselves. That was the previous system. I can tell you that my constituents are very happy to see the travel subsidy doubled. It is the best in Canada right now, compared to what was atrocious before.

When it comes to consultation, I can't help but think about the Peel River watershed plan. For seven years, groups of bureaucrats traveled around the territory and spent millions of dollars talking to people in every community. They got back to Whitehorse here, and a group of five or six people in a back room put the kibosh on the whole thing. They said, "Everybody who spoke out there — your words mean nothing. We're the people who are running government here; we're going to tell you what's good for you and for the Peel River watershed."

I think it was perhaps the current leader of the Yukon conservative party, Currie Dixon, who was the Minister of Environment at the time.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: The Member for Mayo-Tatchun seems to have forgotten that he's speaking to the amendment.

Speaker: The Member for Porter Creek Centre, on the point of order.

Mr. Gallina: I heard the Member for Mayo-Tatchun talking about consultation — the importance of consultation and how it applies to the amendment. He was merely giving examples of previous consultative measures, or lack of consultative measures, that have taken place in this territory.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I certainly heard criticism from the Member for Lake Laberge in his contributions to the debate today about his concerns and providing various instances about his concerns about consultation or lack thereof.

So, yes, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun can continue.

Mr. Hutton: Where was I? Consultation on the Peel. What an atrocious mess that was — so we're certainly not going to be taking any guidance from the members opposite when it comes to consultation. Our team is much better at doing consultation, and they have proven it over the last four years many times.

I don't know how much left really needs to be said about this amendment, other than that I can't support it; I won't support it. It goes against everything that my communities have worked for. All the input that came from my communities — all the things that they asked for — are in this report. Now, because we didn't cost it, you'd like to just throw the whole report away, and we'll have another 15 years of ignoring communities and First Nations around the territory. No, Mr. Speaker; that's not acceptable.

In the past, Yukon's health systems have focused on solving health and social problems once they occur. Everybody here has probably heard that famous phrase: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." How about "An ounce of prevention is worth \$1 million of acute care"?

You only need to think about one FASD child in this territory and the cost on the health care system and on our social system — to raise that child to an age of 21 years has been estimated at \$885,000. Across Canada this year, 3,000 Canadian children are going to be born with FASD. Prevention is pretty important when it comes to that. Acute care is really no solution. It doesn't help these people, except in the most marginal ways, to adopt and adapt to the challenges that they're facing because they didn't have the prevention up front because the education wasn't there, because the labels were so tiny on the liquor bottles that you need reading glasses to see that pregnant women maybe shouldn't drink this stuff. That's part of the reason.

Putting People First is about putting people first. It's about the people and it's about people out in my communities; it's about the First Nation people. The systemic racism is all through the health care system and the justice system. People in my community suffer because of that. This systemic racism is all through the health care system too. There are recommendations in this report to deal with some of that to try to make things better for Yukoners.

This amendment would — well, it's a laughing matter, I guess, for the Member for Lake Laberge. He sees no value at all in this work. To me, it's one of the most important documents I've ever seen produced in this House. The benefit from this — if we properly implement these 76 recommendations, all of my communities will benefit for years to come. Harm will be reduced. People will have better health care outcomes. People won't have to make so many trips to this wonderful city to see their doctor; they could see them in their own community.

When I spoke about my father dying, I didn't do it to make a political show in here. The doctor at the Whitehorse hospital said to me, "Mr. Hutton, I hope you realize that your father could die on the way home. That's on you." I said, "Yes, doctor. I understand that, but it's more important to me to do what my dad asked me to do than it is to live with the burden of maybe him dying in my truck on the way home." I was prepared to deal with that because it was so important for my dad to be home and die in his home with his family.

It's like that for everybody in my community — every elder who is out there. They don't want to die in Copper Ridge or Whistle Bend, surrounded by strangers, if they have an opportunity to have the last face they see be one of their loved ones. That's some of what this report is giving to my constituents in my communities and to all Yukoners. Shame — shame on the opposition who would take that away.

Mr. Gallina: In speaking to this proposed amendment on consultation and addressing costs, I heard from a number of members today on the consultation that took place leading up to the delivery of this report. It was consultation that took place

with the Yukon Medical Association, opportunities that were provided to medical stakeholders, to the community, and to Yukoners to be able to provide their feedback. We know that two "what we heard" documents were created — comprehensive "what we heard" documents — speaking to what was currently taking place in our medical system and what people wanted to see.

I also heard from the Minister of Health and Social Services that a collaborative medical services committee has been set up, has been struck, and is meeting. It is co-chaired by the Health and Social Services DM and the chair of the Yukon Medical Association. Those meetings are taking place. That committee has been struck.

On costing, Mr. Speaker — there are recommendations in the report that specifically speak to costing. There are also recommendations in the report that will provide savings and we have already seen savings from implementing a number of the recommendations that have been brought forward.

The Member for Whitehorse Centre speaks to implementing this report in full, and I believe that this government has committed to that. The Minister of Health and Social Services has spoken to accepting all 76 recommendations in this report. The Premier has spoken to accepting all 76 recommendations in this report, and I know that a number of these recommendations have already been implemented. Cost-saving measures are already in place and costing is taking place — costing is happening. It is part of the implementation of this comprehensive independent review.

The input that citizens provided to the makeup of this report does emulate the Nuka model, and it is good to see. I am also supportive of the Nuka model. I am also supportive of seeing Yukoners as clients and as customers invested in the system that they will benefit from.

I have constituents in my riding who are aging, who are aging in place. I have constituents in my riding who are members of families, who are young — I have a mix. I believe that this report —

Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on Motion No. 350, and the amendment, accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following legislative returns were filed December 16, 2020:

34-3-58

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 51, Community Services, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — construction projects for Old Crow (Streicker)

34-3-59

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — new campgrounds (Frost)

34-3-60

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — special guide licenses (Frost)

34-3-61

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — wetlands strategy (Frost)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 82

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, December 17, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly**Whitehorse, Yukon****Thursday, December 17, 2020 — 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

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, please help me welcome some avid outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen who are here today for the Yukon Fish and Game Association's 75th tribute: the president, Chuck Shewen; the vice-president, Bryce Bekar; Geoff Wooding, Saxon Ritchie, Stephanie Lyons, and last but not least, Mr. Walter Huberschwerlen, who has been a member since the 1960s sometime. He wasn't sure earlier when I talked to him, and he has been a director for decades.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES**In recognition of winter solstice**

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Monday, December 21 is a special day for astronomers as it will be the closest conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn for 400 years.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you are probably worried that I'm about to break into song — when the moon is in the seventh house and all that dawning of age and Aquarius stuff. Actually, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberals and the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to winter solstice. This coming Monday is winter solstice. Solstice marks the start of the winter as a season, although for north of 60 folk, winter arrived a while ago.

Some people think that winter is when the Earth is farthest from the sun in its slightly elliptical orbit — nope. Actually, the Earth is the closest as it gets to the sun in the next few weeks — this is called "perihelion". We are about five million or so kilometres closer to the sun right now than we are during our summer. The thing that makes winter winter in the northern hemisphere on December 21 is that this is the moment in the Earth's orbit around the sun when our rotational axis is tilted directly away from the sun in the north and toward the sun in the south. This tilt is called the "obliquity of the ecliptic".

Simply put, winter solstice marks our longest night — our deep, dark night. Some folks use the calendar to mark the new year. Roman King Numa Pompilius set January as the first month in 700 BC or so. Celebrating the new year is now pretty universal around the globe — so, go, Romans.

But for me, living in the north, winter solstice marks the turning point, the darkness before the coming return of light,

and it is in this moment of transition that I think back to the year nearly done — 2020 — agonizingly still here — I can't wait for it to be over — 2020. To use the phrase from Queen Elizabeth II, 2020 has been an "annus horribilis" — horrible from all angles, from the front to the backside.

Here are some of the events I remember from 2020. We began 2020 with threats to democracy in Hong Kong; then the shooting down of Ukraine Airlines Flight 752; next, we had the Australian bush fires and the arrival of COVID-19 in Canada, which led to the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games; the stock market crashed; the gut-wrenching news from Nova Scotia; racism, intolerance, and frustration here in Canada and abroad; I gasped for breath watching the footage of the massive explosion in Beirut and the aftermath; and COVID-19 bubbles, borders, anxiety, and "speaking moistly".

Next came the west coast wildfires. We had the second warmest year on record for the Arctic with sea ice continuing to diminish. What happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic, Mr. Speaker.

Did I mention COVID-19, the global pandemic?

Here, in the south of the territory, we had a crazy dump of snow.

We watched uncertainty, polarization, and threats to democracy around the US election as they set records for coronavirus in the second wave and in voter turnout.

The death of Hockey Night in Canada's legendary announcer Howie Meeker and the death of Jeopardy host Alex Trebek on the same day.

This past weekend, we had the tragic Keno hotel fire and, still, COVID-19.

2020 has been an absolute dumpster fire of a year. Even for those of us who marked a birth, like my new friend Goldie, or a marriage, like my colleague to my right, in 2020, we all know that their celebrations had to be modified or restricted.

I just want to acknowledge how tough a year it has been for everyone, Mr. Speaker, from Watson Lake to Beaver Creek, from Carcross to Old Crow.

I mark winter solstice because it reminds me that we are northern folk. It marks our journey back into the light.

Last week, as we gathered to declare our commitment to the missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus strategy, we listened to Phil Gatensby speak at the lighting of the sacred fire along the Yukon River. Phil reminded us that we all have light within us.

So, my hope for 2021, Mr. Speaker — harmony and understanding, sympathy and trust abounding, and love will steer the stars.

Applause

In recognition of the Yukon Fish and Game Association

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Third Party to pay tribute to the Yukon Fish and Game Association as they celebrate 75 years of ensuring sound, long-term management of fish and wildlife and outdoor recreational resources in the best interests of all Yukoners.

A bit of history — on February 7, 1945, 13 residents got together in the Whitehorse parish hall to discuss the fish and game situation in the Yukon and the desirability of starting a movement to protect our wildlife.

The Yukon Fish and Game Association was created for the purpose of propagating and protecting fish and wildlife in the Yukon in response to the potential impacts to come from the construction of the Alaska Highway. The first president was G.R. Bidlake, the first vice-president was F.H.R. Jackson, and the secretary was W.D. MacBride. Membership fees were set at \$1.

Credit for founding the organization goes to Gene Garrow, who had been working for the US Army Corps of Engineers on the Canol Road. Gene was instrumental in getting the organization operational in the early days.

Policy of the day dictated that First Nation people could not be members of a social organization. However, it was decided at the first meeting to open up the membership, as Gene was an indigenous man. A motion was also made to open up the membership to women.

The association was active in the day, lobbying for changes to the fish and game regulations, some of which included: that the sale of game meats and fowl by hunters and the licensing of game dealers be cancelled, at least in the town of Whitehorse; that steps be taken to import mule deer, black-tailed deer, white-tailed deer, elk, and buffalo; that an effort be made to provide additional game guardians to secure adequate enforcement of the game laws; and that resident hunting licences be raised to \$2 and fishing licences begin at \$2.

Long before charcoal and gas BBQs became popular, members of the Yukon Fish and Game Association were treated annually to an outdoor wild-game barbecue, second to none, and the outfitters of the day provided meat from their caches or from early season hunts. Of course, now the annual banquet is sold out way in advance, with an opportunity to try wild game of all sorts. Mr. Speaker, I enjoy the many different recipes and how they are prepared. Outfitters involved in some way over the years were Johnny Johns, Mike Nolan, Alex Van Bibber, Curly and Belle Desrosiers, Joe Jacquot, and Alec Davis — names that many Yukoners will know.

Today, the Yukon Fish and Game Association has grown considerably. The membership is up to around 1,500. The association plays a direct and significant role in the development of Yukon hunting and fishing regulations. They represent a large portion of hunters and anglers in the Yukon, and I would also note that they listen to many anglers and many hunters who do not have membership but who do have concerns, questions, or suggestions.

Today, the association has a very busy agenda, hosting many courses, workshops, and events. I mentioned the popular annual Wild Game Banquet, which includes a silent auction and awards, but there are so many more: Big Bull Night, the Bird and Bat Box Building Day, the Family Fishing Days, the field-dressing course, and the Wolf Creek salmon fry release.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to highlight two programs that are offered through the organization that are particularly well-subscribed to and highly anticipated each year. The Yukon

outdoor women program held toward the end of May or the beginning of June brings women together for a weekend full of workshops, firearm safety and marksmanship, photography, field dressing, archery, fishing, and more. It is a wonderful opportunity for applicants to learn new skills and break into outdoor pursuits.

The other one I wanted to highlight is the youth outdoor education camp held in early June or July. It allows youth between the ages of 13 and 16 to learn outdoor skills, including hunting, fishing, survival, and environmental stewardship. Youth are selected through an application process, and of course, the costs are covered through the organization's annual truck raffle.

So, while these events and others were unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, cancelled in 2020, we sure hope to see them able to go ahead this coming year in addition to all of the other incredible courses, workshops, and events offered throughout the year.

Mr. Speaker, while I was looking through the Yukon Fish and Game Association website photos — and you can scroll through them on the top — I saw one of a friend of mine, Alex Van Bibber. He is sadly missed, but he was a lifetime member of the association. He was tying down a set of moose horns, and it got me to thinking of what an advocate Alex was for the Yukon Fish and Game Association. He loved the youth outdoor education program, and he worked and mentored youth from the time it started — I believe back in the early 1980s. This got me to thinking that Alex probably never knew that he was passing on so much valuable information that would change the lives of so many individuals.

As I scrolled through the rest of the other pictures, I realized that every other member of the association in those pictures — the same goes for you. You are passing on so much valuable information that would change and will change the lives of so many individuals. There are too many people to name throughout the 75 years of the association, but all should know that their efforts are very much appreciated.

I do want to thank President Chuck Shewen, Vice-President Bryce Bekar, all those who serve on the Yukon Fish and Game Association board, and Don Aubin, who is the 75th anniversary event manager.

Mr. Speaker, the future of the Yukon includes healthy lakes and forests, bountiful fish and wildlife, and opportunities for all Yukoners to share our passion for hunting, fishing, and conservation.

So, we thank the Yukon Fish and Game Association for being a big part of that. Congratulations on 75 years and many more years.

Applause

Hon. Ms. Frost: I rise today to pay tribute to the Yukon Fish and Game Association. This voice for licensed hunters was established on February 7, 1945, when 13 Whitehorse residents formed the association for the purpose of protecting fish and wildlife populations in the Yukon.

A great deal has changed since then. With the signing of the final agreements came the establishment of the Yukon Fish

and Wildlife Management Board, the Wildlife Management Advisory Board of the North Slope, the renewable resources councils, and the International Porcupine Caribou Board was also established. These boards and councils play a role in partnership with indigenous governments and Yukon government, working together and holding each other accountable to the legacy that we will leave for our children and grandchildren, much like Alex Van Bibber did.

Today, the Yukon Fish and Game Association continues to operate as a non-profit group with a focus on hunting education and ethics and advocating for the preservation of hunting opportunities for many Yukoners. Department of Environment officials work directly with the association on a regular basis, including contributions to the annual funding of the association. This is a significant contribution, especially considering the number of other environmental groups that we also fund, but we just want to highlight that it affords the opportunity to ensure that Yukon hunters and anglers have access to important education and community outreach activities.

For example, the association provides administrative support for hunter education, ethics development, and outdoor education programming. This includes youth camps and skeet shooting clinics, Yukon outdoor women events, and rifle-sighting clinics — as mentioned by the Member for Kluane, highlighting the initiatives for youth and women. They also participate in and support our angling programming, including the family fishing weekend and events related to the Yukon public fish-stocking program. They partner in lunchtime hunter education and information sessions, like species-specific hunting workshops and bear spray demonstrations. Most recently, we worked together to produce a video education clip related to the effective use of bear spray and bear awareness during winter months.

The association is also one community group that we work with to ensure that Yukon hunters and anglers are engaged on decisions that affect them. This is especially true when considering necessary changes to harvesting opportunities. In the end, our ability to hunt and harvest country food is a privilege. It is a privilege that we enjoy only if we manage species like moose, sheep, caribou, and bison sustainably. The association's input and the engagement of their members have also been key parts of this review as well as the review of adjustments to permit and lottery hunt processes. I would like to take this opportunity to say mahsi' cho to the Yukon Fish and Game Association for the years of partnership.

I look forward to our continued collaboration to ensure sustainable wildlife populations for future generations.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. Frost: Pursuant to section 48.1 of the *Environment Act*, I have for tabling the 2020 state of the environment report. This report provides an update on a suite

of environmental indicators based on information available up to 2019, and it can be found on yukon.ca.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have for tabling the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board's PricewaterhouseCoopers' report, entitled *Review of duplication in Yukon mining regulation*. I also have for tabling four legislative returns.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling the legislative return responding to questions from the Leader of the Official Opposition during Committee of the Whole debate on the supplementary budget. I also have for tabling some statistical analysis on 2020 private members' motions.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the *Twenty-third Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees*.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation to:

(1) apologize to the St. Elias Seniors Society for failing to keep her promise that they would be back in their gathering place in November 2020;

(2) explain the reason for the delay; and

(3) provide a date to the St. Elias Seniors Society for when they can be expected to use this space again.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to cause an inquiry to be made, pursuant to the *Public Inquiries Act*, to:

(1) address circumstances related to the December 11, 2020, fire that destroyed the Keno City Hotel;

(2) address concerns raised by residents of Keno City related to fire protection and community safety; and

(3) address related concerns about fire protection and community safety in unincorporated communities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize the independence of the Yukon Ombudsman as an Officer of the Yukon Legislative Assembly with the mandate and authority to access records necessary to conduct investigations pursuant to the *Ombudsman Act*.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to ensure that the fence at the research forest is repaired and in good condition.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to explain why she told Yukoners that the three new school buses would be put into service on November 24 when they will not be in service until January 4.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Safe Restart Agreement COVID-19 funding

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has worked together with communities to keep the Yukon safe and reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to keeping communities and their residents safe, our priority has been to ensure that communities are informed and supported throughout the pandemic. Our partnerships with municipal and First Nation governments have been integral to keeping the case count low in the territory. I want to thank our partners across the territory for their ongoing supports and collaboration as we enter into the 10th month of this pandemic.

Responding to COVID-19 has put a financial strain on our communities that has not gone unnoticed. Municipalities in the Yukon, like those across Canada, are experiencing higher operational costs as a result of adhering to restrictions due to COVID-19. To assist municipalities struggling due to COVID-19-associated costs, the Government of Canada is providing cost-matched funding as part of the Safe Restart program.

Today, I'm pleased to announce that, together, our government and Canada are providing \$4.35 million to Yukon municipalities; \$3.85 million in funding is being distributed to our eight municipalities. In addition, \$500,000 in funding is dedicated to public transit in Whitehorse.

This support will help municipalities with budget pressures that they are experiencing, including reduced revenues, costs for safety measures, personal protective equipment, staffing, and operating requirements. This funding will help municipalities weather the pandemic and support them to rebound, hopefully without the need for additional revenue from their tax base.

It will also enable municipalities to return to activities sooner by offsetting some of the costs associated with adapting to COVID-19 safety measures. Ensuring Yukon citizens are able to access the local services and supports they need in their communities remains a priority for municipalities and for us as a territorial government. On top of these financial supports are community outreach teams staffed by the COVID response

unit. Community Affairs and Aboriginal Relations are in place to assist municipalities and First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken about these supports previously, but they are important, so I would like to highlight them again. The community outreach team provides information about COVID-19, answers questions, and supports citizens in communities throughout Yukon. They are in contact with communities and First Nation leaders weekly. They participate in council meetings and provide constant fact checking, advice, and support. Based on the concerns that we heard from our communities, we sourced hundreds of masks for each of our municipalities. The community outreach team has been organizing presentations in communities about how we will work with them if someone in their community tests positive for COVID-19. We are now working to support them during vaccination.

Mr. Speaker, it is crucial that we work collaboratively with local governments to effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am proud to say that we have been working closely with our partners across the territory since the pandemic took hold in March and we will continue to do so.

Ms. Van Bibber: I would like to thank the minister for this statement. We agree that municipalities have faced considerable cost increases as a result of the pandemic and the government-imposed public health measures. Municipal services that depend on revenue from users, like transit or recreation, have obviously caused a considerable impact on the financial situation for municipalities across the country and certainly in Yukon as well. We agree that the federal and territorial governments should provide some financial support to municipalities. We know that, if they did not, municipalities — especially smaller ones — have much fewer tools to address their budget shortfalls. This could mean increasing taxes on citizens and businesses, which no one wants to see.

We do have a few questions that did not seem to be addressed in the minister's statement. In the appendix of the Canada-Yukon Safe Restart Agreement investment details, which were released several months ago, the details were explained. In that document, it stated that the total federal investment was \$2 million for municipalities and \$2.3 million for transit.

To us, that would mean a total federal contribution of \$4.3 million, and the territorial allocation was to be \$2.175 million. That should bring the total to \$6.475 million, yet today's announcement is only for \$4.35 million.

We're hoping that the minister can explain this a bit more. We would ask if the minister could explain how much of the money that the minister has announced for this program came from the federal government and how much came from the Yukon government. Furthermore, the details document indicated that municipalities would receive funding on a per capita basis; however, we have heard that, instead of per capita, the government used the CMG allocation formula.

We would like for the minister to explain how the amount going to each municipality was calculated.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we agree that municipalities should receive this unique funding to meet their unique needs. We appreciate the work done by the municipal governments throughout this pandemic, and we recognize their contribution to keeping our communities safe and healthy.

Ms. White: Every country in the world has had to face the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada has been no different, and as we looked at the impact of the pandemic from coast to coast to coast, Canadians have worked together to do the best we could through this strange time. In Yukon, folks have been doing their best to follow the recommendations and restrictions since the spring, but individual action isn't enough, and governments play a key role in public health and safety during this pandemic and as we move toward phasing into a life after COVID.

When the Premier signed the Safe Restart Agreement with Ottawa back in October, one of the agreed-upon priority areas was support for municipal governments. In quoting from that letter: "Funds for municipal and transit investments will be cost-shared 50/50. Contributions for municipal supports will recognize provincial and territorial operational investments flowed from April 1, 2020.

"Our government will provide a direct and verifiable transfer to municipalities for the appropriate amounts and commit that no claw-backs in other forms will occur.

"In Yukon, municipal funding will support operating budget pressures due to COVID-19, such as additional costs for PPE, as well as staffing and operating requirements, particularly for the management of community centres, public spaces and public transit. The Government of Yukon is working directly with municipalities to understand their distinct needs. Once this information is gathered, we intend to allocate funding to municipalities based on an evaluation of their needs."

Municipal governments offer critical services to Yukoners. They are the level of government closest to our everyday lives and, like every other organization, the pandemic has affected them.

Municipalities are responsible for costly infrastructure — infrastructure such as recreational facilities and, in Whitehorse, a transit system that has significant operational costs that must be met regardless of the financial hit from reduced revenues that they have taken as a result of the necessary pandemic restrictions.

As we have discussed previously in this House, we expect that the federal and Yukon governments will work together to focus mid-pandemic on effective relief measures so that, when we eventually come through to the other side, our communities will be poised for a healthy recovery. We recognize that municipalities are limited in the revenue that they can generate, and there are very few avenues other than user fees and property taxes. That's why it's critical that the federal and territorial governments step in now to provide money to cover these gaps.

So, we were pleased when the initial announcement of the Safe Restart program was made in September. The update by the minister today would be enhanced if the minister could clarify how the Yukon government has assessed whether or not

the identified needs of all Yukon communities with respect to the impact of COVID-19 have been assessed and addressed.

Also of interest in terms of assessing the impact of the program is how the \$3.85 million has been distributed. How much money has been drawn down to support municipalities since the Premier first signed the Safe Restart Agreement in October? What support is available to communities without a municipal government? Communities such as Beaver Creek, Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing, Old Crow, Keno, Pelly Crossing, and Ross River come to mind. We agree with the minister that it is indeed crucial that the Yukon work collaboratively with local governments. We believe that they should work with all local governments.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First and foremost, I would just like to thank the members opposite for their acknowledgement of support in principle to the safe restart. I will try to answer some of the questions that were posed.

First of all, with respect to how we work with all communities, many of the things that I listed off in my original preamble about connecting with Community Affairs, with Aboriginal Relations, and with the COVID response unit have been with every community; we do work with them all. We work, for example, with our First Nations through the Yukon Forum. We work with unincorporated municipalities through Community Affairs and Community Services. There is work that is going on with all.

How did we assess what the impact was to municipalities? From early on, we spoke with municipalities. We said to them, "Please try to keep track of this stuff. We know it's going to be challenging, but give us a sense." We've remained open to that.

I have some information. For example, with the Whitehorse tabling of its budget, it noted that it had about a \$500,000 to \$600,000 hit to its budget as a result of COVID. Combined out of this safe restart money, we'll be getting \$1.9 million — just over \$1.9 million — to Whitehorse, and that gives you a sense, Mr. Speaker, that there is, we hope, more than enough to support our communities. There will be no clawbacks. I thank the member for asking me to clarify that.

How we worked to allocate the money — we used the comprehensive municipal grant as a suggestion to municipalities. I have given them the opportunity to tell me if they want some other switch for that. The reason that we used the comprehensive municipality grant is because it is, what I call, "base plus". It doesn't go per capita. It says that our smaller communities should have more per capita than our larger communities. Whitehorse has been pretty generous. I will acknowledge that they have been supportive of that type of arrangement. What it means is that, even though our smaller municipalities might make up 25 percent of the population or somewhere in that neighbourhood, they will get 55 percent of the funding.

This was also how it worked with vaccines. We did go and talk — the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Premier talked with Ottawa and explained that per capita wasn't the right way for the north, and they were successful. I

would like to thank the other provinces for supporting that — and Canada.

So, again, in this instance, what we see is that we will get more of the money to our smaller communities because, on a per capita basis, they will have a harder time navigating through.

The last question that I heard from the member opposite was: What is the split on funding? As the Leader of the Third Party said and as I said, it's cost-matched, meaning that 50 percent of the dollars are coming from the territorial government, and 50 percent of the dollars are coming from Canada.

Thank you very much to Canada for providing these dollars. I spoke with the Association of Yukon Communities a couple of weeks ago or maybe a week and a half ago. I think that it was well-received. I'm starting to get letters back now. I think that our municipalities are pleased, but I will wait to see which way they would like me to go. I am at their service.

Again, we will work throughout the pandemic to support our communities.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Consultation with school communities

Mr. Kent: One of the biggest concerns that we have heard about this fall is the decision to limit grades 10 to 12 students in Whitehorse to half-time in-class learning. Parents, educators, and students are all reaching out to us with questions about such things as mental health support and educational outcomes.

The decision to extend part-time classes to the end of the current school year is getting pushback. In a November 26 letter from the three Whitehorse high school councils to the minister, they say — and I quote: “As council chairs, we are disappointed that the recent announcement to continue with the current half-day in-class model for grades 10-12 during the second semester was made again without consultation.”

Why does this minister continue to make the same mistakes over and over by not consulting with affected school councils on her decisions?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't think it will surprise anyone that I disagree with the characterization made in the preamble to that question. Our department, and this government, clearly acknowledge and appreciate the ongoing work of Yukon school councils and their commitment to their school communities, especially during these unprecedented times. We value and carefully consider the meaningful input and perspectives of school councils and all partners in education.

Our decisions during the ongoing pandemic will continue to be informed by our work with school staff and our education partners. We are in a state of emergency and we take health and safety recommendations from the chief medical officer of health.

School administrators work with their school councils to ensure that they operationalize these health and safety

guidelines at the school level at the individual schools and work with their health and safety committee to ensure the health and safety of the students and staff.

Mr. Kent: So, judging from this letter, the school council chairs also share our concerns.

As the letter goes on to say — and I'll quote again: “At our last meeting on October 28 with both yourself and the deputy minister, our understanding was that a separate meeting would be arranged to discuss the next steps and communications regarding a decision to either maintain half days or return to full-day classes. That did not happen.”

Why did the minister promise the councils that she would meet with them on this issue and then do the exact opposite and charge ahead without any consultation?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, not accurate information being given to Yukoners; I didn't do that.

On matters where we have been determining how school operations can best meet the needs of our students — which is our key goal and priority — we're continuing to work with partners through developing our learning through COVID-19 surveys, two of which have been completed. They have been completed with the assistance on drafting those documents with the benefit of our education partners, including administrators and school councils.

I'm interested that the member opposite has a letter that was written to me and not copied to him, but nonetheless, I have responded to that letter. I'm looking forward to having a meeting with the school councils that are mentioned there and asking them how they would choose to work together with us and how we will repair their concerns and address those as we go forward. There will be many more decisions to make during the course of this pandemic with respect to education, with respect to the benefit of Yukon students, and frankly, with respect to having those students as our top priority.

Mr. Kent: So, when the minister is on her feet again, perhaps she can clarify if she is saying that these councils are making this up, because what we are reading is directly from a letter.

The minister claims that work has been done with school administrators; however, the letter tells a different story. I will quote again: “Learning that none of our administrators or staff was made aware of these decisions before public announcements were made, including the decision to return the MAD program to FH Collins/Wood Street site, only adds to our concern and frustration.”

So, why is the minister so reluctant to seek the advice and assistance of school communities before she makes decisions that affect them?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is clear that the members opposite have not been listening to my responses. I have given many, many responses here in this Legislative Assembly — and certainly publicly and whenever asked in the media and in consultation and conversations with our education partners — acknowledging and appreciating the work of Yukon school councils and all education partners. We carefully consider the meaningful input and the perspectives of school councils and our partners in education. We have been having bi-weekly

meetings with the chairs of all school councils across the territory. We have individual meetings with school councils when invited to do so.

I look forward to meeting with the authors of the letter that the member opposite is referring to in the very near future. We are in a state of emergency and decisions must be made and the responsibility that is granted to the minister through the *Education Act* is a requirement. The *Education Act* indicates that the minister has certain responsibilities and the roles and responsibilities of school councils are greatly respected. Our work with them through the past number of months to delineate those roles and responsibilities has been a positive step forward. We will continue to take the advice of the chief medical officer of health.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

Mr. Hassard: So, in June this year, the Yukon government announced that they were providing an increased wholesale discount for restaurants and licensed establishments as a means to support them through these challenging economic times. The measure was based on a recommendation of the Business Advisory Council and was welcomed by the hospitality industry.

However, recently licensees have been notified that this will end on January 1. Instead, those businesses are being told that they need to apply to Economic Development for support and they will be subject to the criteria of those programs.

This is just more red tape and hoops to jump through for an industry that has already been suffering, so why is the government replacing a successful measure that actually supported Yukon restaurants with a measure that will provide less support and a whole lot more red tape and paperwork?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I did speak over the weekend with some of the folks who are involved in the committee that works to share with us concerns from the food and beverage sector. They did talk to us about what they would like to do over time. We are working toward March 21. We sat down with them in September and came up with a game plan for some deeper changes around April of 2021.

The thing that I have always said to this group is that we are concerned about social responsibility. I expressed to them that the measures that we had in place were meant to be interim measures because we are aware that there are concerns around alcohol. What I said to them was that we were going to look for a way to try to be able to allow this program to go further, but only if we could target it better. What we have done is we have said that, for those businesses that are eligible for the Yukon business relief program — in other words, businesses that are not able to have as much revenue as they had previously — we will work with them to support them through this time. I will be happy to answer further questions.

Mr. Hassard: The layers of bureaucracy and red tape that the Liberals have put on the economic recovery program are ridiculous. In order to be eligible for one fund, they are forcing bars and restaurants to prove that 60 percent of their revenue came from tourists last year. Even though they know

that this will be difficult to prove, they will subject them to audits. Then they are saying that, for other funds, you aren't eligible unless you have already applied to different funds. Now they are cancelling a popular, easy-to-use wholesale discount for restaurants and making things more complicated. The result is a complicated labyrinth of bureaucracy and confusing programs that are making it difficult for businesses to get relief. The government has even had to fund a position to help businesses navigate this labyrinth.

Why won't the Liberals just get rid of all of this red tape and just make it easier to get this recovery funding out the door?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I guess I will add a couple of points. The first one is that, even during the pandemic — even though right away we put out the Yukon business relief program and we worked to get it moving very quickly — we still have a responsibility to Yukoners. We still have a responsibility to make sure that the funds are going where they're needed. We have a responsibility in a tourism relief program to put that relief toward tourism businesses.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, you can criticize that, Mr. Speaker.

I think the point here is that we're working with those businesses to help them where they are in trouble.

I had a conversation with one of the members of the advisory group, and he did talk to me about having to go through extra steps. I said to him, "Look, let's work with you. If you have businesses that are having challenges with this, let me know and let's see what we can do."

I'm not trying to say, Mr. Speaker, that there isn't additional work, but we're trying to target that funding so that it supports those businesses that are in trouble. That's what we're trying to do. We're working to support our businesses from day one.

Mr. Hassard: So, we know that the programs have turned into a labyrinth of red tape. Take, for example, the \$2.88 million for the accommodation supplement. The Liberals announced this to great fanfare on October 19. That was two months ago. Yet the minister admitted earlier this week that the program is so poorly designed that zero dollars have actually been sent out the door. So, maybe instead of creating new hoops for businesses to jump through, the Liberals should just make the support available and get rid of all of the red tape, which brings me back to this wholesale discount for bars and restaurants that the Liberals are getting rid of. This program was working. The program was helping, and the Liberals are scrapping it and making these businesses go through new hoops.

So, will they abandon this short-sighted plan and extend the wholesale discount for all licensed establishments beyond January 1?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Since the member opposite has opened the door around the tourism accommodation fund, I will go there, because I think it's important for Yukoners to know the facts around this and that we are continuing to work with this very important sector of our tourism economy. We did announce a \$2.88-million program as a supplementary program

to the Yukon business relief program. What we found is — yes, you're right — that no funding has been disbursed from that supplement.

We have received inquiries from 27 accommodation providers who would like to explore this program. Our first step is to work with CanNor and Economic Development to ensure that each applicant has maximized the funding available to them under the northern business relief fund and the Yukon business relief program.

Again, these are Yukon taxpayer dollars. We are in a supplementary budget with these relief programs and recovery programs. We are using them in the best way to support our businesses. We continue to uphold our hospitality industry, and we will continue to work with them through these unprecedented times.

Question re: Housing support programs

Ms. White: Renters in Yukon now have access to the Canada-Yukon housing benefit program, which provides eligible Yukon renters with financial support to help pay for their housing. This is an income-based program, and applicants must submit their most recent tax assessment.

There's a problem with this, though, Mr. Speaker. An individual working in tourism or in the food and beverage service will likely find themselves earning a lot less than they did a year ago. We have heard from individuals who have been denied the rental supplement because their earnings in 2019 were too high.

Can the minister tell us what options there are for these individuals who have had their applications denied based on their 2019 tax assessment?

Hon. Ms. Frost: As we look at transforming the community housing programming and start to look at the Canada housing benefit program, we looked at ensuring that we provided essential supports and benefits to Yukoners. In doing that, the Housing Corporation recently announced — and I'm very excited about the launching — the new Canada housing benefit in partnership with CMHC. As of December, we have approved 101 Yukoners in Whitehorse and communities for housing benefit support, and we continue to support applicants and approve clients for this programming to help Yukoners with rental housing affordability.

The program is intended to contribute to the COVID-19 recovery process by supporting Yukoners and providing necessary subsidies. We will continue to do that, and that is intended to support low-income people, those who have lost income, and those who have housing challenges. Of course, there's a requirement through the Housing Corporation to do the assessments, and we are working with all of the clients to get that information as quickly as we can so as not to jeopardize the access to the programming.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I think that I highlighted the problem with that so far.

Yukon Housing also has a rent supplement program to help Yukoners who are struggling to meet their housing costs. The rent supplement program supports Yukoners who are eligible for social housing but live in private housing. This would be a

great alternative for Yukoners, but unfortunately, this program is already fully subscribed to. There is no room for new applicants, and this is not a one-time thing. This program is fully subscribed to each and every year. So, we have a federal rent supplement program that individuals and families are being denied based on their 2019 income level, and we have a Yukon rent supplement program that is fully subscribed to.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell this House what Yukoners struggling to pay their rent are to do next?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Existing clients of the Yukon Housing Corporation who were receiving the COVID-19 rent assistance funding will now access the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. If there are individuals having challenges, I encourage them to contact the Yukon Housing Corporation. The federal funding program received was to enhance the affordability of housing for Yukoners, to support our housing action plan, as well as the Safe at Home plan. The Canada-Yukon housing benefit is a key part of how we are transforming housing and social housing program needs here in the Yukon.

I am looking forward to the next question, Mr. Speaker, because the Yukon Housing Corporation responded. We targeted and provided the necessary supports. The Canada-Yukon housing benefit replaces the Yukon Housing Corporation initiative funding. The current program status is to ensure that we have the funding necessary to support vulnerable Yukoners and support Yukoners who are having challenges. We have just ensured that we have supports and a continuation of a program that will continue into the future. As long as we need it, Mr. Speaker, we will support Yukoners.

Ms. White: I guess that my question was: What about new clients who don't currently qualify for the programs that the minister described? Every day, we talk to Yukoners looking for answers and looking for help. We help with Yukon Housing applications and then we help with the appeals. We encourage them to go through the appeal processes available to them and we help them with the paperwork. We encourage them to talk to their landlords and, if need be, to go to the residential tenancies office, but even there, unless a landlord has not followed the regulations, there is little that the office can offer.

The federal rent supplement is based on 2019 income levels and the territorial program has no more spots available.

Does the minister acknowledge that this leaves many Yukon tenants behind, and what will she do about it?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I acknowledge that there is certainly a demand. We are in the middle of a crisis; we are in the middle of a pandemic. We know that we have had some challenges with housing and we certainly want to ensure affordability; we want to ensure access. Canada has committed to providing Yukon with \$9.1 million over the next eight years under the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. We have made significant allocations. We have subscribed to all of the funds that are available to us, and by doing so, we have used that to support Yukoners.

On November 5, 2020, we issued — under this particular program — support to 55 Yukoners who were supported in November and December — in fact, a total of \$62,000 for the first run of that support initiative. We continue to support

Yukoners and we will continue to look for additional resources, if resources are required. This government is all about supporting Yukoners through the pandemic and we want to assure Yukoners that, if you are having challenges, please — as the member opposite noted: housing navigators, Yukon Housing Corporation. We have opportunities to work together. The program for supports is available, so I am just encouraging Yukoners to please come forward, if you have a concern. We will be happy to work with you. Thank you.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic impact on education system

Ms. White: So, it has been a long fall semester for students and teachers alike. Teachers and students have struggled to have their voices heard by this government. Despite these efforts, many gaps remain. This morning on CBC, the president of the Yukon Teachers' Association spoke of occupational health and safety committees. In the context of a pandemic, the role of teachers who are on these committees is even more critical than in a regular school year. Yet the YTA was recently informed that the 90-day window for these employees to get training is expiring this week, just as this semester is wrapping up.

Will the minister ensure that occupational health and safety training is available beyond this week and that teachers will have priority access to this training?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Top priority for the department and for the administrators and educators in our Education department here in the territory is the health and safety of themselves and our students in schools. Our central administration staff have worked to support schools to access training and the support that they need.

I would like to thank all the educators and the school staff for the tremendous work that they have been doing over the course of this term. I can indicate that the training began in earnest in August 2020 and that all individuals who are spending time in school — educators and others — should receive the proper training and the proper opportunities to know and be fully apprised of the health and safety requirements. They have done so — tremendous work, in addition to their regular duties, in order to avail themselves of that information throughout the pandemic and throughout this school year. These are certainly not normal times. Our school system has really risen with an extraordinary response. Training will continue. All those working in our schools need to be properly trained and apprised of the information they need.

Ms. White: I was really looking to know that those training opportunities would be extended and that teachers would have priority access.

Another issue that was raised in this morning's interview was the lack of teachers on call, or TOCs. The YTA president reported that several schools are still not getting sufficient TOC coverage on a regular basis. This puts an extra burden on all teachers, and it forces teachers who are not feeling well to make a difficult decision: Do they stay home knowing that their colleagues will have to fill their spot, or do they go to school?

Despite this shortage, we have heard of long delays for new teachers on call, even after they've completed their background check. In one case, after three weeks of delay, this potential TOC had taken on another job and was no longer available for substitute teaching.

Can the minister report on how many schools have operated short-staffed this fall because of a lack of teachers on call and AOCs? How many days have schools been short staffed?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm happy to address this issue — slightly different from the last, but I'm happy to be talking about schools and I'm happy to be talking about teachers, educators, and our students here in the territory.

As of December 11, registered teachers on call numbers continue to rise, with a total of 253 available in the Yukon Territory, 195 in Whitehorse, and some 58 in communities, with an additional 25 applications pending. Twenty-three of those are for teachers on call who want to work in Whitehorse and three in the communities.

Teachers on call are recruited on an ongoing basis to ensure that continued supports are available to schools. On an occasion when a teacher on call is not available, the school is able to adjust operational requirements to ensure that student learning needs are met — the top priority for schools.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate the minister's take on the issue, we heard differently from the president of the YTA today. Teachers on call are a critical part of our school system, and even more so in a pandemic. The shortage of teachers on call is putting an extra burden on everyone working in our schools. It shouldn't come as a surprise that, during a pandemic, the need for teachers on call would be greater than in a normal year. So, it would be reasonable to think that this government would take extra measures to increase the number of teachers on call and the speed at which these people can be brought in.

Can the minister tell Yukoners if the government has taken measures beyond what they do in any normal year to recruit more teachers on call and to accelerate the administrative process required to bring them on board?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I, too, heard the Yukon Teachers' Association president in the media this morning, and I actually was a bit — well, I was quite shocked and surprised to hear him say that some teachers may be — or, I think he actually said "are" going to school when they're not well. This simply cannot happen.

I assume that the advice from the Yukon Teachers' Association is that teachers must follow the health and safety guidelines, as put out by the chief medical officer of health and the health and safety standards for schools. The department 100 percent supports anyone who is not well staying home. They are supported by the department, they are supported by the administrators, and they are supported to stay home by their fellow educators.

The potential of the consequences otherwise is just too great. Teachers who are not well should stay home; administrators are keen to make sure that those health and safety protocols are dealt with and adhered to properly. Teachers and educators and administrators are supporting one

another through this very difficult time, and I would like to thank all of them for doing so.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic public health measures for hospitality industry

Mr. Istchenko: Last week, we asked the minister why the Liberals did not consult with the Privacy Commissioner before forcing bars and restaurants to start collecting private information from customers. The government dismissed these privacy questions as not their problem; however, this information is being collected because of them. This government is not putting enough of a priority on protecting privacy.

Has the government since consulted with the Privacy Commissioner, and if not, will they agree to? Just a yes or a no.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: While we continue to work under the ATIPP act developed by the members opposite — that ATIPP act hasn't changed since we came into office.

We have a new act that has been drafted and is about to take effect, but currently, we're operating under the same act, so they shouldn't be confused by this, Mr. Speaker. The ATIPP legislation governs government; it does not govern private businesses. So, the member opposite is absolutely wrong. The ATIPP act does not apply to private businesses. Private businesses are gathering their customers' records — Yukoners need to know this — and those businesses will look after that information for their customers. Government will not access those records unless there's a problem, Mr. Speaker. This is being done through provinces across the country. We are no different from them. We are doing it in a public health crisis, and it is a prudent thing for these businesses to do. I applaud them for looking after the safety of their customers.

Mr. Istchenko: The question that I asked — this is for the member opposite — was: Has the government since consulted with the Privacy Commissioner?

Last week, we pointed out that the government has been creating a policy. This policy was created on the fly and not providing guidance to businesses on how to collect and protect this information. This is a government telling them that they have to do it — forcing them to do this. It's the government's responsibility. If they go into any bar or restaurant right now, they are all collecting this information differently, Mr. Speaker. We continue to hear from bars and restaurants that have not received guidance from the government on protecting this information, nor have they received information on their liabilities with respect to this information. So, again, they have been instructed to collect this information by the government.

Can the minister tell us — what are the liabilities of these businesses with respect to people's private information?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to first start by acknowledging the businesses — the bars and restaurants — for participating with the objective of keeping Yukoners safe and, of course, wanting to maintain safety for all of their clients and their staff. That's the first step, and I want to just acknowledge them for that in stepping up and responding to the COVID rules as they apply. We are identifying new ways to

keep our communities safe and the bars and restaurants are very much a part of that — so just an acknowledgement to them.

They are required to submit their operational plans prior to reopening and ensuring that the health and safety of staff and customers are at the forefront of everything they do. These plans have been approved by the Health Emergency Operations Centre and follow the guidelines of the chief medical officer of health. All bars and restaurants are following the protocol. That is to ensure that we follow the principles of keeping Yukoners safe. I just want to extend to them our appreciation.

We have consulted with the Privacy Commissioner in this process. We have consulted with the chief medical officer of health and with our staff to ensure the safety of all clients — and again, just a shout-out to the businesses for participating and keeping Yukoners safe.

Mr. Istchenko: Section 2 of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* states: "This Act applies to all records in the custody, or under the control of a public body..." These requirements on bars and restaurants force them to collect private information on customers and to make these lists available to the government upon request. These lists are being created at the request of the government. In many respects, this appears to leave a grey area about whether or not the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* would apply to this information.

The Minister of Health and Social Services has confirmed that they met with the Privacy Commissioner. Are we going to see any changes to this program since they spoke to the Privacy Commissioner? Has the government received any legal advice on whether the act applies to these lists?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: At a time of a global pandemic, Yukoners need consistent leadership and accurate information. That is what we are continually providing. What we are seeing from the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, is an absolutely shocking lack of understanding of a piece of legislation that they oversaw for 15 years. Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely astounded to see the level — the lack of understanding of the members opposite on information and privacy, so here we are.

I will say that the information being collected by restaurants, as they are across the continent, is being held by those businesses. Those businesses are not governed by the access to information and protection of privacy laws. They are doing it on their own at the recommendation of the chief medical officer of health. Why? It's to protect the interest of their customers — to actually make sure that their customers have a level of safety when they go out to eat or go into their premises. I applaud that responsibility on the part of our businesses. I think it's great. To have the members opposite — they are practising rhetoric in search of a problem, and I absolutely think that they are putting disinformation into the public domain. I think that it's shocking. In the face of a public pandemic, we have to be pulling together to protect the interests of our community and protect the health of our citizens.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Hutton): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Motion re appearance of witness

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 8

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 17, 2020, Dr. Brendan Hanley, Yukon's chief medical officer of health, appear as a witness before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 17, 2020, Dr. Brendan Hanley, Yukon's chief medical officer of health, appear as a witness before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 8 agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 205: *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Yukon Development Corporation

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would just like to begin by thanking the officials for coming in today — our president of the Yukon Development Corporation, Mr. Justin Ferbey, who was with us earlier this week as a witness with the president of the Yukon Energy Corporation, and Mr. Blaine Anderson, who is our chief financial officer and has been with the organization for a while.

Thank you for coming in from your daily activities in the private sector.

I'm just going to share a few comments about the supplementary budget, and then I'm sure we'll have an opportunity to potentially broaden that discussion.

I would like to thank the Members of the Legislative Assembly for the opportunity to speak to the Yukon Development Corporation *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for the 2020-21 fiscal year. The Yukon Development Corporation's mandate to develop and promote the development of innovative energy systems and sustainable generation, production, transmission, and distribution of energy in Yukon is an important one. As Yukon's population grows and the demand for energy infrastructure increases, we must invest in transmission and electrical storage infrastructure. These investments will support economic growth in the territory while supporting renewable electrical projects being developed by the utilities and independent power producers.

The battery storage project — there was lots of discussion about it earlier this week, and we had an opportunity to share some information on an important milestone earlier this week with a ministerial statement — will provide 40 megawatt hours of backup capacity to provide grid stability by maintaining generating capacity. The battery will assist with mitigating short-term outages and assist with peak demand and the integration of renewable energy, like wind and solar, that are not available all the time.

The replacement of the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line and upgrading of the Stewart Crossing substation will modernize aging infrastructure, thereby improving reliability for local area residents and enabling industrial customers to use grid electricity rather than on-site thermal sources of energy.

These projects are being completed with the support of Government of Canada through a 10-year bilateral agreement signed by the Minister of Community Services.

The green infrastructure stream off the Investing in Canada infrastructure program is providing funding for Yukon Energy Corporation's battery storage project and the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line. As the holders of significant subject matter experience, the Yukon Development Corporation is the Government of Yukon's signatory for payment agreements with fund recipients for electricity projects. The Yukon Development Corporation pays out eligible funds as per the agreement and then recovers 100 percent of those costs from Canada.

To that end, the Yukon Development Corporation supplementary budget includes \$9.275 million for eligible costs being incurred by Yukon Energy Corporation for the battery and transmission line between now and the end of 2020. I would like to reiterate that these funds are fully recoverable from Canada and will be paid back to the Government of Yukon by the Yukon Development Corporation.

We are pleased that these projects are advancing in spite of the challenging circumstances brought on by COVID-19 and applaud the Yukon Energy Corporation for their dedication in this regard. I think that we will hold it there and hand over the floor to the opposition for questions, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Kent: I would like to join the minister in thanking the officials for being here today to provide support to him. I would also like to thank the officials who provided the briefing to us in October with respect to the supplementary budget.

As everyone knows, witnesses were here from the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation earlier this week. At that point, we were able to ask a number of questions. I was able to get most of the questions that I had put on the record — and a response to them. I will be submitting the remaining ones in writing.

Just before turning it over to my colleague from the New Democratic Party, I would just wish everyone at the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation very happy holidays and a safe and healthy 2021.

Ms. Hanson: I would echo the comments from my colleague to the right in that the Yukon NDP, based on the hearings that were held the other day, is quite prepared to move on so that we can get other departments through as quickly as possible.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to be respectful to the parties across the way, but the only thing that I think is important to clarify, while we have the opportunity and the officials here today, is — one of the comments that was made and one of the questions that was posed, not specific to the supplementary budget, but definitely, it has to do with current proceedings around the general rate application.

There was a question that was posed by the Member for Copperbelt South to the president of Yukon Energy Corporation. It was really around statements that I had made publicly on what we were looking at as a rate increase — between the relationship, of course — Yukon Energy Corporation works with Yukon Development Corporation and provides that information.

I think that it's really important for the record and for those who are listening today, as well as, I'm sure, folks within government — I'm going to walk through the last 48 hours. I just want to set the record straight — I think it's really important — and give the appropriate information.

A little less than 48 hours ago, we had the Yukon Energy Corporation here. There was a document that was in the hands of the Official Opposition. It was a public document, I believe. It was a document that was from the general rate application. The question that was posed at that point was — there were two numbers that were reflected on. The Official Opposition reflected on the fact that I had publicly stated that the increase that we were looking at for rates was 11.5 percent. The members opposite reflected on a number of 17.1 percent from the general rate application. At that time, there was a commitment from the president of the Yukon Energy Corporation — because he didn't have the documents on him that were being referred to — that he would go back and ensure that there was no discrepancy. I think that it was a very professional and prudent way to handle it.

Less than 24 hours later, I was asked the exact same question here during proceedings, and I responded that I would endeavour to get that answer. I made a commitment to the House. I said that, from our perspective, there is nothing that

we're holding back. We believe that we have provided accurate information to Yukoners and we would then get that back. Here we are, again, less than 48 hours later.

The challenge is that now what's happening is that the Yukon Energy Corporation is going through a number of steps because a press release was put out for immediate release from the Yukon Party. So, instead of waiting just until we could get the appropriate information back, a press release was released: "Utilities Board Indicates Government is seeking a 17.1% Increase to Energy Bills". It goes on to say: "At a time when Yukoners and Yukon businesses are struggling, a 11.5% increase to energy bills is going to make life more difficult ... So that's why the government needs to clarify if they are seeking ..." — so, again, what has now happened, for folks here, is the Energy Corporation — because, of course, the press release was absolutely misleading. There was not an opportunity for folks to come back and just give an answer, which I think is probably appropriate. We made a commitment; we made a commitment that we would come back and give the right information. Here we are — no questions today.

What that leads to, at a time when people are extremely busy in the public service and the Energy Corporation — now what has happened is that we spoke to media today. We have ensured that they have the right information, which is that 11.5 percent is what the increase is. What has also happened today is that now the Energy Corporation — and I will just put this on the record — has now clarified any misunderstanding that the Official Opposition had.

I was also questioned yesterday — there was a statement made yesterday by the Member for Lake Laberge, who is also a former Minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation on this topic.

They have clarified that on their social media. They are now going to have a meeting for the public, and it can be virtually attended in early January. For anybody listening, it will be on January 8, 2021, at 1:00 p.m. Again, they put the same information out that we had previously listed — that they are seeking an 11.5-percent increase — increments made between 2019 and 2021 equate to 3.8 percent.

It is fine to have the challenging conversations and play the political games, but instead of just waiting for us to come back when we had made a commitment — if there was a mistake, I would have clarified that and I would have taken responsibility.

But, anyway, the big spin — and the reality is that a number of people at Yukon Energy Corporation are now fielding calls from media, they are putting together a public session, and they are posting on social media. All that they are doing is putting the same information out, and they are dispelling the misinformation that was put out by the Yukon Party in a press release. All that they really had to do was just wait until today. I was prepared to speak to this. I made a commitment on a legislative return. That has basically been completed.

Again, that is unfortunate — pretty standard for this fall and the last 40-some days.

As well, I just would like to share — there were some visitors here earlier in the week from Yukoners Concerned. There has been some public information. They've been challenging us on what we've done at the Yukon Development Corporation concerning renewable energy. What was great to see was that they had the opportunity to sit in; there were questions from the Leader of the Third Party concerning the projects that Yukon Development Corporation has been involved in. I'm happy to say that — the one question was tabled, and that question really focused on what we're doing with communities. What ended up — there was an extensive list of renewable energy projects, not just the 10-year plan but projects that are in place right from Beaver Creek to Burwash to Haines Junction — again, Old Crow, Dawson City, Mayo, Pelly — an extremely extensive list. I hope what we've been able to illustrate and provide information on is that the government, with direct support and intervention, has renewable energy projects that are feeding into the overall strategy for the Energy Corporation across the Yukon and, as well, a very robust plan.

For folks, if they haven't had an opportunity with some other questions, we have signed on to the working groups here. I think that there is some information coming out on work around hydrogen. We have spoken at the table of energy ministers. We've had an opportunity concerning some of that work. What we're essentially going to be doing is that we're going to have a chance to put our researchers and scientists forward — that's the commitment that I made at the table with energy ministers — to ensure that any work that is being done around hydrogen really — some of our western provinces are looking to this as a key and unique solution. What we have committed to is ensuring that the university and our researchers have an opportunity to support that work — if there is specific research that has to be done in a northern climate, that we would be able to provide that.

So, that's one, and I think there are one or two other working groups that are about to announce on other types of energy. Again, we have supported those working groups. I think we're going to look at different technologies than what we've seen in Yukon previously.

In some cases, what we've said is that we don't have — we're not bringing a lot to the table because, in that particular sector or technology, there are provinces that have extensive work in them, but what we've said is at least we have great researchers. So, when it comes to hydrogen or other new technologies, we are at the table. We have committed to that and we have signed on to that work across the Yukon.

With that, I think it is important to add a few items. I don't know if there are any other questions. I think that the opposition have made the point that they are just going to submit some written questions, so thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Hanson: Interesting — I just have to make one final comment. It is fascinating to hear the minister. We have been told repeatedly over the last 40-some days that we are here to talk to the supplementary budget. When we have attempted to — because we didn't debate the budget in the spring, we saw great theatrics and forestalling or even, well, basically bombast

by various ministers. They were refusing to answer questions or going circuitously around them. So, it is fascinating to hear the minister use his allotted time to go after my colleagues down the way, but I do think that what we were attempting to do was to try to make best use of our time here this afternoon, given the fact that we have a major piece of legislation — the *Condominium Act, 2015* amendment — that has not been debated.

There are a number of pieces of legislation and remaining budget areas — significant aspects of Education and Health and Social Services — that have not been canvassed and are key to the supplementary budget. Then the ministers opposite wonder why we have difficulty supporting what they put forward. I mean no offense to the officials who are here. They are professionals, they do their job, and they are here to support the minister. But it's unfortunate when it becomes a theatre piece for the minister. That is what I understand — that is how they describe it to each other — as theatre. I don't think this is theatre, Mr. Chair.

We understand that there is significant work. We would love to have a discussion someday about the delimiting of the mandate of the Yukon Development Corporation and how it could be revived and operate to the full extent of its original concept, but that's not what we're here for today. I will stand down. We were intending to get the support of members to move and clear the \$9.725 million that the minister has identified as supplementary and that had been discussed previously.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: In response to that — the comments — we were in a position where, throughout this Fall Sitting, I think that the exchange and my exchange around the questions for the budget for Energy, Mines and Resources — I think we had a good exchange. It was very broad; it wasn't just specifically to the supplementary budget.

I know that the member opposite didn't have any questions for me. The Member for Whitehorse Centre didn't have any questions for me concerning anything to do with Energy, Mines and Resources. There were no questions on mining; there were no questions on agriculture; there were no questions on forestry; there were no questions on biomass; there were no questions on land planning — absolutely no questions.

I provided the opportunity to the Official Opposition to go through those questions, and the member opposite — the Member for Copperbelt South — had identified if there were any pieces that were missed. There were some things we didn't get to and was going to just submit those. I think that's an appropriate way to move forward.

But I do want to set the record straight. The last day we were here, we did unanimously pass a budget, but also, folks will know — I was in a precarious position in that I had to go through some of the early testing for COVID, and I came in, and my budgets that I was responsible for were the last budgets that were tabled that day. I was ready to speak to those budgets. It was Energy, Mines and Resources and Economic Development.

I think that folks, at that point — concerns, anxiety about what was happening — folks wanted to — I think that there

were some conversations happening between all three parties. I wasn't involved in that discussion. I was really just coming back to make sure that I was in a position to speak to those particular budget items.

Just for the record, I was ready — both opposition parties on that particular afternoon — I thought it was going to be quite a unique experience, like other folks have had the opportunity to do in the past — I thought we were going late into the evening and was ready to speak to those.

We collectively and unanimously decided — so, not casting any shadows here — we all made a decision, but that was the good thing about being able to come back and have questions from the Official Opposition on those items that we didn't get a chance — and to be fair, I felt I had that responsibility to answer those questions that might have been outside of the supplementary.

That's the only reason today that I have touched on a few things — and you know, there's a bit of buzz. We have folks over at Yukon Energy who are trying to correct some information that's out there. We have media calling on a number of things. So, I thought, you know, we're here, and part of my responsibility is to provide that correct information to Yukoners so they understand, when they're sitting down and they're contemplating what 2021 will bring and they're trying to figure out consistently what those bills at the kitchen table will look like — that they have a chance to understand that. What we're really looking at is 11.5 percent. Hopefully, that — and we're not looking at that number that was misunderstood by the 17 exactly, which was not correct — what we're looking at for a rate increase. So, with that, I will take my seat.

Mr. Gallina: I do appreciate the officials from Yukon Development Corporation being here today. I think that it is important to have a conversation with them while they're here before we move on to other business.

I did have a couple of questions for officials and the minister while they're here. The first area that I just wanted to touch on was the innovative renewable energy initiative. We know that the government has made a four-year commitment of \$1.5 million annually to the innovative renewable energy initiative, which is now in its final year. We know that this is managed by the Development Corporation. The innovative renewable energy initiative funds Yukon First Nation governments, municipalities, and community-based organizations to identify and develop projects that sustainably generate electricity and heat for homes and businesses.

I was wondering if the minister could speak to some of the projects that this initiative has supported and provide some details to Yukoners to update them on the progress of these initiatives.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I appreciate the opportunity to provide this information to Members of the Legislative Assembly — and yes, gathering our officials here today. I'm glad that we have the opportunity to just share a couple of things at least concerning the work that's undergoing. Energy is always something that is near and dear to folks' hearts. It can be a very personal thing. We've heard lots of discussion about that — a

great opportunity to share a few things about the renewable energy program.

So, the Government of Yukon, again, is proud to invest in Yukon communities and Yukon First Nations to develop renewable energy projects that help reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. Our government has made a four-year commitment of \$1.5 million annually to the innovative renewable energy initiative, which is now in its final year.

Managed by the Yukon Development Corporation — as stated — this innovative renewable energy initiative funds Yukon First Nation governments, municipalities, and community-based organizations to identify and develop projects that sustainably generate electricity and heat for our homes and businesses.

This year, we are supporting a number of exciting projects across the territory, including: construction of a one-megawatt solar project on the north Klondike Highway; construction of a small-scale solar project here in Whitehorse; feasibility work for a solar project in Watson Lake; and design work for the Beaver Creek solar project — and I would like to take an opportunity to thank the folks at Highways and Public Works for helping us there; they partnered up with Yukon Development Corporation so that we could get access to some material that was needed to keep that project moving in a particular location — feasibility work for a combined solar and wind project in Pelly Crossing — and I know that folks there are excited in our discussions with the Selkirk First Nation about that particular project; and feasibility work at the North Fork hydro site near Dawson City — it seems that, in our latest correspondence, there have been some good conversations between, I believe, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the proponent. That is quite important; they seemed to be supportive of this project moving forward. Of course, that is an exciting one, when you think back to the history of the Yukon Ditch and how innovative and groundbreaking that was back in the day that it was built and the ability — just an exceptional engineering project — and what it did at that particular time — so innovative to provide that electricity to Dawson. For anybody who is not aware of that, it is such a great, amazing accomplishment in Dawson, and now we are seeing North Fork hydro come back to light.

Interest in innovative renewable energy has grown year over year since its inception in 2018, and the fund is fully subscribed for this fiscal year. This fall, our government will be reviewing the success of the innovative renewable energy initiative and considering recommendations for further funding. Just to give you an opportunity to — so this year, \$1.5 million is committed to renewable energy projects. To date, over \$3.6 million in project support has been spent. Our major projects in 2020-21 include, again, our project with Solvest — a great local company. What has been great to see there, Mr. Chair, is their ability to increase job opportunities in the clean energy sector, where you see young Yukoners coming home and having an opportunity to work in a sector that they may be very passionate about.

Just this week, I saw a student from the University of Victoria who was commenting on the workplace experience in

some of her graduate studies and having the opportunity — how nice that is to see on a business social media page, where a young grad student is coming to the north to have an opportunity to learn about this specifically, and those folks at Solvest have done just an exceptional job of continuing to grow their business.

This funding goes to make sure that we have the feasibility and design work done, and on that North Fork — that's a two-megawatt project. Working with First Kaska — just to clarify — in Watson Lake and with the First Nation development corporation in Beaver Creek, we're also going to be providing about \$172,000 to Yukon Energy for their peak smart program — a great program. I know that the Leader of the Third Party commented on it. It was pretty seamless to get engaged in that particular program. I have also reached out — great subcontractors from Arcrite electrical came into my home to make sure that we're leading by example. It has been quite seamless. They changed out all the infrastructure on my hot water heater and throughout the house — making sure that we're heating our water tanks at not a peak time, and we have that opportunity to properly ensure that demand is as helpful, I'll say, as possible.

As well, we're going to continue to work on other projects with the Klondike Development Organization on a solar project in Dawson City. You might have heard, Mr. Chair, from some of the constituents whom you represent around the geothermal work that has been done in Carmacks, and the First Nation is very committed to that. Some of the early work — some of our top-notch companies here that do work globally and that have expertise in drilling are now going to be working with them. They're going to do some exploratory drilling, and that's using some technology that has been used in certain industries and then seeing if there isn't an opportunity to make that work for their project with their development corporation. Again, supporting work around the Atlin expansion project — there was also a great discussion about that earlier this week — something that we're pretty excited about.

Some of the other things that we're still keeping an eye on, that we funded before — a wind project on Montana Mountain. We're again engaged with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and the development corporation around some of their key priorities. I know that, once we see — there has been a bit of delay in Old Crow, and that has really been just around COVID and having those particular experts come into that community to work on some of the final touches on their project.

But I know that — and I'm sure we've heard from the great proponent, Chief Tramm, on ideas that they have. I think it is kind of a stage gate. This is the first one, but now they are pretty excited about some other work that they're looking to do.

So, I hope that gives Yukoners who have an opportunity to hear today a sense of really the robust — you have to remember, in 2016-17, we were walking in. There was a resource plan that was put in place. We didn't have the IPP regulation completed at that point. We asked folks to lean in on that. Since then, we have now a mechanism that's appropriate and accountable and that all folks came together to work on. That's what we use to be able to purchase this energy — this power.

I think that when you go through it and you go — probably getting close to almost 20 projects, between probably a dozen to 20 projects — all of that over a period of 36 months. Really, the only project that was in place was the Kluane wind project and I think the challenge for that was the company that they sourced the hardware from originally had become insolvent and so now they're sourcing out and they have some new champions to get that project done in the community.

But really, folks have worked really, really hard. The Yukon Development Corporation — whether it's policy work on the IPP or it's some of the work that we've committed to doing around demand-side management — both of those pieces. Then all of the work by the advisors we have there has been really substantial and I think that it has been quite transformative.

I do appreciate the time to share that today with folks so that they know all the work that's being done.

Mr. Gallina: I appreciate the response from the minister and an update on renewable projects here in the territory. It sounds like, for this year, the \$1.5 million that was committed to renewable energy projects has been fully subscribed. That's wonderful to hear — that over the life of the project to date, at over \$3.6 million, there are 20 projects over a 36-month period.

I do appreciate the work that the department and the Yukon Development Corporation has undergone — the policy work around the independent power producers and demand-side management piece. I thank the officials for being here today. I don't have any further questions and I appreciate their time.

Mr. Kent: I just have one quick question. I know that the battery storage project was announced the other day. I think it was earlier this week, actually. I was just wondering if the minister can confirm the location of that now, as we have seen some OICs here today.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: They are still in the midst — I believe, and as I have been told — of concluding that agreement. At this particular time, I can't touch on that, but I think that we should have that information pretty soon. It's back to — again, this question was tabled — appropriately, and a good question — with the Yukon Energy Corporation CEO and president, but at this time, I believe, they are still in negotiations and cleaning that up. Some of the work that the member opposite is reflecting on really has to do with the fact of new technology. We are just going through some particular administrative work to ensure that this project can be properly assessed.

Mr. Kent: I have the OIC that was just released publicly a few minutes ago, which is why I stood up. It is OIC 2020/180, *Public Utilities Act*, and states that: "The following energy project is designated as a regulated project for the purposes of Part 3 of the Act." It goes on to say, under 1(b), that it is: "to be located near the intersection of Robert Service Way and the Alaska Highway".

As I mentioned, this document just arrived in my inbox as a public document, so I am just hoping once again that the minister can confirm that the location is indeed right at the intersection of Robert Service Way and the Alaska Highway.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: My understanding is that there are two blocks of land within that particular area. I am not sure which

one is the final spot that has been chosen. I think that what was shared by the president was that we are working with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, which has settlement blocks in both of those areas. One of the things that we had to do to ensure that the OIC was in place — we had an obligation to have the government reach out to Chief Bill and ensure that there was a comfort level and that this was going to proceed in that way. Again, we will make sure that we get back. As I have done all week, I want to make sure that I have the exact and appropriate information.

I do understand this area. Another First Nation has a block there as well. I want to go back and take a look, but I know that, in earlier proceedings on some other projects, there were multiple blocks that were looked at in that particular area. I just wanted to make sure which one it is that they are using.

Mr. Kent: As I mentioned, this is an order-in-council that was just made public. It was my understanding that the potential location on the north Klondike Highway was abandoned and that there were two left. I thought that there was the one mentioned in the OIC at the top of Robert Service Way or on the corner of the Alaska Highway, and I thought that there was one down closer to Yukon Energy. I understand, I guess, that the minister needs to go back and confirm this OIC. If it is confirmed to be and the site has been chosen — if he is able to provide us with the terms of the lease as well, because I think that this was another outstanding issue that was identified earlier this week when the announcement was made.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Absolutely — again, we will reach out and make sure. I don't know if the description that we put in the OIC would be covering that particular area that is really what I guess Yukoners would think of as the snow dump and the motocross track in that particular area. Then, of course, it reaches up to the corner. I know that there is land available as well right across the way.

Again, what I will commit to is that I'm going to go and find out the terms of the agreement. I know that members in the opposition would be aware of — I know there are agreements that were done previously with Kwanlin Dün First Nation. I don't know the nature of what can be shared. I know that we've come back here and reported on a number of those things, but I just want to make sure that I understand exactly if there is any confidentiality around it. I'm not stating that there is, but I will endeavour to ensure that we give the exact location, if that's available to share, and that we are in a position to speak about the terms of the agreement with the First Nation as well.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*?

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

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan

Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan in the amount of \$9,275,000 agreed to

On Total of Other Capital

Total of Other Capital in the amount of nil cleared

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$9,275,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$9,275,000 agreed to

Yukon Development Corporation agreed to

Chair: This concludes Committee of the Whole's consideration of Vote 22 in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Seeing the time and knowing that there's a motion passed unanimously that a witness appear at 3:30 p.m., I suggest that the House recess until 3:30 p.m. when the witness will be in attendance.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Chair, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Kent that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 8 adopted earlier today, at 3:30 p.m., Committee of the Whole will receive a witness, Dr. Brendan Hanley, Yukon's chief medical officer of health.

In order to allow the witness to take his place in the Chamber, the Committee will now recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

Recess

Appearance of witness

Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 8 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive a witness, Dr. Brendan Hanley, Yukon's chief medical officer of health. I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witness. I would also ask the witness to refer answers through the Chair when he is responding to members of the Committee.

Witness introduced

Hon. Ms. Frost: The witness appearing before Committee of the Whole today is Dr. Brendan Hanley, Yukon's chief medical officer of health. Dr. Hanley assumed the role of chief medical officer of health for the territory in 2008.

Since then, we have seen the growth of this role as he has steered us through the H1N1 pandemic of 2009 and raised awareness around the state of the opioids in Yukon, around motorized vehicle safety and injury prevention, environmental health, and countless other issues.

Those in this House will recognize him more recently for his calm and steady presence in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic over the past 10 months.

Dr. Hanley has first-hand experience with health issues surrounding northern and marginalized populations. Prior to working as Yukon's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Hanley worked as an emergency physician and family practitioner in the Yukon. Before then, he practised medicine in a number of rural and inner-city locations throughout Canada, as well as

internationally. He spent many years in various parts of the Canadian Arctic and frequently worked with Doctors Without Borders and other relief organizations.

Since coming into his role as the chief medical officer of health in February 2008, he has focused on strengthening public health capacity and developing partnerships within the community.

Dr. Hanley received his MD from the University of Alberta and has a master's in public health from John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Over the past nine to 10 months and more, Dr. Hanley has worked tirelessly and almost every day to keep Yukoners safe during the pandemic.

Dr. Hanley, on behalf of our government and Yukon, we can't thank you enough for the work that you have done. Welcome to the House today. We look forward to a fruitful exchange of information. Hai choo.

Chair: Would the witness like to make opening remarks?

Dr. Hanley: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you minister. Mahsi' cho. Yes, I would like to thank Members of the Legislative Assembly and all Yukoners for the opportunity to speak today about my work as the chief medical officer of health and the work of my team from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic until now. I look forward to answering your questions regarding the public health approach to COVID, the nature and behaviour of the virus, the workings of my office, and what we might expect in the coming months.

Mr. Chair, I'll trust that you'll understand that I may not be able to answer some of the questions immediately because I may not have the information at my fingertips. If so, I'll endeavour to follow up with a response as soon as possible. I also hope that you'll understand that I must keep my responses focused on my duties and professional responsibilities as a chief medical officer of health. I will not be able to answer questions about the advice I provided to ministers. This information is protected by confidentiality conventions. Also, I will not be able to answer questions about legal, political, or financial matters, as these are outside of my area of responsibility. I therefore just wanted to make clear beforehand the reasons if I must decline to answer questions or parts of questions that are put to me.

Under the *Public Health and Safety Act*, my duties are to promote health and prevent disease, including by preventing the transmission of communicable diseases. I am also responsible for monitoring, investigating, and responding to communicable disease. I also have certain authorities under this act, including the power to designate and revoke the designation of a disease as a communicable disease and the power to declare a public health emergency.

If a public health emergency is declared, I have additional authorities under the law. This includes: the power to compel a person to provide me with the information I need to exercise my duties; the power to order a person to suspend the sale, distribution, or relocation of medication, supplies, and equipment; to enter a place or vehicle to determine the health of a person or peoples, including by examining a person; to direct a person to undergo testing; to direct the disinfection of

a place or vehicle; and to detain, appropriately isolate, and hospitalize a person if necessary until the communicable disease threat is no longer of concern.

In the course of my duties, I am asked to provide my professional views and opinions to the ministers on matters regarding prevention of disease and the promotion of public health. In doing so, I take an evidence-informed, science-based approach, and I am supported by professionals and experts in my office. I also rely on a network of professionals, academic journals, and my medical officer of health colleagues and their staff around the country.

This pandemic is an unprecedented event in our lifetimes. There are few guideposts and there certainly is — as of yet — no textbook for dealing with this novel disease. As you know, when the first wave of COVID arrived in Yukon last winter, I declared a public health emergency. Yukon acted quickly and decisively. Thanks to our precautionary approach, we were able to gain control of the emerging situation. What followed was a period of relative stability in Yukon over the summer months, where some restrictions were relaxed and businesses and our communities were reopened while preparations were made for subsequent increased risks that would be faced in the fall.

As we know, health restrictions can have unintended societal impacts, including impacts on people's livelihoods, which can, in turn, affect the health of Yukoners. Balancing measures that protect Yukoners from this disease while keeping an eye on the overall health and well-being of Yukoners is one of the challenges of responding to the pandemic and one of the themes that I have always made an effort to promote.

My efforts have been aimed at promoting the health of Yukoners throughout the pandemic by providing additional supports for mental health, promoting physical activity, and ensuring that people could safely attend camps and schools. Our knowledge of the virus is evolving and growing, and we have been fortunate to have close and effective working relationships with medical officers of health in other jurisdictions.

With the simultaneous onset of winter, which can present increased risk of transmission, and arrival of a vaccine, the upcoming months will certainly be a time of increased vigilance, but also a time of increased hope and optimism. I am confident that, acting together as Yukoners, we will be successful in meeting the coming challenges, and we'll be able to defeat this virus.

I look forward to your questions.

Mr. Hassard: I would like to thank Dr. Hanley for being here. We certainly appreciate him taking the time to be here today and answer questions from us in opposition. I understand that he's a rather busy guy, so I won't spend a lot of time talking. I'll just get straight to questions.

The first questions I have are in regard to testing. Since the beginning of the pandemic, it has been widely acknowledged that the pathway to effectively managing this would be through testing and tracing. It seems that our tracing is strong, but we do have some questions about the testing.

We know that Dr. Hanley recently indicated that we have now expanded testing criteria to include asymptomatic people,

so I'm wondering if he could tell us why the criteria was expanded and whether it will revert back at some point to where it was.

Dr. Hanley: Thank you for the member's question. I think this is a really important area to be clear on how we do asymptomatic testing and what our criteria are.

We have actually always had what I might say is a contained policy of carrying out asymptomatic testing among whom we designate, and this is through the efforts of our contact tracing and our communicable disease team at YCDC, whom we designate as "higher-risk" contacts, recognizing — especially through the early months of the pandemic — the increasing role of asymptomatic transmission, which was not well recognized at the beginning of the pandemic in the early months, but by the time we came through the summer months, it was increasingly recognized that there was a contribution — even if unclear how substantial — but nevertheless, there was a contribution to COVID spread by asymptomatic transmission, and therefore, the role of strategic identification of asymptomatic COVID became a part of our contact tracing approach.

So, what does that mean in reality? What it means is that when we identify someone who is what we call a "high-risk" contact — so, let's say that there is a case, and let's say that there is someone living in confined circumstances who may be more susceptible to complications of COVID and for whom it may be harder to detect symptoms for whatever reason, or there are other circumstances that make it that much more important — perhaps it is a person who may be more difficult to follow up because of life circumstances — there are these circumstances where, under direction from YCDC, we actually do testing to determine if there is asymptomatic or even what may turn out to be pre-symptomatic detection of COVID disease. So, this is what I call "strategic and contained asymptomatic testing" as a part of contact tracing and follow-up of cases.

This is different from public asymptomatic testing, where we might, say, open the doors — anyone who wants a test gets a test. We have seen that there have been limitations and potential problems with that approach. We have seen that happen in other jurisdictions, where I would say that the zeal to expand testing without clear goals of testing has led to kind of the loss of that goal of testing. I think that it is really important to always maintain a strategic approach to testing and to everything that's within that testing envelope.

What we have always said about public asymptomatic testing is that, in our low-prevalence, low-incidence environment, the chance of finding — no matter how good the test is — a false positive test is relatively high, and in our context, that could be as high as a 50-percent chance of finding, in a random public case, as much as 50-percent false positive tests. That means, if a test came back positive, there would be a high chance of that being a false positive if there were no other risk circumstances to suggest that person may have been exposed to COVID.

So, it becomes not a very reliable test. If we were to go, for instance, to test the whole of Yukon in one day or something

like that, we would then be encountering false positives, which would then lead us down misleading paths. So, the role of asymptomatic testing has become integrated into our communicable disease approach. It is focused, and it's really part of our case-finding approach. That's very different from a policy of encouraging all comers for asymptomatic testing.

I hope that clarifies the distinction.

Mr. Hassard: I had some questions in regard to rapid testing as well. I'm wondering if Dr. Hanley could tell us: What is the status of rapid testing here in the Yukon? How many tests are available? What are the parameters for a rapid test to be conducted?

Dr. Hanley: There are actually a number of rapid tests either currently in place in Yukon or anticipated in Yukon. So, maybe I'll take a chance to go through what we have or what's in the works. I think there's one thing I want to have everyone keep in mind, first of all: That is that our present gold-standard approach is still our best test, and that is our current test — the one that is a nasopharyngeal swab that is sent out to BC and processed at BC CDC labs. It comes back with an average turnaround time — from arrival at the lab — from shipment to arrival back — of 48 to 72 hours. We continue to maintain a very good turnaround time with what I would call our "gold-standard" test — a test that is likely to be our go-to test for the bulk of our needs here and henceforth. I think that it becomes our benchmark test.

Then it's looking at, well, what is the role of additional testing capacity and where can that help us? The first example of that is our GeneXpert machine — the GeneXpert analyzer — which is also — like the BC CDC test — a molecular PCA test that is housed within Whitehorse General Hospital. It's throughput — it is a smaller machine and a smaller analyzer than what we have at BC CDC, but it's also very reliable. It is still in a relatively early stage of implementation. I think that we have about 171 rapid tests that have been carried out between mid-September when it was launched up until the other day.

In general, this test, we reserve for when it's really critical that we have that result with a quick turnaround — a turnaround of between, say, two to six hours, depending on the circumstances. We use this sometimes for hospitalized patients. We use it for scenarios where there may be staff illness and it is critical to know whether that person might have COVID or not, particularly when it is a critical hospital staff member with a mild illness who otherwise could work.

We also have used it in outbreak scenarios. With certain high-risk contacts, it has made a critical difference to know within a few hours versus two or three days what that test result is, because it influences how we expand or potentially expand our investigation.

Vulnerable persons are another category where we use this test where it may be a matter of having a person in a self-isolation facility where that person may need many supports while in self-isolation. So, it's having the advantage of that rapid turnaround also there.

The GeneXpert is still in the verification process where, if we have a positive test, that is considered a preliminary positive

test until it's confirmed by the referral lab, which is St. Paul's Hospital in BC.

Of course, we consider a positive a positive and there is just a quality-assurance process that requires a certain number of positive tests before it is completely validated as an independent testing device. Fortunately, we are not quite there yet. The negative tests, though, are considered confirmed as negative.

There is a backup GeneXpert, a device which is not online, but if we did run into problems with the first analyzer, we could bring a second one online. The device also does require supporting technology, so that really is only suitable for the Whitehorse General Hospital laboratory. It needs to be in that kind of an advanced hospital environment and could not have the supports, even in the Watson Lake hospital or Dawson City hospital, because of the lab technology that is required and person time that is required to support that test.

We also have a machine called the "Biofire", which is actually similar — it is also a molecular-based test, and it is similar to the GeneXpert. There are a few technical differences, which I could explain, if required. So, we have one device at the Whitehorse General Hospital. It is not yet kind of online and ready. It is going through some validation — I would say that we are preparing for a validation process. Really, the idea of this machine is that if there was a problem with the GeneXpert cartridges — for instance, the supply of cartridges — we could use the Biofire, because it has a completely different supply inventory, as a backup device for, more or less, in-house testing capacity.

There are a few more, and I am sure that everyone is familiar with other technologies. There is the Abbott ID NOW. We have 10 devices in-territory and we are expecting 10 more devices. These have yet to be deployed. This type of technology is also a molecular test, but a rapid and simplified molecular test which gives you a qualitative yes/no answer. It doesn't have quite the precision of the larger analyzers — the GeneXpert or the ones used at BC CDC.

So, what we are doing right now is working closely with our colleagues and counterparts in BC, as they are going through a rollout of Abbott ID NOW to really determine the best use for these machines.

The advantage that these will offer would be either for more remote settings to have that kind of rapid turnaround in a more remote setting or to be able to deploy — potentially three or four at a time — to where an outbreak is occurring to give us that kind of on-site capacity to do some rapid testing.

It's more than just a matter of putting a machine in a place. It requires — what is the additional benefit that we're going to get and really being clear about it; it's training providers; it's establishing standard operating procedures; it's knowing what to do with the result, whether it's positive or negative, and what the backup plan is — for instance, the verification process.

We're actually going through that process almost as we speak in validating and preparing for — what I would call — a "strategic deployment" of these devices.

Two more to go through, if you don't mind a longer answer — the next one is called the "Abbott Panbio", and this is where

we really go into a different category of test. The Abbott Panbio is not a molecular but an antigen test. So, really, now what you're looking for are little bits of viral protein instead of the molecular material of the virus. What you're talking about is literally a handheld card, not dissimilar to a pregnancy test, where you actually have a kind of a piece of filter paper, and the material — whether it's saliva or swab material — is placed and then gives a positive or a negative.

This is really designed for more of a mass testing approach where we might be using it in a surveillance setting — if, for instance, we were looking at its potential applicability in a remote work site where we are testing workers or in long-term care — certain areas where we're really looking for lots of tests, recognizing that it's going to be inaccurate but, if you do lots, it makes up for the inherent inaccuracy of the test. We might be just looking for signals rather than using it individually as a diagnostic test. So, it has a different place. It is also new — also fairly recently validated by Health Canada. These things came after a long wait. These came one after another, so it's really lining up which technology works for which area and where we might strategically deploy it to add to our internal testing capacity.

Again, this is in the line up, and we're very interested in the potential complementary role that this Abbott Panbio or the antigen testing might play.

Lastly, I'm going to just mention what we now call the "mouth rinse and gargle test". This is what BC had pioneered a couple of months ago and we are now piloting. It is really the same test, but it really replaces the swab with just taking saliva from a child. For children, the potential advantage is just replacing having a swab in the nose but using a kind of a rinse process with salt water, gargling, and then spitting into a tube and using that as your sample. It otherwise goes through the same process as our BC CDC testing.

It's not so much a rapid test as an additional method to take a sample that can then go through our normal testing. It's really a convenience measure, particularly for children, and hopefully to lower the barrier and make it easier for kids to be tested. This is currently being piloted through YCDC, doing a few to get the procedure right. It sounds simple, but it actually has to be done rigorously in order to get a good sample. There's a video that BC has produced, for example, to really instruct how you prepare your child for it and how you prepare for the taste of salt water, the rinse, and then the taking of the specimen to ensure that you get the best quality specimen possible.

That's a bit of an overview of our testing technologies.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly appreciate the in-depth answers because it actually takes care of several questions at once. It helps us move along in the long run.

Just to follow up on the rapid tests, some people have pointed to them as potentially offering an alternative to self-isolation or possibly shortening up that isolation time. I'm just curious if Dr. Hanley could give us some insight into his thoughts around this idea.

Dr. Hanley: Yes, it is again an area of growing interest. That interest is shared with us — with me as well. What I would say is that we are all focusing attention on the experience

globally but, more particularly, the Alberta pilot test, which is a collaboration between the federal government and the Alberta government. This is focusing on two international ports of entry, one land-based and one airport — at Calgary Airport — for testing asymptomatic travellers and determining what the results are from testing at entry and then at, I believe, day eight, and then looking at the actual results. As I understand it, we will be seeing more results from that research soon. I think that this will help inform our approach to the possibility of looking at the potential role of testing as it might influence isolation times.

I think that it is important — there are a couple of things that I would say about that. It's not just a matter of looking at that result and then, sort of, going with it. We would be very interested in how this might apply, for instance, to Canada's approach as a country for its use in international quarantine.

We are always looking for precedents where we can because, of course, when we can see the ability to evaluate in larger jurisdictions with larger populations and look at results, it gives us that much more comfort, rather than being the first ones out of the gate, I would say. It is definitely something that is part of our national conversations at the CCMOH — the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health — level to follow these results and to see the potential wider applicability to international travel and then potentially to places where we have these domestic requirements.

I will say that we are following this with interest and looking at the potential role that this could play in how that might influence the current requirement for a 14-day isolation period.

Mr. Hassard: I thank the witness for that response. I had questions on gargle testing, so I will just stay on that now since you brought it up earlier.

In late September, Dr. Hanley announced that these tests were coming to the Yukon in a matter of weeks. Then, on December 7, we asked about them here in the Legislature during Question Period. At that time, the minister said — and I quote: “We have also looked at the swab tests and are reviewing the policies of implementing the saline swish-and-spit test currently in use in British Columbia, and we anticipate an update being made available by the...” chief medical officer of health.

Then, on December 9, the minister told us — and again, I quote: “We are waiting at the moment for the chief medical officer's advice on when and if this test will be implemented here...”

It would seem that, at that point, the minister was suggesting that the government was waiting for Dr. Hanley. Then, later that day in a press scrum, the Premier told the media that the gargle test wasn't as effective and that we were simply waiting for a recommendation from the chief medical officer of health.

Based on those comments, both from the minister and the Premier, the *Whitehorse Star* then published an article that told Yukoners that these tests weren't coming to the Yukon. Of course, this prompted several parents throughout the territory to contact us, obviously disappointed, but then the next day,

which came as a surprise, on December 10, the Acting Minister of Health and Social Services told us that there actually was a trial of these tests moving forward immediately.

I'm just wondering if Dr. Hanley can clear the air, so to speak, on this, because it sounds like, from what he's saying now, the gargle tests are being used in a few instances. I guess the other question along that line would be if Dr. Hanley would be able to explain why there was such a delay from September until just recently.

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to questions that were asked specifically here in the Legislative Assembly around testing and testing methodologies, I have noted numerous times, as did the acting Health and Social Services minister, that the tests were being trialed in British Columbia, and Yukon hasn't yet pursued that, given that the trial was still in effect. So, of course, as we move and progress, I want to just say that the evidence around implementing this methodology in the Yukon really falls under the advice and guidance of the experts, and it's not in any way putting Dr. Hanley in any kind of political realm of conversation. It's really about the structure and the process of how and what happened in British Columbia that resulted in us following through here.

Just as a note, I happened not to be in the House that day as I was on another federal call and wasn't able to answer the question. So, my good colleague on that very day, once we received notification, presented to the House. As a preamble to the question, that's where we landed here last week.

Chair: Would the witness like to add to that?

Dr. Hanley: Certainly, yes. I would be happy to give my point of view.

I'll talk about, basically, the role that I play in medical direction provided to the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit. My answer will probably be a little bit more on the operational side because we regularly really have that kind of clinical communicable disease level — regularly work. My deputy CMOH — Dr. Elliott, in particular — works very closely on a day-to-day basis with the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit providing that kind of day-to-day medical direction with me participating regularly at a slightly arm's-length level, but often involved in key decision areas, such as new additions to our testing capacity, changes in our delivery, or changes in our approach and contact tracing according to emerging guidelines — things like this.

As soon as we heard of the — it's hard to get the official name right — “mouth rinse and gargle test”, as it is now called, certainly that was something that captured our interest immediately as we learned that BC, which we also worked very closely with, of course, was implementing — first trialing and then implementing and working out the kinks. We were following along with them and were excited about this possibility and definitely had it on our radar.

I think that there were delays in our anticipated timeline operationally just simply because of the work that was required when we had the surge in cases. So, it was just at that level where we really needed that kind of intimate involvement of our staff and personnel at YCDC to carry out the piloting of this method.

It's a matter of working out the processes and the operating procedure, the instructions, and going through any potential limitations of how this actually works in practice. Again, when you read it about it, it looks simple, but it does need to be worked out exactly how it is going to happen, and therefore, our goal was to have it within the premises, under the supervision of the nursing staff at YCDC before expanding it.

We have had an opportunity to use it recently with some of our recent testing as that very contained pilot measure, and we do anticipate having it more generally available early in the new year.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the answer, but just to follow up on that a little bit further, I'm curious as to if, in the mind of Dr. Hanley, when the Premier said we were waiting for a recommendation, would that be a correct assumption in his mind?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would suggest that the member is here to provide his expert advice, not to engage in political decision-making processes. Clearly, he provides advice to this side of the House, and we take that under advisement. Suggesting and perhaps leading the chief medical officer to respond to a political question, I think, is inappropriate. So, I would advise that, if there are any specific questions on implementing the program, as I understand it, based on the BC model and leveraging the expertise and experience on this type of testing — that is what we relied on in making the decision to proceed with that methodology here in the Yukon.

Chair: Dr. Hanley, would you care to add to the response?

Dr. Hanley: I think I've said enough on that particular topic, thank you.

Mr. Hassard: I think, when the government says that Dr. Hanley or Dr. Hanley's office was the holdup, I think that it's fair for us to ask, just to try to decipher this for Yukoners because obviously we are very fortunate to have this time and our briefing time to talk to Dr. Hanley, but unfortunately, the general public doesn't. This is our opportunity to try to ask these questions on behalf of the general public, so I certainly was hoping that we could get some clarification on that. But understanding that we don't have a lot of time, Mr. Chair, and that we do have a lot of questions, I will move on. I certainly wasn't trying to make the doctor speak to something political.

I have some questions regarding critical workers and questions coming from employers. They have brought these questions forward and asked us to raise them. The guidelines on yukon.ca indicate that critical workers must self-isolate when they are not working but don't need to isolate if they are working. I guess a good example would be a truck driver. They are a critical worker. He or she can attend their workplace without isolating, but when they go home, they must isolate from their family. I am wondering if Dr. Hanley could clarify if that is, in fact, the case or how that works.

Dr. Hanley: I will try to answer. I know that there are many complexities that can arise out of life circumstances vis-à-vis how the orders are actually written. First of all, the essential and critical services were defined by the Yukon government and aligned to be consistent with the federal

guidelines that were issued early on in the early months of the pandemic. Of course, the role of that in defining "essential" and "critical" workers was in order to maintain essential services, minimizing the risk of introducing COVID-19 to Yukon. Defining what is "essential" and what is "critical" was essential for that business continuity part.

"Critical" really is around what is essential for preserving life, health, and basic societal functions within Yukon. Within these categories, travel into Yukon was allowed as part of delivering the essential or critical service. Now, there are two ways the order is written. Of course, the order is written around critical service, where there is actually an exemption from the requirements inasmuch as it is in order to provide the service that is part of that critical work.

The "essential" part is not an exemption — essential workers are required to self-isolate but are also able to submit alternate self-isolation plans to enable the process of working with self-isolation. How that plays out in real life really depends on the work sector.

An example might be health care workers who are critical workers and who may have been required to travel out or who may be coming into the territory to provide services. When they're in that critical category, they have requirements for how they provide that service in the workplace while protecting the potential for the introduction of risk. That might involve how they use PPE, for example, and how they follow infection control precautions within the workplace.

Really, the basic expectation is that critical workers are expected to abide by self-isolation measures to the extent possible while carrying out the service that they're required to provide. So, the expectation is that they are to abide by the principles of self-isolation even while providing that service. I don't know if there are perhaps circumstances that the member wishes to bring up that might provide more clarity, but I think it's important to, first of all, understand that there are these two categories, and the much bigger category is essential, where that expectation and the order is actually for self-isolation, but there is an allowance for approval of alternate self-isolation plans.

Mr. Hassard: This particular question was specific to the trucking industry. We know that some companies haul fuel out of Alaska, for example; we have companies here based in Whitehorse that travel to Alberta for groceries on a weekly basis; we have companies that travel to British Columbia every other day for such things as groceries. So, my question was really based around that — if I am a truck driver and I make five trips to Skagway or if I make a trip a day to Skagway — so, essentially five or six trips a week to Skagway — as my job, what do I do on Sunday or what do I do when I get home at night? Am I supposed to self-isolate from my family or how is that supposed to work?

Dr. Hanley: The principle is abiding, to the extent possible, with the principles of self-isolation. I will probably have to get back to the member with exactly how the order is written, because we are really now talking about what the law is and how it is written out. The principle is that there is always an expectation to carry out the general principles of self-

isolation to the extent that it is possible — recognizing that there are these frequent travellers who are going in and out and have been doing so and applying the utmost care in what they do. From what I have heard — whether it is health care workers or truck drivers or other people in the transportation industry — they have been very aware of what the expectation is, and I have not heard of instances where that principle of adhering was not carried out with the utmost faith. But perhaps there are some elements that I will have to bring back, in terms of how the order specifically applies.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for the question and Dr. Hanley for the response. I am just going to add a small thing here. Rather than have Dr. Hanley go up and look at those orders, I think that I will ask my department to do that and bring that back. We are happy to get the language around the orders and supply them here, as it is our responsibility to enforce those orders. I will get that information — the clarity around how critical workers isolate during off-hours, how they do that, and what the orders require.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly look forward to seeing that information.

I have another workplace question for Dr. Hanley. We were asked about an employee who called in sick for work one day saying that they had COVID-like symptoms and were worried that they could have COVID. They stayed home that day and the next day and then went to work the following day without getting any test. I am curious if this is the obligation of the employer to instruct that the employee get tested, or is it the obligation of the employee to get tested as soon as they feel that they have symptoms?

Dr. Hanley: Again, I will answer to the best of my ability from the public health point of view, but clearly this again goes into some of the nuances of orders and interpretation, so I will be a little bit careful here. You have heard much of my messaging particularly in the last few weeks, which emphasizes the importance of people who are sick and have symptoms staying away from the workplace — and pointing out a number of the resources and supports that are available, whether as an employee or as an employer, to avail upon should an employee be staying home, as appropriately they should be when they have symptoms. Again, the directive to the public and the plea to the public is that, if you are an employee and you are sick, you stay home and away from others and arrange to get testing when symptoms occur.

We do have some specific guidance around that and what we affectionately call the “traffic light” guidance, which really gives a bit more specific direction on when to worry more and when to worry less. Since we have had the surge in cases, we have really tried to push the basic concept that, if you’re sick, don’t go to work. Stay home, stay away from others, and arrange to get tested. Call 811 if you are uncertain, or do the online self-assessment. That is really the basic message.

I am hoping that employers have mechanisms in place so that they are able to support that in the workplace, whether that is notification, meetings with the employees, or other ways to notify employees that this is the expectation of the workplace.

To me, it’s up to the individual to arrange what to do with their own life, but I think that there is a responsibility for the employee to follow that direction to stay away from the workplace when sick, and it’s the responsibility for the employer to make it known that this is the expectation within the workplace and to make it known what the supports are for that person to enable that process to occur.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly appreciate that information from Dr. Hanley because I think that it’s interesting that this is the situation that we experienced here this week with an MLA in the Legislature.

I have some questions around schools for Dr. Hanley. Now, there has been considerable debate about whether and how to reopen schools. Probably the most controversial aspect of that decision was the decision to only reopen to half days for students in grades 10 to 12 here in Whitehorse, while students in grades 10 to 12 in the communities, as well as the French school here in Whitehorse, are back full time. I’m curious what advice Dr. Hanley provided to Education about the reopening of schools and if it was in his recommendation that grades 10 to 12 only attend half-time in-person classes.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I certainly will turn it over to Dr. Hanley. I think that it’s important to correct the information in the question in that grades 10 to 12 students here in Whitehorse are attending in-person classes half of a day but they are learning full time with additional supports for them when they are not in class in the three large high schools here in Whitehorse.

Just to correct that — I’m certainly happy for Dr. Hanley to answer with what advice he provided or what recommendations he provided in relation to the school health and safety guidelines.

Dr. Hanley: Maybe I’ll back up a little bit and provide a little bit of an overview. What we saw early on in the pandemic was jurisdictions, in that first phase of response, migrating in-person learning to online learning. That was really due to many of the early uncertainties of the pandemic, the mixing of students and staff in close proximity to each other, and limited measures at the time to reduce the possible transmission of COVID-19 in school settings. So, Yukon likewise adopted a similar structure for the last couple of months of the last school year along with other jurisdictions — so, closing in-person classes and going to online learning as of April 15, 2020.

Then there was the resumption of classes with all of those intensive preparations that occurred during the rest of the spring and over the summer period to put in place all of the protective measures — with that focus on student and staff safety, but also to support student learning and to support the ability of learning to continue as best as possible in an altered environment.

Within what was the Health Emergency Operations Centre — basically, my team — we developed guidelines for K to 12 — public health and safety guidelines — based on federal guidance and, at the time, emerging guidance as it was coming out in various jurisdictions and what we could review and interpret of the literature around COVID introduction into schools, COVID transmission among children, and that global literature as it was coming into play. As you know, we have

revised that guideline — I believe twice — and the most recent updates are around the use of masks, making it a requirement rather than a recommendation within common areas within schools for ages 10 and up, the requirement for staff to wear non-medical masks outside of the classroom, and the one-metre spacing as a new bar for students within a classroom, as well as staff requirements for two-metre spacing.

Then, of course, most recently, there is the updated guidance around school buses. Students aged five and over will be required, as of January 4, to wear a mask on a bus, as must the drivers, with students under five, or the four-year-olds, having more of an encouragement but not a requirement.

I think that my role, and our team's role, was to provide the basic public health guidance that acted as a kind of a template for the Department of Education to then put in place the requirements for operational plans. Each school, as we saw, developed operational plans, really coming back to the public health guidance and how that would adhere to the basic principles that we laid out in the public health and safety guidance for schools. So, that comes back to screening of staff and screening of students for illness before going to school, recommended sanitation measures for schools, physical distancing requirements and, as I said, that evolving recommendation and then requirement for mask use and others of those public health measures. Decisions by the department were made accordingly.

Mr. Hassard: I'm wondering if Dr. Hanley could tell us what the additional risk would be if we allowed full-day classes for all students. We know that a lot of parents have asked us about this, and they have said that they would definitely support stronger measures in other areas if it meant allowing children or students to fully access the education system. A follow-up to that would be: If Dr. Hanley felt that adequate spacing could be achieved, would he be in support of full-day classes for all Yukon students?

Dr. Hanley: Again, this goes to a place where public health guidance is the foundation and operational requirements are out of my scope. I mean, one could imagine all kinds of possible scenarios where you might have adherence in a number of ways to guidance to the public health requirements. Then it really comes down to what works best for the operational capacity of the department. That's where it gets out of my scope.

I think that my role in this case was really to provide the best public health guidance that we could in a Yukonized context and then to work with the department, of course, for the department to be able to translate those recommendations into practice, but the department has many other considerations to take into account as the operationalizing of those guidelines are carried out.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that. Just to kind of expand on that a little bit, we know that the guidelines that led the government to the decision to limit in-person classes for grades 10 to 12 here in Whitehorse were all developed in the summer. Obviously, at that time, the situation was quite different from what it is now — you know, there were no mandatory mask requirements and we had the BC bubble open. Now that the

bubble is closed and we have mandatory masks throughout the territory — or in any public spaces, sorry; not to change the wording — I would think that the risk assessment has obviously changed. I am curious as to if Dr. Hanley has considered changing the guidelines for schools based on new risk levels. I guess I would like to see what he has to say about that, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Hanley: Yes, I think that is a really interesting question. I think it comes back to: How do we assess overall risk and what is the actual risk? I think that, for me, it is a reminder of how close we are to an actual risk of introduction and transmission, given the surge that we have apparently come to the other side of recently. As little as probably a week and a half ago, I was saying that I'm not actually sure if we are starting to see community transmission and we may actually be seeing the beginnings of community transmission in Yukon. That would very much change our approach in potentially a number of areas.

Now, as I say, technically, we have not ruled that out yet until we are perhaps a week or two further in to really know if there are some undetected cases in our territory, but the fact that we have come down to only one active case — and that most recent case being a known contact — puts us in a much more comfortable position than we were in a week and a half ago. But I think it speaks to the vulnerability and that vulnerability is around the surge of activity in Canada. So, even though we did come to a point where the BC bubble seemed to no longer be a sensible approach based on the increasing risk and that it made more sense for us as a jurisdiction to consider reverting to a quarantine requirement for any importation — any person travelling in — we were still at the same time facing an actual increased risk of any single person coming in — no matter what the reason for travel — to be infected with COVID based on the increasing surge in most of the rest of the country. So, there were many factors in play.

In other words, the decline in travel has been, to some degree, countered by the risk per traveller coming in, so the introductory risk is relatively high even though there are now these new requirements.

I think that we have to see the self-quarantine measure as one layer of a multiplicity of layers that help to protect us and that we can't — even with the closure of the BC bubble, I think we would be mistaken to view that as an impenetrable barrier because we have seen that barrier pierced many times, actually, since the beginning of the pandemic, which is why I always try to bring the messaging back to — not so much the risk solely of introduction, but how do we mitigate and reduce the risk of transmission?

I think that really is perhaps a larger picture view of how we think about risk of both introduction and then transmission of COVID and how that influences the way we develop guidelines.

To make it short, I don't see that the actual risk has changed that much that it would influence the rewriting of guidelines that would then, in turn, influence changes in the schools. I think, holistically, we're probably dealing with a similar level of risk, and we have just seen how close we are to

the ability for COVID to be not only be introduced but transmitted — potentially in a very short amount of time.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that from Dr. Hanley. We've heard that vaccines are coming in early January. That's great news. Everybody's happy to hear that. I'm wondering if, once people are getting vaccinated, that would change the dynamics around the school being able to go to back to full capacity and allowing those grades 10 to 12 students to go back to full-time classes.

If the vaccine does have a positive impact on that, is there a magic number that Dr. Hanley and his office would be looking at for the percentage of people to be vaccinated here in the Yukon to allow that to happen?

Dr. Hanley: This is a very interesting question. I'm going to probably again take it up another level of more general thinking. Maybe the short answer is that we don't know yet. It's clearly the question that everyone has and that I hope we'll be happily able to answer in the months to come, but it literally might take months before we know the answer to that.

There are estimates of what might constitute herd immunity — the magic phrase “herd immunity” meaning what level of uptake in a population do we need to ensure that COVID transmission is either nil or minimal or negligible so that it no longer poses a significant risk to the public. It actually is not quite clear what that number is. There are formulas to determine that. Of course, it relates to the transmissibility of the virus, and then it also relates to the effectiveness of the vaccine.

The early vaccines — the messenger RNA vaccines — have very promising results from the clinical trials in the area of 95-percent efficacy, which are amazing results based on the robust results so far from the phase 3 clinical trials. As we know, some of this more specific information and data will come as the approval processes carry on, but also — as the phase 3 trials are not over, they are continuing for a further two years — we will get more data as time goes, particularly on durability of vaccines. The durability question is, as yet, the unknown.

All we know is that there are initial estimates that seem to put the durability at three months at least, but that's really based on the short time that we've had of the vaccine being put into arms as part of the trial data. The more months that go by, the better we will know what the expected durability of the vaccine is and therefore what the practical herd immunity is.

An example might be — if we were estimating, for instance, 70-percent herd immunity, but the durability of the vaccine was only three to six months, it would not necessarily be enough assurance that we could start to undo public health measures unless we had all of those contingencies about revaccination and boosters and that sort of thing in place.

There's a lot of work to do to know what the target is, how durable the vaccine will be, and how the vaccine effectiveness plays out in real life. There often is a difference between the clinical efficacy based on clinical trials and then the real-world effectiveness based on population uptake and the whole variety of recipients of vaccine. That is something that is followed, researched, and surveyed, so we will get information as we go.

This is all to say that it's too early to say what the impact of vaccine will be on our ability to start to unroll public health measures. Of course, it is our expectation that we will be, at some point; we just don't have enough information anywhere in the world, as yet, to know what the expected timing would be.

I would be thinking that we're months away from that, so if you think about how that would play out into the practicalities of a school term, I would be surprised if we could reach a point where it would be enough to influence the continuity of a school term given, again, all of the other considerations, but I think that we would probably have a better idea, even by February and March, what the expectations would be.

I could probably go on for quite a bit, and maybe that would answer some of the other questions around vaccine, but, of course, coverage is one of those big unknowns. We all hope — and I am certainly encouraging the population to, and will continue to encourage people to, step forth when the time comes. We have a unique chance in our territory, as well as in the other territories, to have enough vaccine for all of our adult population. We have an opportunity that few Canadians have at this point to, within the first quarter of 2021, potentially achieve population immunity. If we can get to that 70- to 75-percent population uptake, we would likely be in a very good position to expect population immunity. I think that is our goal for now, and when we start getting into that implementation phase, we will have, hopefully, more data, more evidence, and more information to be able to then project what the implications of that will be for many of our public health measures, including some of the ones around school and education.

Mr. Hassard: I thank Dr. Hanley for that. I think that he has pretty much answered the next question, but in light of the time, I will ask my one last question. In doing so, I will thank Dr. Hanley again. I appreciate him taking the time to be here and certainly look forward to future opportunities to ask questions on behalf of Yukoners. We have many questions today, but I understand that we only have a limited amount of time.

Dr. Hanley talked about the vaccine and how the rollout would change the picture here in the Yukon. We know that the vaccine, I think, has been to many people the thing that they have been waiting for, and it will be the be-all and the end-all, and COVID will be gone and history.

But then Dr. Hanley indicated today that we could be looking at another 12 to 18 months. I believe that he indicated many of the reasons why in his last answer — and if there is something else that he would like to add, I would appreciate it. Also, the question of other jurisdictions — will vaccination rates in other jurisdictions affect it, or does he feel that it would have any effect on how our borders would open up to other territories and provinces? I guess an example would be if we need BC or Alberta to reach a certain — again, I will go back to the magic number, for simple terms — the magic number that those provinces would have to reach for vaccinations before the bubble could be reopened to the Yukon?

Again, I appreciate Dr. Hanley for his time today.

Dr. Hanley: Thank you for your comments and thanks for that question.

I think that there are so many remaining questions that we all have. I am trying to be authentic with my responses and these are great questions. We really fundamentally don't know yet. I can give a few thoughts, though.

I think that we are certainly in that fortunate position to be able to have the chance to reach population uptake and potentially population immunity before most of the rest of the country. Again, I think that this is important for us because we are remote. It is something that we asked for through the three territories in consideration of our small, widely dispersed populations, our relatively low capacity in health care, and the need to transport for tertiary health care — all of those considerations — which made it more feasible for us to go with a population-based approach rather than that kind of staggered, phased, priority approach that the larger jurisdictions are beginning right now.

But added to that equation is the importance of vaccine uptake in Canada, and added to that is the importance of vaccine uptake globally. This is a global pandemic and the pandemic won't be over until we have global control — not just Yukon and not just Canada, but globally — which speaks to the importance, for instance, of Canada's participation in the COVAX initiative, which ensures — or at least attempts to provide — assistance to countries that have less ability to purchase vaccine because we are literally all in this together. So, until we kind of have that global control so that COVID becomes, at best, perhaps a disease that still exists, but without that epidemic potential, then we will be at risk. I think even if we had, say, a widely protected Yukon population but not the same level in Canada, then we would continually be facing importation risks, the potential for declining immunity in Yukon as time goes on and the potential for our changes in population, with newcomers coming in. So, there are so many things that weave into that dynamic of how we could consider ourselves protected as a community.

But we also know that it's only a matter of time before the rest of Canada catches up, as it were, to Yukon. It just stretches that timeline. Certainly, there are tremendous advantages to us having as our goal the ability to have the bulk of our population — three-quarters of our adult population and potentially more than that by the end of the first quarter — that puts us into a very good position. But it would behoove us to maintain some degree of public health measures in addition to that until, I think as a country, we were all probably at an equivalent measure of immunity. But these things really, again, need to be worked out as we gain more information about durability, as we see what the actual uptake is like, as we learn more about the role of other vaccines as they're coming in — the need for boosters, et cetera — so I do think it's getting into speculative territory.

All we know is that we have a great opportunity and that the more that we can do this — achieve rapid uptake — the more rapidly we can achieve population uptake, the more robust position we will be in and the more protected our vulnerable people will be. We also have a chance to demonstrate to the rest of the country the operational realities

and the benefits and potential pitfalls of achieving a population uptake. We do have a really important role to play not just for ourselves, but for the country in the next few months as we aim for a population approach to vaccination.

Ms. White: Just before we start, it feels like months ago, the first time we met in what became the operational space in the old library. It definitely feels like a lifetime ago where everything was happening very quickly and we just didn't know what it was going to look like.

I have since decided that I feel like you are like an iceberg. You're the person we can see and you have entire — we talked about this back in March — that it was important that people understood that you weren't alone and that you were doing this with a team. I thought I would give you an opportunity to tell us a bit about the team. In our brief briefings over time, that wasn't ever anything I asked. I think this is an opportunity for you to tell us a bit about the folks who are behind you — because you are a tip of the iceberg that we can see, but we know that icebergs are complex and mostly what we can't see is under water.

Dr. Hanley: Thank you for that opportunity. I really appreciate that. I think, if I'm at the tip of the iceberg, at least I'm still floating — so that's good — and holding everyone up.

I think that there are actually several teams — without getting too poetic about it. I think there is a core team which was, at the time that you first came over, what we called HEOC, or the Health Emergency Operations Centre, which was a very large team. I think it was up to 60 people at a time — often with high turnover in those initial stages of together very rapidly carrying out a large amount of work that was organized as an IMS, or an incident management structure — so that included the often overlooked financial part of that — the financial people who track the money, the operations people who were doing things like looking after and setting up the self-isolation facilities and the testing facilities, doing a lot of the day-to-day operations part, and then the whole planning team who looked at guidelines and policies — and then the logistics side — so all of what is required to make things work and happen.

Those four elements that are fundamental became the four sections of the so-called "HEOC" and then working with our allies in EMO and Community Services, the emergency management organization, as they looked at and helped to take care of some of the larger operational parts, such as operating the borders and helping to operationalize the orders as they came into play.

That was the large HEOC that eventually, in July and through the summer, gradually diminished; it gradually stood down and was replaced by what we now call the "CRU", which is the COVID response unit, which is a smaller team and is now an official unit of Health and Social Services, which is about 16 or 17 people and is organized roughly in the same way, but with some of those core pieces, such as the finances and logistics, taken over as core work by the rest of the department, as it should be — leaving largely the planning section where the guidelines, the policy writing, measures like resurgence planning, testing and strategy, and all of those kinds of thinking

parts that help translate a new issue, an idea, a concern, a worry, or an e-mail into an informed response, action, or guideline.

As public servants, I won't name all those people. My deputy, Dr. Catherine Elliott, who most of you know, works closely with me every day and oversees much of the medical, communicable, and epidemiological side. We have policy people; we have epidemiologists; we have modelling people; we have writers and a communications team, of course, as part of our unit.

I think the other team that I wanted to make sure I refer to is the communicable disease team that I talked about earlier — and that is, of course, YCDC and the nurses and the managers at YCDC who do the actual disease control — the on-the-ground disease control. As I mentioned, that is another team that I work with daily when we are actually mapping out not only the day-to-day case management and contact management — they do that expert work — but also developing, as we revise our guidance — whether it is around isolation periods, case management, or integrating new federal guidance. We provide that advice or the day-to-day kind of situational advice that might come to us because we also do on-call duties as medical officers of health. That YCDC team is really an important part — and also Community Nursing, which does the role of contact tracing in rural communities, as well as all of the other work that they do, whether it is acute care or public health care.

I don't know if that gives enough of a picture. There is a tremendous team that provides the support — the ability for me, then, to be the mouthpiece for all of that work.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. The reason why I asked is that I feel like the folks behind the scenes are the ones that we don't see but that do a lion's share of the work to support you. I just wanted to give you an opportunity so that we could thank them. I think that this comes from all Yukoners, and I truly mean it. This has been a strange time, and the work that was done behind the scenes, I think, will change how we face future crises.

I was thinking, when you were talking about herd immunity — polio is an example of something that, as a planet, we came very close to eradicating, but it has reared again. We will continue to fight it. So, there is hope, right? We have seen it before and we have been able to respond. So, I just want to thank your team.

One of the things that we definitely look at — so we have had the success of 14,000 Yukoners being vaccinated against the flu, which are maybe our best numbers yet, but we need more for the COVID-19 vaccine. I wondered if there is a plan on how to try to encourage more people to get that vaccination.

Dr. Hanley: Yes, it is a really important question — and, of course, a good question. Yes, there is plan, but I will say that we really don't have all the details worked out. I think that we have dedicated communication staff specifically for the COVID vaccine. Of course, Canada as a whole, through the Public Health Agency of Canada, has what will be seen as an emerging strong communication strategy around immunization for COVID-19.

Part of it is information and part of it is engagement. I think that the engagement part can be sometimes easy to overlook,

especially when we're in a hurry. I want to make sure that we do this in a way that, even though we are looking at quite a short timeline for quite a lot to accomplish, we have to do it in an unhurried way. Part of that unhurried way means using the next few weeks to be able to describe all that we know about the vaccine, all that we know about potential side effects — the effectiveness of the vaccine based on the studies so far, what to expect — and also to be talking, just as I did previously, about what we don't know yet — what are the uncertainties and what does that mean?

For instance, it's actually not uncommon at all, when we have the new vaccine, that we don't know about the durability of the vaccine, because sometimes that actually takes years of experience to know. The hepatitis B vaccine would be an example of that — the HPV vaccine as well — where it's only with years of experience that you actually know what to expect about durability. Sometimes that takes 20 or 30 years. That is one aspect that only time will literally tell you.

But we also want to have the opportunity for people — as I said in the media update — to feel comfortable knowing enough about the vaccine that they feel comfortable that they have the information they need at the point of receipt. I think that we just have to give ourselves the time. I'm talking about weeks because I think it can be done within weeks, but it has to be listening and then providing the information at the right levels so that there's sufficient understanding.

I think that there's a lot of really exciting information, particularly about these vaccines coming into the approval process. As you know, we're expecting approval through Health Canada of the Moderna vaccine imminently. As messenger RNA vaccines — they are the first messenger RNA vaccines to be produced, but it's using a technology that actually has been around for some time and has been in play for at least a couple of decades in the development of cancer treatments using the same technology. It's a well-developed technology. When it comes to the vaccine production — it is an approval process and a clinical trial and approval process that is just as stringent with these vaccines as for any other vaccines. I think that it's a good chance for us to communicate what the Health Canada approval process is, how Health Canada as a regulatory body for vaccines is one of the most stringent in the world, and how the accelerated timelines have worked. For instance, the ability to do the rolling data review — so, instead of waiting for the trials to be completed, to be receiving the data a little bit at a time so that it has enabled Health Canada to keep up, as it were, with the demand on data review so that the final approval process can be done in a relatively short amount of time but no step has been missed.

So, many, many opportunities to talk about new technologies, vaccines and what that means — how efficient they are, how rapidly — that, with the new technology, there's the ability to scale up very quickly — that is just orders of magnitude more than, say, traditional influenza vaccines that are still grown in chicken eggs.

I think that this really is the beginning of the 21st century of vaccines and that we are really in a whole new state of ability to develop and scale up production of vaccines. So, exciting

times — but there is a real onus on us to be able to interpret and provide the information that will help us to get to that goal of high population uptake.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that answer.

With Moderna, am I right to understand that it's a two-shot process? It requires two vaccinations? If it does, what's the timeline between the two? How does the witness — I'm sure that, at this point in time, we're looking toward the future and trying to figure out what that will look like and how to get people to follow up. So, if he could just share a little bit of that — understanding, of course, that plans change and things might change — but just what that might look like.

Dr. Hanley: I'm certainly happy to provide what I know. As the member states, there are still a number of contingencies around when the vaccine will actually arrive to what quantity and therefore that will affect how the implementation will occur.

As you know, there's a national prioritization process and there are a number of priority groups identified — so that, for example, if we did have an opportunity for early, smaller amounts of vaccine, we would be able to apply that prioritization sequence accordingly.

When we talk about the larger mass immunization clinic, the mobile teams of the community rollout — I think that it's important — that will take several weeks, at a minimum, to prepare those teams. That, I think, is ideal — because I think this is something we don't want to rush into, but we want to prepare our communities and our population with the right communication and the right comfort level of information to have that rapid uptake when it's available.

As the member indicates, the flu vaccine uptake was great for flu vaccine, but it's, I would say, far below what our goal will be for the COVID-19 vaccine. I think we will be looking to at least double, if not triple, that uptake. Therefore, that takes a lot of preparation so that, even for those people who are saying, "I want to wait a little more; I want to just see some more time" — there are clearly people who need some time.

I think that, if we look from here a couple of months forward, it will, in itself, give us the time to not only develop the communications and the tools, but to have those sort of more individual community-based engagement conversations and to watch the global uptake occur.

There will be concerns. We have already had concerns about allergic reactions. For instance, we heard about two people in Alaska having allergic reactions, and so these are not unexpected. If you vaccinate thousands of people, you will see people with allergic reactions. You will also see people with life events that follow having a vaccination. We need to make sure that the public is aware of post-marketing surveillance, for example, and what that means. It means that we have mechanisms at a national level, and also jurisdictional, to very actively follow people for side effects, for adverse effects, so that we have those mechanisms in place for that whole imperative of safety.

It's not just — do your studies and get the vaccine out there. It's a whole, continuous process that follows through implementation of vaccine so that people know that not only is

this a safe product, but that we have mechanisms in place to ensure the ongoing safety and we also have the ability to — for instance, we know how to immunize and we know how to treat allergic reactions. That's part of the competency built into an immunization provider — so that people are assured that we have as much capability, even with a new vaccine, to do this safely and to do it well.

I have said this before, but I do think that, in this territory, we know how to do this very well.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for the answer. It's true that the flu clinic at the Convention Centre was something to behold. I wasn't there during a busy time, but I can imagine that it would roll quite smoothly. I think, just to paraphrase what I think the witness was getting at — it was building confidence for folks, and wraparound — how once you receive the vaccination, to know that there was a wraparound process to make sure that you were okay. That's all part of the confidence building and getting people to buy into the idea that this isn't just about you or me, but it's about us; it's about the collective.

I often refer to my grandmother when I talk to people about why I would do this, and I spend time with seniors and immunocompromised children in my life.

Just to switch gears a bit, because I feel like — we are obviously in a pandemic that we know with COVID-19, but there is a secondary pandemic that is happening right now. I will go back even further.

In 2018, I was asking the chief medical officer of health to do releases when there might be a series of overdoses and whether they led to death or even just the action of overdose. At the time, there was a disagreement in the media where I said, "Let's do it" — and the officer said, "No, not yet." But that changed in 2019 when we saw an increase in deaths due to opioid overdoses, which has been a hard thing to watch in the community, and we know that it has only gotten worse in 2020. There has been a lot of information coming out from the CMOH office about making sure — safe practices, "Don't use alone", and things like that.

In September 2020, the Canadian Health minister was urging — or is urging — provincial and territorial ministers to establish a safe drug supply as a method of combatting the opioid crisis, and I just wanted to know if the CMOH agrees with this approach. If so, why? If not, why not?

Dr. Hanley: I thank the member for bringing up such an important issue that has come to light not just in the face of a pandemic, but preceding — as the member indicates — the pandemic by at least three years when we started to see the influx of fentanyl into the territory in 2016. It has taken a number of lives, and as the member says, it has taken a particularly tragic toll in 2020 as well. Although, fortunately, in the last few months, we seem not to have seen an opioid-related death, but just like COVID, we know that the risk is always there.

There have been a number of initiatives thanks to the work of not just my office, but the work of the department and the work of Blood Ties Four Directions. Some examples are upcoming. There will be what I would generally call "expansions" in harm reduction services throughout the

territory. This is a work in progress, including more capacity rurally for harm reduction services — and going along with the expansion of mental wellness capacity in the communities and substance and addictions counselling, but also the exemption process. There was a process where we were able to download, in a way, the Health Canada exemption process to allow for fentanyl drug testing in-territory — so to have that process as a jurisdiction rather than seeking Health Canada approval for each exemption. That allowed us a little bit more latitude for approving drug testing capacity — for example, the ability to do that with the outreach van in addition to the fixed site of Blood Ties Four Directions. So, there have been initiatives like that.

Of course, there have been more supports over the last few years to the Referred Care Clinic and the OATS — or the opioid agonist treatment service — and the bolstering of that service at the Referred Care Clinic which, again, has helped to improve opportunities for opioid agonist treatment for those who are addicted.

I do agree that a safer drug supply is one of those elements. Supervised drug consumption is another one of those elements. I think that we have to examine how each one plays out in our territory — I think that, following the rollout in other jurisdictions and then how we can adopt, and adapt to adopt, similar measures in our own jurisdiction. I think that, in concept, yes, I support safer drug supply. I don't think that, operationally, we're there yet. I think we have to learn more about how it actually works and how it would work within our health care system. But I do think that is one of the multi-faceted components — the protections that we should be striving for to prevent opioid overdose in our territory.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. I spent much of the time, when I was in the lower mainland — I have friends who work at locations like Insite and learning about what was being done there and how it was a safe supply and then it was a safe consumption site. I say "consumption", although it is an injection site, but in talking about more of our northern context, I have been told that I need to change my vocabulary from "injection" because, in Yukon, it's typically more an inhalant.

I wanted to know if the witness had opinions on safe consumption sites and whether that was something that his office is looking into.

Dr. Hanley: Another really important question. As I just referred to, I think that it is another one of those elements to consider. Yes, I do support — again, I support the concept. I think that we have evolved as a territory. If I had been asked, based on my collaborations with Blood Ties Four Directions, for instance, even as much as a few years ago, our sense was that the community was not ready for supervised consumption. There was such an expectation and atmosphere, I would say, of privacy around drug consumption that it wasn't seen to be acceptable to the community. So, I think we have to get to that point of feasibility, and I think that we are getting to where it does likely have a role to play.

The ministerial exemption process does allow not just for drug checking, but for supervised consumption. Again, I think that it's one of those things that we have already had

conversations about. I think it goes to: Where should that happen? How should it happen? Who should run it? A lot of those operational considerations — so I think it's something that does need further exploration and development, but that, in concept, yes — I think that there is a role.

It's always a question, in a very small place — how does it actually work? How is it staffed? Could it fit somewhere else? If so, what are the unintended or the possible unintended consequences? I do think that it's another direction that we've started conversations around and I think we need to continue.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. I think that there has been movement in Canada to try to remove the stigma of drug use because it's not so much when we're talking about folks who might be street-affected — because they are quite often experts in their chosen consumptions — but I think that the most startling numbers were that it was single men, upper middle-class, who were actually dying the most in southern Canada, because they were consuming alone. Removing the shame, talking about it, and normalizing it is important because then we will be able to have those bigger conversations.

I am just realizing that I am nearly at the end of our time here with the witness. I wanted to know if there was kind of a message that you wanted to direct outwards, whether we were talking about safe drug use or what the future of 2021 looks like.

Dr. Hanley: Yes, thank you for that opportunity. I mentioned this morning — that I think that the next few months are going to be both exciting and challenging. I think that the challenge will be to — as I was saying in my media update — maintain our vigilance with regard to COVID risk while we await that relief of the vaccine — but that the relief is not an instant relief. It is a relief that is going to potentially take months.

I don't know if it will take 12 to 18 months, but it will take months. I think that we need to look forward to — yes, relief, and yes, hope and optimism, but also a lot of repair. The recovery — whether that is economic recovery or recovery of well-being — is going to take time. We have to allow ourselves that time. I think that living through a pandemic — we all are taking a hit. It's a stressful and traumatizing experience. I think that, to some extent while we are in this suppressed life — where we are socially suppressed and unable to have the social relationships that we normally thrive in — we have to realize that it is a traumatic experience. It is an experience that is, to some extent, an experience of grief.

As we look forward to the solstice and the return of the light, the coming of a vaccine, and the restoration gradually of normalcy, we also have to remember to give ourselves that recovery time and build that into our lives, as a society — not just as people and families, but as a society.

I think that's one — if I'm thinking forward, that's what I'm thinking.

I also think it's good to go back to some of my opening comments, where — that's why I have always tried to emphasize the balance. The member brought up the opioid crisis, for instance, as an example of where we are seeing the potential impacts of restrictions — and that likely has played

out in the opioid crisis and in worsening the opioid crisis — whether that's here or elsewhere — and potentially in many other areas of substance use. As a society in Yukon predisposed to substance use, that's a concern for me. Again, it not only speaks to the need to always look to adjust that balance according to risk so that we aren't introducing unintended mental health stresses and all the potential chain of stresses that lead to other consequences — to loss of livelihood, to financial hardship, to domestic violence, to influence on crime —

This is why, always, our lens should be more than just COVID. It should definitely take COVID risk seriously — as we have always stressed and as I have always tried to stress — but always being cognizant of what else is in the balance here — whether we're talking about the importance of physical activity, of being outside, of enjoying the winter, of maximizing our social interactions in a safe way, of keeping music in our lives — of all those things that keep us thriving. That is going to help us in the recovery, and that's going to shorten and strengthen our recovery.

I think that what we do now is so important for how we can live the recovery through the end and post-pandemic.

Chair: Are there any further questions for the witness?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to — I note the time, so I wanted to just take a few minutes to say to Dr. Hanley: Thank you for your time today and thank you for keeping Yukon safe. I know that we all appreciate all the great work that you are doing. I know that it has placed a heavy burden and takes a toll, and you are doing an exceptional job. I just wanted to say thank you so much. We absolutely appreciate everything that you have done for us and the guidance. We wouldn't be where we are in Yukon had it not been for you and your team — and, of course, Dr. Elliott — for leading us into a good place as we will accept the vaccines shortly in the coming weeks. We are all excited about that. So, I just wanted — before the day ends — to say thank you so much, on behalf of all of us.

Applause

Chair: Thank you very much for your appearance here today.

Witness excused

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

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report progress.

Also, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 8, a witness appeared before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled December 17, 2020:

34-3-61

Yukon state of the environment report 2020 – a report on environmental indicators (Frost)

34-3-62

Twenty-third Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees (December 17, 2020) (Adel)

The following legislative returns were tabled December 17, 2020:

34-3-62

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to general debate on Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — anticipated royalties for placer and quartz mining (Pillai)

34-3-63

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — staff working from home (Pillai)

34-3-64

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — Beaver River regional land use plan (Pillai)

34-3-65

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to a ministerial statement re: Mayo-McQuesten Transmission Line (Pillai)

34-3-66

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to a ministerial statement re: land development (Streicker)

The following document was filed December 17, 2020:

34-3-46

Review of duplication in Yukon mining regulation — June 2020 (Pillai)

The following written questions were tabled December 17, 2020

Written Question No. 24

Re: *Coroners Act* (Hanson)

Written Question No. 25

Re: legal aid services (Hanson)

Written Question No. 26

Re: women's halfway house (Hanson)

Written Question No. 27

Re: Department of Justice human resources (Hanson)

Written Question No. 28

Re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre (Hanson)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 83

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, December 21, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

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Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, December 21, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a matter regarding the Notice Paper. Motion No. 390, notice of which was given on Thursday, December 17, 2020, by the Member for Kluane, and Motion No. 394, notice of which was given on Thursday, December 17, 2020, by the Member for Lake Laberge, were not placed on today's Notice Paper as the motions were not in order as they sought an explanation on a matter.

The members may refer to my ruling of October 28, 2020, for further reasonings regarding these motions.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like my colleagues to help me in welcoming a number of very special guests here today for the tribute for Annie Smith. We have Annie's daughter Shirley Smith, Dianne Smith, Edith Baker, Judy Gingell, and Kathie Smith. We have Annie's brother, Alfie Fred, and his wife, Effie Njootli; we have Annie's granddaughters, Georgian Smith and Josephine Holloway; and we have Annie's great-granddaughter, Kalea Smarch; we have Annie's grandson, Rick Gingell; and we have the Chief of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Chief Doris Bill. We have a really special friend, Nicole Bauberger, here as well.

We have many folks who are listening in on the radio from Tourism and Culture, I know for sure, and other people for whom Annie was really special. I also want to welcome Luke Campbell from the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

Thank you all for being here today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors? Tributes?

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Annie Smith

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government and the New Democratic Party to pay tribute to an extraordinary Yukoner and the eldest member of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation — the late Annie Smith. Gaanaxteidí Sháax wusateeyín, a woman of the Gaanaxteidí clan, was born on July 12, 1925, in a Yukon

River fishing village that was located on the east side of what is now called Schwatka Lake. Annie's parents were Suzie Fred, née Slim, Gaanaxteidí of Marsh Lake, and Casey Fred, Daklaweidi, belonging to Sháwshe/Dalton Post/Neskataheen.

Annie had three sisters and four brothers. To her surviving sister and brother and her surviving children — Judy, Shirley, Dianne, Edith, Kathy, Rosemarie, and John — and her many nieces and nephews, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren, Annie was the family's Gaanaxteidí matriarch. Her life's journey of 95 years was Haa Kusteeyí, the Tlingit way, which she walked alongside her Christian pathway.

As a young girl, Annie moved around the southern Yukon a great deal. She spent time in the villages of Marsh Lake, Carcross, Champagne, and Klukshu, where she received her only summer of formal schooling. When growing up, Annie's parents taught her how to fish, hunt, and trap. Summers were spent at fish camps as well as picking berries, tanning hides, and sewing.

Annie's life spans a period of tremendous change in the Yukon, from snowshoes to satellites. Throughout her lifetime, she lived during a time when the train still ran to Whitehorse. She witnessed riverboats on the Yukon waterways, experienced a changing economy as a result of the construction of the Alaska Highway, lived through the Second World War, and supported her husband Johnny's efforts for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation to achieve self-government.

Although Annie's heritage is Tlingit, her customs and traditional knowledge were influenced by Southern Tutchone teachings and values because of her deep connection with the Champagne Aishihik people, for it was the Champagne Aishihik people who raised Annie's father, Casey Fred. These connections gave her many lifelong friendships.

Annie met and married her husband, Johnny Smith, in Whitehorse during 1947. He was a son of Kitty Smith from Marsh Lake and Chief Billy Smith, born in Dyea, Alaska. Together, the couple raised 10 children. In addition to Annie's surviving children, she is predeceased by her daughters Alice, Leslie, and Betsy. As a couple, Annie and Johnny spent a great deal of time in Robinson and moved to Whitehorse so that their children could attend school. Annie and Johnny eventually moved to the Kwanlin Dün old village in 1956 and moved to the current Kwanlin Dün First Nation community in McIntyre in the mid-1980s.

At a very young age, Annie was taught by her mother and aunts how to sew and do beadwork. In the summer of 1939, at the age of 14, Annie sold her first handmade dolls to tourists in Carcross. She liked to tell the story of selling her moccasins for less than \$1 a pair, which was very good money at the time. As Annie became an accomplished sewer, she supported her family with her exceptional sewing for most of her life. Through each and every significant family milestone — graduations, weddings, her daughter Judy's appointment as Commissioner of the Yukon — Annie was sure to have a work of art for the honouree to wear for just that occasion.

Annie was renowned for being a natural and dedicated teacher. She welcomed everyone interested in learning, starting

them off, of course, with a box of patterns to trace while they watched her do beadwork and assemble slippers. This learning sometimes took place in organized events, schools, and cultural camps, but just as often around her table at home.

Annie and her family also opened their Marsh Lake camp for learning and healing, welcoming countless students, friends, visitors, family members, and so many more. She encouraged others to be self-sufficient and said that, if you learn to sew, you would always be able to support yourself. She loved telling younger sewers how she bought her first car with proceeds from her sewing.

Annie Smith was a pillar of the Yukon indigenous sewing and beading community. Her creations, made from her own home-tanned hides and handmade sinew, included moosehide jackets, vests, shirts, mukluks, slippers, mitts, gloves, purses, booties, souvenirs, and dolls. They can all be found in collections and homes throughout the Yukon, Canada, and abroad. We are fortunate to have three of Annie's works in the Yukon permanent art collection — a gopher hat and two of her very beautiful dolls. These exquisite items will proudly tell all future generations of Annie's skills and incredible contribution to Yukon's life.

Annie's accomplishments were formally recognized in 2012 when she received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. She was again recognized in 2016 when Yukon hosted a meeting of the Council of the Federation. Annie and her family were asked to make moccasins for each of our Canadian Premiers.

But Annie's legacy is perhaps most meaningfully reflected in the skills, creativity, and inspiration that she passed on to younger generations of beaders and sewers throughout the Yukon, Alaska, and northern BC. Warm, welcoming, and kind, she had a gift for making people feel special. Living a traditional lifestyle, she valued her connections with the land and offered healing in her teachings. Annie's legacy will continue on in the amazing gifts of knowledge, cultural ways, and stories that she passed on, especially to her beautiful family.

Beyond her many cultural and artistic contributions, she was a tremendously giving and loving person. She will be remembered by those who learned so much from her as they continue to practise what she taught them and pass it on again to the next generation.

I ask all the members of the House to join me today in paying tribute to this truly legendary Yukoner. On behalf of the Government of Yukon, I extend our heartfelt condolences to Annie's family and many friends and, of course, the whole Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

Tsu woosh yéi gaxtoostéen. We will see each other again.
Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the amazing life of Annie Smith. Annie was born in 1925. Imagine what she must have seen and experienced during that time frame.

Her parents were Suzie and Casey Fred. Along with her siblings, Annie grew and played along the Yukon River around

the area of Schwatka Lake. During those early years, all the First Nation families lived from the land — hunting, fishing, drying, and smoking their bounty as well as herb and berry picking. They had the ability to use everything provided to them and they lived well. All had a connection to the water, so the river was important to the families to sustain their way of life.

The people were nomadic and moved with the seasons around the Southern Lakes region. As she grew into a young woman, Annie learned to bead and sew from her mothers and grandmothers. Once summer and fall gathering and preserving for long winters were complete, they spent hours making clothing, and the young women became skilled at their crafts.

At the age of 14, she sold that first doll to a tourist in Carcross, and she was hooked. Through her hard work, her legacy continued as she sewed and beaded her way into the history books with beautiful superior products. Annie married Johnny Smith and they were together for 63 years. They taught their many children independence and instilled a great work ethic. Johnny was the chief of the Whitehorse Indian Band for many years, and she was by his side through it all. The major change was moving the Whitehorse Indian village from the industrial area to the current Kwanlin Dün First Nation area in the McIntyre subdivision.

Annie was thrilled for her people when the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre opened and she saw the link back to the river again. Before Johnny passed, together as teachers, they shared so much of their knowledge to schools, cultural camps, and events. Annie was a mainstay at every Adäka Festival since it began in 2011.

On March 21, 2013, then-Premier and Finance minister Darrell Pasloski was preparing to present his budget speech. It is a tradition in every parliament and legislative assembly to wear a new pair of shoes when a new budget is given. He did a true Yukon thing. He purchased a new pair of home-tanned caribou and moose mukluks trimmed with beaver from Annie Smith. He described her as "an icon of Yukon's First Nation sewing and beading community". She, along with some family members, were present in the gallery that day.

Annie spent her final days at home in Whistle Bend Place. At age 95, she left us quietly on Sunday, November 8, 2020. She had handed down her rich traditional knowledge to family, friends, and young people. She will be missed. We offer sincere condolences to her family. Mahsi' cho.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling: *Report of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly — Official Opposition and Third Party Membership of the Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation.*

In addition, the Chair has for tabling: *Report of the Chief Electoral Officer to the Legislative Assembly — An Update on Territorial Election Readiness.*

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling a legislative return related to matters outstanding from discussions related to the appearance of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board chair, president, and CEO from the Committee of the Whole on November 10, 2020.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling some statistics on general debate on supplementary budgets.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 303: *Act to Amend the Taxpayer Protection Act (2020)*— Introduction and First Reading

Mr. Cathers: I move that Bill No. 303, entitled *Act to Amend the Taxpayer Protection Act (2020)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge that Bill No. 303, entitled *Act to Amend the Taxpayer Protection Act (2020)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

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

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to provide a public update on the status of the Shallow Bay area zoning initiative, including expected timelines for completion, by January 15, 2021.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to include the provision of in-centre hemodialysis when implementing the *Putting People First* recommendations.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon Energy Corporation's 10-year renewable electricity plan

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Last week, I announced our new plan for a grid-scale battery that will be the largest battery project in the north and one of the largest in Canada. The battery project is part of a broader framework that aims to maximize the use of renewable electricity. Today I am pleased to endorse Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable electricity plan that the Energy

Corporation finalized earlier this month. As Yukoners, we take pride in our energy self-sufficiency. We are so fortunate that most of our electricity comes from renewable sources, but with Yukon's increasing population and high peak energy demands, we must expand our renewable electricity sources.

Strategies like the 10-year plan will allow us to keep up with rising consumption and will also help us to meet the 97-percent renewable electricity goal in *Our Clean Future*, our government's climate change, energy, and green economy strategy for the territory. New supply projects to support this goal include: battery storage, supporting green independent power producers, energy conservation initiatives, enhanced storage capacity, and hydro upgrades.

In close partnership with First Nation governments and development corporations, Yukon Energy's plan represents a bold vision for our territory's sustainability goals and will help to reduce Yukon's carbon emissions.

The 10-year renewable electricity plan identifies three important new infrastructure projects that will address the growing demands for clean electricity in the Yukon: the planned Atlin hydro expansion project, the potential new pump storage facility at Moon Lake, and the upgrade to the Southern Lakes transmission network. The project identified in the 10-year plan will promote energy conservation, maximize the amount of renewable power generated at existing hydro facilities, connect new sources of First Nation-owned renewables to the grid, store and use excess renewable power generated in the summer to decrease dependency on fossil fuels during the winter, and open new markets for surplus renewable electricity generated during the summer. They will also help to ensure that electricity prices stay affordable for Yukoners.

I want to thank the Yukon Energy Corporation board of directors, First Nation governments, and passionate Yukoners for their collaborative efforts on the 10-year renewable electricity plan. Renewable energy is a crucial step in keeping our economy strong and resilient as well as ensuring that we achieve the objectives set out in the *Our Clean Future* strategy.

I look forward to creating a more sustainable energy future for the territory together.

Mr. Kent: Over the past several months, we have consistently raised concerns with the approach this Liberal government is taking with our energy infrastructure. Two years ago, they made a decision to cancel the construction of a new 20-megawatt generation facility here in Whitehorse. Instead, they chose to rent diesel generators for the next decade.

We know from the Yukon Energy Corporation's material that this was not fiscally prudent. In their "what we heard" documents from 2019, the corporation clearly acknowledges that rentals are more expensive than owning. Then, last week, the CEO of the Yukon Energy Corporation confirmed that. He said — and I quote: "If you take it over the full lifespan that the data supports — what we said in the response is that the rental option is more expensive than greenfield."

On top of being more expensive, it also means that the money that we spend on those rentals flows directly out of the territory. Owning the assets ourselves would at least mean that

we would be investing in Yukoners. Now we're seeing the results of those decisions. Currently, the Yukon Utilities Board is reviewing a general rate application that will increase Yukoners' power bills.

On Monday of last week, the YUB referenced an increase of 17.1 percent. On Tuesday, we asked the CEO of the Yukon Energy Corporation for clarification about the amount of increase. Then on Wednesday, we asked the minister and he wasn't able to answer. On Thursday, we issued a written request for clarification. We were happy to finally get a clarification from the corporation that Yukoners' power rates would be going up by 11.5 percent, but we were a bit surprised that the minister himself wasn't able to answer that question. After all, it was the minister who proudly announced in this House by way of a ministerial statement that Yukoners' power rates were going up. This is of course on top of the 12-percent increase announced last year.

What this GRA shows is that Liberals' decision-making on this issue has consequences — and in this case, those consequences are higher power bills for our residents. We are happy to see the government looking at longer term renewable options to support our power needs, but we have some questions about some of the projects.

First of all, it seems extremely optimistic that some of these projects will be completed in 10 years or less. For instance, the Moon Lake hydro project seems to be at least eight to 10 years away. That's assuming that there are no delays in permitting, design, or development. It comes at a significant cost — hundreds of millions of dollars. So, it would be helpful if the minister could confirm that this project is why the Liberals increased our debt cap. Are the Liberals going to be asking Yukon taxpayers to borrow hundreds of millions of dollars for this project?

Also, we would like for him to elaborate on the plans in the meantime. How will we make up the generation gap between our forecasted load growth and our capacity? It seems that the only answer that this government is willing to look at is renting more diesels. In fact, they are looking at 12 and a half megawatts of diesel capacity in this plan as well.

We also note that the plan contemplates a 10-megawatt greenfield diesel generator in Takhini in the potential future resource options on page 48. So, we would like the minister to explain the status of that project when he gets a chance.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we are happy that there are portfolios of renewable energy options that lie ahead for Yukon, but many of those are quite a ways off, and in the meantime, the Liberals' plan is to continue to rent diesel generators from the south to meet the needs of our territory. We don't think that makes sense for our economy, our environment, or for our ratepayers.

Ms. White: In the years that I've been in this Chamber, we've had more than one future-looking energy plan presented and we've seen at least one dropped by the wayside. In the last nine-plus years, we — along with many others — have gone to meetings and presentations that have covered a vast array of

topics focused on energy over the years, but we have seen very little progress on completed actions.

As a territory, we've been standing at the edge of an energy cliff for far too long, so now is a good time as any to move away from that edge. We truly believe that energy planning needs to withstand four-year election cycles. For the sake of the generations of Yukoners to come, we fervently hope that the government — no matter who is in power — is seriously committed to implementing this latest plan. We are hopeful that, after years of disappointments in the energy file and continued years of hard work by those tasked to lead us forward, finally there is a plan that will go the distance.

Having a plan to maximize our storage capacity and seasonal generation is a positive thing, but again, without the follow-through, we will be back at square one.

Mr. Speaker, I do not need to remind this House that we unanimously agreed that we are in the midst of a climate crisis. We did not do that in isolation. We joined in solidarity with the voices of Yukon youth to remind us that, while we will die of old age, they will die of climate change. We did it in solidarity with First Nations and municipal governments. Our words must not ring hollow.

The Yukon NDP will continue to support serious initiatives that will see the Yukon have a combination of hydro, wind, solar, and storage solutions to displace our dependence on fossil-fuel generation.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I appreciate the comments from the Leader of the Third Party. I am sorry to share with her that I think the words are absolutely ringing hollow with the folks sitting next to her.

Going through this, we have looked a number of things that we have discussed over the last little while. First of all, just to set the record straight, the rentals that we have had in place are a backup source of energy. We had the president of the Yukon Energy Corporation come in. Folks from the Yukon Party had the opportunity to ask that question, and it was clarified. Again, just for the record, we should probably have the right information out.

There was a conversation about a brand new diesel plant versus retrofit. I think that the words that were used to illustrate the approach from the Yukon Party was "apples and oranges" from the CEO.

On the rate question, the member opposite asked the question — and the CEO said that he would get back within a day. The next day, less than 24 hours later, I was asked the question. I made that commitment. Within 48 hours, I had the question. What had happened is that, in the interim, the Yukon Party put out a press release. What we saw for the first time — I have never seen this — was the absolutely unprecedented approach where the Yukon Energy Corporation actually came out and had to correct misinformation from the Yukon Party. They came out and said, "No, that's wrong", and so they put a statement out to do that. Again, seeing an independent corporation having to do that really says a lot about what we have had happen here over the last 44 days.

I think that the projects that are being worked on between the Yukon Development Corporation to support Yukon Energy Corporation — whether it be the construction of our one-megawatt project on the north Klondike Highway, in conjunction with the private sector, construction of small-scale solar projects throughout Whitehorse, feasibility work for solar projects in Watson Lake, design work for the Beaver Creek solar project, feasibility work for a combined solar and wind project in Pelly Crossing, feasibility work on the North Fork — all of those projects, as well as the other three main components that we have talked about, really show good progress.

We are working with each one of those communities. They are leading these processes. We are providing human and financial capital where necessary.

I want to thank folks. In a period of 48 months to get from “We are just going to build diesels” to independent power production policy in place — almost every community in the Yukon building their own renewable project — and then actually going back to the table and sitting down with First Nations, not like next generation hydro where \$4.1 million was just spent and evaporated quickly, but where we have that opportunity to sit down with folks and walk along with them so that they can look at self-reliance, self-determination, and provide us with clean energy.

We don’t have to look far back to understand. I think that even the new leader for the Yukon Party, when the last climate change plan was being built, actually took the emission targets right out of there. So, we kind of know where folks stand. We will leave it up to Yukoners, I guess, to see what they think about the decision-making here.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon First Nation procurement policy

Mr. Hassard: So, over the past week we have been raising concerns with the Liberals’ lack of consultation with the business community regarding their new First Nation procurement policy. Other than some high-level meetings with certain business organizations, it seems that no one from the actual business community has been consulted on the details of this new policy. The minister has said that one-on-one meetings would begin soon, but some contractors have asked what the point is of consulting on a policy that is already completed and approved.

Can the minister tell us: Is this actual consultation, and is he willing to go back and make changes to this policy as a result of these consultations? If he isn’t actually willing to make changes, why should businesses even bother providing input?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Well, Currie Dixon’s post-Peel, post-Bill S-6, Erin O’Toole-endorsing, Jason Kenney-loving conservative Yukon Party is asking questions about First Nation procurement. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if they support it, or not. I hope that we hear that fairly soon.

If the members opposite would like a briefing on First Nation procurement — a legitimate, sincere briefing on this document — I am happy to provide it.

I know that the procurement policy is a completion of a commitment to Yukon First Nations identified in self-government agreements. These are legally binding agreements signed between the Yukon government and First Nation governments. It wasn’t done by past governments — none of them.

In 1993, the UFA identified this as a commitment. Every subsequent final agreement included this commitment. This was not something invented by our government. It is a long-standing commitment that had been glossed over or outright ignored for decades.

This policy will strengthen Yukon companies in their bids for government contracts. It will work to keep dollars in the territory, and it will be to the benefit of all Yukoners in the years to come. We have worked on this policy for two years with First Nation governments. We have completed that work. We are now working with businesses to inform them about the policy in this living and breathing document, and we will continue to work with them through January and February.

Mr. Hassard: I’m happy to hear that the minister is offering up briefings because I think that he maybe should take that up himself. He could probably use it.

Another group that the Liberals forgot to consult is municipalities. Some municipalities are under the impression that capital projects that are funded by Yukon government will be subject to the First Nation procurement policy, even though they will ultimately be owned by the municipality.

Can the minister tell us if this new policy will apply to municipal infrastructure projects?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have, as I said last week — and you can go through the Blues, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Official Opposition can certainly go through the Blues and see the list of consultations and briefings that we’ve had with the business community and with other stakeholders. Those meetings are going to continue in the coming weeks and months. We have already had several interactions with business leaders and others in the community. Those are going to continue, because we support and absolutely have to get behind this policy. This has been decades in the making. We worked very closely with our First Nation partners over the last two years. This is a commitment that we made as a government, as a society, more than 20 years ago, and we’re fulfilling that obligation.

We thought that the Yukon Party might be against this procurement policy, and I’m not really sure what their position is. Despite Currie Dixon’s pledge to build a kinder, gentler conservative Yukon Party, it’s painfully evident that this is the same tired old party pushing a battered figurehead, Mr. Speaker, the old Yukon Party that sees First Nations as an obstacle to business and as an inconvenience — the party of Bill S-6, which was backhandedly introduced in the Senate, and the party of “pave the Peel”, which sought to subvert land use planning processes. I’m happy to talk about this going forward.

Mr. Hassard: It's pretty hard to form a position on something when you can't get the details out of this minister. I've asked questions and got absolutely no responses — just personal attacks against someone who is not even in this Assembly.

You know, Mr. Speaker, these questions wouldn't be necessary if the Liberal government had simply taken the time to meet with the affected stakeholders before the policy was actually signed and delivered. It seems that the Liberals have developed, approved, and are getting ready to implement a new First Nation procurement policy before many of the affected groups have even seen it. It's not consultation when you just tell someone how it's going to be.

Mr. Speaker, why did the Liberals wait until after the policy was finalized before they decided to consult with the affected stakeholders?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really have to take issue with the assertions of the Leader of Official Opposition. We did not wait, Mr. Speaker. I have said on the floor of this Legislature several times in the past week or so that we actually did meet with businesses and other stakeholders prior to this policy being endorsed and ratified by virtually every First Nation of the Yukon Forum just a couple of Fridays ago.

We did meet. We actually provided a draft of the policy — as a matter of fact, the same draft of the draft document that Cabinet has seen, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is frankly wrong.

Now the policy has now been ratified by the First Nations. We're very happy to have that done. Now that it has happened, we're working with our business community on informing them about the details of this policy and how it will work going forward. We've worked very, very hard on the procurement file for the last several years since we took office in 2016. We have endorsed and have worked with the business community to get all of the recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Panel in place within two years. We made that deadline and we're improving the definition and doing all the good work to try to keep as much work and as much money in the territory as possible.

This is the next phase of that implementation. We told the business community that there would be a First Nation procurement policy. We told First Nations that. We have delivered.

Question re: Early learning and childcare program

Mr. Kent: On December 10, the Network for Healthy Early Human Development — a local NGO that provides the partners for children program in Yukon — wrote to the Liberal government with concerns about their lack of involvement in changes to the programs the department offers.

The programs this group offers are aimed at supporting the healthy development of children under the age of 6 and provides supports in many areas of child development, parenting, and childcare. In their letter, they expressed concern and disappointment about the lack of consultation from the Liberal government. To quote from their letter: "... we are

surprised that our organization has not had involvement or consultation concerning this large-scale change..."

Can the minister tell us what changes the Liberals are making to these programs and why this organization was not consulted?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I would say with respect to early learning supports and early learning childcare is that we have expanded the scope of practice when it comes to supporting resources for childcare centres and opportunities for capacity development. If there is a specific letter that the member is referring to, I am not aware of the letter and it would be nice to see it so that I can appropriately respond, but I can speak to what we have in place with respect to early learning supports for all childcare centres across the Yukon.

Mr. Kent: I have a copy of the letter in my hand. It is dated December 10 and it was addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services. I am quite surprised that she hasn't even seen it, let alone considered a response. The copy list is quite extensive as well and included members from both opposition parties.

What I asked about was a lack of consultation with a partner. Yukoners are starting to get used to the Liberal government making decisions and then consulting with stakeholders afterwards, but we are also concerned about the growing trend of the Liberal government pushing out local NGOs and replacing them with government-run programs and services. In their letter, the group says — and I will quote again: "YG has always led us to believe that they have no desire to replace non-profits and their services and take over the private sector. Unfortunately, this is what appears to us to be happening."

Why is the Liberal government pushing out yet another NGO and trying to replace it with government-run programs?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to the specific letter, I still am not clear on the details of the letter, who the letter is from, and what it contains. I would be happy to go back and get the details and, of course, respond appropriately. We are doing all that we can to support our childcare centres. In fact, we have a pilot project to ensure that we have supports for non-government-supported childcare centres, such as Little Blue Daycare in Dawson City and the Watson Lake program.

We have expanded the direct operating grants, we put in supports for capacity development, and we are now looking for K to 4 supports. We have incorporated early learning development, we are working with our First Nation communities, we are looking to resiliency into the future, and we are ensuring that all children are supported.

I am very pleased about the efforts that we have put into the department. If there are any specific concerns that are brought to us, we certainly look forward to that coming to our attention so that we can respond appropriately. Thank you — and I would be happy to respond to the letter. That will go through its due course — as the member opposite knows, a letter arrives, it is case-managed, and it is responded to accordingly, and that is where we are.

Mr. Kent: I had assumed that the minister would have had a copy of this letter, but clearly she hasn't seen it, even

though it was sent on December 10. So, I will table it now, and hopefully the minister then has a copy of it.

Mr. Speaker, this is just the latest attack on the NGO sector by the Liberal government. Here is a telling quote from the letter that the minister hasn't seen from this important NGO — and I quote: “It was honestly always our understanding and belief that the Yukon Government was supportive of and respectful of the significant and extraordinary work completed by non-profit organizations in the Yukon. We are presently at a loss to understand in this instance why instead of supporting an organization already providing an exemplary service, a decision has been made to provide the same service and potentially being an end to our organization.”

We couldn't have said it better ourselves. So, what is the minister's response to this?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I think that is absolutely not the case. What we are working toward is universal childcare. We are working toward supporting all children in Yukon. In fact, we have put into place a program, working with our indigenous partners and our First Nation childcare centres, called “Honouring Connections”. It is an opportunity to work with our communities, that have never been supported historically — to put on the record.

We have early learning childcare — a universal extension of our early learning childcare agreement, which we worked on. We will continue to ensure supports. We have no intention whatsoever to take over and operate childcare centres. We have every opportunity to support all children in the Yukon.

With respect to the letter — that is being caseworked through the department. The specifics around that — I would certainly be happy to respond. The members opposite certainly haven't had that as a priority in their long history past. We have made every effort, and we will continue to do that to ensure that every child in the Yukon is well-supported, that all families are supported, and that we work with our operating childcare centres — as we have — and we will continue to do that into the future.

Question re: Alaska-to-Alberta railway

Ms. White: The Alaska-to-Alberta railway, also known as A2A, is a proposed railway running from Fort McMurray in Alberta to Delta Junction in Alaska.

Alberta's Premier, Jason Kenney, has aggressively promoted the railway as an alternative to running a pipeline from his province through British Columbia and bringing oil to the coast, but calling A2A a “railway” or a “corridor project” is greenwashing. A2A is essentially a pipeline on a rail system. It conveniently avoids any controversy in British Columbia by cutting through Yukon.

As A2A begins consulting with people along the planned route, we ask on behalf of Yukoners: Is this government in favour of the Alaska-to-Alberta railway through Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The Alaska-to-Alberta railway — of course, an ambitious project. It's in the early stages and has not been at the point of evaluation or assessment, which is key to understanding the magnitude of the project and even what the route is.

The presidential permit is one step on the regulatory path. It's an administrative approval for American infrastructure crossing an international border. At this point — and what we've said publicly is — we know that there is a proposed route. We've had the proponents reach out to us at the Department of Economic Development. We've urged them, in all cases, to speak to any community that would potentially be affected, understand the environmental assessment process, understand the land planning process, and also look back at really good work that was done previously in the Department of Economic Development and by consultants here in the Yukon around other routes — one being a route that is parallel to the Alaska Highway.

We're looking forward to seeing what this proposal brings. I think that it would be a bit early to identify support for something when you don't know what the route is yet or even what the magnitude is.

As the member opposite talked about greenwashing, there are other conversations that have occurred talking about agricultural products, mining export, as well as other goods and services.

Ms. White: Unfortunately, there was no clear message there as to whether the government was in support or not.

The Premier's mandate letter to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources directs him to promote oil and gas development in Yukon. As we hear about A2A ramping up their lobbying effort, we have to wonder: Is this what the Premier meant in his mandate letter?

Can the Premier clarify whether the A2A railway is the kind of project that he believes the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources should promote? Has his government taken steps to help the project move forward?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, yes, it's identified in my mandate letter. What we've done, over the last number of years, is work with the northern chiefs table, which is primarily led by the voice of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation on anything that has happened outside of the Whitehorse Trough.

The member opposite would know that my other interaction is — I don't want to get in trouble with the Minister of Justice, but it's a pretty big lawsuit — in the billions — and my name is on it because we haven't let anybody go and frack. I think that this has kind of been our position for the most part on oil and gas.

When it comes to the A2A, I think that it would be premature to say you either support or don't support. You want to know where it's going to go; you want to know what it's going to carry. There's a commitment that it would be almost majority First Nation-owned. We haven't seen that business model put together. I think that there are a number of things.

The members opposite — maybe from the NDP's perspective, that's enough information to say that you're for or against something. Over here, I think that it's important to actually see the entire plan and maybe even see the submission to the environmental assessment process.

Ms. White: So, as Yukon considers its commitments to climate change, it also needs to consider its role as a leader for climate action. We are isolated, but we're not independent of

the states, provinces, and territories that surround us. We don't live on this planet alone. That's why it's important to look at the impact of the A2A rail on everyone. Promoting the A2A rail is promoting oil and gas development on a global scale. Projects like this one have a massive impact on our climate, our environment, and our planet. A railway from Fort McMurray, Alberta to the Alaskan coast is not meant to transport Santa's Christmas presents. Transporting oil from Alberta is the only way this project can see the light of day.

So, will the Premier simply state that large-scale oil projects like the A2A rail don't have a place in Yukon's future?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, the question that I pose when I'm thinking about this project is — you're absolutely correct. We do have a responsibility to our climate change plan. We know that the second biggest contributor to our emissions is transportation. I think that, when you take into consideration

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Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pillai: — first from my colleague who knows best — so, those are the things that I'm taking into consideration. What goods are being transferred? What type of rail is this? Would this be able to reduce emissions in the north? These are all a number of questions that we want to be able to get the answers for. I think that is what is going to lead us to be able to make a judgment call on it.

Again, fun politics by the NDP on this one — but let's see what the project is; let's see where it's going; let's see who owns it; let's see what it's carrying; and let's see what it does to the overall emission effects here in the Yukon as well as across North America. Then we can make a judgment call.

Question re: Supportive housing for women and children

Ms. Hanson: Some of the most vulnerable in our communities have been hit hard by the pandemic. Some women are stuck at home with their abuser for a variety of reasons with few options. By October of this year, Kaushee's Place was reporting that they had reached 115-percent capacity. Kaushee's Place's capacity has been reduced from 19 to 10 beds due to COVID, increasing a demand for hotel rooms at a time when many hotels remain closed.

Hotel rooms might be adequate for the short term but are not even close to the same as staff-supported housing in a secure building.

Can the minister explain what next steps are being taken to provide supportive and safe housing for women and children trying to escape violence in the home?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm certainly aware that, in the middle of the pandemic, we have some major challenges with respect to accommodations, and Kaushee's is no different from any of our shelters or support networks. We have provided supports through case management to all of the clients and we are working very closely with the Women's Directorate. We are currently looking at a partnership arrangement for an additional shelter here in Yukon. We are doing that in collaboration with the Yukon Housing Corporation, Health and Social Services, the Women's Directorate, and partners in our community. We

have a project on the horizon that we hope to move along very quickly.

We are working on addressing the long-term pressures, but in the meantime, the department is working very closely with our partners through the Women's Directorate and through the client service agencies to ensure that women are supported and that we have the right wraparound supports and services. We absolutely agree that it is imminent and necessary that we provide the services. We will certainly work to do better and ensure that supports are there to support all women who are fleeing violence.

Ms. Hanson: Christmas is also imminent. With Christmas comes an increase in violence. It's not just Whitehorse experiencing increases in violence, Mr. Speaker. The Dawson City Women's Shelter is also seeing a 50-percent rise in calls to the shelter and more women dropping in for advice and assistance in creating a safety plan. Both shelters report that some of the incidents of violence have taken more extreme forms.

On top of all of this comes a report from Statistics Canada reporting that Yukon in 2018, before the pandemic, had the highest assault rates in the north. Fifty percent of women reported experiencing sexual assault. Red flags should be waving when you combine this report and the current state of women's shelters during this pandemic.

Can the minister tell this House how women fleeing violence will be supported now when they have no option but to stay in a hotel?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I can advise is that — as I indicated — we are working with our partners. What is really important to note is that we have partnerships in every one of our communities. We are working very closely to ensure that we have safe houses and safe shelters in each of our communities. We continue to take steps to address housing and services around shelters — particularly in the communities that don't have shelters. So, that requires us then to work with our indigenous partners, given that most of our communities are indigenous and have some huge components and responsibilities.

We are working on ensuring that we have supports. We do that through consultation and engagement with our partners. Our long-term priority is to get a shelter here in the city and we are doing that with our partners. With regard to continued efforts to address housing and housing with social supports, we have efforts going forward in terms of ensuring that we have housing navigators and supports in place for women fleeing violence. We are working very closely with the Women's Directorate as well to ensure that all women are supported, especially now as we come up to the Christmas season.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about long term; I am talking about now. The numbers of women and children experiencing violence in the home had been rising well before COVID became part of the reality faced today. Our numbers are not going down. We have seen great programs like the sexualized assault response team. Unfortunately, the rollout of this program has been slowed by COVID-19. We were honoured to witness the signing of the *Changing the Story* to

Upholding Dignity and Justice. These are important initiatives and we applaud them, but they need to be matched with an increase in resources for front-line organizations.

Directors from the shelters and the Yukon Status of Women have called for more housing, additional shelters, and an indigenous-led low-barrier option. Will the minister answer the clear call from Yukon women's shelters for immediate additional support?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We are painfully aware of the rates of violence in our communities. I have stated before that in the north we have three times higher rates of violence — whether it's domestic or sexualized assault — and three times higher yet if you are an indigenous woman. I know that our Minister of Health and Social Services has worked very closely and very hard with the shelters, and those funding streams come through the Department of Health and Social Services.

I know that the member opposite has mentioned the sexualized assault response team, which we have put into action in March 2020. This includes a number of new measures — a 24-hour, confidential, toll-free Yukon-wide support system. I won't go into all the details. I have gone over this previously in Committee of the Whole during our debate there. But I do want to say also that we are working closely in all of the shelters in the Yukon, and all of the shelters in Yukon have received additional dollars through Women and Gender Equality at the federal level to help support additional costs. We are continuing to work with them. There is a new federal fund that was just announced and our shelters will be receiving additional funds for additional costs as a result of COVID-19.

Question re: Seniors' costs for long-term care and camping fees

Ms. McLeod: Last Thursday — a week before Christmas — the Liberals quietly passed an order-in-council that raised the rates for Yukoners living in long-term care. Starting in a few weeks, the daily rate for long-term care facilities in the territory will go from \$35 to \$40. While an extra \$5 per night might not seem like much, that works out to an extra \$150 over 30 days. They introduced a new monthly rate of \$1,217.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why the Liberals are hiking long-term care fees just before Christmas?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With regard to the care fees for our seniors, what I can advise is that we still have the lowest rates in the country. We provide services to seniors 24 hours a day. We have nurses on staff. We have direct access to physicians. We have care facilities that allow us to provide essential services and necessary supports.

With regard to the *Putting People First* recommendations — one of the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report was to look at and assess the long-term care facilities. We have done that and one of the recommendations out of that was to look at ensuring that we provide all the supports that are required for seniors. At the same time, we need to balance the supports and ensure that we have long term — that the fees of course need to become aligned with the services — appreciating that we still have the lowest rates in the country.

The \$5 rate increase will come into effect in January, not before Christmas.

Ms. McLeod: When private sector landlords impose a rent increase, they are required by law to give three months' notice to the tenant. The order-in-council was issued on December 17, with the increase taking effect on January 1. That's just 14 days' notice, Mr. Speaker. We have yet to even see a public announcement about this rate increase. It seems like the Liberals were hoping that this lump of coal would go unnoticed.

Why did the Liberals wait until the week before Christmas to announce this rate increase for seniors and residents in long-term care?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The notice didn't just go out. The notice went out in the beginning of November — the first of November, in fact. The new rate starts in January. The monthly rate was requested by the seniors. For the record, the standard monthly rate, as was previously noted, was not something that was working for the seniors. Now there is an average rate that was requested by the seniors.

The note from the member opposite — I want to just suggest to the member opposite that we should perhaps have a look at the whole package and what is encompassed in the \$35. It covers all seniors' three meals a day. It covers medical supports and all essential critical supports that a senior might require during their time and their stay in the long-term care facilities.

I would suggest that, if there are any specific concerns from seniors, we would be happy to have a talk with the families. Of course — as I indicated — we certainly do not want to pose any hardships on any of our seniors; however, it is still the lowest rate in the country and we worked directly with the residents to ensure that we took measures that they've requested which is the monthly rates.

Ms. McLeod: As we know, the majority of long-term care residents are seniors and many of them are on fixed incomes. Any increase in their monthly expenses affects them.

This announcement is on the heels of the Liberals' increase of camping fees for seniors as well. At least the Liberals gave the seniors a year's notice on the camping fees. It seems like the Liberals are waging a war on the pocketbooks of seniors, Mr. Speaker.

Why are the Liberals targeting seniors for all of their rate increases?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would say that \$40 a day is one of the lowest rates in the country — appreciating that the long-term care homes are publicly subsidized services and that pressure on seniors and forcing seniors to pay the full amount is not appropriate — I certainly acknowledge that.

The aging-in-place submission that the seniors put together — over 1,200 seniors submitted. Their proposals and recommendations and the augmentation of services and supports to seniors across the Yukon — I think that has provided many opportunities for us to work with seniors to ease their burden — the home first initiatives, working on the re-enablement unit at the Thomson Centre, ensuring that we have the necessary supports through Yukon Housing Corporation to

make alterations and adjustments to their homes so they can stay at home longer and not go into a long-term care home. We have provided many, many other alternative supports in terms of specialized supports and services that we brought into the communities. We have palliative care now in all of our communities to allow seniors to age well at home — of course, end-of-life services, home supports in our communities — so lots of supports to seniors in all of our communities.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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 (Mr. Adel): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 205: *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Environment — *continued*

Ms. White: Welcome back to the official and the minister. I just have one last question — a follow-up to a question I asked on November 24.

When will the participants of the Youth Panel on Climate Change be announced?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. I welcome my deputy minister, John Bailey, here today. With regard to the youth panel, it's a very exciting opportunity for us to engage with youth in terms of

creating a Youth Panel on Climate Change as part of *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*. The youth panel will include broad and diverse membership from across the territory. That broad distribution went out and expressions of interest came forward. I'm very excited to say that we have had a resounding number of individuals who had applied. It's a huge opportunity for us to look at working with youth and empowering our younger generations to contribute to policy decisions and enabling actions within our communities.

The application deadline was October 27. We received over 50 applications from across the territory. The selection committee — with representation from Government of Yukon, BYTE, and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society — reviewed the applications.

Where are we with regard to the applications? All of the applicants have been notified — those that were successful on the panel. Public announcements will be made once consent forms are signed. That will be after the inaugural meeting in the new year. I'm looking forward to that exciting new venture for Yukon.

Ms. White: Just to seek clarification on what the minister said — on November 24, she said, "We are happy to say that we are going to go through that exercise and to the selection and make the announcement in December."

Am I to understand that the announcement won't be made of who those panelists are until the new year?

Hon. Ms. Frost: That's exactly what I said, but in order for the announcements to be made, of course, the consent forms have to be signed — recognizing and appreciating that the individuals have to have consent forms signed by their parents. Some of them are teens. Maybe the member opposite would appreciate that the youth who have stepped forward are excited to participate; however, we do need to have consent.

Once we have all of the consent forms signed and endorsed, we will quickly move forward. We are doing that in collaboration with our partners — so with BYTE and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. In this particular instance, we have had representation from across the Yukon. We are so very excited about that. We'll work through the Executive Council Office where the youth panel resides. We will do that with the Department of Environment.

We are working also in collaboration with the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Assembly of First Nations to coordinate the panel with their fellowship. We want to make sure that we maximize the opportunities in ensuring that we don't have duplication of efforts. There was a little bit more time required to ensure that this work was done appropriately and, of course, protecting the interests and ensuring that youth were supported by their respective parents.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*?

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all

lines in Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: Ms. White has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Deputy Chair: We do not have unanimous consent.

We will continue with line-by-line debate.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On COVID-19 Response

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to take a few minutes to speak to the operation and maintenance budget specific to our supplementary request. The increase in the operation and maintenance budget is as a result of increases related to COVID-19 responses and additional front-line personnel contract increases.

I would like to speak a bit about the valuable work that the Department of Environment contributed to the COVID-19 responses — why the supplementary we see before us is here and specifically what it speaks to. Also, during the early discussions on the main estimates with regard to the Department of Environment, the responsibility to safeguard our land, air, fish, wildlife, and water is not taken lightly and it is done in partnership with First Nations, Inuvialuit, and other governments.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: The minister doesn't seem to be speaking to the line item. It seems more like a filibuster to avoid getting to the next department. Her comments do not seem to be relevant to the line item that is currently under review.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I heard the minister talking about was the O&M line item, which is what I believe we are debating right now. I believe that she is talking about work that has happened this year, under the supplementary budget, on the operation and maintenance budget line item.

Deputy Chair's statement

Deputy Chair: I am just going to have to review what is going on before I make any judgment on that and before I come back to the House with an appropriate response.

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to operation and maintenance and the Department of Environment, the supplementary before us speaks about the increase to operation and maintenance, where that results from, and the priorities for the Department of Environment with regard to safeguarding our land, air, fish, wildlife, and water. It is not taken lightly and it is done in partnership with our First Nation partners, the

Inuvialuit, and other governments, as well as many organizations and citizens. These are still the obligations of the department. Despite the fact that we have a supplementary before us for COVID does not deter or does not prevent us from still doing the good work of the Department of Environment to ensure that we focus on maintaining biological diversity and upholding the principles of conservation so that all Yukoners can contribute and can use the land for harvesting and for cultural, recreational, and economic purposes. These are the fundamental principles and objectives of the department. The overview that was put forward on the mains in the spring was to address that.

Of course, there was an adjustment made to the budget to reflect the requirements to support COVID. Of course, in the 2020-21 mains we saw approximately \$46.8 million in the budget, which covered a number of things. Those obligations were still required for us to fulfill the duties of the department, in terms of delivery of programs and services.

What I would like to do is talk a little bit about that, because what happens during the operation and maintenance requirements of the department — as we looked at COVID, we still had some huge underlying responsibilities of the department.

The underlying responsibilities of the department covered a number of responsibilities. It speaks about the workforce. To undertake the mandate of the department, we must attract a highly skilled and diverse workforce. The department is home to scientists, biologists, technologists, planners, conservation and compliance officers, policy advisors, and administrators who inspire and engage with other environmental stewards and our partners. This holds true as we look at the supplementary budget and the requirements for us to make the adjustments. This entails and highlights what we have within the department. The Member for Kluane would be very well aware of all of these responsibilities as the former Environment minister.

Focus on maintaining a diverse staffing complement that allows our objectives to be achieved is for the benefit of all Yukoners. The Human Resources branch has been focused on creating a barrier-free recruitment process to increase aboriginal representation and diversity. A total of 59 percent of the department's budget expenses, \$25.4 million, is for salaries and benefits and includes our obligation under the collective agreement.

The important thing to note in that statement is that, as we embarked on our journey through COVID — and the immense pressures that Yukon saw, in particular the Department of Environment — we certainly had to respond appropriately. It's important to note that the human resource capacity and the diversity of the staff had to be adjusted. A lot of our staff complements fall under the collective agreements. Working from home — and the opportunities for us to look at implementing the workplace and adjusting the spaces within the office and the environment in which the individuals are required to work and deliver their obligations.

So, staff returning — the plan around safe spaces in the workplaces, safe places in the field, looking at the overtime required, looking at parks strategies and the requirement of

parks staff, which is covered under the supplementary budget — so, acknowledging the department's unwavering commitment and professionalism during outreach, education, and delivery of its programs and services was a key component —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Deputy Chair's statement

Deputy Chair: The Member for Lake Laberge — I would appreciate it if you would stop whistling. Please, Ms. Frost has the floor. Your tunes are probably appreciated outside the House.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am sure that the members of the Official Opposition might have some specific questions, and certainly I would be happy to respond to those questions, but I see that their seats are all empty, with the exception of the one member.

So, I will just keep focusing on my presentation with respect to —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: The minister, just in referring to the absence of members that she suggested was the case — in seats on this side — was in fact, of course, in contravention of the Standing Orders, referring to the absence of Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: Ms. Frost, would you refrain from referring to empty seats and absence of members in the Chamber, please.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Deputy Chair, I retract my comments and I will continue on, respecting that the distractions of the whistling in the House is somewhat troublesome, as I am trying to do my report and answer the questions that are of the utmost importance with respect to explanations on variances and explanations on the budget.

I would request that the Member for Lake Laberge be respectful of this space.

Deputy Chair: I have already ruled on that, so if you would continue, please.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I acknowledge that the department's unwavering commitment and professionalism during the outreach and education in the delivery of programs and services is still a priority and a requirement, despite that we have to put the adjustments in to make accommodations for COVID-related activities. Part of the commitment included climate change and climate action.

So, our government has been and will continue to commit to addressing climate change. The Climate Change Secretariat is leading the Yukon government's response to climate change. During the early stages of the pandemic, we made the

announcement and the budget allocation — an estimated \$1.37 million — in operation and maintenance for the Climate Change Secretariat. These are still obligations that we have a mandate to deliver on, noting that the adjustments in the operation and maintenance variance still require us to deliver on this — so added pressures on the department.

This increase — we saw \$1.37 million in operation and maintenance, and \$570,000 of this is recoverable from Canada. The preparedness in the north program is to support adaptation projects. This increase of \$203,000, of which \$104,000 is recoverable for adaptation projects — so, I just want to make note that climate action and climate change is happening faster in the north than anywhere else in the continent, so we are still having to put that added pressure on the staff as they are still required to work from home and are still partnering and delivering supports and working with many other departments on releasing the draft — releasing the climate change, energy, and green economy strategy — and the requirement for public reviews.

In saying that, the department had to look at its information technology systems to ensure that staff are able to work from home and ensure that staff have the connectivity to continue to do the public engagements. As well, the requirement in developing partnerships with our transboundary indigenous groups and municipalities — the strategy on reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing energy security, adapting to the effects of climate change, and supporting Yukon businesses and individuals to participate in the economy were still a key priority. Despite the fact that we were in the middle of a pandemic and staff were required to work from home, we still had an obligation. So, the strategy really was a road map to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent from 2010 to 2030.

As we look at Yukon's strategy and Yukon's vision, the changes to climate change and signs and horizons and our clean leadership programs were all very much a part of this original budget. They obviously had to be adjusted, and you'll see that in the supplementary as it summarizes.

We have a lot of work ahead of us to achieve the vision and the targets set. A public review of the strategy is now finished and the team is hard at work at reviewing the final feedback and, of course, moving forward. We have done all that work, and we are now past the climate change strategy and are focusing our sights on the future.

The changes to the complement of the delivery had to be adjusted accordingly during this time. At the same time, the parks and campgrounds were very much an obligation, so we speak about that in the supplementary as we look at travel costs for parks and environmental staff.

The parks strategy — Yukon's network of parks, campgrounds, and recreation sites — provided some of the access to valued spaces in the territory. Maintaining 32 campgrounds with more than 1,000 campsites, 12 recreation sites, and six territorial parks like the Tombstone park — use of the territorial parks has more than doubled in the past decade. What we focused on during this time was ensuring that we still have our parks staff working in the field, prepping up the parks

for the parks season, and also making increased capacity to open up the parks safely, ensuring that we have the necessary tools — safety and sanitization tools, the outhouses, the notifications, and making sure that we had the supports in place.

Although we continue to invest in parks, we also had to continue to invest in ensuring that Yukoners were safe, as we were encouraging Yukoners to remain in the Yukon during the pandemic and use the facilities that are here in the Yukon. With the services that are made available with the 1,000-plus campsites, we are trying to encourage Yukoners to stay here at home.

The operation and maintenance budget for the Yukon Parks branch at the beginning of the year was \$5.7 million. We had to make some adjustments to the job responsibilities and the duties of the staff. We have seen a total capital budget for Yukon Parks at \$1.4 million. This includes capital investment in campgrounds and playgrounds — a total of some resources in both.

This is just to look at ensuring that we have many more opportunities for Yukoners to use the parks appropriately during the pandemic and, of course, making sure that our parks officers are safe while they are in the field but also allowing for field staff to adjust to the protocols to ensure a safe work environment. We provided technical supports to many of our staff as well. Some of them worked from home, but we had some who were in the field and we adjusted to accommodate that.

As well, the department worked to ensure the health and safety of its staff. We continue to move through the COVID pandemic together. The department has maintained all of its services to Yukon while minimizing the potential risks and impacts on staff, clients, and our partners. The front counter remains open every week throughout the spring and summer. In the fall, the pandemic required adaptation and innovation and new ways of delivering programs and services. Encouraging clients to use online systems for hunting and camping permits and such and delivering online education and other events rather than in-person gatherings were some of the adaptations and the adjustments that had to be made under the increase in the operation and maintenance budget and the supplementary request before us. Staff were hard at work offering a virtual version of regular annual programming, such as the Celebration of Swans, Bear Fair — bear safety information — Wild Discoveries, and the Bioblitz.

There has been very limited impact on the responsibilities that the department had by adaptations and adjustments. We want to just give a shout-out to the Department of Environment and the staff for going above and beyond and still delivering the same level of services that Yukoners are accustomed to.

Successfully supporting all licensed hunting and fishing activities in the fall is another indication of the adaptation that was necessary and the supports that were in place. We've sold over 10,000 fishing licences and 4,000 hunting licences over the fall — over the whole season. As you can see, that was done because the supports that were put in place — the barriers that were put up in the office — the Plexiglass barriers, the office adjustments, and the spacing for staff returning to work. There

were significant cost overruns when we looked at environment enforcement and inspection officers and their contribution to COVID — their contribution as peace officers to be able to go to the job site, to make adjustments to their everyday workplace and to their everyday job duties and responsibilities to adapt and to ensure that Yukoners are kept safe during the pandemic.

The Environment enforcement and inspection staff contributed heavily to the front line, enforcing orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* while working the border inspections. I want to just highlight that, for sure — in terms of the O&M — there are other associated costs that I can speak to with respect to spaces and planning. But there are some other sections in this supplementary budget that speak to the increase around the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, climate change, Science Horizons, clean leadership programming — which I can speak more to with regard to the next specific line item — and breaking that \$1,534,000 down — \$1,191,000 — I spoke a lot about that. There is \$341,000 that I can provide details on when I get up again. Changes to the environment requirements and, of course, offsetting identical changes and cost recoveries, the North Slope conference — that is defined under the *Inuvialuit agreement*. I would be happy to speak to that when I rise again.

Deputy Chair: Is there any more debate?

COVID-19 Response in the amount of \$1,193,000 agreed to

On Corporate Services

Hon. Ms. Frost: For the record, Mr. Deputy Chair, it is \$341,000 in that particular line item that speaks to changes to the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, climate change, Science Horizons, clean leadership programming — all of which are offset with identical changes to the recoveries. The North Slope conference was cancelled due to COVID-19. Of course, there is still an obligation under the Yukon North Slope agreement and the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, of which the Yukon is a signatory, so we have an obligation. The North Slope includes 18,000 square kilometres of land and 343 kilometres of mainland coastline, which makes up approximately 3.7 percent of the Yukon. That is really important. It is important because we still have a legal, binding obligation under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* around implementing the agreement. The changes as we see them in the budget reflect that obligation.

There are currently resource prohibitions in place in north Yukon in the North Slope. That applies to east of the Babbage River. There are specific requirements to look at the North Slope from the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* boundaries to the Beaufort Sea. The withdrawal orders of the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* restrict entry under the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act* and prohibit the disposal of lands under the *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act* and prohibit oil and gas development under the *Oil and Gas Act*.

The obligations under the —

Deputy Chair's statement

Deputy Chair: Order, please.

Ms. Frost, you are speaking to Corporate Services, the \$331,000. That is the line we are on.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chair. Thank you.

The increase under the agreement speaks about continued projects that were not completed, but we still have an obligation. The requirement under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* still requires the Government of Yukon to fulfill its legally binding obligations. The North Slope provides habitat for over 50 harvested wildlife species that directly contribute to the Inuvialuit's food security and, of course, material well-being. That also includes the obligation — given that this is in the traditional territory of the Vuntut Gwitchin — to ensure that we protect critical habitat and the critical habitat of the Porcupine caribou herd, given that the caribou herd now migrates into this particular area 28 percent of the time. Historically, we have seen some adjustments and changes due to climate change and climate action.

Over the course of the last five years, we've seen major shifts. These observations with these scientific assessments still need to be considered as we have our bilateral meetings with the signatories to the agreements. The species that we are predominantly responsible for in that particular area, aside from the Porcupine caribou herd, are the migratory birds and the importance of that particular area to our migratory birds. The Yukon government's obligation under the final agreement was proclaimed in 1984 and it directs that the entire Yukon portion of the —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Deputy Chair: Mr. Cathers, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: In talking about a \$331,000 line item, which is the subject that we're on, the minister has strayed very far. Now she's delving back into the 1980s and has talked about a wide range of things that clearly have absolutely nothing to do with the change in this line item. I would ask you to have her confine her remarks to this debate or maybe even just let us finish the bill so that we can ask questions about Health and Social Services or Education instead of listening to a filibuster from the Minister of Environment.

Deputy Chair: Ms. Frost, on the point of order.

Hon. Ms. Frost: With all due respect, the additional funding to continue projects that were not completed in 2019-20 — less savings of the North Slope conference that was cancelled due to COVID-19 — the Climate Change Secretariat request and the amounts that are identified in this particular line item — conservation — all of it is identified in the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. It's fundamentally important that we speak about the principles of the agreement and our obligations. Being in the middle of COVID doesn't eliminate that requirement, so we are sticking to implementing our obligations.

Deputy Chair: Ms. Frost, I just want to point out that the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* is down lower in Corporate Services, so if you could bring your remarks into the line item that we're doing, which is the \$331,000 — Corporate Services O&M.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Corporate Services — an increase of \$331,000 requested for the following: *Inuvialuit Final*

Agreement additional funding to continue projects — and that's what I'm referring to. There is \$331,000 — \$67,000 under the Inuvialuit agreement, and Climate Change Secretariat, \$264,000. Maybe you can provide a little more clarity to the —

Deputy Chair: When I get down to capital votes, it has \$1,000 in the supplementary for the final agreement. That's why I was asking. I was confused.

Mr. Streicker, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* is both in the operation and maintenance side under Corporate Services and under the capital side. The minister is responding.

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to Corporate Services and their increased requests under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, additional funding to continue projects that were not completed in 2019-20 — then we speak further about the recoverables from Canada and then part of that with regard to our Crown-indigenous relations with Canada. Then, of course, the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* speaks, really, about our obligations. That's kind of where I'm going to.

I just want to say that, as we look at Government of Yukon's funding from Canada to implement obligations under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, including the operations for Herschel Island, Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park, and funding to conduct wildlife research and monitoring for North Slope — it is still an obligation of this government, despite the fact that we were in the middle of the COVID pandemic. We still had to deliver on those initiatives.

Although the projects were adjusted accordingly because we were in the middle of COVID, we had to make reasonable efforts to work with our partners. Some of the research projects that we have to still undertake — including the Porcupine caribou research and monitoring, muskox monitoring, polar bear genetic research on the Beaufort Sea, and wildlife monitoring on Herschel Island, including the hiring of an intern to do some field studies — all of this work is fundamentally important and is a critical element of treaty implementation and treaty obligations. The agreement and the additional funding for these projects were obviously somewhat delayed. We still had to ensure that we delivered them within the fiscal year.

The Yukon North Slope wildlife conservation and management plan has submitted a draft that was updated by the wildlife conservation and management plan to the Government of Yukon. The Inuvialuit in Canada — there are some key points in the plan that included an integrated conservation management regime for the Yukon North Slope where the Inuvialuit are an integral part of this discussion into all aspects of North Slope wildlife and land management because it's defined in the agreement. So, the obligations are still underlying and they are still there, and they still commit us to do that as a government, despite us being in the middle of COVID. The supplementary adjustments speak to that very clearly.

Maintaining the obligations in terms of the integrated conservation management regime in Yukon's North Slope to speak about habitat and the supports of diversity, abundance, and the obligation of the Inuvialuit land use requirements and

land use of that region and maintaining the current orders of prohibition on oil and gas and gas exploration and the development of activities on an immediate basis — these are all requirements and topics of discussion under the Wildlife Management Advisory Council for the North Slope, which is a co-management body established under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* to provide advice to the appropriate ministers on all matters pertaining to wildlife policy and the management, regulation, and administration of wildlife habitat and harvesting for the North Slope.

You will see, Mr. Deputy Chair, that the North Slope conference was cancelled due to COVID, but these are still obligations. They are still obligations that we have to fulfill as we look at promotions and initiatives that bring economic benefits, that provide certainty around biodiversity, that bring certainty to ensuring that we have wildlife protection, and that all matters relating to wildlife policy, management, regulation, and administration of wildlife and habitat are directly discussed with all parties.

The proposed objective of the final agreement was to speak to all parties with regard to a planning process. The plan to have the interim protection area discussed in whole under the advisement of the WMAC initiative — the Wildlife Management Advisory Council — was still an obligation. The deferral of that does not deter any of our commitments. I want to just make sure that we get on the record that we are still working toward ensuring that we work with our partners and that we identify to Canada that the recoverable costs are identified, but also that we still are following through on our commitment to ensuring that we look at indigenous protected areas and conservation areas. WMAC has proposed that the Yukon North Slope is designated as an indigenous protected and conservation area and will receive funding from the Canada Nature Fund Target 1 Challenge initiative to determine the feasibility of indigenous protected and conservation areas designated in consultation with Inuvialuit, Yukon government and Canada. That's really critical. It's critical to highlight that for the record because the funding came from Canada. The obligation of the agreement defines the scope and practice as we go forward; however, we didn't follow through on some of this initiative in terms of face-to-face meetings and the requirements because we were in the middle of a COVID pandemic. The intended outcome of the proposal and funding is a designation that formally establishes the area of indigenous protection and conservation area — is still a requirement, still an outstanding obligation. The funding was received by WMAC and they are proceeding with their planning for that specific region, which is some 30 years in the making. It has been a long time anyway. It has never been addressed; it was just land set aside and never captured in any of the priorities of the previous government, yet we see the caribou migrating to that area and calving 28 percent of the time.

The efforts here — why they are important is because, as we look at climate change and we look at the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* and the obligations of the North Slope and the North Slope conference, we're seeing adaptation measures that have to take effect as we look at potential development, but we also

need to look at protection. That is part of the conservation area funding that was received. The Canada Nature Fund Target 1 Challenge initiative was received to do this great work — and funding that will facilitate meetings between the parties, as well as legal advice pertaining to the various designation options. It is really important that we get that on the record and note that for future conversations, rather than skip over it and not have that discussion because it is very much a part of land use planning. It is very much a part of land use planning that had not occurred in the Yukon North Slope area.

The land use planning is spoken to only briefly in the agreement. However, it is an obligation that was set aside, and the obligation that was set aside and not captured in the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan*, but captured in the Inuvialuit plan, has a transboundary obligation, and so it is very important that we note that, as we look at the additional funding and the continuation of those projects and we highlight that we are continuing our efforts with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada to ensure that we certainly follow through — where a land use planning commission is obligated to look at establishing area-specific supports and measures to protect the critical habitat. But we also have to look at potential oil and gas development and economic opportunities. We now have to look at the agreed-upon principles of the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, and we have to look at our obligations — as we have to Canada. This does not, of course, deter us from continuing on with this very important work as we look at the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* in the territory and the interests and the purpose of land use planning specific to that region.

We have some good practices. I am very excited to say that, for the purpose of this discussion, the Yukon North Slope means that all those lands between the jurisdictional boundaries of Alaska, north Yukon, and the Northwest Territories spoken about — as the advisory council comes together, they speak about their obligations. It is important that we are at that table and have discussions around common, collaborative interests.

I want to just say that the agreement continues. Our agreement looks at fostering reconciliation. It is about fostering reconciliation between our indigenous and Inuvialuit partners.

The work in implementing the final agreement in Yukon includes management of various commitments, including wildlife conservation, wildlife planning, and potential development in that particular area and the interests in that area. That has to happen in collaboration not just with the advisory groups that have been established in the agreement, but also with the indigenous and Inuvialuit communities that have a vested interest in that area.

The *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* funding identifies our commitment in terms of the North Slope conference, so we were extremely excited and looking forward to hosting the North Slope conference in Whitehorse. We are still looking forward to that as quickly as we can facilitate that. I am hoping that we can still do that before the end of the fiscal year. The operation and maintenance budget for implementing the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* — you will see it in the mains — comes from Canada. The funding flows directly to the Department of Environment's main budget. The adjustments

had to be made because we weren't able to deliver on that. I want to just say that we look forward to that initiative.

Corporate Services in the amount of \$331,000 agreed to On Environmental Sustainability

Hon. Ms. Frost: The amount identified here is for the hiring of an intern under the team leadership professional internship program. The intern is for the water resource program under Science Horizons. The objective is to look at leadership development and to look at an internship program, and this initiative is fully recoverable from Canada. The objective of the internship is to look at healthy environments and healthy people and clearly looking at clean water.

The Government of Yukon's Water Resources branch monitors the quality and quantity of the territory's surface and groundwater. We continue to work together with our Yukon First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, communities, and other partners to make sure that water is protected and managed responsibly and sustainably for current and future generations.

Water monitoring and data programming — we maintain long-term monitoring networks and baseline data programs to study trends of water and water resources, and the professional internship development will look at these initiatives. It's done through Canada's Science Horizons program. We conduct targeted research projects and work with communities on local water stewardships and monitoring. It's very important as we look at climate change and adaptation and we look at the importance of leadership development within the Department of Environment, together with our partners.

We operate 89 hydrometric stations, 57 snow survey stations, eight meteorological stations, 53 groundwater stations, and 13 water quality stations. It's important to note that the individual will be working with a diverse set of individuals with expertise in hydrology, as well as scientists and meteorologists. It's important to say that the opportunities for leadership development with the various department experts will work with our identified candidate to look at professional development and an internship program. I'm very excited about that. Dedicating resources to that is important.

This is done in partnership with our federal colleagues as we look at capacity development — always important. It helps to understand water-management conditions, hydroelectric projects, mine tailing structures, what is needed to operate wastewater treatment facilities, and it assists us in designing resiliency as we look at infrastructure.

The capacity development addresses many things in terms of implementing the *Water for Nature, Water for People — Yukon Water Strategy and Action Plan*. It identifies resources in the budget to provide that opportunity.

In November of 2019, we released *Yukon Water Strategy and Action Plan*, a five-year report. Out of that, there are a number of markers. The markers in terms of the ongoing work with partners to sustainably manage and conserve Yukon waters are all fundamentally important as we look at the strategy and we look at leadership development and the ever-changing environment and the ever-changing climate.

In February, a two-day workshop was held with 60 groundwater practitioners from across Yukon and Canada. The intent was to gather feedback about groundwater, foster collaboration, and share information. This is all a part of that work. Part of that work talks about co-hosting and working with the Yukon Water Forum and partnerships with indigenous communities. In particular, we had a two-day event with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation — so lots of really great work that came together during this time.

It's important to talk a bit about wetlands because they are very much a part of the strategy. It's very important — the work across all of the Yukon, with a significant cultural component, providing valuable input in terms of looking with two lenses — that of a traditional lens and that of a scientific lens — on a Yukon-wide policy and the future of land and resource planning. Interim project assessments and permitting all take into consideration capacity development. The amount identified here captures all of the initiatives and all of the obligations from the department.

Environmental Sustainability in the amount of \$10,000 agreed to

On Total of Other Operation and Maintenance

Total of Other Operation and Maintenance in the amount of nil cleared

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,534,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

On Corporate Services

On Inuvialuit Final Agreement

Hon. Ms. Frost: The Corporate Services increase of \$1,000 was intended to cover the equipment purchase necessary for the obligations under the implementation of the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. You will see that here in the budget. I'm happy to say that there are still *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* obligations — delivery of the obligations and the implementation of the negotiated requirements under the agreement. The \$1,000 covers the added costs required for equipment.

Inuvialuit Final Agreement in the amount of \$1,000 agreed to

On Total of Other Capital

Total of Other Capital in the amount of nil carried

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$1,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,535,000 agreed to

Department of Environment agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Education — continued

Mr. Kent: I would like to welcome the officials back to the Chamber here today to provide support and advice to the minister.

When we left off — I think it was last week when we had Education discussions — I had asked a question about the funding — the \$250 per student that was provided in the spring — so just wanted to confirm from the minister — of the \$1.28 million that was allotted, the administration fee, I believe she said, to support Sport Yukon was \$130,000, and it had 4,595 students.

If she could confirm those numbers and then give the House a sense of how many students in total were eligible for that program. She mentioned that 4,595 applied for the \$250 per student. How many students were eligible in total — just to confirm those numbers for the record today?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: To confirm the amount of students — this wouldn't be the amount of families because some families have more than one student — who applied for and received the \$250 per student that was administered by the Sport Yukon program was 4,595 students. They would all have been students in grades K to 12 in the Yukon school system. The funding was administered, as I said, by Sport Yukon and the administrative fee for that service was \$130,875, or approximately 11.39 percent of the total funds that were disbursed. The number of students who were eligible to do so — this would be based on the enrolment numbers as of May 2020 — was 5,610 students. I won't do the math or the percentages, but the number I have for enrolment in May of 2020 is 5,610 students and 4,595 of them applied for and received the funding.

Mr. Kent: This program in the documents that we were provided with at the briefing states that the total for this activity has been identified from savings realized and forms part of the internal transfers. Going through the rest of the document — I think it's from schools and student services — it says that this decrease is part of the departmental internal transfer to support K to 12 financial relief to families as part of the COVID-19 response, the significant shortfall in human resources staffing, and a facilities and transportation position.

If I read that correctly — and the minister can correct me if I'm wrong — it sounds like it came from HR positions, essentially — so if I could just get some details from the minister about where that internal transfer came from or if it is indeed all from schools and student services or if there are other line items in the department where that money came from.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The funding for the \$250 that was provided to each family per student in order to assist with — certainly not cover but assist with — the idea of additional expenses when students were learning at home during the early

part of the COVID-19 pandemic did come from schools and the student services part of the budget.

It primarily came as a result of funds that were not spent on teachers on call and transportation — generally, the operation of schools, which of course were reduced during that period of time. I just want to clarify that I think, in part of the question, it was noted that some of it came from human resources and staffing and facilities during that period of time. That is actually not what occurred. There was a breakdown of some additional funds that were transferred into HR because there had been a shortfall there. So, it wasn't additional HR funding that went into that. I can provide the breakdown as follows: \$1.280 million in internal transfers of available funding went to support the partnership with Sport Yukon to provide — we have been talking about the \$250 per student to eligible families who may have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 while students were learning from home — \$28,000 came from Policy and Partnerships, \$54,000 came from First Nations Initiatives — those being line items in the Education budget — and \$1.198 million came from Schools and Student Services, as I have noted — primarily from savings from teachers on call and transportation. If a further breakdown is required, we are able to do that as well, but those are the numbers that I have today.

Mr. Kent: Just before I move on from this particular expenditure, I am curious as to why Sport Yukon was chosen and if this amount of administrative fee of \$131,000 was offered to any other NGOs. Obviously, it has been a tough year for many of them. I am not saying that Sport Yukon wasn't qualified to do this; I am just wondering if this was offered to other NGOs as well and Sport Yukon put forward the best proposal or what the rationale was for having Sport Yukon administer this funding program on behalf of the government.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The decision was made with respect to having these funds put in the hands of families very quickly to look for an organization that was able to move the funds as quickly as possible. Sport Yukon had a relationship with a lot of parents and students. They had experience in the ability of getting these funds quickly into the hands of families. Parents were familiar with the society. I should indicate that Community Services was a partner with respect to having these funds moved quickly.

The last and probably most important part of the decision moving forward was that the administrative fees went into the kids recreation fund, which is a commonly known recreational fund where families, students, and children can apply to have funds and expenses with respect to recreation and sports covered for them if they are not able to afford it themselves — or have access to sports and opportunities that they might not otherwise have. As a result, all of those factors went into making that decision. There was some discussion — of course, there was some discussion because it's spending taxpayers' money — about how children could benefit from this. The determination was made that the administrative fees going to the kids recreation fund was an appropriate use of those funds, as well as the opportunity to have those programs dealt with

very quickly and by an administrative system that was already in place.

Mr. Kent: So, there were no other NGOs considered. As I said, I have confidence in Sport Yukon and what they're doing, but there were no other NGOs considered and there was no consideration for this to be done internally in the department; am I correct?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We certainly considered a number of options in determining how to have this fund administered or how these payments to families were administered. There was a scan of NGOs. Earlier today, we were being asked in Question Period or being, I'm going to say, accused in Question Period of not supporting NGOs or of somehow wanting them to do less work — or certainly not being supported by this government. That's clearly not the case.

There was certainly a scan. There was a consideration of whether or not the department could do it themselves — clearly for the purposes of saving the administrative fee, because clearly no one was going to be able to manage such a large project quickly and efficiently without some sort of administrative support. Ultimately, the discussions that we had with Sport Yukon — and the fact that the administrative fee would be put to the use and benefit of kids here in the territory was a decision that was easy to make at that point because there were benefits on both sides — a clear administrative process, families familiar with them, ability to administer this quickly and efficiently, getting the money into the hands of families, and ultimately a benefit to children through the administrative fee.

Mr. Kent: That issue from Question Period is with respect to Health and Social Services. Those remarks or concerns were brought forward by an NGO; they weren't brought forward by the Official Opposition. It was an actual NGO that wrote the letter, so once the minister has a chance — not the Minister of Education, but the Minister of Health and Social Services — to read the letter that I tabled earlier today, hopefully she'll respond to the concerns that were raised.

I just wanted to move on to the program that was launched with First Nations and providing electronic devices to First Nation students during the pandemic. I'm wondering if the minister can give us an update on how much has been spent so far and how many students have benefitted from the program up to this point.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. This initiative that is being asked about is a partnership between the Government of Yukon, First Nation governments, and Yukon University. There is a recognition that online and digital learning technologies and resources are a key part of modern learning and skills for the future and an important tool for continuing learning not only during COVID-19, but at all times. COVID-19 and the responses have brought it to the forefront. Students who do not have access to personal devices are unable to support their learning in a way that they may want to. Access is provided through their school, whether during in-person study halls or borrowing a school device that is needed for their learning. That is all available.

To further support the equitable learning opportunities for students, the Government of Yukon is contributing up to \$478,400 as part of a partnership with Yukon First Nation governments for the purchase of up to 1,300 devices to support First Nation students. This partnership ensures that Yukon First Nation K to 12 students have the necessary technology for learning inside and outside of school and to develop digital skills to participate in modernized learning.

The specific question is if we know how much of the funding has been spent or how many students have had that made available to them. I can indicate that Yukon University is the lead, and the work that they are doing — I'm sorry, I don't have the numbers, the actual numbers of students, but the plan is to have technology in the hands of students in January, so just in a number of weeks — perhaps not all students, but that will be the beginning of the rollout of that programming and opportunity for students. I certainly can in future check in with the member opposite once Yukon University reports how much uptake there is on the program and how many pieces of technology and students have benefitted from that program.

Mr. Kent: Just to clarify, have none of the devices been sent out yet to any of the students? I just wanted to make sure that this was what the minister was talking about. I think she mentioned January.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I just want to be clear that there are two separate things that I've mentioned here.

One is supporting students in Yukon schools from K to 12 with available technology from their school, either having it at the school or being able to borrow it for their personal use and learning opportunities.

The other is the specific program that's being funded by the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations. It's being administered by Yukon University.

The first is ongoing and students have access to technology through their schools.

The second is the specific program that is a technology initiative administered through Yukon University. The information I currently have is that the devices that will be distributed to students through this program have been purchased and are scheduled to arrive here in January and will be distributed at that time. Has anyone received a device through this program prior to this moment? I don't know, but I can check with Yukon University. The information that we have is that the items have been purchased and will be here for distribution in a few weeks.

Mr. Kent: I'll check back in with the minister on that one sometime in the new year.

I'm going to move now to the federal funding priorities that were identified by department officials at our briefing in October.

This, of course, is the \$4.1 million that the federal government has allotted to Yukon for school reopening priorities. Now, my understanding is that half of it came in October and the other half, I believe, is subject to some reporting perhaps in the second semester or the second half of the year. If the minister can confirm that this still is the case, or

if the entire amount has flowed without any additional reporting requirements, that would be great.

While I am on my feet, I will ask her about the first priority that was identified here by department officials in October, and that is health and safety. It said that there was a number of items funded: extra custodians, sanitation costs, ventilation costs, sanitation on busing, special services to pay for health and safety training, and health and safety for teachers on call. The number that I got, as of September 30, was \$355,477 — so if the minister has a more recent amount.

We will start with the first one — if she can tell us how many additional custodians have been hired with these resources.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have some updated numbers. I am going to answer the question back to front if that's helpful.

The number of additional custodians who have been hired pursuant to this process is 16. There is another insertion for the answer — yes, the money is coming from the federal government in two instalments, as they said it would earlier in the fall. I understand that there is a requirement to report to the federal government this week. I saw a draft of that report just this morning. I know that it's there, although I haven't quite read it. It will go to the federal government this week in order to report on the information that we have regarding the spending of those particular funds. In addition, we expect that this process will roll out much as has been reported and that there will be an additional payment made to the territory by the federal government in January 2021.

I have updated numbers with respect to the actual funds that have been expended as well as the projected funds. We can be clear that this is actual and projected expenditures, pursuant to the response to COVID-19 with respect to Education. As I have noted, the federal government is requesting a full reporting of the expenditures and projections by December. That is what I had noted earlier. These projections are subject, of course, to some change in actual numbers but are provided here as an update. As of November 9, the health and safety expenditures — actual and projected — have been a little over \$703,000, including extra custodians, sanitation costs, ventilation costs, sanitation on busing, health and safety, training for school staff, and health and safety training for teachers on call. As of November 9, \$1.35 million — a bit over that — has been calculated for continued learning. Again, those are actual and projected expenditures. It involves adapting K to 12 programming and includes the move to Wood Street for the grade 8s and some fit-up costs and IT costs with respect to the Wood Street Centre, special services pay for principals and teachers who worked during the summer to help with getting their schools ready, and the COVID-19 response of school staff to support programming adaptations, additional transportation costs of busing, field trips, et cetera. Those come under the heading of "continued learning".

There have been additional supports for students. As of November 9, approximately \$900,000 — a bit over that — is for Student Support Services, including trauma-informed instruction, virtual study hall costs, study hall, additional supporting costs for school staff to support student learning,

additional tutoring costs, and lastly, under the heading of "flexible learning", as of November 9, about \$95,000 — a little over that, \$95,766 — has been spent or is projected to be spent on IT technology, curriculum training, Zoom costs and communication, IT infrastructure costs, and extra network personnel.

I think those are the most up-to-date figures that we have, being clear that it includes the actual and projected costs and much of this information is included in the reporting that's required by the federal government in December.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for those updated numbers. Obviously, there are some changes from where we were in late September.

When we talk about continued learning, one of the items that was flagged was a move to Wood Street — the costs of the move and the fit-up and IT costs. I'm curious if the minister can break that out of the continued learning piece and let us know how much that cost to move the grade 8 students in there was and then what the costs were to move the MAD program to Porter Creek and the subsequent costs to move them back down to Wood Street.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thanks for the question. The figure that I have with respect to the — we'll call it the "Wood Street move" that involves having the appropriate work done so that the grade 8 students could properly move into that space. There was some IT, some fit-ups with respect to the location, as well as having the Wood Street experiential programs move to a different location, including storage of their equipment and the moving of their equipment. It totals a little over \$77,000. I don't have figures yet on the move back, which was, of course, earlier — I am going to say the middle of November; I think that was the right date. We don't expect there to be an exorbitant amount of funds required for the move back. The space was available for them. Much of their equipment remained at Wood Street, and I am talking about the MAD program. Some of their equipment, costumes, and things that they weren't able to use due to COVID-19 remained at the Wood Street location and have remained there. The matter of moving the students back there and having their transportation sorted out was not any significant additional cost, but I don't have those figures yet. They will be reporting in the next number of weeks, I expect.

Mr. Kent: Also, in that continued learning amount are additional transportation costs for busing and field trips. So, I'm curious: With the changes to the guidelines announced last week, as well as the addition of three buses, how many additional students will be able to be accommodated on school buses for transportation in the new year?

The last number that I had from our October briefing was that there were about 1,750 students on the bus in a normal year. I guess that, even last year, it would have been about 2,000. Will the new guidelines and the three additional buses essentially cover off anyone who is on the wait-list, or will there still be people without student transportation options to their respective schools?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The number quoted by the member opposite in the question was a September number. I think he said that there were approximately 1,700 students. We have

been clear that this work has continued through the fall. In November and until very recently, we have accommodated 1,907 students on the buses.

The addition of three more buses, as well as some minor changes to the busing routes to make sure that some students could be accommodated who hadn't previously been accommodated, or an additional bus stop, would help with that as well. All of those changes, which were announced last week, will allow 2,250 students on the buses. I think that the question was about how many additional students — from 1,907, approximately 350 additional students.

That work took a long time. It was clearly complex. We were doing what we had committed to do — getting as many students as possible on those school buses, and that work was done expertly by the folks who deal with busing not only at Standard Bus, but most particularly by dealing with families and parents through the Department of Education — the portion of the department that deals with busing and the busing requests going forward.

That means that, as of January 4, some 2,250 students will be accommodated on school buses. The projected cost — I anticipate that this may be the question — done by the department for the operation of those buses was approximately \$300,000 or \$298,000. I know that I've answered that question here in the House before. The updated information that we have about it is that we expect the costs to be somewhere in the range of \$150,000 of actual costs between January 4 and the end of the school year. That is subject to change based on all kinds of things that may or may not occur in a world pandemic, in a situation that's changing quickly. I'm happy to provide that information as of today's date.

Mr. Kent: For the minister, I don't think she answered the question about how many — will these 2,250 students — will that accommodate the entire wait-list, or are there still outstanding individuals who have applied to ride the school bus but still aren't able to be accommodated? If so, how many?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm sorry — I remember now that was part of the question. These 2,250 students being accommodated on school buses are the vast majority of individuals and students who require busing.

I can indicate that there remains a small number of requests that are not able to be accommodated. Again, these would be students who are not eligible for busing — as are many of the ones who are being accommodated — but these special requests tend to be requests for students who are traveling to a school that is very far outside of their attendance area or students who reside far outside of our current route system.

So, there are some — a small amount of individuals — we are working with those families to discuss transportation assistance of some kind or additional opportunities for them to have assistance from the department. There is a transportation subsidy, for instance — those kinds of things. But these would be — I would call these extreme requests. Certainly, the vast majority of the individuals whom we have heard from and who have been applying are being accommodated through these changes that have been announced.

Mr. Kent: So, does the minister have a number? I know she said there is a small number who are not being accommodated, but I'm just looking for if she has a specific number of how many students will not be accommodated after Christmas.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't have a number because the department and the busing team are continuing to work with them. But I should be really clear that there is no wait-list. Everyone who was seeking and expecting accommodation — because we were, through the COVID process, not able to have the same routes as we've had in the past — the routes have been adjusted and the additional buses take care of all of those students. There is no wait-list and these special requests are being dealt with one at a time. But I am sorry that I don't have a number.

Mr. Kent: So, I'm going to just move on to a few other topics. I will turn the floor over to my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King shortly, but I do want to touch on a few other issues before I do that.

With respect to the grade 8 students who are currently studying at the Wood Street Centre, can the minister tell us how they have access to PE programs and shop programs? Are they currently being bused to alternate locations so that they can have access to those types of programs?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. The grade 8 students who are being taught and attending school in the school facility — albeit it a certainly historic building — the Wood Street Centre — are accessing additional programs at various locations throughout the city, including back at F.H. Collins. I can indicate that, prior to it being winter, a lot of the PE or their physical education was taking place outside. The teachers, administrators, and educators have been very innovative in their approaches. I know of hiking classes — of walking from the school on to a hike and then returning to the school. I know that they have accessed the Canada Games Centre.

There is busing provided for that. I know that they have accessed the F.H. Collins facility back at the school for the gymnasium and that has also been supported through busing.

I am also aware that there has been some innovation and great imagination by the educators to have those students — and many others, not just the grade 8 students at the Wood Street program — participate in additional things that they might not otherwise have done. I know that, for instance, some students have attended the Lumel glass-blowing facility here in Whitehorse when they hadn't accessed that place before. They are using the opportunity — if I can say it that way — that is COVID to really branch out and have new experiences for those students.

The specific question with respect to PE — some of it was done at the Wood Street Centre School, some of it was done outside as additional activities, and some of it is done at other locations throughout the city. Those are supported by way of providing busing and transportation to those students.

Mr. Kent: I am hoping that the minister can give us an update on the attendance area review for the Whitehorse area. Can she let us know the status of that work? I know that there

were a number of meetings that were supposed to be held with affected school councils. I am wondering where we are at with those, given some of the obvious other priorities that have probably moved to the top of the list over the past number of months.

Also, does the minister have an idea or a sense of when that attendance area review will be finalized?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am sorry, could the last part of the question be repeated? I am not sure if it was about when it will be online or when it will be completed. I am not sure; sorry.

Mr. Kent: Yes, when it will be completed or when does the minister expect that review to be finalized?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. The attendance area review is an important aspect of the Department of Education's work going forward and certainly long-term planning for schools and school communities.

We have conducted — the department has conducted a review of the Whitehorse school attendance areas. The key, of course, and the focus is to plan for future enrolment, future student needs, school governance, and to enable the most effective use of schools and the resources to support students going forward. For some schools, there will be no proposed changes to their attendance area. Those school councils are being informed — I want to say they have been informed, but I will confirm that they will be informed, if they haven't been already — that their school attendance area is not changing, and that's the vast majority of school councils.

For other schools, there are some proposed changes to their attendance areas that affect four schools in the Whitehorse area. We are meeting. We have met with one of those school councils. The proposal is to meet with those school communities to seek their input on the proposed changes. The school communities will be able to speak through their school councils and their administration to discuss the proposed changes and to seek feedback for consideration before our final decisions are made.

A new attendance area will be created for the new Whistle Bend elementary school based on city boundaries for that subdivision overlapping with the current attendance area for Jack Hulland Elementary. I can indicate that the four schools that have proposed to have some minor changes to their attendance area include Golden Horn Elementary, Takhini Elementary, Selkirk Elementary, and Elijah Smith Elementary.

As I said, one school council has been met with already. There is a timeline for that to proceed. We are seeking feedback from those school councils and a conversation, of course, with them about the proposals. Those are the only schools that are affected as a result of the attendance area review. That is exciting in that our community is growing, our neighbourhoods are growing, and it is critical that we look at the school attendance areas to make sure that we are providing appropriate plans for future enrolment, for student needs, and for school governance going forward.

The meetings schedule — I daresay that we all hoped we might be nearer to the end of COVID-19 and the pandemic than we are at this time of year — for school councils to provide their feedback and to meet face to face with the department for

opportunities to consider this information has been pushed back slightly, but the plan has been to establish the Whistle Bend attendance area as soon as January 2021. Hopefully, an election for that attendance area — that school council — will be not too long after that, and we will continue with the schedule to meet with the individual school councils and obtain their feedback going forward on this important aspect of education in the territory.

We have met with Selkirk. Of the four schools, we have met with the Selkirk school council and will schedule meetings early in the new year with the other school councils to address this issue in particular. Of course, we meet with school councils on lots of other topics and lots of other schedules, but in particular to deal with this one, that will be the case.

Mr. Kent: I have a number of issues that are still outstanding, but I will touch on one more before I turn the floor over to my colleague. Then, if Education does come back before the end of session tomorrow, I can perhaps get into some of the other items that I wanted to talk about.

This last one is with respect to the Ross River School remediation. It looks like there is an \$800,000 decrease in that — with the documents provided at the briefing. It says that the original budget of \$4.6 million for this work will not be spent this year. The Government of Yukon anticipates spending \$1.5 million on the Ross River School remediation work in this fiscal year. After discussions with the Department of Highways and Public Works, the Department of Education has worked to redirect some of this lapsed budget to other education initiatives to respond to COVID-19.

I am just curious as to why that original budget wasn't spent, if the government is still on track to spend that in Ross River this year, and then where the remaining budget was redirected to within the Department of Education.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am happy to provide what I have today. I think we have significant details about how this occurred, but there may be additional questions directed to Highways and Public Works if that is of assistance to the member opposite.

The information that I have with respect to the \$800,000 not spent on the Ross River remediation project is a result of more complex work relating to the mechanical room, and the thermosiphon cooling system is noted to continue into the 2021-22 budget. That work is currently in the design phase.

There were some delays in getting consultants to the site at Ross River School over the summer due to the pandemic and related travel limitations. I don't have all of the details with respect to that, but I am aware that some companies were not prepared to come and self-isolate prior to July 1, and then that changed, but that did affect the schedule. The original budget of \$4.6 million for this work will not be spent this year, as noted by the question. The Government of Yukon anticipates spending \$1.5 million on the Ross River School remediation work this year — the stuff that can be done and the work that can be addressed. After discussions with the Department of Highways and Public Works, the Department of Education has worked to redirect some of the lapsed budget to other education initiatives in the department and to respond to COVID-19.

I can indicate that \$480,000 of that money was used to match funds from Yukon First Nations to the Yukon First Nation COVID foundation to provide the personal mobile computing devices that we talked about earlier, being administered by Yukon University. Those are being provided to Yukon First Nation learners to support blended learning and digital skill development.

\$220,000 of that lapsed funding was to be used in this supplementary budget for two technology infrastructure specialists, based on employment of two-year terms, to develop and maintain IT services to support blended learning, which has been expedited due to COVID-19 and our intention and requirement to do that sooner than might otherwise have been.

\$100,000 has been used for professional services to enhance cyber security to ensure that student personal mobile devices can safely and securely connect to school IT infrastructures and access IT services.

While some of those funds from that remediation project in Ross River were lapsed, they were redirected to other education initiatives to the benefit of students.

Mr. Kent: Just a quick thanks to the officials for attending with the minister today. Seasons greetings and happy holidays to all of those school communities. I think it is extremely rare that we are still in here while they are on Christmas break, but they are, so I wish them all a safe and happy Christmas and a very prosperous new year.

Thank you, and I will turn it over to my colleague.

Ms. White: I echo my colleague's sentiments, this time as a welcome as opposed to a goodbye. I am excited to get the chance to speak with the minister today about the Department of Education.

Just to start off, I was looking for the survey results for the most recent survey on people's experience of education in this first semester. I wonder if the minister could share an update with us.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. First of all, I should say that the survey ended on November 30. I am just trying to find out if we know how many responses there were. Those are being assessed. Similar to the last survey, we will release that information again. It is planned for the week of January 4. I can indicate that we will be reporting Yukon-wide results as well as by school. That is the breakdown that is happening now.

I can pop up again, but if we get the number of — I think that there was very good uptake again, but I am just looking to see if we have the number of how many people might have responded.

Acting Chair (Mr. Gallina): Ms. White.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Acting Chair, and I appreciate the prompt. I think it is very exciting once we go down the line of who is there. I thank the minister for that answer. I look forward to seeing how the experience was for folks in January. I am sure that the minister and her officials are not surprised — based on the questions, as Education critics, that we have been asking this Sitting — it has been very difficult for high school students in Whitehorse in grades 10

through 12 with the half-days. I understand that, for some, it has been good, but for others, it hasn't.

Just before I go into more of the questions, I just want to thank the minister and her officials, because I sent a letter early on after the \$250 of support for students was announced, asking if there was the possibility of splitting that between families because of the challenges that exist. In some cases, families can't sit down and actually have a conversation about the money being divided. I just want to thank the department for making that happen. In the end, I know that there weren't very many families who did apply for the split, but for those who did, it was incredibly important and it removed just one more stress factor at the time. So, thanks for that.

The pandemic has revealed to some parents that their children are struggling with basic reading skills. Unless children learn how to read in their first few years, they cannot learn to read in later years and this results in poor graduation rates and more special education students as they get older. When students cannot read well, they display behaviour problems in classrooms. So, in Yukon, reading skills are developed through what is referred to as a "whole language" or "three queuing" system. So, if a child sees the word "dog" written enough times with a picture of a dog, then he or she will associate it with that word. It's not a phonetic-based reading, which is taught by having children identify letters with certain sounds and then piece them back together — a process called "de-coding".

So, phonetic instruction is emphasized in pullout remediation for students who are struggling with reading skills and not with the entire class in the classroom, where the emphasis is typically on thematic language lessons. So, to be clear: The fault doesn't lie with the school-based teachers, because they are following the Department of Education directives.

I don't think that anyone would argue right now — we can all agree that our teachers are under a great amount of stress — and from the pandemic, parents have first-hand experience on how difficult the teacher's job is. So, why does the Department of Education — why are phonetic-based skills not emphasized in each classroom?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. It is quite specific and I will attempt to provide some information, but I really think that this is the kind of conversation that we should be having with some experts in language and reading skills.

That said, I can say that the curriculum redesign here in the territory is based on foundational skills in literacy and numeracy. There are a wide range of learning requirements, particularly in the primary school area with respect to a focus on not only — we're looking for a balanced approach with respect to literacy and numeracy, which are absolutely core values and core competencies. A balanced approach in literacy means skill development in both oral and written, and of course, that involves reading skills as well.

All grades in Yukon schools are now following the modernized Yukon curriculum for K to 12. In addition to taking these core competencies to the forefront of learning and

working with individual students to meet them where they are and to help them achieve their learning goals, that curriculum is designed to reflect Yukon's context and Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being. I know that the member opposite asking these questions grew up here in the territory and would no doubt see a significant change in the new focus of this curriculum from her time in school. This is critical for the future of education here in the territory.

With respect to the contextual inclusivity of the programming, it was mentioned in the Auditor General's report of 2019 as a recommendation. We continue to develop and distribute guidelines to address these particular cultural deficiencies in our education system, and we continue to work with Yukon First Nations on additional materials and supports for teachers who are learning and, as noted by the member opposite, having to add these responsibilities to their lesson plans and to their programming for students.

The foundational literacy and numeracy focus is critical. I certainly respect the question about the differences between the approaches for language skills and language arts, but I don't think that I have the appropriate information to provide that answer, but I am happy to meet otherwise with the member opposite to discuss these. Curriculum development, changes to that curriculum, and new ways of doing things rest often in the hands of teachers and their expertise, but absolutely, the department wants to support them in that work. They are always looking for better ways to do the spiral of inquiry, the learning concepts for students at every grade, and better ways to help them achieve their own learning goals.

Ms. White: The reason why I am asking this question is actually from having learned that there was a problem, actually, from reading experts. It was just kind of signalling that there were perhaps some deficiencies in programs that are happening now.

I will go back to — between 2011 and 2016, I was lucky enough to work with a retired educator who had been a principal and classroom teacher for many years. He was passionate about the Reading Recovery program and the Wilson Reading System. Just a question: Are those still being utilized in Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. She has described a former colleague as being passionately interested in reading. If my child was here in this House, he would be attesting to the fact that, for his entire life, I've been hammering home the concept of reading and how important it is and how important it is as a person's learning takes place over a lifetime, and that's reading for pleasure, reading for work, and reading for learning and all kinds of really critical opportunities that come with great reading skills.

The specific question regarding Reading Recovery is that, yes, it is still used, primarily at the kindergarten and grade-1 levels — following that. It's quite school-specific as well, I should say, with respect to the reading programs, but overall, Reading Recovery is supported for very early readers to help develop those skills. I can also indicate that schools are doing individual assessments with students using a plan known as "Fountas and Pinnell". This allows assessments of benchmark

reading levels for the purposes of providing that data. They also build on the data that comes from the Reading Recovery program. I've said that those are school-specific. The purpose of the benchmark assessments by school are so that there can be early detection of issues, if there are such issues, or of students who might need to learn in a different way.

The goal is that all students would be reading for the purposes of their learning by grade 3, and so the focus is on early changes and early addressing of any issues that might arise. That is a brief description of some of the programming involving the focus on reading at early ages and the opportunity to assess students and continue.

Ms. White: I appreciate that answer from the minister, but if I was to go back to the Public Accounts hearing that we held here on December 11, 2019, it was said by the witness at the time — the deputy minister — and I quote: "We know that, if students are not reading to learn by grade 3, their likelihood of graduating is significantly reduced. If they are not reading to learn by grade 3, they have a less than 20-percent chance that they are going to get back to grade level, even with interventions in the school system."

The reason why I am bringing up the phonetic-based reading is based on the recommendations and thoughts of experts. How will the current program that is being used get audited? How do we know its efficacy in making sure that students aren't falling behind?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, not being an expert with respect to literacy education and teaching literacy, I will explain or provide information regarding how the assessments are done in the current system, noting that we are always making sure and auditing internally and externally whether or not the approach is working, based on the best evidence and experts in the education world.

Speaking with respect to literacy here, which I understand to be the focus of the questions — as students enter school, there is an early years assessment, as well as a BOEHM assessment, which is, for Hansard, an acronym. Both of those assessments are done as kindergarteners enter school and during their first year of school, both in the fall and in the spring, to provide data.

The focus of my answer here today will be about data collection because that is how we learn about supports and where they are needed. At grade 2, students undergo a district assessment reading test, and that is providing more information. At grade 4, young students participate in a foundational skills assessment regarding reading and writing. All of this information is formative. It is used to identify where students are, where they are going, and how we can best support them in their learning. Again, I am specifically speaking about a literacy focus here — always asking ourselves how this process is benefiting students and if it needs to be adjusted and how we have the experts in education provide that information going forward and how our curriculum and schools need to respond to provide the best possible education to our students.

I will return to another question, if I can. It may be of assistance to the member opposite. I have numbers now about the response to the second survey. We have had 2,085 people

respond. The breakdown is: 1,340 parents responded; 496 students responded; and 249 educators responded. Earlier, I was speaking about the results of that survey being available in early January and they will be, but I thought it would be useful to provide the information about how many people responded.

Ms. White: Just in looking at it, I mean, that is just about 300 responses fewer than for the survey that was sent out earlier in the year. It is a significant percentage of parents or students — just to put that out there.

I have sent the minister a communication about delays in students receiving the Yukon grant. Was the timing that the Yukon grant was delivered in — was that typical, or was it delayed this year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: First of all, I should say that I have not personally seen the note that the member opposite refers to, but if it is about a specific case, I will track it down by tomorrow and see if we can get a response.

The government has adapted the Yukon grant process this year and taken the opportunity during COVID-19 to modernize the administrative delivery of the Yukon grant program. The short answer is that I am not aware of any excessive delays, but there may be a particular case. It is important to note that the changes were partly as a result of institutions not being able to or choosing not to verify students' enrolment. For example, to ensure that students received their funding in a timely and safe manner this year, we have now implemented a direct deposit system for the Yukon grant to the student as opposed to the institution, which it has been in the past.

Department officials are working with other jurisdictions to monitor how students are impacted by COVID-19 and continue to ensure that any financial impacts are mitigated and that their specific needs are being met.

The number of Yukon students applying for the Yukon grant and Canada student loans for post-secondary education is slightly lower than in previous years — some students not choosing to maybe go back to school.

I just wanted to confirm a couple more pieces of information.

The application process for the Yukon grant in the past has generally been about a five-month window. We've condensed that, at the department, to about three months. If there is a specific case where there has been a delay, I would be happy to know about that and try to address it on behalf of a student.

Through the workplace development fund with the federal government, there has also been an announcement that students will receive \$500 each for IT costs because there is a recognition that the technology costs are likely to have been increased for individual students who are attending school remotely or not being able to be in a classroom, depending on what their programming is. I can indicate that the changes, as I've said, with respect to having those funds go directly to students has been a change in the program. In the past, they have been sent to institutions primarily and then any additional funds are provided by the institution back to the student, but this year — due to all of the reasons that I've noted and, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic — students were to receive these funds directly. If there is a specific case or perhaps even

more than one, I would like to address it with the member opposite so we can make sure that our Yukon students have the financial support that they need.

Ms. White: I appreciate that very much. The letter was sent to the minister on November 19 with all of the information.

I'll just make note that the young person says — and I totally appreciate it — that they work hard, they budget, and then having a \$73 interest charge on their credit card is actually a hardship because of how they try to plan.

All of that information was sent to the minister on November 19, so I look forward to hearing back about that. Sometimes what can seem insignificant to us is actually really a barrier for others.

The minister and I have talked at length about the Yukon grant and its application to non-academic programs. I am the perfect example. I did a \$10,000 culinary program, and my Yukon grant at the time was insignificant. I worked full time and went to school full time. That education led me to a job until I was elected, actually, in 2011. It's not to say that non-academic courses don't lead to employment. They more often than not do, but they don't have the ability to access the same support and funding.

Since we spoke about this initially — which I believe was in 2019, but it might have been as far back as 2018 that we started talking about the Yukon grant. The example is the mining program up at Yukon University. They have an environmental remediation program, and I just wanted to know where we were with that. I think that the minister shared my interest in trying to get support for students. I just wanted to know where we were with that.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This is something that I — well, there are lots of things that I share interest in with the member opposite, but certainly this is one that we have talked about. The Members of the Legislative Assembly and the member opposite will remember that some of the difficulty — when you talk about Yukon University — with respect to Yukon student financial assistance as well as Canada student financial assistance provided to students for certain programs has to do with the requirements of those programs at the federal level and the *Student Financial Assistance Act* eligibility criteria. Certainly, we need to look at those eligibility criteria in that piece of legislation.

In the meantime, the Department of Education is working with Yukon University, and we have suggested — although I am sorry to say that I don't know the update at the moment with respect to how far along this project is, based on a number of adaptations that have had to take place at the university with respect to providing programming during a pandemic, et cetera. Again, it's not an excuse, but something that is just the reality in where and how much attention this particular project has received. We have sought and continue to work with Yukon University, suggesting adjustments to the program design and structure that would allow students to be considered under the current legislation and the criteria there. We are looking for wording with respect to the description of programs and the concepts of programming that would align with the Canada student loans legislation as well, which is required to be

complied with. The department is considering and recommending changes to the eligibility criteria in the future review of the act and, in the interim, is working with the university to suggest that descriptions and some of their programming design could help individual students meet that criteria.

I am going to say that one of the opportunities that has presented itself through the COVID-19 pandemic — on the basis that education at the post-secondary level, in all of its forms, is going to need to adjust to the realities of a new world and to the realities of what has presented itself to us this year — we see university students across the country attending virtually. We see hands-on programs being affected. How does one become a nurse or a mechanic if they can't be in a hospital or can't be in a learning environment — a garage and other important places — for hands-on learning to take effect?

Clearly, adjustments are being made, but long term, those adjustments are going to need to be looking at how we learn and how traditionally we have — and I'll say it in this case — put certain programs into a box and certain programs out of a box. Whether those be skill development, whether they be the length of a program or where it's delivered, we have the opportunity to look very broadly at how education will need to develop into the future going forward.

I can commit, and will commit, to continuing to work with Yukon University to do the very best that we can for individual students. I urge individual students who are thinking that they're not fitting into the box to contact us at the department so that we might be able to assist and even work with the university on individual cases if they're a student there or try to assist in looking at real program descriptions and development and how students might be assisted.

It's more important now than ever that we are focused and flexible with respect to how students receive financial assistance, particularly in the days of a pandemic — who knew that we would ever be saying this? — but where people might be pursuing an education in a way different from what they had planned. They might have been planning to work in a particular industry or sector and are now choosing to pursue education because of the circumstances of COVID or because of the circumstances of being able to not travel or to be in a particular place. We should be doing everything we can to assist them in that endeavour.

Ms. White: Thank you, both for the recognition and the answer from the minister.

Another problem that we ran into this year, or that I was supporting someone through, was eligibility for the Yukon grant. I think that it's important to note that families are different. Every family is different. If the student who is applying for the grant has made Yukon home — so they have Yukon health care, they have a Yukon driver's licence — and they go away to school, they come back to Yukon to work for the summer, and they're here, but their primary parent who doesn't financially support them leaves the territory — why do we punish the student? If the student has met the requirements for everything else for the Yukon grant — they went to school here, they come back, they're committed to Yukon and have

also seen the appeal process — how can we do a better job in making sure that students who may come from a different family set-up are still supported through the application for the Yukon grant?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I spoke about the direct deposit process, but I think what the member opposite is asking about now is the concept of the criteria that is administered at the department. I am happy to speak about that process and, more generally, about the process for an appeal of that decision.

At the Department of Education level, for individual applications that come forward, criteria are applied. The criteria are available to all under the *Student Financial Assistance Act*. It is clearly enunciated there about what requirements there are — residency and a few others. I won't get into the details of that, but in the event that the decision is made — and it is a relatively blunt decision because it's about whether the act applies and, if so, how and what is the effect of that decision — then students are encouraged, if they are unhappy or unsure of the reasoning for those decisions, to apply to the student financial assistance appeal process. That is an independent panel whereby applications go before an individual panel whose responsibility it is to reconsider those kinds of decisions and confirm whether or not there are circumstances that they find that would mean that a student should receive financial assistance if the department had initially said that this is not the case. Then, if there is a recommendation from the Student Financial Assistance Committee that, in fact, a student be funded, that matter comes back to me and I review it. I don't think that I have ever denied their decision or request. The matter is resolved in that way.

I can indicate that, in 2016, the act was reviewed and updated, but we are always looking to make sure that the concepts of fairness and administrative justice are the guiding principles with respect to the student financial assistance process. The Student Financial Assistance Committee has been requested, by a letter from me, to review the current process and their perceptions of procedural fairness and to consider any appropriate amendments to that process. A family had written to me, and of course, I can't direct them — the independent panel — on what to do, but I did forward the concerns and asked that they review their process and consider the comments that were made by the individual student.

Lastly, I think it is important to say that the requirements of residency and the requirements of an individual student's circumstances — something that I am quite familiar with — must be considered and that the Student Financial Assistance Committee and their panel is the place for those circumstances to be described and for the request to go. While a strict application of the legislation might mean that somebody is not eligible for student financial assistance, the opportunity exists at that panel level for those personal circumstances and personal family situations to be described and to be considered.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I will just put out the notice that nearly \$5,000 a semester is a significant amount for a person who is living independently in a different place, and so, even having the delay — you know, applying for

an appeal and having an appeal delayed is problematic because that is \$5,000 that you didn't anticipate necessarily needing.

The last question that I have is — in conversation with my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, there was mention of the Takhini Elementary School attendance area being looked at. Can the minister tell me more about what is being looked at for the Takhini Elementary School?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the time. I'll answer this quickly and I'm happy to review it otherwise, outside of this Chamber, if the member has more questions.

It's a relatively minor change in relation to Takhini Elementary. I should note that Takhini Elementary and Selkirk Elementary will be adjusted by assigning the Marwell subdivision to the Takhini Elementary attendance area. This area is not currently assigned but, in practice, attends Selkirk Elementary. There will be that minor change to the attendance area for Takhini Elementary.

I will take this opportunity to thank the officials, Deputy Minister Nicole Morgan, and our director of finance, Jackie McBride-Dickson, for attending and assisting today. Seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, 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.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled December 21, 2020:

34-3-63

Report of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly – Official Opposition and Third Party Membership of the Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation (Speaker Clarke)

The following legislative return was tabled December 21, 2020:

34-3-67

Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board before Committee of the Whole on November 10, 2020 (McLean)

The following documents were filed December 21, 2020:

34-3-47

Report of the Chief Electoral Officer to the Legislative Assembly — An Update on Territorial Election Readiness (Speaker Clarke)

34-3-48

Partners for Children Program, letter re (dated December 10, 2020) from Tanja Westland, President, Network for Healthy Early Human Development Board of Directors, and Tara Wheeler, Vice-President, Network for Healthy Early Human Development Board of Directors, to Hon. Pauline Frost, Minister of Health and Social Services (Kent)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 84

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, December 22, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

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

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Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
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Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, December 22, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they are now outdated: Motion No. 366, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; and Motion No. 368, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

The following motions have also been removed from the Order Paper as the actions requested in the motions have been taken in whole or in part: Motion No. 239, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South; Motion No. 241, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; Motion No. 251, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; and Motion No. 341, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.
Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukoners during COVID-19 pandemic

Hon. Ms. Frost: I rise today on behalf of all my colleagues on this side of the House to express our deep gratitude to all those working to keep our territory safe and healthy. This year has been one for the books. It has tested each and every one of us. Yukoners, like all Canadians, have faced unprecedented challenges. Now more than ever, we need to come together and continue to do our part to keep our communities safe and healthy. That's exactly what I see happening here in our territory as we prepare for the next step, a very welcome step — the COVID-19 vaccine.

I want to thank some very special and extremely dedicated groups of people today. To all those who have been involved in providing front-line work in these stressful months, to those providing services to the public in our stores and our local businesses, to those in health care, standing tall at their posts, safeguarding our most vulnerable in your scrubs and your N95 masks — we salute you. I know that going into work has not been easy this year and has not been without anxiety, but you played such a critical role in the battle to stop the spread and mitigate the risks of COVID-19 in our territory. Thank you for your courage. Thank you for your dedication.

To all our Yukon nurses, doctors, pharmacists, and support staff at our hospitals, nursing centres and wellness hubs and

those involved in this year's flu clinics, thank you. To all those at the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit, the COVID testing and assessment centre and the drive-through testing clinic who have ensured that testing and contact tracing was carried out quickly and efficiently — you have demonstrated true heart. Thank you.

Today in Yukon, we have zero active cases of COVID-19 and we have these teams to thank for this.

I would also like to thank the teams working hard on the vaccine strategy and the planning, logistics, and coordination and the folks working to get information out to Yukoners throughout the territory — online, in print, and on the radio and on posters adorning walls from Watson Lake to Beaver Creek, from Carcross to Old Crow.

I also want to bestow a heartfelt thank you to all those who will be working tirelessly to ensure an efficient distribution of the vaccine once it is approved and delivered, including those who will be at the mass vaccine clinic here in Whitehorse and the mobile teams who will travel to our rural communities. Even though they will be wearing masks, I know that Yukoners across the territory will be smiling as you deliver the vaccine that will protect them and their families and friends.

Mr. Speaker, we owe a debt of gratitude to all those who have contributed to this collective effort for their unwavering commitment to Yukoners, knowing that you are all our heroes and that you continue to make a difference. As I reflect back on the past 10 months that we have been in the grip of this pandemic, I am struck by one word in particular: "resiliency". COVID-19 has tested us, but it has also revealed our ability to adapt and innovate.

We are not out of the woods, but we can finally see the path out of the woods. If we stay vigilant, we will emerge from the woods together. I am so grateful and proud of each and every Yukoner.

Mahsi' cho.
Applause

Mr. Hassard: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to provide the House with a little poem here today, in light of the Christmas spirit.

'Twas the last sitting before Christmas, in this hallowed House

The Highways Minister practiced for an Emmy — or something thereabouts.

His acting unmatched, his oration unrivaled
His ranting and raving will make you unbridled
No one before, of their voice has been prouder
He knows if you're wrong, you need only shout louder
But enough about him, there are others in here
The Member for Lake Laberge sure brings the Liberals
cheer

From talking, to chatting, to expressing dissent
His hours of speeches are sure to torment
Not to be outdone, his expertise will astound
The Minister of Ec Dev will happily give us background
I'll move to the North, with the Premier I'll plead
By consulting and listening is how you'll succeed

Now the Klondike is great, and right now somewhat cold
 But this year our economy owes a thanks to the gold
 To the miners, suppliers, and even their friends
 It's clear more than ever, the Yukon depends
 On your tireless efforts, your sponsorships too
 You deserve an applause and a hat tip or two
 To small business and restaurants, to the book stores and

bars

You've been through so much and all deserve some gold stars

To the doctors, the nurses, all the hospital folks
 The front-line and teachers, you've been solid as oaks
 But back to the Legislature where I started this poem
 It's been 45 days, so it feels just like home
 Now despite all our differences and our partisan stripes
 And even our questions, our statements, and gripes
 It's important to remember that at the end of the day
 We're all people, despite this legislative horseplay
 Just a few more things but I promise to be quick
 Let's talk about all of our letters to Saint Nick
 For requests — the Liberals would only have one
 Please, Santa, you gotta get rid of Dixon
 Now the NDP were a little more altruistic
 Calls for rent and worker support made the government

ballistic

What's in the Yukon Party's letter? I'll get to that now
 A happy Christmas for all — and with this weather — a snow plow

I'll close out our letter, and I have a confession.
 We just want the government to set a date for the election.
 Merry Christmas.
Applause

Ms. White: I have never wanted to be more poetic than today, but sadly, it's not to be the case.

Today I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP as we look back at 2020 and toward 2021. This last year has been tough. As a planet, we have stood facing a storm of the unknown. Canada has faced and continues to face uncertainty, and we in Yukon haven't been unaffected. It started with the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games and gathered steam with the cancellation of school and the closure of some businesses and other businesses trying to operate with restrictions. It continued with border closures, openings, and closures again. Parents, teachers, and students faced a new reality of learning with schooling from home. High school students in Whitehorse still grapple with half-day classes, unsure what their future holds.

Yukon, no part of this has been easy, but you did it and you are doing it to the best of your abilities. Businesses adapted, morphed, and did the best that they could — from restaurants to book stores to cafés and markets, each one affected in different ways, with the hard realization that not all could make a go of it with this new reality.

As Yukoners, we have supported each other with the decisions to buy local, to adapt to both serving and buying takeaway meals. We have seen folks reach outside themselves, asking for and offering help as needed. Acts of kindness both

big and small are repeated daily in all of our communities. So many have found a renewed sense of purpose because, after all, we are in this together. That, I believe, is the overarching theme of 2020. It's just not about you or me; it's about all of us. We're all in this together.

As we look toward 2021 and the rollout of a vaccine that we hope will see the world as we know it right itself, let's not go back to the old normal. Let's take the lessons of the last year and look at building a better tomorrow, because together we can do this.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors outside of the time usually provided.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like my colleagues to help me welcome my husband, Rick McLean, to the Legislative Assembly today.

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 2018-19 annual report of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators and the 2019-20 annual report of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

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

Mr. Speaker, I also have for tabling the Yukon Law Foundation 2019 annual report, which is tabled pursuant to section 83(2) of the *Legal Profession Act, 2017*.

I also have for tabling the Law Society of Yukon 2019 annual report, which is tabled pursuant to section 150(2) of the *Legal Profession Act, 2017*.

Mr. Speaker, I also have for tabling the Yukon Judicial Council annual report for 2019, which is tabled pursuant to section 37(2) of the *Territorial Court Act*.

Lastly, I have for tabling the Workers' Advocate Office annual report for 2019.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling today the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues annual report for 2019-20, as required under section 15 of the *Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*.

I also have for tabling today the Yukon Geographical Place Names Board report for 2019-20.

Further, I have for tabling two legislative returns, one relating to outstanding questions from the Member for Watson Lake on December 3, 2020, and one relating to an outstanding question from the Member for Whitehorse Centre on December 14, 2020, during Committee of the Whole — during the *Second Appropriation Act 2019-20*, Bill No. 205.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Monsieur le Président, je dépose aujourd'hui les rapports sur les services en français pour 2018-2019 et pour 2019-2020.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a legislative return responding to questions from the Leader of the Official Opposition during the witness appearance of the chief medical officer of health.

Finally, I have for tabling one more set of statistics — this one for MLA travel claims.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today a response to questions asked on November 24, 2020, from the Member for Kluane regarding funds for wildlife monitoring surveys.

I have for tabling a response to the motion from the Member for Kluane on December 17, 2020, regarding the St. Elias Seniors Society.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling two legislative returns responding to questions from the Member for Whitehorse Centre on December 8 during Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling 21 legislative returns pertaining to questions on Economic Development, Yukon Energy Corporation, and Energy, Mines and Resources.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House thank all Yukoners for their efforts in mitigating the spread of the COVID-19 virus and for helping to keep Yukon safe.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House recognizes the necessity and thanks Yukon's essential workers for their hard work and dedication during this pandemic.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the 31 action items contained within the MMIWG2S+ strategy.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports energy retrofits for Yukoners to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase energy efficiency in homes and buildings.

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

THAT this House supports the Tourism and Culture COVID-19 relief and recovery plan, including:

(1) providing tourism sector leadership;

(2) rebuilding confidence and capabilities for tourism;

(3) supporting the recovery of tourism industry operators; and

(4) refining the brand and inspiring travellers to visit Yukon.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House thanks all Yukon health care workers for their commitment to keeping Yukoners safe during this pandemic.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House thanks the public service for their continued efforts and support during this extended Sitting.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to recognize that many Yukon businesses including farms, the hospitality sector, and condo corporations are experiencing financial hardship due to large spikes in insurance rates by taking the following actions:

(1) doing an assessment to determine how much of the increase in Yukoners' insurance premiums is the result of the territorial Liberal government's tax increase in insurance premiums;

(2) tabling a report on the results of that assessment in the Legislative Assembly by March 31, 2021; and

(3) consulting with local businesses, stakeholder organizations, and insurance providers to determine if government action to amend legislation, regulations, and/or policies would result in a decrease in insurance rates being paid by Yukoners.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make prekindergarten, K4, available in all Yukon communities, including Whitehorse.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon economy

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, despite the challenges of this year's pandemic, Yukon has had strong economic progress. Success within a pandemic context looks different from other years across various geographic and demographic regions, but our government has strived to centre economic stability within our decisions over the past year, carefully balancing a need to maintain a thriving economy while keeping Yukoners safe. Maintaining as much stability as possible under turbulent times

reflects the values of our community and its future goals going forward.

Despite the challenges that we faced, forecasts show a strong and robust economy for the Yukon. Yukon's real gross domestic product for 2019 was \$2.7 billion, an increase of \$23 million compared to the revised 2018 figures.

That GDP growth of 0.8 percent will increase funding for the Yukon mineral exploration program as part of our economic recovery spending to incentivize mineral exploration and support businesses that strengthen the Yukon and our sector.

Mr. Speaker, under our leadership, we will see three mines in operation as Alexco ramps up production in the Keno Hill silver district. Our mining economy remains thoroughly intact compared to other industries, which has resulted in positive projections for future economic growth in the Yukon. Strong gold, silver, and zinc prices and improving markets are expected to see an increase in exploration and deposit appraisal expenditures.

Baseline forecasts from the Conference Board of Canada foresee that two of the mines located in Yukon — Eagle Gold and Minto — are expected to sharply ramp up production in 2021, allowing output in the territory's mining industry to nearly triple.

Our construction sector is equally strong, with investments totalling an estimated \$29.8 million, representing an increase of 8.2 percent from last year. From January to October of this year, total investment of \$296.4 million shows an increase of 23.9 percent. Building permit values are extremely strong. Residential building investment is up by \$64.6 million — I believe, a record.

The territory saw a 0.7-percent increase in retail sales from January to October, totalling \$733.4 million. Wholesales in Yukon also saw an increase of 2.9 percent compared to the 2019 figures. Although preliminary figures showed business closures in April, June saw a shift in this trend, with 88 businesses opening.

We have seen growth of digital innovation in tech sectors — most recently seen in the expansion of Northwestel's Internet services across the territory.

This week, we heard of a local entrepreneur, Joel Brennan, who has developed the SUPStick with help from the innovation entrepreneurship team at Yukon University. Mr. Brennan has gone from an idea sketched on a napkin to online sales.

Our territory continues to enjoy the lowest unemployment in Canada. Yukon's 4.2-percent unemployment rate is well below the Canadian average of 6.3 percent.

Our economic response to the current challenges that face Yukoners today allows for flexibility while we continue to lead Yukoners through this time using an adaptive approach. We must continue to prioritize recovery for our economy. Our strong economic footprint underpins our perseverance in challenging circumstances.

I know that COVID has resulted in many struggles. There are businesses that are on the edge and people who are not able to make ends meet. There are supports in place for Yukoners who need assistance, and those supports will continue.

Yukon's economy is strong and able to bounce back from economic hardship as our economy has shown such resiliency over the past year.

Mr. Istchenko: I'm pleased to rise and respond to this ministerial statement.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent government response has created an economic crisis in the world, in Canada, and right here in the Yukon. While everyone recognizes the importance of these public health measures, the impacts have created huge issues here in the Yukon.

Industries like tourism and the hospitality industry which depend on social interaction have taken a big hit. The restrictions on travel have created significant hurdles and additional costs for the mining exploration and drilling industries.

Over the past weeks and months, we have tried our best to raise issues about the government's response to this economic crisis. In some cases, we have supported the government's efforts, and in some cases, we have offered suggestions for improvements or changes.

For instance, we have made a number of recommendations related to the government's handling of the support for tourism and hospitality industries. For example, we have suggested removing the red tape for bars and restaurants, like the requirement to prove that 60 percent of the restaurant's 2019 revenue came from visitors. We have suggested the government abandon their plans to end the additional wholesale discount on alcohol pricing for licensees — a decision that we know will hurt bars and restaurants. We have suggested allowing cannabis retailers to once again be allowed to sell their products online, which is what the government retailer was able to do already.

We have questioned why no money from the accommodations sector support packages flowed to any Yukon businesses yet, despite being announced months ago. We have questioned why the non-profit support package still doesn't even have an application process. We were glad that the government has released a new tourism strategy, but we are worried that they aren't as focused as they should be on getting immediate support out the door and on to the actual businesses that need them.

To cap it off, the government raised power rates by nearly 12 percent last year, and they've announced that they will raise them by a further 11.5 percent next year.

Further, we have raised concern that the government parks strategy did not even mention the impacts of the pandemic on tourism, nor did it contemplate economic recovery. In fact, the only mention of the word "recovery" in the documents were the words "cost recovery", which is a government code for "fee increase".

So, during this pandemic, it became obvious how important the mining industry is to our economy. As other industries ground to a halt, the mining industry continued to be a driver of employment, investment, and local purchasing. This was especially true in the placer mining industry in the Dawson area. Services and supply companies that support the hardrock

mining industry continued to thrive despite the challenging circumstances.

While mining should clearly be the keystone of our economic recovery, there are troubling signs on the horizon. The decision on the ATAC Resources project has sent chills through the industry. Even operating projects are getting questions about what this means for the future of investment in the mineral development industry in the Yukon.

Combined with the government's inability to get any large resource road projects done, despite the years of promises, there are some legitimate questions being raised about whether or not Yukon is indeed open for business.

Even on newer emerging industries like tech and communications, we've seen this government stumble. Their signature project was the Dempster fibre project which has gone from a top priority in 2016 to being completed in 2018 and to 2020 and now the Liberals are finally admitting it won't be ready until 2024 — that's at the earliest. This inability to meet their own timelines and commitments and get things done is one of the government's biggest failings.

Yukoners are looking for a government that can actually meaningfully engage with the Yukon business community, take action to ensure that Yukon businesses make it through this crisis and chart a path forward on economic recovery that is driven by the private sector. That's not what we've seen from this Liberal government.

Ms. White: It gives me great pleasure to respond to a record-breaking 45th ministerial statement today. I appreciate that in this House there's at least one person who finds beauty and power in numbers. I myself prefer words, but I thought that today I would give a nod to the numbers.

So, each ministerial statement comes with time restraints. First, the minister can speak for up to four minutes and history will show that they do a fine job of nearly hitting that mark. Today's statement rang in at three minutes and 55 seconds.

Next, it's four minutes to the Yukon Party and four minutes for us here in the Yukon NDP. These first sets of comments are what one could call "curated". We as opposition know what will be said as we prepare our responses. Now, I probably don't need to point out that, although we're both in opposition, our perspectives are very different. But it doesn't end with these 12 minutes because there are still four minutes to go. Now, these next four minutes are wide open — the wild north, if you will — because government has the final word. Each day of this Sitting, the government has set aside 16 minutes of time out of a possible 270 minutes for these statements. That's 64 minutes a week; we're at the end of our response to number 45; it's 720 minutes all together.

So, for those who were following along — and I don't blame you if you aren't — that's 360 minutes for the Liberals, 180 minutes for the Yukon Party, and 180 minutes for us here in the Yukon NDP. Or for those of you who prefer these numbers in hours, that's three hours of curated government statements and three hours of unopposed closings, and for the opposition parties, it's three hours a piece.

So, all together out of a possible 202.5 hours of this Sitting — and this doesn't include any 10-minute breaks — 12 hours have been dedicated to ministerial statements. That's one and a half hours shy of three solid Sitting days.

Now, as for the state of the economy, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the review of Yukon's economy through rose-coloured glasses, but it's not roses for all. Our economy is not doing well when essential workers are not making a living wage without government wage top-ups. Our economy isn't doing well when people can't afford their rent or their hydro bills and hundreds sit on affordable housing wait-lists. Our economy isn't doing well when our teachers and nurses are burning out because they are all understaffed. None of this is sustainable, even from a strictly economic standpoint.

Until we start measuring how well our economy is doing by how well working folks are doing, then all government is doing is listing off numbers, just like my minute-by-minute breakdown of ministerial statements.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to thank the Leader of the Third Party for her comments and analysis of ministerial statements. Also, though, I have to touch on the fact that I think that it is important that we provide this forecast. We have had a lot of individuals, companies, and leaders within the business sector as well as investors reach out, so I think that it is important information.

Concerning the comments from the Official Opposition, quickly — first of all — wow. Great to see some support, I guess, for the private sector and especially on cannabis. I am just reflecting on where the position of the Official Opposition was when the legislation was coming through. Concerning the hospitality sector, we continue to provide our business relief programs which support them, if they are in challenging situations from a revenue perspective.

The Yukon Energy Corporation is looking to increase the power rates by 11 percent — simply not true. It was corrected already. So, sad that this misinformation continues to be shared. Then again, I guess, on meaningful consultation — there are some big projects that we continue to work through, and meaningful consultation also means working with the business sector. It also means that there are other governments in this territory, and they are First Nation governments, and you have an obligation to consult with them too — maybe not the same as it was in the past.

So, happy, again — Mr. Speaker, I think it's best if we just — I am going to touch on a few comments that really reflect on the work of the Department of Economic Development. Private sector partners — some of the thoughts that they have shared over the past months — and this really speaks to the public service. The chair of the Business Advisory Council told us back in the spring — and I quote: "It is increasingly obvious that your team's work on getting the standard setting business relief grant out quickly, has had a major impact in keeping certain businesses alive, and you and your entire team are to be commended on this work." It is really the Department of Economic Development.

Also, he said — and I quote: “The proactive responses by Yukon territorial government, which we believe are indicative of a greater level of concern for businesses than in some other areas in Canada, are responsible for us being in a slightly stronger position than our northern peers, and I sincerely believe that Yukon will reap dividends for their level of forward thinking.”

Also, from the chair of the Tourism Industry Association, he said, “We have the best relief programs in the country.”

Mr. Speaker, we are seeing a bit of cheering against Yukoners here again, especially with the comments around the mining sector. I think that we have great leaders there and that we are in a good position going into the spring of this year.

From our conversations with the private sector, we know that Yukon is destined for great investment. Companies are looking to invest in the Yukon Territory as a place of opportunity, in part due to strong, collaborative relationships with First Nation governments following many years of legal battles and uncertainty. We have seen positive GDP growth every year that our Liberal government has been in office. This is a big change. We know what the numbers looked like back in 2015.

I want to thank the private sector for showing such strength and resiliency through the pandemic. I know that it has not been easy to adapt this year, but you have shown remarkable determination in the face of adversity.

I also want to thank the many dedicated public servants who have worked tirelessly to administer the relief programs over the past several months. The strength of our economy reflects the efforts of so many people, Mr. Speaker, and I just want to express deep gratitude on behalf of my colleagues and me.

I encourage all Yukoners to continue to support local businesses and organizations. Please get out, order some food, hit a restaurant, and shop local in these last couple of days. Again, I want to thank my colleagues. Today, we have zero active cases, which are the best numbers in the country.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Access to information

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* requires government to respond to a request for information within 30 days. They have an option to extend the deadline by 30 days two times. On August 22, 2019, we submitted two ATIPP requests to government. On December 15 of this year, we finally received a response to one of our requests; that is 391 days late. This morning, we received a response to the second request; that was 398 days late. Not only is this not compliant with the act, it's ridiculous, and the only reason that we even got anything was because we filed a complaint with the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

This government talks a good game on access to information, but it's becoming clear that they are not giving the

resources necessary to departments to actually meet those obligations.

How do the Liberals justify being nearly 400 days late on an ATIPP request?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will take this information from the member opposite under advisement. Of course, as the member opposite knows, caucus does not control the ATIPP request. There is a whole department and team that does that, and we are not privy to that information. At the same time, we do know that there are timelines and we will look into those timelines for the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: Well, that's a pretty weak response. Let's go to another question.

A local reporter filed an ATIPP request in November 2018, and the government has still not handed all the documents over. As a result, they've filed a complaint to the Information and Privacy Commissioner who began looking into it, but they found the government uncooperative and non-transparent. Frustrated by the government not living up to its commitments of transparency, on December 18, the reporter posted on social media — and I quote: “It's been two years and 11 days.

“My complaint is now a toddler and at this point I'm wondering if I should start looking for openings at pre-schools.”

Now the commissioner has resorted to an inquiry in January to get the government to release this information. This is another example of the Liberal government talking a good game on openness and transparency, but when it comes time to put their money where their mouth is, they do not deliver.

How do the Liberals justify this continued fight with the Information and Privacy Commissioner?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm happy to talk about ATIPP — access to information and protection of privacy — this afternoon. It's an issue of importance to Yukoners. I know this, Mr. Speaker, because I actually used the former act in a former role and knew its shortcomings and its warts and wrinkles and how it had been amended to make this government one of the most closed governments in Canada.

When we came to power, we took action to rewrite, from head to tail, the ATIPP act, and we did that important work because we heard from Yukoners and knew that they wanted access to their information. This government is a repository of public information, and we want to make sure that we get it into their hands.

Now, the member opposite knows that Cabinet and caucus do not control ATIPP and do not look over these requests. If there are concerns about ATIPP, I'm happy to bring them up with the department, but as the members opposite know, we have rewritten the ATIPP act. It will be clearer and more robust. We're having more resources put into the provision of access to information, and the regulations to enable that act are coming before this Cabinet very shortly.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, again, nice talking point for the minister, but four years in office and the government has gotten worse on transparency under this Liberal government and under the minister.

During Right to Know Week in October of this year, the Information and Privacy Commissioner wrote an open letter in local papers. In that letter, she said — and I quote: “I know that those processing access to information requests are doing their best. It is not their fault that they are struggling to process these requests in accordance with the requirements of the ATIPP Act. The system is faltering because there is a lack of commitment by those at the top of Yukon government public bodies to ensuring that the access to information programs within their respective departments are functioning properly.”

I know that the Liberals don’t like it sometimes, but they are the ones at the top and they are the ones responsible for this problem. They are the ones who the Information and Privacy Commissioner was admonishing.

So, will the Liberal government finally give public servants the resources and direction that they need to start living up to the government’s commitments to be accountable and transparent?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said, Yukoners take the information that this government holds and the protection of their privacy very seriously. We heard from Yukoners that they wanted better access to their information. Mr. Speaker, we found when we came into government that a lack of focus — a lack of attention — had been paid to the information resources of this government. So, we have bolstered that. We have rewritten the ATIPP act. We are getting more public information through the open data repository. I just heard — close to 21 legislative returns. Mr. Speaker, we’re putting reports and tables before the people of the territory. We’re answering the questions, and we will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

It is a little rich coming from one of the most closed, most repressive, information-clutching governments that we’ve ever seen — to have them chastising us for our information provision. We will continue to get the information and data of this government into the public’s hands. That’s what we committed to do; that’s what we’re doing, Mr. Speaker, and we’re happy to do that because it is the public’s information.

Question re: Early learning and childcare programs

Ms. McLeod: On July 15, the Premier announced that the Liberal government is developing a universal, affordable, early learning and childcare program modelled after the Québec system.

At the time, the Premier committed that he would release the details of this program in the fall. Well, winter solstice has come and gone and, with it, the commitment that the Premier made this summer.

So, can the Premier tell us when he’s going to live up to his commitment to release the details of the new childcare plan?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would be happy to speak about early learning childcare and the great work of the department. I just would like to take a moment to acknowledge the department for doing such an exceptional job and pulling together the details. Of course, we would not be where we are had we not had the support of the department looking at the best practices across

the country and investigating the priorities and looking specifically at ensuring high-quality childcare, and the earliest stages of children’s development is key to success.

Earlier today, we spoke about K4. That is part of the discussion that we are having as well. Early learning and, of course, universal childcare is a key priority for this government. We committed to doing that and we will endeavour to make that happen. That is our focus and we want Yukoners to know that it is in our vision and we aim to implement it.

Ms. McLeod: And no answer to that question.

So, Mr. Speaker, the worst-kept secret in the Yukon is that the Liberals were planning to call an election this fall and that is why they made this commitment. They never actually intended on having a detailed plan in place by the fall, but they hoped to include it in their platform. The only problem is that they got cold feet about the election.

Now they have officials scrambling to get a plan together. The problem with that is that rushing a massive new childcare and early learning program is the wrong way to go about it. They need to consult with the people working in the field.

So, will the minister commit to ensuring that they adequately consult with experts in the field before rushing out a flawed program?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that it is incredibly important that Yukoners have accurate information about this initiative being brought forward by our government and the commitment that we have made to develop early learning initiatives and early learning plans for the benefit of Yukon children.

The *Putting People First* plan recommended that the government work toward a fully-funded, universal, early childhood education. That work was already underway at that time, in the conceptual phases. The panel also recommended that, over the early learning years, that the file be transferred from Health and Social Services to Education. We will ensure that early learning services are coordinated at all levels, which is key to the planning for this process, including the transition into preschool and primary school years.

The Department of Education and the Department of Health and Social Services are working in earnest and collaboratively in an effort to introduce an affordable childcare model for the Yukon using the Québec model and best practices in the industry as a guide. We are working with our partners to do so — including Yukon First Nation governments, education stakeholders, Yukon Childcare Association, Yukon Child Care Board, the Yukon Teachers’ Association, and school councils so that this work can be done properly, to the benefit of Yukon children.

Ms. McLeod: For a government that ran on a platform of “Be Heard”, this government sure has struggled with listening. They have refused to consult businesses about their new procurement policy. They’ve failed to consult school councils about school reopening, and most recently, it seems that they haven’t consulted with the early learning and childcare groups about changes within the family resources unit. So, Yukoners can be forgiven for questioning their commitment to consultation. What has become clear about their

plans for childcare and early learning is that they depend entirely on what the federal government is willing to fund.

Can the Premier confirm that the new childcare plans are entirely contingent on receiving support from the federal government?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Where I would like to start is by acknowledging the communities and acknowledging the childcare centres, acknowledging the good work and the vision that they had and the contribution that they've put into *Putting People First*. The recommendations came out in May — not a pre-election platform — the commitment came out in May and it came from Yukoners.

The Member for Watson Lake should well know that her community has a childcare centre that certainly was not supported historically by the previous government — fundraising, trying to make funds, make ends meet — the efforts of putting that childcare centre back in operation by working with the executive director and modelling a best practices effort going forward and working together with various departments.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize the importance of childcare for Yukoners and the need to improve children's learning outcomes and opportunities, and the work toward universal childcare and other initiatives that have been underway since the spring is not something that has just come to light. The extension of the early learning childcare initiative over the course of this last few months is an indication that we are moving in the right direction and we are looking at the integration of K4. We are looking at universal childcare and best practices to ensure that every child is supported in the Yukon.

Question re: Opioid crisis

Ms. White: Across the Yukon, we're experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, our communities are experiencing the trauma of an increase in drug overdoses and deaths.

In the first five months of this year, Yukon reported 13 deaths related to opioid and fentanyl overdoses. According to Yukon's chief coroner, these deaths occurred across Yukon communities and many were adults in their 20s and 30s. Sadly, some died alone. These folks represent more than just numbers — they're Yukoners. They have names. They're someone's family members, someone's friend, and they're our neighbours.

Since May, when the 13 deaths were first reported, can the minister tell us how many more overdose deaths have been confirmed and how many suspected overdoses are still being investigated?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I couldn't agree more. Certainly, it's tragic whenever we lose an individual in the Yukon. It's sad in communities that experience this loss as a result of the opioid crisis as a result of pressures. With respect to how many more deaths have occurred, I certainly don't have that number in front of me, but I would be happy to endeavour to get that information.

Ms. White: I look forward to that response.

Last week, we had the opportunity to ask the chief medical officer of health questions about the increased number of opioid deaths. He spoke about the outreach van that has expanded their services and now offers fentanyl drug testing. Dr. Hanley said that he supported safe consumption sites, but the caveat for him was the need for further discussion around questions such as: Where should it happen? How should it be run, and who should run it? What are the staffing models? Dr. Hanley also discussed the need for more rural capacity for harm reduction.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us what work this government is doing to support harm reduction specifically in rural communities?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With regard to the actions related to opioid safety and of course ensuring safe supplies across the Yukon, ensuring that we reduce the opioid crises, eliminate as much as we can the serious harms and effects that it is having — knowing that we are in the middle of a pandemic and we're seeing increased stresses — I shudder to think about how many more unfortunate deaths we would have had we not had the supports of the mental wellness hubs and the supports of our communities.

I just want to acknowledge also that we have our supports and our drug-testing services through Blood Ties Four Directions through their location on Ogilvie Street and, of course, through the outreach van and now at Housing First. So, we are expanding the services. We are working very closely with our partners to ensure that we have all the supports that are readily available as much as we possibly can to eliminate any further incidences.

Knowing that we are coming up against the holiday season, we are ensuring that we are working even more closely now than we have been in the middle of a pandemic, ensuring that we have the necessary naloxone kits out there and providing further supports as required.

Ms. White: Unfortunately, deaths don't just happen in Whitehorse and I was looking for the government's response to supporting harm reduction in rural communities.

So, Blood Ties Four Directions is one organization in Whitehorse promoting harm reduction programs such as offering drug testing for toxic levels of fentanyl, needle exchanges, and training and distribution of naloxone kits for the public.

Since the 13 deaths were announced, the president of the Yukon Medical Association pointed out that a safe consumption site could be lifesaving in Whitehorse. In fact, we have seen this lifesaving program and policies in action in British Columbia for a number of years.

Mr. Speaker, what steps is this government taking now to offer safe consumption and safe supply in Whitehorse, like we have seen in British Columbia?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I couldn't agree more with the member opposite with respect to supports in the communities. We have been working very closely with Blood Ties Four Directions to increase supports in our rural Yukon communities, which they have agreed to, and we are working with them on that.

We are also in conversation on ensuring that we have added supports here in the city — safe consumption here in the

city. Wet shelters are always in the conversation, of course, with the chief medical officer of health. It is certainly something that we would endeavour to pursue with direction and with support from our partners.

Question re: Queen's Printer Agency and Central Stores services

Mr. Hassard: So, in October 2019, the Minister of Highways and Public Works picked a fight with the public servants when the Liberals decided to close Central Stores. At the time, the minister refused to meet with the employees and they were only given a heads-up that their jobs were going to be affected minutes before the public announcement went out. The minister claimed, without evidence, that getting rid of Central Stores would save the government \$1.2 million. However, the 2019-20 Public Accounts reveal that the minister's decision not only didn't save the government money, it actually ended up costing the government \$138,000.

So, can the minister tell us how his cuts to the public service that were supposed to end up in savings actually ended up costing taxpayers money?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Now more than ever, Yukoners need consistent leadership and accurate information. Consistently, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing a lack of clear or accurate information coming from the opposition benches. I just heard the Official Opposition leader say that we cut the civil service. We did not cut the civil service. Every single employee working within the civil service is still working in the civil service.

We did do what we said we were going to do with the Financial Advisory Panel. I don't know if the members opposite agree with the recommendations of the Financial Advisory Panel, but they said that we should look at our services and provide the services that we need in the best way possible.

We have actually focused the work of Central Stores and the Queen's Printer. We now have print shops that are lauding our government for the work that they are getting out of this government. We have made sure that every civil servant working at the Queen's Printer and Central Stores retained their positions in the civil service. We are proud of the work that we are doing on this file, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work in the best interests of Yukoners on so many other different files.

Mr. Hassard: I will remind the minister that the Public Accounts tend to be pretty accurate, so I think that he had better reconsider that statement.

At the time, the minister sold the narrative of privatizing Central Stores as a cost-saving of \$1.2 million. We know from the Public Accounts that the write-off for Central Stores actually ended up costing taxpayers money. In fact, the fight that the minister picked with the public service actually ended up costing taxpayers at least \$138,000. At the time, the minister said that, as part of his decision to make cuts to Central Stores, there would be \$300,000 in savings in personnel costs. Well, looking at the Public Accounts, we see that the Department of Highways and Public Works actually went overbudget by

\$2.4 million in its operation and maintenance budget, which would cover personnel costs.

Can the minister tell us why his alleged savings are reflected nowhere in the Public Accounts?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, Yukoners demand consistent leadership and clear information. What they are getting is spin, chaos, fear, and discord under the guise of opposition.

Well, here's what Yukoners need to know. Our government is improving service delivery and providing better value for taxpayer dollars by modernizing the way that we do business. We are reducing the number of steps that it takes to order goods and eliminating the costs of storing and holding products.

By closing the agency, we eliminated the long-term storage of a wide variety of supplies, and we contracted out printing that used to be done in the Queen's Printer Agency while maintaining the function of confidential printing. The central purchasing unit within the Supply Services branch remains a key department function and will continue to serve the Yukon government by taking orders for supplies from departments and arranging their delivery.

The change to service delivery has resulted in an almost \$1.6-million reduction in ongoing costs. This is money that we will then use to put in early childhood and daycare. We will hire more nurses and doctors. We will provide the services that Yukoners need with the savings that we are realizing. We are realizing savings, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite just do not understand the principles.

Mr. Hassard: Yet the Public Accounts show that it actually costs the government an additional \$138,000.

You know, during the pandemic, many departments and public servants have indicated that purchasing goods such as hand sanitizer and personal protective equipment in one central location is preferable. However, on the eve of the pandemic, the Minister of Highways and Public Works cut the government's Central Stores. This left many departments scrambling early on in the pandemic. We've learned that at least one department has been forced to set up their own distribution system for PPE during the pandemic, so it seems that the minister broke something that certainly did not need breaking.

So, can the minister confirm if individual government departments are setting up their own version of Central Stores to replace the branch that the minister cut? If so, how much is this costing taxpayers?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, what we've seen on this closing day is exactly what we've seen throughout this entire session: wild innuendo, speculation, chaos, discord, and hypothetical speculations.

Mr. Speaker, I would like this afternoon to thank the hard-working staff at the Department of Highways and Public Works. The folks there have worked through all of their regular work, they have worked through the pandemic, and they have worked through the longest session in Yukon history.

Mr. Speaker, sustaining this democratic institution has been an absolutely enormous task for the entire civil service. I want to take a moment — on top of everything that they have done this season — to thank them from the bottom of my heart

for the support that they have provided this government, the opposition, and the people of the territory under extraordinary circumstances.

I think that they deserve our thanks and I think that they deserve our support. I really hope that they take this Christmas season to get some rest because they have worked harder than I have ever seen people work over the last nine months.

Question re: Mining sector development

Mr. Kent: I have a series of mining-related questions for the government.

So, on the heels of this year's Geoscience Forum, the Liberals denied permits to ATAC Resources for a tote road into their project north of Keno City. This, of course, was after the company received a favourable recommendation from the YESA board in 2017, only to be saddled with the need for a sub-regional land use plan a year later, which the minister at the time described as a "new way of doing business".

Others have described it as creating uncertainty in our permitting process. The company actually put out a press release questioning whether or not the Yukon was indeed open for business.

So, what message is the minister giving to companies, shareholders, and investors about the Yukon in the aftermath of his decision to move the permitting goalposts for this project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think it is important to start off by just thanking the staff at the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. As I think about the spring and the exploration season that we had — the many, many late nights that folks worked so effectively and efficiently to ensure that we looked at our alternative isolation plans — even helping out companies from the Yukon that were working in northern British Columbia — I want to thank those — lots of late-night calls and a lot of folks working very, very hard. I think that, really, that is what we should be sharing — and what we do share with the investment world — the fact that — whether it is Energy, Mines and Resources or the folks on the ground in the ecosystem — prospectors, drillers, you name it, and the many associations that support it — folks are only a phone call away. They understand the importance of this particular sector — what it did in this last year, as it was reflected upon today — and the fact that it is important that you put the time in for the respectful relationships and you understand the structure and governance of the Yukon. When we see that done, we see good, responsible projects put forward.

Mr. Kent: Companies that are active here are looking for consistent and predictable permitting, which has been undermined by this decision by this minister.

Another issue that is outstanding from this Liberal government is the four-year-old promise by the Premier for a commitment that he made to the Yukon mining industry to develop a collaborative framework with respect to timelines and reassessments of projects. We have consistently asked questions about the progress of this work and we have continually been met with excuses, deflections, and, of course, the ever-popular blame game.

Can the Premier tell us what will come first — a completed collaborative framework, or the next election?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I want to take this opportunity — as my colleagues are doing — to thank the public servants in ECO for all of the work that they have been doing on the YESAA reset oversight group, for example. Through the work of ECO, and in partnership collaboratively with our government, we have a joint effort — not only internally, but with the Government of Canada as well and Yukon First Nations — to collectively speak about efficiencies and ongoing improvements on the YESAA process. I know that is alien to the members opposite. They took Bill S-6 directly to Ottawa without the First Nations' blessings. But here on this side of the Legislative Assembly — whether it is the mining MOU or the YESAA reset or responding to the litigation that we were left with from the previous government — we have an obligation to First Nation governments to make sure that we are working with them in partnership.

As part of the mandate, the oversight group is considering changes to YESAA and/or its regulations that will address the amendments and renewals of existing projects in an effort to reduce unnecessary assessments. We've been working very hard in that capacity.

The government, with the Council of Yukon First Nations, has written to Canada to request a review of the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* to address whether or not the assessments are required throughout the authorization as amended or renewed. We met with the chairs of the Water Board and YESAB together. I don't think that the members opposite ever did that and I don't think that they ever really talked to the First Nations as much as we have when it comes to this important industry.

Mr. Kent: I guess the answer to my question should have actually just been: "Next election". The Liberals are zero for two in answering questions here today with respect to mining, so I'll give them another shot.

There is currently over 50 percent of the Yukon off limits to mineral claim staking. A healthy and sustainable mining industry needs the ability for new claims to be staked. Two large areas that are off limits to mineral staking are the Kaska traditional territories of the Ross River Dena Council and Liard First Nation.

Can the Premier update this House on negotiations for when those blanket staking bans will be removed?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I wonder why we're in that situation that we're in with Kaska. I think there were some litigation questions that were outstanding from the previous government. But, Mr. Speaker, what we've seen — and I'll give credit to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Environment, as well, for coming together collaboratively with ECO as well when we talk with First Nation governments, when we talk to proponents, when we travel internationally to drum up business for the mining industry.

You have a government here that is committed to working with First Nation governments — unlike the previous government — when it comes to our resource industry. You have a government here that is going to take the time it needs

to take to make sure that we have a strong industry. But at the same time, I'm so proud of the work that this government has done to diversify the portfolio in Yukon — whether it's through the process with the YuKonstruct folks, tourism industry strategies that have never happened before, working with the municipalities through Community Services, or the work that we've done with the Yukon Forum to unite and to communicate with First Nation governments.

I'm extremely proud of the work that we've done in this 34th Legislative Assembly. The members opposite are pining away for an election. We're still busy working, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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

Speakers leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 16: Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'm just asking our officials to get comfortable and take their seats. I will ask my colleagues to welcome Peter Morawsky, the managing counsel of the solicitors' group with the Department of Justice, and Abdul Hafeez, who is our policy development officer at the Department of Justice, having worked on this particular bill. I welcome them both to the Legislative Assembly and thank them for their assistance this afternoon.

This is Bill No. 16, Mr. Deputy Chair. The government is pleased to bring forward the *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015* for discussion at Committee of the Whole.

I just have a few remarks which might alleviate some of the questions and then we're pleased to address questions the opposition may have with respect to this particular bill. The *Condominium Act, 2015* was developed as part of the land titles modernization project with the participation of Yukon First Nation governments, real estate lawyers, surveyors, and the business community as well as condominium owners, the federal Surveyor General's branch, the Law Society of Yukon, the City of Whitehorse, the Association of Canada Lands Surveyors, and the Government of Yukon.

The act was passed in May — the original *Condominium Act, 2015* — not original. The *Condominium Act, 2015* which Bill No. 16 will amend was passed in May 2015. Three years later, a public engagement was held. There were no regulations put in place in 2015 to accompany that piece of legislation. So, when work began on developing those regulations, public engagement was held from December 2018 to March 2019 on the concept of regulations and draft regulations.

Stakeholder and public engagement efforts in the draft regulations made it clear, Mr. Deputy Chair, that in order to operationalize the regulations and to ensure consistency with legislative developments in other Canadian jurisdictions, some amendments to the act were necessary, and that bill brings us to Bill No. 16.

The amendments before us are a result of engagement feedback and the recommendations of an independent consultant and reflect the practices in other Canadian jurisdictions. To respond to the recommendations and engagement feedback on the draft regulations and the concepts of what should be in those regulations that were received over the past few years, changes are required to Yukon's *Condominium Act, 2015*. The proposed amendments to the *Condominium Act, 2015* seek to provide a balance between economic development objectives and consumer protection measures.

I would like to provide the members and Yukoners with a brief overview of the key provisions of Bill No. 16. To begin, the proposed amendments modify insurance requirements to create greater flexibility for condominium corporations to respond to the changing insurance market. The amendments will also establish a clear reserve fund process and system for pre-existing condominiums, new condominiums, and condominiums that are in various stages of development. Additionally, the proposed amendments will modify voting entitlements and proxy voting and will clarify rules related to condominium liens.

Furthermore, these amendments will modify timelines for developers and purchasers in terms of the delivery of documents and funds, provide for a legislative framework to create and manage mixed-use condominiums — which is an important development here in the territory — establish special requirements for bare-land condominiums, and determine what type of condominium developments will qualify as

“substantially completed” in pre-existing condominiums. Those are all quite technical changes, but necessary in order for proper regulations to be brought in to enhance and give life to the *Condominium Act, 2015*.

Lastly, Mr. Deputy Chair, the proposed amendments provide transitional provisions to allow owners and developers an opportunity to prepare for and implement the new legislative requirements, such as those pertaining to insurance, reserve funds, timing of agreements, and management contracts. So, there is a transitional period here so that condominiums that are currently in existence or are being developed or are in the process of planning to be developed will know the timeline for the implementation of Bill No. 16, should it pass, and the regulations coming.

The items presented today exemplify the highlights of the proposed amendments in Bill No. 16 — a bill that our government is pleased to bring forward so that regulations can be brought into force and effect, give life to the *Condominium Act, 2015*, and resolve a number of issues for developers, condominium owners, and those in the future business of this type of housing project for the Yukon Territory.

I thank the Members of the Legislative Assembly for the opportunity to review those changes and I look forward to any questions that they may have.

Mr. Cathers: This is the last day of the Sitting and we have had very little chance to debate the Department of Health and Social Services, which is not only the largest department financially in government, but also one that is vital to the territory — especially during a pandemic. So, in the interest of getting to the Department of Health and Social Services later today and asking questions there, I will not be asking any questions at this point in time on the legislation and I will cede the floor to the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for her comments. We last spoke to this bill on November 9, and it’s unfortunate that we’re actually having this discussion this late in the game of this Assembly. I think that it was somewhat of an understatement to say that there are “some” amendments to the act, as I understand that there are 134 amendments to the legislation. As we discussed on November 9 when reviewing some of the issues, concerns, and questions that we felt — and still feel — needed to be addressed, key is the whole issue of regulations.

The minister pointed out in her opening comments this afternoon that the act of 2015 — there were no regulations, and work began three years later over the period of 2018-19, and it was in that course that they identified that amendments were necessary. On November 9, I asked the minister to confirm the timing of regulations and what work has been done — because, as I said at the time, the documents that were prepared by officials were very good. There was a series of summary documents and a summary of the proposed condominium regulations under the *Condominium Act, 2015*. Those documents are quite comprehensive. But it boils down to this act, and all the work that has been done over the last number of years by all of the people who were enumerated — individuals, groups, as well as public servants — will be for naught if we

don’t have a timeline for regulations. All the transitional provisions and all the new improvements to this legislation will be like, “So what?”

So, I have asked this question before about other legislation that we have debated in this Legislative Assembly. It is unfortunate that we have some pretty — there has been some decent legislation passed, but it’s useless unless it comes into force and effect.

So, can the minister — for the record — give this House an indication — before getting into any detailed questions with respect to the proposed amendments and the proposals for regulations — of what the timeline is? Have the regulations been developed in tandem with the development of these 134 — that’s what my notes tell me — amendments to the *Condominium Act, 2015*? If they have been done in tandem, then that may provide some relief to those who have been anticipating this work being completed and the changes being brought into effect.

As we discussed on November 9, the impact of the delays is more than just the good governance that is outlined in the proposed amendments. There are significant financial risks associated with the delaying of the reference to the transitional provisions even further when we see condominium corporations that do not currently have adequate reserve funds and the transitional provisions that would allow them to extend — as I recall from the minister — by special resolution but on an annual basis — that could be another 10 years. There are some corporations that will not have adequate reserve funds because they have been already in place for a number of years. There is a risk collectively and to individuals.

So, before I move into any other questions, I would very much appreciate, for the record, having an update and some information as to what we’re looking at with respect to the timing of regulations.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I think that we have talked many times about regulations being aligned with legislation and the importance of that. She and I clearly agree on that as an improved process going forward.

The information that I have is that the schedule for regulations to be completed is the spring of 2021. I have May — other people think that maybe spring is a bit sooner than that — but April or May 2021 is the goal.

As part of the question, there was a notation that the work began several years after the act, which was the reference to the engagement that began in 2018. I should say that the work began immediately upon me being given this file because I was aware that the *Condominium Act, 2015* was an important piece of legislation that had been passed in 2015 and that there had been no regulations developed. Work began when I first had the privilege of being given this job. It was through that work between 2017 and 2018 that it became clear that a number of the recommended regulations for implementation of this legislation were not supported by the act that was drafted at the time.

It became evident that, in order to put in place the regulations that are contemplated here, changes needed to be

made to the 2015 piece of legislation to come up to best practices in Canada and address a number of the issues that I mentioned earlier. As part of that process — and the implementation committees and the consultation that took place with respect to this project — regulations were being drafted along the way because that was the way in which it became evident what changes needed to be made.

A first draft of the regulations was shared for feedback in December 2018, and we will continue the work. The work has continued with the Land Titles Office Stakeholder Advisory Committee to finalize the regulations — so between now and the final version in the spring of 2021.

What I want to also say is that, with all good intentions, we will meet the deadline or the timeline set out for those regulations in the spring of 2021, but I should also emphasize that work is being done with the stakeholders advisory group and with industry. They have indicated that, while the regulations should be completed at that time, a transition period of implementation is recommended so as to not adversely affect the building seasons.

No decision has been made, but conversations have been had with respect to the idea that the regulations would be completed, but they would come into force and effect likely in the fall of 2021 for the purposes of making sure that everybody is properly educated about the changes. There will still be transitional provisions in the bill and in the regulations. They are in this bill and will be in the regulations — but nonetheless, the idea being that, even though they may be finished in May, they probably won't be implemented until the fall upon the recommendation of industry folks and their working schedule to not adversely affect projects that might be in the middle of being built over our short building season.

Lastly, I think there was a question regarding the reserve funds. I'm just going to take a moment to obtain the information that was related.

What I understood to be a question about reserve funds, or it may have just been a comment by the member opposite about — that's one example of something that's going to take a while. I can respond to that if she wishes or I can take my seat and, if she has a question about those, I can go there.

Ms. Hanson: I do want to speak about the reserve funds. I want to posit a question with respect to that. It may be what the minister is going to respond to.

One of the underlying concerns that I've heard from some is that the proposed regulations change the contribution by developers — the percentage that's required to be contributed to the reserve fund by developers — from, I believe — and the minister can confirm this — six percent.

The reason that I'm being a little bit vague on this is that, as I said before, we have a 156-page act and 80 pages of amendments. I'm not trying to go through clause by clause because I can't possibly do that. As I had said before, we don't have a crosswalk between the old legislation or the current legislation and the proposed amendments.

If the delay is to facilitate several large constructions that are being done — currently on the market — and so they wouldn't get caught in that cycle of having the larger

contribution — I am trying to figure out what would be the interest in seeing that delay.

If the minister could explain the changes being proposed with respect to what is currently expected of a developer of a condominium — in terms of contributions to the reserve fund — so the current — and what is going to be required under the proposed regulations.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair, and thank you for the question.

I am going to restate what I understand to be the question, which is basically why developers are required to contribute 25 percent of the estimated common expenses in a reserve fund, which is a change. I will see if I can address that and whether that answers the question.

Currently, the *Condominium Act, 2015* provides for three types of calculations to determine a developer's contribution to the initial reserve fund. The act requires that a developer make a payment to establish the reserve fund when the first unit is conveyed to a purchaser. This is the current legislation.

The timing of the first conveyance determines the amount that the developer must pay. If it occurs within one year from the deposit of the condominium plan, the developer's minimum contribution, at this time, is five percent of the estimated operating expenses in the interim budget multiplied by the number of years, or partial years, since the deposit of the condominium plan — not terribly clear cut.

If the first conveyance occurs after one year from the deposit of the condominium plan, the act requires the developer to contribute up to 25 percent of the estimated operating expenses in an interim budget, depending on several other factors.

In the draft regulations, we propose that the contribution — again, the draft regulations are not before us, but this is I think what is being asked — to the reserve fund in the first interim budget should be an amount equal to at least 0.6 percent of the total asking sale price of all the units, calculated as of the day that the first unit is sold — so it is a little more certain based on the amount of units that will be sold. In other words, that would mean that an amount greater of five percent of the operating costs or 0.6 percent of an amount equal to the total of the asking sale price of all the units. That would be calculated at the time of the sale of the first unit.

Mr. Deputy Chair, we received feedback from a number of stakeholders that, while they agreed in principle that the developer should provide the initial funding for the reserve fund, the amounts proposed by the regulations would result in an unrealistically high initial contribution that developers would not be able to achieve. Therefore, the proposed amendment will simplify the calculation to determine the developer's contribution to the reserve fund and will provide more confidence to the purchasers. Requiring the developer to establish a reserve fund by contributing 25 percent of the annual estimated common expenses to the reserve fund is more logical and simple — and, I would add, knowable — to the developer, as it allows the developer to determine their costs well in advance of a sale.

I have several examples, but I am going to stop there to see if that addresses the changes. In the past, there was a very complicated calculation based on a number of factors and based on some time when the first unit was sold to when the second unit was sold. There is an attempt here with all of the engagement that occurred to simplify that process to have the developer know up front the amount that is required to establish the reserve fund.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. I understood from the summary documents that the government was proposing this 0.6 percent in terms of the value of all the units. If the minister then could speak to how the proposed regulations will serve to prevent a developer from underestimating so that the condo corporation is not left with a budget that is inadequate and then the baseline is set too low for the operation of the condo corporation, which can make it very challenging for a group of people who are just, first of all, coming together in a community to sort out.

I believe — but I ask to have it on the record — that the proposal is that there are some safeguards proposed to be built in. My purpose for asking these questions is to try to get them on the record because I think they're fairly important.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This is an excellent question. The amendments that are proposed in Bill No. 16 would — there are amendments that would address the current section — what is currently section 141 of the *Condominium Act, 2015*. It directly addresses the situation that's being asked about here. Section 141, if it is to be amended, would indicate that the actual common expenses that are reasonably accrued by the condominium corporation would need to be done so that, in the event that the condominium corporation — they would pay their percentage into the reserve fund based on their estimated expenses. In the event that the estimated expenses are wrong or incorrect, they would need to pay the difference into the reserve fund, which would enhance their interest in making sure that their expenses are accurately reflected or their estimates are accurately reflected. If, for instance, the changes were made to section 141, it would read that — if the difference described in the section above is greater than 10 percent of the total estimated common expenses, the developer would be required to pay the corporation at the same time as the developer pays that difference of an additional amount calculated according to the regulations.

So, there would be — it's not called here a "penalty", but the provision is that they would be trying to estimate their expenses as close to reality as possible; otherwise, they would be required to pay the difference. If it's out by more than 10 percent, they would be required to pay an additional cost that will be set out in the regulations — so, encouraging, I will say, the developer's interest in making sure that those estimates are as close to the true expenses or calculations as appropriate so that they are not financially penalized.

I can make a reference for the member opposite to section 141 in Bill No. 16. It talks about adding certain wording. That wording would be added into the section of the act, which would give the effect that I've just described.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. So, those penalties — or whatever they want to be called — the amounts that are identified that can go up to nine times the amount of the difference — if it is more than 35-percent skewed, according to the document. Is that going to be in legislation or in regulation? I am just unclear, when she was referencing section 141, whether she was suggesting that the method of calculating these differences would be set out in the legislation as an amendment to section 141, or if the intent is to have that reflected in regulations?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The requirement for the condo corporation to properly estimate their expenses — and the fact that they would need to pay the difference if they do that incorrectly — will exist in the legislation. The additional amount that they might need to pay if their calculation is wrong by more than 10 percent will be in the regulation. That is the distinction.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. With respect to reserve funds and establishing — we have talked about how they are going to be done, but the whole issue around transitional rules for reserve funds — in the notes that were provided to the public, it talks about — neither the provisions in the *Condominium Act, 2015* dealing with reserve funds nor the regulations dealing with them immediately apply to pre-existing condominiums. We had some discussion about this before.

There is a proposal for a three-year transition period, and existing condominiums — all the buildings that are currently around the territory that are condominium corporations — will be expected to have obtained a reserve fund report. Reserve fund reports, which we discussed, have to be done by a qualified person — and establish a reserve fund by that three-year anniversary.

Can the minister confirm that this is the only extension? As I recall, I thought that there was some discussion — that this could be longer than that. But is there only one three-year extension proposed in the amendments that we're talking about today?

I will come back to another aspect of that in a moment.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I just want to make sure that we have the correct reference here. The reference that is being made by the member opposite indicated a three-year extension. Bill No. 16 changes that to a five-year extension, and I'm looking at section 133 in the bill which will amend section 239 of the act. That's on page 78 of the bill, if that's of assistance to the member opposite. It notes the change in the definition of "substantially advanced". In relation to a condominium corporation, it means that the necessary documentation has been developed under the former act. On page 79, it goes on to speak about the bylaws of a pre-existing condominium and then notes a number of other changes that are transitional in that section.

I can also indicate — I think it's under (g) in that section. Paragraph (2)(f) is replaced with the following: section 17 of the former act applies to sections 171 and 181 of the act and does not apply to any pre-existing condominium unit, subject to the later of the following — the day that is 18 months after

the day it comes into force and effect in relation to a particular type of insurance for a condominium. It goes on to talk about the insurance policies and does not note the changes in that section.

I want to say, Mr. Deputy Chair, that part of the difficulty in this — and I truly appreciate it for the member opposite as well as for anyone who is reading Bill No. 16. The member opposite has mentioned it before about the benefit of a consolidated piece of legislation where the actual changes are inserted into the act. Often — well, always — legislation is not amended in that way. When amendments are made to a piece of legislation, they exist separately to that piece of legislation, of course, which is why it's always difficult to make sure that you are reading the most up-to-date piece of legislation, until such a time as a consolidated act or a consolidated set of laws are published.

While I certainly will follow up with the department about us being able to make that available in an unofficial way, if it exists when work is this complicated, it's not generally the way in which that work happens. Clearly, you are reading things like "the insertion of these two words" into a piece of legislation that you may or may not have in front of you. I appreciate how complicated that is.

Let me do it this way. The proposed amendments do provide that pre-existing condominiums with the following types of transition assistance — so these will apply to condominiums that already exist if and when Bill No. 16 becomes law. These transitions are in place to help them comply with the reserve fund requirements, which I understand the member opposite to be asking about. Pre-existing condominium corporations that are 10 years or older on the day of the coming into force of the act are exempt from the reserve fund study for a period of five years. They will not need to do a reserve fund study for at least five years. After that period, those condominium corporations may waive the reserve fund study requirement annually through a special resolution. So, if a group of individual condominium owners choose — and they own a building that is more than 10 years old — to not do the reserve fund study, they may do that by way of special resolution going forward.

Pre-existing condominium corporations that are less than 10 years old on the day of the coming into force of the act are exempt from the reserve fund study for a period of five years only. So, newer condominiums will have to sort out how they are going to do a reserve fund study at some time after five years. They can do it sooner, of course, if they choose to, but they will have to do it after five years. I hope that is helpful.

I also have a note that, for condos that are older than 10 years, there could be a regulation developed, based on the information and advice that comes forward in the next number of months, that a later date for a reserve fund study could be prescribed in the regulations, but right now, it's five years and then they would have to make a special resolution each year after that unless the regulations provide differently. I hope that is helpful.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. I understand it, and I guess that is what made me twig to it because the concerns that I had — and I still have a couple.

One is that you could have a situation now where a building is 10 years old — and so it's 15 years before you can waive it. There are provisions — and I hope that we can get to the parts about ensuring people's rights to have prudent management of a condo corporation. But it could be quite a shock to find out that, if you wait 15 years after a building to do a reserve study to find out what the actual costs of replacement — as it says, the reserve fund is for the repair or replacement of major components of common property and common assets like your roof, your exterior paint, your windows, heating systems, elevators, et cetera. Those are all very, very expensive. They all have an end-of-service life, and the reserve study identifies that and it identifies the cycle with which money should be put toward that.

I noted that, when the government's document was published — one of its public consultation documents — the draft regulatory summary for public engagement on governance reserve funds and general matters — the government was proposing that there be a three-year transition period. I'm wondering why it was changed from three to five years in what we see before us today.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that this is, again, an excellent question and something that was worked on — clearly with careful thought — by the advisory committee. The question is: Why are condominiums 10 years old or older allowed the five years, and why was it changed from three to five?

It is important to note that the following types of pre-existing condominiums may require more time — and that was the discussion — for them to comply with the reserve fund requirements. Let's remind ourselves that, currently in the legislation, there are no reserve fund requirements. There are certainly condominiums much older than 10 years — maybe older than 20 years — here in the territory that will ultimately be affected by this, and the concept was to give them a bit more time to resolve that fact.

Again, this will be driven ultimately by the legislation but more clearly by the condominium owners because they can choose to have a reserve fund report done sooner than that or an assessment of what the reserve fund might be. Older condominium corporations that were built more than 20 years ago may be in need of substantial repairs or replacements, which is, I think, what the member opposite has noted. These types of older condominiums may require a large amount in their reserve funds, and it will be difficult to establish that in a short period of time — the idea being to give a bit more time for those owners to come to terms with that and to sort out how to achieve that reserve fund.

There are no reports or statistical data, unfortunately, available that can provide the current state of these older condominiums. However, discussions with the independent consultant and others, and research, showed that those types of condominiums may require substantial repairs and

replacements and, in order to come up with the reserve fund, a bit more time would be beneficial.

Secondly, some pre-existing older condominiums built on affordable housing concepts for Yukoners may have low-income residents, and they may face difficulties in paying a higher monthly condo fee to meet the reserve fund threshold in a shorter period of time.

So, there is some thought about making that period of time five years instead of three to ease that adjustment.

There may also be a situation — which is an important factor for consideration as well — that condominiums, as reserve funds as they have across the country, become more and more common and ultimately required by the legislation, there needs to be this transitional period for condos that don't have that kind of reserve fund, but ultimately they could also affect the value of an owner's property if it's determined, for instance — you're making a choice between buying into a condominium corporation where there is a reserve fund and you think that's a positive thing and you think there's some ability to help pay what those costs might be over time. Those who do not have a reserve fund and whether that could ultimately affect the property values — those things were all taken into account so that the transition could be as smooth as possible — not too long and not too short.

After five years, the annual review to grant an exemption annually to meet the reserve fund requirements allows unit owners of older condominiums to make more informed decisions. They can ultimately still decide not to have a reserve fund going forward or to waive the requirement for the report going forward — but ultimately, that's a decision made jointly by special resolution that will need to be made by the owners of that unit. At that point, the authority — or the power, really — in that decision-making shifts, when you have an older condominium, to the owners.

If I could just have one more moment to see if I can add anything.

I will add one more piece of information that has been provided to me, and that is that the owners in this type of situation of an older condominium could also choose not to establish a reserve fund through budget amendments, but the majority would have to do so at a general meeting and that ultimately — again, back to the concept that those decisions rest in the hands of the owners, but those also could affect property values. So, those are the people who should be making that decision.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. I would ask the minister to clarify: If that's the course that was decided — not to do a reserve study — do the regulations or proposed regulations set out a threshold — so a higher threshold — with respect to members of the condo corporation deeming that they will waive the conduct of a reserve study after the requisite period of time has passed? It would appear to me, Mr. Deputy Chair, that many of the older condominiums, in fact, are probably what we would call "condo conversions". That has passed. Looking forward with respect to condo conversions — so, you own an apartment building and you want to convert it to condos — are you, as the owner of that building, pursuant to

the new regulations, required to assure that a reserve study has been completed as part of the sale and to ensure that it's adequately resourced prior to selling it? Again, it's like you're putting something on the market that already has a history as opposed to something that's new. So, I'm looking to see how condo conversions are anticipated to be addressed in the amendments as well as in the proposed regulations.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: That's another good question. There are two parts I think that are important to make distinct. Even if an existing building which is currently rented out as apartments, let's just say — or it could be a smaller building; it could be a house with three apartments or that sort of thing — ultimately, if he wants to convert it from being a rental unit into a condominium, the rules and regulations — the legal authority and the legal entity that is a condominium — would need to come into play under this legislation — or the *Condominium Act, 2015* — and it would actually create a new legal entity. So, despite the fact that the building was 10 years old or 40 years old or whatever it might be, the triggering factor would be the fact that it was being converted into condominiums, and then the condominium laws and authorities would apply to it.

The other part of the answer to this question is that those specific concepts of a conversion and what rules will apply are to be included in the regulations, but aren't in the current draft regulations. It is something that the advisory committee is still grappling with, but important to note — because the concept of changing some property from what is currently a rental or owned by one person into a condominium is about a condominium as a legal entity and the requirements of the owners to have value in that, and those concepts will be a new situation, regardless of whether the building is currently existing or if it is built new.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. My reason for raising that was because it was referenced in the document that talks about condominium conversions as part of the regulations consultation that was published, and I had a further question. I mean, it does say that the reserve fund study is to be obtained for a converted condominium by the developer, and in many cases, the amount identified as required for the reserve fund would be higher than for a new building because it's old — as I said earlier — older, anyway. I look at the ones that I am aware of and they are significantly older. As I understand it, the onus is on the developer to obtain that reserve study for the converted building and to contribute to the reserve fund the amount recommended by the reserve fund study at the time the first unit is transferred. I am hopeful that this is something that the minister has directed that is a reasonable approach.

I have a question with respect to building assessment reports for converted buildings. I am quoting here — the Government of Yukon suggests that the regulations state that an approving officer for a public authority may require the developer to obtain a building assessment report. The report would be prepared by a professional engineer, a licensed or registered architect, or another person specified by the approving authority. I guess my question is: When we are looking again at the issues associated with something that was built in a time previous, why would the government be hesitant

to make it obligatory as opposed to permissive? Why would it be “may” as opposed to “shall” ensure that a building assessment be done by a qualified professional?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will see if I can make my way through this. I think that the question is about what is referenced in section 54(2)(i) of the current *Condominium Act, 2015* — not of the bill. I am going to look that up. It is unchanged by the adoption of Bill No. 16.

I will describe that this section relates to the developer’s requirement to disclose, and that is in respect of a converted building. It requires that the developer disclose, of course, information that they have and that the additional requirements will be set out in the regulations, but the actual legislation will be unchanged — if I can make a reference to that.

I also want to make comments with respect to — I believe that the member opposite is identifying some draft regulatory summaries back from November 2018, at which time a set of detailed summary documents were released that contained proposed provisions to be included in the regulations and sought feedback on those proposals. The issues that were identified in the draft regulatory summaries for public engagement are still being addressed in the regulations, but the concept of the developer being required to disclose certain facts with respect to the conversion of the details of that building will remain unchanged and live in the legislation.

Ms. Hanson: I understand that the issue I’m raising is — if I don’t know it, then I’m obviously not going to disclose it. The question I’m raising about conversion — the language and the notion that, rather than requiring making an obligation of somebody who is converting an existing series, condo, or apartments into a condominium to get a professional assessment so that then there is no excuse for not knowing that there’s mould or there is a faulty foundation or whatever. It’s really a direction that government takes as to whether or not they put that onus on the seller — keeping in mind that we have no homeowner protection in this territory, let alone for an old building.

It would seem to me to be reasonable to expect that, if somebody is able to make money by converting an existing building into condominiums, there should be some basic undertaking expected of them that they have a professional assessment of the integrity of that building.

Acting Chair’s statement

Acting Chair (Mr. Gallina): If it helps members, they can refer to me as the Acting Chair.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have “Acting Chair” written right here, sir — if I can remember.

Mr. Acting Chair, I take the member opposite’s point. The current legislation enables regulations to be made in relation to this. The final determination has not been made as to whether or not that will be a must, but I certainly take note of your concerns. I completely understand that anything that is available to the developer must be disclosed. I think that the likely regulation direction will be that they are required — in the concept of the conversion — to determine all of the

information that they can possibly ascertain so that we are not ultimately having converted buildings or converted condominiums that do not have the appropriate protection for owners.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. I hope that the government will — or whichever government is in place at the time — err on the side of protecting those purchasers.

I have a question with respect to information certificates. In the summary documents, it talks about section 186(1) of the existing act — of the act prior to amendment — providing certain persons — for example, a unit owner or a mortgagee — the right to request an information certificate from the condominium corporation setting out specific information about the corporation.

The regulations would require that the information certificate include — in addition to the information set out in section 186 — the financial statements and budgets of the corporation for the current year and for the previous five years and any claim, order, or judgment filed or issued by the court against the developer or corporation.

One question is: Is it any judgment or claim against the developer specific to that condo corporation, or is it any judgment? What protection does an existing condominium owner have, or how do they exercise the rights identified in section 186(1) — currently absent the coming into effect of this five-year-old legislation? I raise this question because we have had people come to our office who have been unable to get financial statements from their condominium corporation. It’s hard to believe, but it is true — where information has been withheld by people who are actually legally owners, or part owners, of that condominium whole — the common.

What rights does a condominium owner in a condo development have as part of a corporation? Is section 186 just sort of hanging out there and it doesn’t do anything? I’m just curious. I can see how it would be beneficial when this legislation actually comes into effect.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I want to make reference to section 186(4) of the *Condominium Act, 2015*, which I understand the member opposite to be asking about: “On application by the corporation, a unit owner or a person who is affected by an information certificate, the Supreme Court may make any order it considers just in the circumstances to give effect to or relieve the corporation from some or all of the consequences of an inaccurate certificate.”

That’s the reference, I think, in section 186, to how those difficulties could be addressed. What I would like to say about — that’s currently unchanged. The regulation — often our conversation here is about what might be in the regulations, but I take note of the member opposite’s question. I think, if I understand this correctly — I want to say that the first part of her question was about if it would be that the information certificate would have to disclose any adverse information about the corporation or developer’s legal status. I think that’s fair. It can’t just be about a particular building or reserved for that.

Again, it’s not my role here — or ability — to provide legal advice, but I think that’s information that would be reasonably

inferred from the legislation — that if you're disclosing a history of bankruptcy, for instance, it can't be in relation to — I'm using another example — but it can't just be, "Oh, I'm only bankrupt with the Bank of Nova Scotia and not with the Royal Bank." That's not the intention here. It's about disclosure of information.

I think I'll stop there because I don't want to misinterpret the question, but let me make one more reference, if I could.

One more reference, Mr. Acting Chair, if I can, to section 212 in the *Condominium Act, 2015* — it provides for authority if the corporation does not do what it's required to do. I'm afraid I'm not able to answer the question about what the current state of affairs is for an individual, but I will encourage the member opposite — if she is aware of a specific situation — which I think she alluded to — I would be happy to talk outside of this process and determine whether there is some assistance that could be given to having people obtain the information. But under section 212 of the current *Condominium Act, 2015*, "Enforcing performance of duties" is the title of section 212(1) and it has enforcement provisions there.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate the minister's comments. It does point to the importance of — really, it's going to be critical to have good public education. The number of people — over the last five or six years, in particular — who have moved into condominiums that are exceedingly expensive and who are very much unaware of — currently, they don't have any rights because this law is not there. But this section 186(1) is really important. I just can't overstate the importance of making sure that people are aware of that as we get this forward.

As I was reading through and looking at some of the changes, there are a number of amendments. I just want to ask for clarification. It's my understanding that the current legislation allows for active engagement on the condominium corporation board of all unit owners in a condominium corporation. Can the minister clarify that in fact — having previous experience — that in the past, tenants were not allowed to be on a condominium board? But am I correct in understanding that tenants can, under what's being proposed here, be members of a condominium board?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm looking at section 65(1) of the *Condominium Act, 2015*. It is unchanged by Bill No. 16. Let me just note that it indicates an eligibility to serve as a director and indicates that the only person eligible to be a director of a condominium corporation are: (a) an individual who is a unit owner; and (b) an individual who is representing a corporate unit owner — so maybe a commercial space or something like that.

I suppose that technically someone representing a corporate owner could also be a tenant, but the current Bill No. 16 will not change *Condominium Act, 2015* section 65, which really makes it only unit owners who can be a director of the condominium corporation.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate that from the minister, but I thought I had read in the proposed regulations that there were proposed regulations with respect to participation in condominium corporation governance that would, by regulation, allow tenants. The second part of the next question

is with respect to the representation — I would like to have this clarified for the record as well — whether or not the representatives of the developer of the condominium — so if XYZ corporation has developed a condominium, are they also allowed to be part of the governance of that condominium?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will make reference again to section 65 of the *Condominium Act, 2015*. I didn't maybe go far enough, and perhaps this is what the member opposite is thinking about. Let me just, before I read that section, clarify that there is no reference in regulations — or there hasn't been a conversation in regulations — specifically about tenants being able to become a director, but section 65(2) says that "(2) Despite subsection (1)..." — which is the one I already read about unit owners or individuals representing corporate owners — "... but subject to subsection (3)..." — which sets out all the folks who are not eligible to be a director because of certain personal circumstances — "... a corporation..." — so, a condo corporation — "... may, by a bylaw passed at a general meeting held after the first annual general meeting, allow classes of persons other than those referred to in subsection (1) to be directors." So, an individual condo corporation could say, "We, by virtue of passing a proper bylaw, think that tenants should be available to be directors. We might have a lot of tenants who are active in the community of the condo..." — something like that. They may make that decision for whatever reason. They could do that by virtue of that kind of a bylaw, but it is not provided for otherwise as a class of individuals as tenants.

I know that there was a second part of the question. I'm sorry that I am forgetting what it was.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. McPhee: About the developer — thank you. Somebody else remembered what it was — not me.

Yes, initially, the developer appoints a board. So, a new condominium corporation has a board that is appointed by the developer.

They're known as the "first directors". The first directors have the same standard of care to the condo corporation as later elected directors. In order to get it up and running, that's the way that they are required — the developer, because they are the initial entity, is required to develop a board of first directors. They are required to have the same responsibilities that ultimately the directors who are owners of that space would have, and that's in section 76.

I will make reference also — further down in section 76, which might be of assistance to the members opposite and to the Member for Whitehorse Centre. First directors, as I will call them — the first initial board is not entitled — section 76(2) indicates that they have to exercise the powers and perform the responsibility of a condo corporation. They have the same powers and responsibilities as ultimately elected voters. They owe the same standard of care. They're not entitled to remuneration from the corporation to serve as a director even though, in other cases, directors might have that available to them. They are vicariously responsible. There's a real requirement here that they carry out these duties in the best interests of the soon-to-be owners or of the owners — those

who will be elected as the directors of the condominium corporation. That's all set out in section 76 of the legislation.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate the minister's clarification on that.

I think that where I was coming from, with respect to the role of the developer — when I look at the summary of proposed condominium regulations — the summary that deals with governance of condominiums — it talks about the fact that the current act allows for voting by proxy and that the government proposes that the regulations provide that, if the proxy voter is a director or an employee — the developer or a person who provides management services to the corporation of the condominium corporation — then the forum that appoints the proxy voter must acknowledge that the proxy voter is one of those identified persons and must note the possibility of that person having a conflict of interest.

This is not how it is set out in the act right now, so I'm just seeking clarification. Is this one of the proposed regulations that will get tracked? I personally think that it is a good one — that it's only valid for one meeting or a specific resolution and that this type of proxy voter cannot vote on any issue in which they have a direct or indirect material interest. So, it's a limitation being placed on the use of proxies. The proposed limitation by regulation would only apply to those persons who are a director or an employee of the developer or a management services contract — such as a management services company that the condominium corporation employs to manage its condominium or some of its affairs. I want to see confirmation that this is the correct interpretation. Otherwise, proxies would be allowed for members who may be absent or unable to attend the meeting in person.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am going to first make reference to the question asked and the response set out in the *Condominium Act, 2015* in section 98. Then I will make a reference to proxies in general.

Section 98, with the passage of Bill No. 16, would read that a person other than a mortgagee, who may vote under section 97 — which is about voting generally — may attend a general meeting and vote either in person or by proxy. A person may not be a proxy if the person is the developer. I think that the question is that — under section 98(3), there are a number of items listed about individuals who cannot be a proxy. The developer cannot act in that capacity. A person who is an agent or any employee of a developer — again, these are references that have already been made — I think that the question is: Is this the interpretation — that those people cannot be a proxy? The interpretation is correct.

Also, a person who is an agent or an employee of the condominium corporation, a person who provides management services to the corporation, or a proscribed person or someone who belongs to a proscribed class of persons — none of those people can operate by way of a proxy.

The proxy concept in the work that was done in getting us to today — the question was asked not here today, but in that work: Is there a limit on an individual as to how many proxies they could carry? Are directors of the condominium corporation allowed to cast proxy votes? Ultimately, the

determination was that the proposed amendment to section 98 — which I have just made reference to — in the *Condominium Act, 2015* has removed the limitation on the number of proxies that an individual can carry at a meeting. In the past, there was a limited number that they could carry. Now that has been removed.

The proposed amendment to section 98(3) defines who may not hold proxies. I have just mentioned that. The provision does not include directors of a condominium corporation. The proposed amendments also provide opportunities to unit owners to attend meetings and vote electronically as provided for in the corporation's bylaws. This was an important progressive move, taking into account much of the information we heard.

At least in days past, when individuals would leave the territory for longer periods of time — sometimes known as "snowbirds" in the territory or in Canada — there was difficulty sometimes for condominium corporations to deal with their business or people could not do so remotely. So, this is a progressive change. Proxy voting and attending meetings electronically is the way of the future. This was not brought on by COVID, but it certainly fits into that category of progressive moves so that owners can participate. The proposed amendments to proxy voting are intended to assist condominium corporations in holding general and special meetings while providing enhanced opportunities for participation and voting in those meetings.

I hope that answers the questions.

Ms. Hanson: Just a clarification, if a condominium developer owns units in the building — they own it, so they're an owner as well as a developer — do they have rights, as owners, to vote? Is there not a conflict potentially in there?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Certainly a developer, if they are an ongoing legal entity, could be a unit owner. We are just looking for the references to whether or not there are limitations on that experience or their authority. They certainly could own a unit and have the rights and responsibilities of a unit owner, but we are just looking for that. I will get back to the member opposite on that, if there is a specific limitation that we can reference. It is not at our fingertips and I know that there might be more questions, so I am going to move on, if that's okay.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. Could the minister clarify — so, we have talked about the role and what limitations are placed on somebody using a proxy to vote, but there is also discussion about powers of attorney — that the proposed regulation would provide that a property manager, developer, or condominium corporation or director can be given a power of attorney to act for a unit owner. Then it sounds very much similar to what a proxy can do. The proposal is that the person appointed as attorney acts with respect to only one specific meeting or resolution and is limited to voting on only one issue, and there are similar conflict of interest provisions. So, I am just wondering what difference is intended and if that is reflected in the legislation or the just-proposed regulations.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I can indicate that — I am going to go back a question. Mr. Morawsky has been very helpful at finding section 138 of the *Condominium Act, 2015*, and that

references the ownership by the developer of a unit. I am just looking for my own version. I will leave that as a reference that might — it comes under the title of: “Unit owners pay condo fees during transition period based on interim budget”. That reference is there and the changes that are suggested — that is, developers as owners.

Let me go forward with the question about power of attorney. The distinction would be: If I am a condo unit owner, and the member opposite owned condos in that building as well, and I can’t be at a meeting, I can certainly provide a proxy to either of the other tenants who might be directors on the board to go forward and to vote with respect to my interests at that particular meeting.

A power of attorney is quite a separate legal document. I’m going to say it this way: A power of attorney would not be appropriately used for the purposes of just giving someone a vote, like a proxy, to take place at a condominium board of directors meeting. A power of attorney would be required — first of all, there are legal documents that are required in order to advance a power of attorney. There are requirements about when that power of attorney would be invoked. It generally has to do with the individual’s inability to provide for their own decision-making and/or their own needs with respect to assistance.

Power of attorney, as noted here, indicates that, if a power of attorney has been invoked for a particular director, that could be used to further their interest in the condo corporation, but it’s not the same as a proxy. A proxy is the opportunity to vote in my stead if I’m not able to be at the meeting — or as I said, with changes, to participate electronically. A power of attorney is quite a different legal requirement and responsibility, and it is regulated by the power of attorney act, not by the condominium act.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate that clarification. I’m just curious as to why — and I’m just referencing this document at page 8 which says that proposed regulations would provide that a property — blah, blah, blah — can be given a power of attorney. I’m just curious as to why the government document would say that’s what the regulations propose given the — as I understand it — and we’ve talked about powers of attorney before in this Legislative Assembly, so I just was curious about that.

Can the minister identify or outline for us how the act — with respect to placing liens — and I understand that it’s section 167 or something in the act — we had some correspondence — the minister had correspondence from an interested individual who indicated some concerns with respect to the burdens — and I’m quoting here — and restrictions for placing liens in section 167 as being too high — so the threshold — and how the new amendments to the act address issues like liens for fines or repairs for damage caused by an owner of a condominium — ultimately, it’s the owner’s responsibility — and how are condominium corporations enabled by the legislation to address unpaid condo fees and/or special assessments that are determined by the condominium board of directors — or the majority of owners through the board meetings, not just the directors? So, they’re just some general questions in terms of

the whole governance with respect to ensuring that, when there are contraventions of bylaws or regulations that are established by the condominium corporation through its duly elected board, they’re enforceable. What are the mechanisms that are open to the board now under the act and what, if any, amendments are being proposed in the new legislation?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I just want to take a moment to distinguish between fines and the question about liens and the more general question about how monies owing could be collected.

The concept of condominium liens is new in this legislation; they didn’t exist in the past. I can also indicate that — sorry; I may be incorrect about that. Let me say it this way: They’ve been rewritten so that they are — as set out in section 167 — let’s go there. There was a concept in a question about whether or not liens would also include fines. The decision has been made to keep them separate. The *Condominium Act, 2015* specifically provides that a lien may not be filed if the amount owing is a result of a fine — so a bylaw fine of some kind or something imposed by the condominium corporation. This is aligned with the purpose of liens specifically to secure unpaid contributions such as contributions to common expenses or reserve funds — so, generally smaller amounts versus larger amounts is one way to look at it.

We do understand concerns regarding the collection of fines from unit owners, especially in these challenging times as we go forward and there are changes to the legislation. Section 121 of the *Condominium Act, 2015* provides various enforcement options for condominium corporations to collect fines and any other money owed to the corporation.

Section 161 of the act also provides an option to the condominium corporation to charge interest on unpaid fines. In addition to the provisions of the *Condominium Act, 2015*, the proposed amendments to sections 104 and 104.01 would allow a condominium corporation to develop bylaws on various matters. That could include bylaws with respect to repairs, maintenance, and fines.

I will note that, in section 167, there are proposed changes that would ultimately result in condominium corporations having various means to collect money. I said section 167, but I meant 163, I think.

There are different options there. A tenant could pay an amount owing. A lender could agree to pay, whether it be a mortgage company or others. There is an option for a lawsuit if that was necessary. Alternative dispute resolution could be a possibility. Perhaps lastly, a condominium lien is used mostly for larger or for an ongoing claim, such as condominium fees that weren’t being paid — again, that reference is in section 167 — if it was a special levy of some kind or costs of repair work that wasn’t done and that is trying to be recouped.

Of course, a condominium lien process involves some process that is decidedly more complicated and more time-consuming. It wouldn’t likely be the first option, although ultimately, depending on the amount, length of time, severity, and complexity of the problem, it could result in the sale of a unit, but that’s certainly a much more complicated process than

it has been in the past. Those changes would result from the passing of Bill No. 16 and ultimately the regulations.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. I wanted to ask a question with respect to phased developments. We see — and we have seen, as I live in one — phased development. The document — a summary of proposed condominium regulations under the act — speaks to postponing the approval of bylaws that restrict rentals, pets, age of occupants, age for access to common property, and the marketing of the units by the developer until all phases of the development are completed.

I have a note to myself that this could be up to six years. There is a question mark after that. I am assuming that this was in something I read or that it was just a general question.

I guess what I am looking for is: What kind of suspension of some significant powers for a condo corporation — if the ability to make bylaws that restrict rentals or pets — I'm not so concerned about the pets — but there are other aspects, in terms of good governance, that normally you would expect, if you're living in a condominium setting — that you would have some say over those kinds of matters?

Can the minister confirm if that is what the current — not “regulatory environment” because there aren't regulations — law says? How would that proposed regulation be reflected in the legislation, and what kind of time frame? What reasonable parameter or limit can be placed on a developer in terms of ensuring that you are not in limbo forever as a board?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am just going to make reference again to the change of control from the developer to the elected board of directors. That is in section 76 of the *Condominium Act, 2015*. I think the reference that the member opposite is making is to some of the draft regulations that were distributed back in 2018 with respect to a possibility — in the concept of phasing in bylaws. Let me say that those are in the regulations. Bill No. 16 does not make any reference to it — the bill that is before the House today. Nonetheless, I appreciate that the question might be for phases going through. I make reference to section 76 because it is the opportunity for the developer to have the initial — or the responsibility and the fiduciary duty to the first board of directors, but that is not indefinite.

As a result, the types of bylaw questions or restrictions on ownership of a condominium corporation that are being contemplated in the question, I think, will rest with the directors as duly elected, but I don't have any information on whether the question that the member has about it possibly being up to six years — it is not something that we know about and it is not something that we can locate. I am happy to track that down, but it's certainly not in the proposed regulations that are currently drafted. Nobody is interested in having those kinds of decisions being delayed indefinitely. They are the responsibility of the owners, directors, and the board of directors that is duly elected in a condominium corporation.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate that answer. Essentially, as the minister knows, this is not a legal mind over here. I am referencing and trying to understand the concepts that are being put forward based on what I have read in the documents that speak to the consultation process. That is where a lot of these questions are arising from — the publicly available documents

that were provided as a way of interpreting the existing act and ways that have been proposed to amend it, including the regulations.

I appreciate the minister's response.

I have one other question with respect to reserve funds, which I should have asked earlier, but I just wanted to ask about mixed-use condominiums. As we have talked about before, the act as it is now makes references — this is where you can have residential with non-residential units, and then they are quite clearly delineated with respect to the specific interests of each “section”, I guess you would call it. My understanding is that the proposed regulations would see separate reserve funds for the residential and non-residential units.

My question is: Will the same timelines — and sort of exemptions or extensions — of the obligation to complete a reserve fund be applied to mixed-use condominiums as well?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will make reference to section 114 of the *Condominium Act, 2015*, and I will also make reference to Bill No. 16.

Let me just say it this way. Section 114 of the *Condominium Act, 2015* will be amended by the passing of Bill No. 16 to the point where it deals with mixed-use development and sets out the provision that a mixed-use development can have some sections. There will only ever be one condominium board, but there could be bylaws put in place for — let's just call it “commercial and residential” — if that was the mixed use, as an example — for the commercial units versus the residential units, and there could be bylaws and certain responsibilities and duties that apply to one type of unit versus the other.

Section 114, when and if it is amended, would indicate that a bylaw for a section may be in relation to the following types of matters: the control, management, maintenance, repair, et cetera for those particular units or for common property or common assets.

They could make bylaws regarding the duties of the condominium corporation in relation to the two types of units — or maybe there would be three types of units, but in my example, there are two — or any common property or common asset in that section. They could make bylaws with respect to the assessment of — and fixing — common expenses in relation to any of the common property or common assets of that particular section. They could also make bylaws regarding the exclusive use of any of the common property or common assets of the section. Meetings of eligible voters for those units in the section could include voting at meetings and individuals who are authorized to bring forward to the board certain matters of interest or certain particulars. So, there would be one board of directors, but individual bylaws or sections are authorized by what will be the new section 114.

Ms. Hanson: That is one board that I don't want to be on. Clearly, I am disqualifying myself.

I have questions with respect to understanding leasehold land condominiums. We understand that the *Condominium Act, 2015* provides that public authorities can develop leasehold condominium housing on lands that they own, including, as we just recently saw — and we talked about this

as part of the land titles modernization act. We have First Nation categories A and B and fee simple settlement land if they are registered in the Land Titles Office.

My question has to do with how the existing legislation deals with leasehold condominium agreements and the proposed regulations that the discussion document — the summary of proposed condominium regulations — talked about. All of the terms and conditions — I am quoting here from page 6 of that document — agreed upon regarding the leasehold condominium — for example, what happens with assets remaining at the end of the lease and to what extent the property is to be remediated, whether the condominiums are to be a particular type — low-cost housing, for example — would be set out in the leasehold condominium.

I understood that there was also a provision that spoke to not just the remediation, but the length of time and what happens to those buildings. Is there an expectation that regulations would talk about the expected life or duration of the buildings — the duration in terms of a leasehold condominium agreement? The public authority and the developer must enter into these agreements, so what is contemplated being contained in those?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As noted in the question, leasehold condo agreements are only ever going to be public with respect to a public authority — so a government or a First Nation government. So, it will entirely depend on the choice of that lease — if I could say it that way — or the length of the leasehold. There is not expected to be anything with respect to the regulations regarding the life of a building, because it's really about the life of the legal entity, which is the lease. The leasehold condos will only exist, as I've said, in the public realm or government realm. It's really about what will occur at the end of a lease. There are two options really. One option would be for the units of the lease to revert back to the landlord at the end of the lease. The other would be that the actual legal entity or the legal authority that is the condo structure — and I don't mean the building structure; I mean the legal structure of the condo — would in fact end and would be terminated, and then there would need to be a decision about what would be happening with the units or with the lease. So, the concept of the lease is about the length — partly about what are the rights and responsibilities and ultimately what is the decision for the length of that. It's not necessarily related to the expected life of the building, as was noted in the question. Regulations have yet to be developed with respect to the details of that, but that's what I can say to date with respect to that concept.

Ms. Hanson: I understand that we are talking about leasing the land from the public authority — you're building, as a condo, a home for which you may have a lease for 40 or 50 years or whatever — say, 40 years — and at the end that, if the land lease is not renewed, then am I correct when I read the proposed — I guess what I'm looking for is what experience elsewhere — because we've seen that these situations do exist elsewhere — so, in terms of determining the compensation. So, if my lease expires and I have a significant investment — I've built a house, my home, my condominium on that land — the regulations set out that, at a minimum, the public authority

would pay the leaseholder to ensure that they receive some compensation. So, are there industry standards? Is that what the government is intending to reflect in the regulations, or could the minister just elaborate on that? I mean, this is a model that we will see — we have seen it in other jurisdictions, but I think that the public — again, this is part of the public education piece — is going to want to know what kind of protections they have and what reasonable expectations they have that their investment of a number of years is not going to be for naught.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I am happy to have the opportunity also to comment on what the member opposite has said with respect to public education, because we certainly agree — our government, as does the Department of Justice — that the public education with respect to changes to the condominium act — because, as the member opposite has mentioned, condos are becoming a popular way of life here in the territory — is going to be critically important, and I agree that this is the case.

With respect to leasehold situations, I should say that there are, of course, other situations, and the member opposite has mentioned situations where this has happened in other places. A short answer with respect to industry standards regarding compensation — I think that was part of the question — there is not such a thing. The lease and what will occur at the end of the lease will be a requirement of disclosure. Individuals who are entering into those agreements are going to need to know fully what the expectation is at the end of the lease, what the life of the lease is to be, and what, if any, situation is going to occur at the end of that situation.

The fixtures, after the end of a lease, generally — by virtue of the operation of the principles of law — revert to the landowner at the end of the lease, and that's a standard principle of law. Anything else would be a fundamental policy change. If we were to consider changing that in some way, I don't think that is what is anticipated here.

Public authorities may choose to have lease terms accordingly. They may want to make sure that individuals who are entering into such leases know full well what the expectation is. I would say that we have had conversations regarding perhaps a special notation on the title of such a property so that — of course, there may be restrictions on selling such a property. If I have such a property under that circumstance, am I allowed to sell it to someone else? Certainly, issues of disclosure and making sure that, if I am permitted to do that, others who are buying into that situation know full well what the consequences of that are — there are many reasons why people might enter into such a situation — whether they want to enter into that lease type of arrangement with a public authority, with a government, with a First Nation government is a personal choice. Full disclosure of what the roles and responsibilities are in that situation must be available to the buyer.

Ms. Hanson: I would hope so. One would expect that there would be notice of expiry provided.

So, my question would be: Is the intention — when they talk about the proposed regulations, provide advance notice of an expiration of a ground lease — that they are going to — if

somebody enters into a ground lease condominium — leasehold land condominium agreement — that they will have, in the landhold agreement, an expectation that they will have five years' notice or X number of years notice of the expiration, and — to the minister's point — would the government propose, in its proposed regulations, that there be some restrictions toward the end of that lease with respect to selling?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that the protections with respect to the situation noted by the member opposite — there are a number of ways for those protections to exist. One might be a notice provision required in the regulations. One, of course, is a disclosure requirement to any potential buyer that you might be interested in buying this property, but the lease is up in five years or 15 years or 100 years — whatever it might be. That would absolutely be required by way of a concept of sale. Any other provisions that might be put in place by the — I am going to call it “the government” — whether it would be the Yukon government or a First Nation government — they could require certain provisions in their lease for notification and other protections. Lastly, I think that one of the protections would be that, if there was notation on the title of the property, somebody could be notified of that. It would absolutely be a requirement.

All of those could happen and probably should happen. There would be no way that a purchase or a sale of a property with that type of restriction could happen without that clear notification to a potential buyer.

Ms. Hanson: I know that you have enjoyed this condominium act 101, but I think that I have exhausted the questions that I could possibly ask. There are many more, but I would like to thank the minister for her forbearance this afternoon and her officials for their presence here, providing such able advice to the minister as we tried to glean the surface of these 134 amendments.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause-by-clause debate.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Deputy Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title of Bill No. 16 read and agreed to

Deputy Chair: Ms. Hanson has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 134 deemed read and agreed to
On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee that the Chair report Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a 15-minute recess?

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Deputy Chair: Okay. Due to our COVID-19 protocols, there will be a mandatory five-minute break to ensure that staff can have time to properly clean the desks and chairs.

Recess

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

Bill No. 205: Second Appropriation Act 2020-21 — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Health and Social Services — continued

Hon. Ms. Frost: I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak on the Health and Social Services supplementary budget. As we have seen before us, a lot of questions with respect to the \$33,695,000 relating specifically to COVID-related expenses — broken down as I have gone through it. I tabled the report introduced here in the Legislative Assembly to support Yukoners as we go through the pandemic — and looking at some of the top priorities as we look at the COVID pressures that we were seeing — some of the difficult and challenging pressures within the department — and the supplementary submission really covers that.

It covers the territory's position with respect to supports required to ensure that Health and Social Services was well positioned to protect and enhance the well-being of Yukoners during the global pandemic, as well as looking at mobilizing and establishing an emergency health operation centre with the support of the chief medical officer of health.

In that, we have also had to put significant resources in place for continuing care facilities and looked from there to ensure that our staff were well-supported and that we have the necessary essential cleaning supports and of course mobilizing the supports to ensure the safe protection of all the clients and visitation and limitations there — ensure that we had to look at

providing necessary supports to all of our continuing care workers, as well as the doctors and nurses who frequent these facilities to provide essential services — and bringing in additional cleaning staff, as well, during that time.

We had looked at the vision, health, and vibrancy of Yukon in ensuring sustainability of our communities during the pandemic. At the same time, there were significant obligations of the government to fulfill its mandate commitments to still deliver essential health services.

Part of the requirement around virtual care — knowing that we were not able to provide in-person supports, we certainly had to look at virtual opportunities and expanding the 1Health initiative, working with Highways and Public Works on the supports to health delivery.

As well, we had significant resources available to support our social support clients, our vulnerable citizens — looking at ensuring that the testing sites were established and set up along with our — of course, the communities had to have direct response and direct supports. We worked very closely with the chief medical officer of health in combatting COVID.

So, lots of really great things in the budget that covered our obligations — our COVID obligations. Incorporated in that — which we didn't spend a lot of time on — was the appropriations specific to the other added responsibilities of health.

An increase related to collective bargaining was part of the supplementary requests. We also had information as I indicated — information technology — acceleration of activities in the health care system during COVID. We also had policy and program development to support planning for our bilingual health centre — so that of course had to continue on, looking at ensuring we provide that essential service.

We looked at increasing supports to primary health care and expanded support for virtual options. We had to also look at Family and Children's Services and ensuring that we continue to provide coverage and funding for extended family care agreements, which was not historically funded. As part of the supplementary request to Family and Children's Services — let me see, now — \$100,000 was added to that — but a lot of conversations and discussions in the Legislative Assembly about early childhood and prevention services. We've had \$2,400,000 added to that specific line item to look at the one-year renewal commitment as well as the additional staff that was required for the Yukon family review process. Of course, we looked at increase-related supports to collective agreements for social supports, which weren't in the COVID-related expenses.

But off of that, a continuation of that, we had established or incorporated income support — the pioneer utility grant increased funding to meet the projected increases and demand for 2020-21. The income support for Yukon seniors supplement was also identified over and above the COVID-related expenses in this particular budget request.

Disability services — for parents of children with disabilities, there was increased funding — an agreement to meet the increase in needs and demands. There were also increased fees related to extension of supports — partly to deal

with mental wellness supports and to mental wellness hubs and increased requests related to the collective agreements.

Those were some of the objectives and the priority areas that we covered under this supplementary request. The opposition was briefed on that, so what I have just highlighted is information that was shared in the opposition briefing.

Out of the COVID-related expense budget — I know that we had extensive discussions with the health supports to mitigate COVID transmission — significant coverage — \$1,107,757. On top of that, there is the requirement to incorporate the mass flu clinic, and the flu clinics in the middle of a pandemic have had to continue on to ensure that Yukoners were provided the necessary health supports to remain healthy during the pandemic.

Further to that, we had enhanced screening and enhanced cleaning staff required throughout our facilities and an increase at WES for domestic aides. We had screening staff at our continuing care facilities and the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. We had increased cleaning at our health centres. There are quite a number of care facilities across the Yukon, so we had supports in each of our facilities.

In addition, quite a lot of supports on our PPEs and cleaning supplies went out to all of our health centres and our continuing care facilities. We talked a bit about a vaccine — very excited to let Yukoners know. Of course, we are on the cusp of making an announcement very shortly, pending federal approval on the vaccines — the Moderna vaccines. That was covered in the budget. There was \$4 million set aside for that funding — really exciting news for Yukoners. I think that we will see, early in the new year, the rollout of the vaccines across the territory — excited for Yukoners that we will start seeing the end of COVID and the end of COVID in such a way that we will start putting some proactive measures in place with the vaccine as it comes quickly available and supporting, of course, Yukon communities and setting the sights and the vision on vaccinations and vaccinating our priority clients.

We will continue to work with the chief medical officer of health and our health professionals and work with our health centres as we look at rolling out the vaccines to mobile clinics that will be out in the communities. We have one mass clinic here in the city that is mirrored after the mass flu clinic.

The community and the team are well prepared for the delivery of the vaccines. Further to that, we have continuing, of course — we still need to have the enhanced screening and staff supports as we go out across the Yukon. That will continue on.

The estimated budget request that we have before the House today for debate is \$33,695,000 and the difference that we have in capital requests is \$8.62 million. Then, on top of that, there is an additional request of \$43,602,000.

Deputy Chair: Order.

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(1)

Deputy Chair: The time has reached 5:00 p.m. on this, the 45th sitting day of the 2020 Fall Sitting.

Standing Order 76(1) states, "On the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for that Sitting pursuant to Standing Order 75, the

Chair of the Committee of the Whole, if the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole at the time, shall interrupt proceedings at 5:00 p.m. and, with respect to each Government Bill before Committee that the Government House Leader directs to be called, shall:

“(a) put the question on any amendment then before the Committee;

“(b) put the question, without debate or amendment, on a motion moved by a Minister that the bill, including all clauses, schedules, title and preamble, be deemed to be read and carried;

“(c) put the question on a motion moved by a Minister that the bill be reported to the Assembly; and

“(d) when all bills have been dealt with, recall the Speaker to the Chair to report on the proceedings of the Committee.”

It is the duty of the Chair to now conduct the business of Committee of the Whole in the manner directed by Standing Order 76(1). The Chair will now ask the Government House Leader to indicate whether the government bills now before Committee of the Whole should be called.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The government directs that Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act 2020*, be called at this time.

Bill No. 205: *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — continued

Deputy Chair: The Committee will now deal with Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

The Chair will now recognize Mr. Silver for the purpose of moving a motion pursuant to Standing Order 76(1)(b).

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be deemed to be read and carried.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Silver that all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be deemed to be read and carried. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$96,591,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$18,253,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$114,844,000 agreed to

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to

Schedules A and B agreed to

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Silver that the Chair report Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act*

2020-21, without amendment. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

Bill No. 13: *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*

Deputy Chair: The Committee will now deal with Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*.

The Chair will now recognize Mr. Silver for the purpose of moving a motion pursuant to Standing Order 76(1)(b).

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Deputy Chair, I move that all clauses and the title of Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*, be deemed to be read and carried.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Silver that all clauses and the title of Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*, be deemed to be read and carried. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Silver that the Chair report that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*, without amendment. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: As the government bills identified by the Government House Leader have now been decided upon, it is my duty to rise and report to the House.

Speaker resumes the Chair

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(2)

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

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Also, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Finally, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Standing Order 76(2)(d) states: “On the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for that Sitting pursuant to Standing Order 75, the Speaker of the Assembly, when recalled to the Chair after the House has been in the Committee of the Whole, shall:

“(d) with respect to each Government Bill standing on the Order Paper for Third Reading and designated to be called by the Government House Leader,

“(i) receive a motion for Third Reading and passage of the bill, and

“(ii) put the question, without debate or amendment, on that motion.”

I shall therefore ask the Government House Leader to indicate whether the government bills now standing on the Order Paper for third reading should be called.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the government directs that Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*, be called for third reading at this time.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, the government directs that Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*, be called for third reading at this time.

Bill No. 205: *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 205, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Premier that Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now read a third time and do pass. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question to the House. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Disagree.

Paired: Mr. Hutton and Ms. White

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yea, seven nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 205 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 205 has passed this House.

Bill No. 13: *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 13, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Premier that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall put the question to the House. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Disagree.

Paired: Mr. Hutton and Ms. White

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yea, seven nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 13 agreed to

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

Bill No. 16: Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015 — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 16, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*, be now read a third time and do pass. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question to the House. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Paired: Mr. Hutton and Ms. White

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 16 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 16 has passed this House.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to bills which have passed this House.

Commissioner Bernard enters the Chamber announced by her Aide-de-Camp

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

Speaker: Madam Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

Clerk: *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015; Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020); Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020); Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020); Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020); Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015; Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020); Second Appropriation Act 2020-21.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.

I would like to thank all the members for their work this Sitting. I invite you to check the Office of the Commissioner's Facebook page on January 1, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. to see our virtual levee where we will be handing out the Order of Yukon to the 2020 inductees. It will also be broadcast on Northwestel's community channel 209 from January 1 to 10. You can also check our Facebook page for Christmas stories with the Commissioner if you want to hear some stories. You can view one story in English and one story in French per day until Christmas Eve and catch up on the ones that you missed because you were working.

I wish every one of you happy holidays and a safe and healthy 2021. Take care of yourselves and each other. Thank you.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. Please be seated.

Before I adjourn the Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, I have a few brief comments. I would like to extend my thanks on behalf of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, and the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole and on behalf of all Members of Legislative Assembly to Clerk Dan Cable, Deputy Clerk Linda Kolody, Clerk of Committees Allison Lloyd, Director of Administration, Finance, and Systems Helen Fitzsimmons, Operations Manager Brenda McCain-Armour, Finance and Operations Clerk Lyndsey Amundson, as well as Sergeant-at-Arms Karina Watson and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms Joe Mewett, who have all provided invaluable support to all MLAs and their staff in order for us to continue to do the important work that we are sent here to do on behalf of all Yukoners. Thank you very much.

Applause

Speaker: As well, I would also like to thank the skilled team at Hansard for their timely and accurate service and all of the other background staff and contractors who keep this operation going. I would also commend the hardworking civil servants who delivered services to Yukoners and support to all of us as members in our work since October 1.

I would also be remiss if I did not specifically commend and provide heartfelt thanks to all of the Legislative Assembly cleaning staff who have all done the fantastic and much-appreciated job of keeping MLAs and Yukon Legislative Assembly staff safe by effectively and efficiently cleaning the Chamber on a daily basis in order to comply with the Chamber's COVID-19 protocols.

This has been a difficult year for many Yukoners resulting from the known and unknown impacts and the unforeseeable impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Many of our relatives, friends, and colleagues have suffered financially, physically, and emotionally over the past 10 months. It is my strong hope that all Yukoners can look forward to and realize a brighter 2021, where we can come together and support each other in person again.

We may not be able to see our extended families, friends, and constituents in person in the near future, but I urge all of us to reach out, as able, in friendship and in generosity in our communities and neighbourhoods as we remain vigilant in a final and important push of complying with the “safe six” — plus one — prior to receiving a much-anticipated vaccine.

Finally, I wish happy holidays to all members and your loved ones and safe travels to those MLAs travelling back to your communities. Thank you very much.

As the House has reached the maximum number of sitting days permitted for this Fall Sitting and the House has completed consideration of all designated legislation, it is the duty of the Chair to declare that this House now stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled December 22, 2020:

34-3-64

Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators 2018-19 Annual Report (Speaker Clarke)

34-3-65

Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators 2019-20 Annual Report (Speaker Clarke)

34-3-66

Crime Prevention & Victim Services Trust Fund Annual Report 2019-20 (McPhee)

34-3-67

Yukon Law Foundation Annual Report November 1, 2018 to October 31, 2019 (McPhee)

34-3-68

Law Society of Yukon Annual Report December 31, 2019 (McPhee)

34-3-69

Yukon Judicial Council Annual Report 2019 (McPhee)

34-3-70

Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Annual Report 2019-2020 (McLean)

The following legislative returns were tabled December 22, 2020:

34-3-68

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. McLeod related to general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — COVID-19 cell phone program (McLean)

34-3-69

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to general debate on Vote 54, Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — virtual familiarization tours (McLean)

34-3-70

Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of the chief medical officer of health as a witness before Committee of the Whole on December 17, 2020 — critical worker isolation requirements (Streicker)

34-3-71

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Yukon Geographical Place Names Board 25th Annual Report 2019-2020 (McLean)

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Yukon Legislative Assembly

3rd Session

34th Legislature

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March 4, 2021 to March 11, 2021

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2021 Spring Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Vacant*
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

Independent

Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun
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Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

*On March 8, 2021, Mr. Hutton resigned as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 85

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, March 4, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Spring Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun

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Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 4, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

I would like to begin the 2021 Spring Sitting of the Legislative Assembly by respectfully acknowledging all Yukon First Nations and also that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they are outdated: Motions No. 273, 298, 305, and 331 and Motion for the Production of Papers No. 18, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre; Motion No. 232 and Motion for the Production of Papers No. 17, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motions No. 338 and 384, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek North; Motion No. 301, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; Motions No. 380 and 395, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge; Motion No. 365, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North; and Motion No. 354, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper, as the actions requested in the motions have been taken in whole or in part: Motion No. 2, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre; Motions No. 246 and 363, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge; Motions No. 227 and 364, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motion No. 369, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; Motion No. 328, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre; and Motion No. 62, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

Motion No. 220, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane, was removed from the Order Paper as it was an exact duplicate of Motion No. 189.

Finally, Motion No. 403, notice of which was given on December 22, 2020, by the Member for Porter Creek Centre, was not placed on today's Notice Paper because the motion is outdated.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, it is my absolute honour and pleasure today to introduce shah Gwich'in kat, shoh ihlih — I'm happy to see you here today to honour your son, your father, husband, nephew — Darius' mother, Norma Kassi, Jolene, Johnny — Darius' beautiful son — and his beautiful

wife, Tina, and my dear cousin and awesome brother, Danny. Thank you for being here for the family. Tookie, Arthur — it is awesome to see you here. Thank you for being here — of course, Dwight, for being here with Heather today and supporting her — mahsi' cho — and, of course, none other than the former chief of the Tahltan Nation and a really good friend to Darius Elias. Mahsi'.

Applause

Ms. White: In the gallery today, we have a friend of mine, Sylvie Salomon, who is here to witness today's proceedings and to be here to honour her son Max. Welcome.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Could we please welcome to the gallery today a constituent, Mr. Terry Sherman?

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to also welcome Mr. Mike Pemberton to the gallery today. Thank you very much, all of you, for coming. To see Darius' family and loved ones here is a great honour. Mēduh.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Darius Elias

Hon. Ms. Frost: On behalf of my Liberal colleagues and my community, I rise to pay my highest respects and honour to our sijaa, the late Darius Patrick Elias, who went on to dance in the spirit world with his ancestors on February 17, 2021.

Darius was born on March 17, 1972, to Norma Kassi and Vern Marion. He was a proud citizen of Vuntut Gwitchin and had strong ties to his father's people in the Tahltan Nation. Let's not forget that he was very well loved and respected by his extended family in Old Crow, Teslin, Northwest Territories, and far beyond.

To his stepdads, Jerry and Tookie, mahsi' cho for lending your hand in raising a wonderful man. Darius was affectionately described by his mother, Norma, as a born leader. He was charismatic, funny, and an all-around solid friend to many. He was incredibly passionate about spending time with family, sharing his knowledge and cultural ways of life, protecting the land and caribou, and of course those who knew Darius knew his love of hockey.

From a very young age, he was taught the traditional Gwich'in way of life from his beloved grandmother, the late Elder Mary Elias Gwahtl'ah Ti'. These two had a very special bond. As the firstborn grandchild, it was he whom she taught to look after the land and live off the land. I can hear her saying "Shi boy, gwinzii nan k'anyahtih." These teachings guided him forward in his chosen profession as a park warden and later in his career in politics.

These sacred teachings, spirituality, and his love of the land are truly what guided him and kept him grounded, even through his many challenges and adversities in life. His passion

and the teachings of his mother's people were passed down to his children and many youth of our community. Until his passing, he continued to teach these values of integrity and respect to the next generation. Get up early, work hard, be quick, be respectful, be careful what you think, be careful what you say, keep things clean, always give something back, and lastly, don't be greedy with your meat and share your harvest, especially with the elders and the single mothers.

His commitment to helping people lived at his very core. Whether it be sharing his harvest, helping youth, or advocating for the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd with international and global leaders, Darius was a voice to be reckoned with. He spoke with passion and dignity on matters of importance to him and his people, the Vuntut Gwitchin. His final words to the youth would end with — and I quote: “Niganaiinlyaa k'it tanihee — follow your dreams.”

He truly did it all and was always for the people. When Darius was asked to do something, there were no questions asked. In his early years, straight out of high school, he was introduced to our land claims process by two seasoned and dedicated mentors, Stanley Njootli Sr. and Stephen Mills. Both can attest to this motivation and his zest for knowledge, never shying away from those difficult conversations or the difficult tasks before him.

Darius loved the land he walked on, the mountain tops he hiked to. Through his connection as a park warden in the mountains of Kluane Park, he developed a strong passion for sheep. Divii chii kak nadhat — the one standing on the big rock. This was fitting because this was his Gwich'in name.

Along with his dedication in working for his people, he made many friends along the way and formed many special bonds that lasted a lifetime, including many of us here in this Chamber today.

Darius leaves to mourn his beautiful children: Rachel, Heather, Bohdi, and Johnny, their mothers, Tina and Mary, and his grandchildren, Mary, Trapper, and Nashton. Always thinking ahead, even before the children could walk, they were gifted their first pair of skates. Darius passed along his love of hockey and, equally so, the traditional knowledge he learned from his jiiuu to those he loved.

For all his children, the yearly vacations they looked forward to were always at fish camp or hiking on mountaintops hunting sheep or travelling his beloved Dempster Highway searching for vadzaih or getting ready to head to Old Crow Flats to spend time on the land. Darius truly showed up for his family and embraced his nieces and nephews as his own. He supported, taught, and raised them to be proud and strong. In the same way, he loved and cared and protected his siblings: Rosetta Jolene, Chrystal, Denise, Jenny, Kayne, Kory, Kelso, Shelby, Shiloh, and Yudii.

Darius so loved all children and youth and was always making someone laugh, driving them to hockey practice, coaching, and especially this time of year, gearing up for the most important time: the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament. In fact, my good colleague, Minister McLean, assures me that he could be found making rosters and giving the executive

unwanted grey hairs doing his many trades and setting up his teams, sometimes months in advance.

Darius would coach, manage, and play and was integral in the North Yukon Eagles, Gwich'in Braves, and Gwich'in Spitfires. It didn't matter which team was playing; Darius was there to support, and all for the love of the kids. He believed in strong and healthy competition and truly recognized the importance of sport and physical activity and how important it was for young people to learn the values and principles of sportsmanship.

Leadership was always a part of who Darius was, and he took the values and the various roles he had very seriously. The one he held with the highest honour was his time in the Legislative Assembly from 2006 to 2016, when he served as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Vuntut Gwitchin riding. I took my seat in this Chamber in 2016 as the MLA for the Yukon Liberal government, following on the heels of a giant, our friend and our colleague, Darius Elias. I am eternally grateful for the years Darius committed to his people and making his community a priority.

He was larger than life and touched so many people on life's journey, be it in the political career, sports, hockey, as a youth advocate or in the protection of our beloved caribou on the international stage. His voice resonated with pride as he spoke of his grandmother's teachings and the teachings that she shared with him at Zelma Lake in Old Crow Flats.

Darius was an amazing, influential, and loving leader who was always guided by the old ways. I am lucky to say that Darius was a mentor and guide to many of us. He blazed the trail for us to follow.

The Creator took you too soon. Like others, I too will miss you, especially your presence in the gallery, the odd times you would drop in to quietly observe me in action, mainly to see if I was doing my part to represent shah Gwich'in kat. As you silently observed and watched, I am reminded that dinjii naii datthak eenjit t'igwii'in — we do this for our people.

He will always be, to many of us, yiinjihidhoh'eh — highly respected — and we will now know him as our zheekat Gwich'in. Gwinzii gwitr'it gwadhanhtsaii — you did a good job — now rest easy. You are a warrior who led with empathy and passion and fought for your community. You were a part of the land and a part of the water, and to that you will return.

On behalf of our Gwitchin family, mahsi' cho to all of you for your love and support. If he were here with us now, he would remind us to Adik'anootih — take good care of yourself. Mahsi'.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister Frost. That was a beautiful tribute.

I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to our esteemed colleague and friend, Darius Elias. There really are no words to describe the overwhelming helplessness many of us felt when faced with the news of Darius' passing. He was far too young to leave us. The adjectives to describe this young man are dynamic, energetic, intelligent, and generous. To add further to describing him, he

was a passionate advocate and champion for his riding, his people, and his community.

Darius was the son of Norma Kassi, who was a former MLA for the same riding for Vuntut Gwitchin and a strong advocate for rights for her people in the north. Politics was obviously in his blood, as he decided to seek election in 2006. For 10 years, until 2016, Darius represented Vuntut Gwitchin as their MLA. During this time in office, he worked on many committees and was also Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole. He worked diligently and constantly for Old Crow.

After this time, he returned to his community, where he was elected deputy chief for his First Nation. This past June, Darius decided to retire from political life. But that didn't mean he was not going to continue to help. Throughout his years as a politician and as a spokesperson for his First Nation, he was passionate about the land, the animals, and the culture. As the modern world of change creeps to Old Crow, Darius was very active with the "protect the Porcupine caribou herd" campaign. He would expound on how these animals needed to be protected for the current and future generations as a vital food and clothing supply. He spoke well and often about the caribou, the river, the salmon, the flats, and all his people — especially the youth and the elders.

Darius worked across borders for all Gwich'in voices — Yukon, Alaska, and NWT — and people listened. His love of sports was contagious. He not only played, but he encouraged others to be involved in traditional games, as well as his beloved hockey. He gave it his all and he enjoyed the challenge and the friendships he made along the way.

A Gwich'in man who loved his dancing, jigging, and traditions, his moccasined feet would fly across the floor as the fiddles and the guitars played for hours. The beauty of the square dances and the jigs that everyone, young and old, participated in is certainly something to see.

That ready smile that lit up his face and his sense of humour were also legendary. He was always looking for the bright side, and even when life got serious, Darius made sure that everyone was taken care of and then he would try to lighten the mood. It was his way.

We send our sincere condolences to his wife — my cousin, Tina — his children, his mother, and extended family. Words are never enough when someone is taken from us. But we remember, we share stories, and we honour him. During these current times when we cannot properly gather and mourn as a community of the whole Yukon, it's equally sad. I don't think there's a place big enough, though, to hold all who would come from near and far to show their respect and care for those who are left.

As advice given to a newly elected person, Darius once said, "Always stay true to the people who elected you." The people who elected him have such a passion for their land, their families, and their language. The Vuntut Gwitchin are proud people and they welcome anyone who comes to their village with kindness and sharing. I have experienced this wonder, and when you leave, they say, "Come back."

As we experience death — the rituals and grief — each culture or family has their traditions and wishes to honour and organize their loved one's passing. I know that these past couple of weeks have been so emotional and hard to comprehend. Now, make sure that you take time to grieve and know when to reach out to talk. We share in your grief and we want you to know that Darius filled the days spent in this Chamber with his presence and his love of life, and we were blessed with having known him.

Go Flyers, go. Mahsi' cho.

Applause

Ms. White: Today, I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to offer our thanks, respect, and admiration of Darius Elias — a man who lived his life to the fullest. Like any of those who had the good fortune of crossing paths with Darius, we were deeply saddened to hear of his passing. Darius loved his family, his friends, his community, the Porcupine caribou herd, and hockey.

Anyone who heard him speak in this Chamber knew that, when he rose to speak, you would be hard-pressed to not pay attention. He was a great orator. He would bring you along for the ride no matter what he was speaking about. But if it was about home, you could smell the river, hear the birds, and feel the breeze on your face through his words. When he shared his stories of the caribou, his eloquence could transport you along so that you could feel the vibrations of thousands of hooves as he described being surrounded by thousands of caribou, and you felt the awe that he felt. I know that I wasn't the only one brought to tears by his stories.

Just as Darius believed passionately about the importance of preserving the Porcupine caribou, he was equally eloquent when it came to his passion for sports. As an avid hockey player, he took a keen interest in making sure that all Yukon youth benefited from the health and well-being that active living presents.

Over the course of his time in this Assembly, he led a one-man crusade seeking government action to limit the sale of caffeinated energy drinks to kids, citing the serious documented adverse effects. He was relentless in pressing government to do the right thing, to stop the marketing of highly caffeinated drinks to youth. Someday, I hope that we in this Legislature will pass legislation recognizing his efforts to ensure the health and well-being of youth and to prevent marketing that targets their vulnerability.

Mr. Speaker, I was always delighted to spend time in Old Crow and see Darius in his place. I got to watch him interact and share his love with those around him, along with a lot of jigging, a lot of smiles, and a lot of laughing — because when Darius was laughing, he was never alone.

On one trip, he took me up Crow Mountain on a four-wheeler — which was kind of a funny story because, as you might imagine, he and I had never sat quite that close before and it started out with me trying to figure out where to put my legs and where they should go. Then I didn't quite know what to do with my hands, but he solved that problem by gunning the engine. He made so much fun of me when I nearly fell off —

which I deserved, because you obviously need to hang onto the person who is driving if there is nowhere else to hang on. He laughed and I laughed — and because we all know that his laughter was contagious, it was a very funny ride. He was kind and funny as he told me stories up the mountain.

Over the past short while since Darius' passing, we too have keenly listened and read the many stories that folks have been sharing. As these stories and thoughts are shared, together we are getting a more complete picture of the legend that is Darius Elias. Anything he did, he did it 100 percent, with his entire heart. He advocated for those who couldn't advocate for themselves. He stood up for his people, his community, and his family and for what he believed in. He left us too soon.

Rest in power, Darius.

Applause

Speaker: Would members and members of the gallery who are able please rise for a moment of silence in remembrance of Darius Elias?

Moment of silence observed

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling the *Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees* dated March 4, 2021. This report is tabled pursuant to the direction of the Members' Services Board.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Mr. Cathers: I have several documents for tabling. First is a letter to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources dated February 16, 2021, entitled "Shallow Bay are proposed zoning — problems with the process".

Secondly, I have a letter to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources dated February 18, 2021, entitled "Potential impact of a 60-metre buffer from Horse Creek on Grizzly Valley homes".

I also have for tabling a letter to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources dated February 25, 2021, entitled "Potential impact of a 60-metre Riparian Buffer from the Takhini River" and a letter to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources dated March 2, 2021, entitled "Potential impact of a 60-metre riparian buffer from the Yukon River".

Finally, I have for tabling a letter to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources dated March 3, 2021, entitled "Negative Financial Impact of the Shallow Bay Zoning Proposal".

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

Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Adel: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the *Twenty-fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Major Government*

Boards and Committees dated January 25, 2021, and the committee's 25th report dated February 29, 2021.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 206: *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 206, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 206, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 206 agreed to

Bill No. 207: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 207, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 207, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 207 agreed to

Bill No. 208: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 208, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 208, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 208 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to abandon the government's plans to impose a 60-metre no-development riparian buffer on titled property beginning with titled land in the Shallow Bay zoning area.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to respect the long-standing practice of ensuring that changes to zoning regulations provide new opportunities to some land owners and protect the current legal rights of all land owners instead of picking winners and losers, as the proposed zoning for Shallow Bay would do.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to visit farmers, greenhouses, and tourism businesses that would be negatively impacted by his plans to develop Stevens Quarry to gain a better understanding of those impacts before proceeding with any additional steps toward his goal.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow the BC government's leadership and put in place a residential rent freeze until December 31, 2021.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reaffirm that long-term care in Yukon will remain a public, not-for-profit service and that Yukon will not license or fund for-profit long-term care.

I also give notice the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take immediate action to ensure that proper fire protection is available in all Yukon communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to respect the spirit and intent of both the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* with respect to free prior and informed consent, as well as the land use planning process set out in chapter 11 of the *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement* by acceding to the January 26, 2021 request from the Dawson land use planning commission that mineral exploration not be permitted in the land use planning area, pending the finalization of the plan because "... decisions made prior to the completion of a land use plan may impact the commission's ability to develop recommendations for the appropriate use of land, water, and other renewable and non-renewable resources within the planning region..."

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consult with parents, students, the Yukon Teachers' Association, Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, and Autism Yukon prior to implementing any proposed policy decisions that remove a student's ability to access individualized education plans as prescribed in the *Education Act*.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to pause all work related to the Alaska Highway upgrades through the Porter Creek corridor in order to fully consult with residents and business owners potentially affected by these upgrades.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Government of Yukon borrowing limit

Mr. Cathers: In October 2018, I asked the Premier questions about the debt cap and whether his government was planning to seek an increase to it to allow them to borrow money.

The Premier repeatedly told the Assembly that he had no interest in increasing the debt cap. On October 2, 2018, he said this: "I'll just say up front that we are not contemplating taking on any extra debt for our five-year capital plan." He also said: "... I don't think the member opposite is paying attention to it — that we are not contemplating borrowing."

Now we know that, just nine days after that, the Premier wrote to the federal Finance minister and asked him to double the debt limit to \$800 million. So, it would appear that the Premier misled the Assembly.

Can the Premier explain this, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What I can say to the Legislative Assembly is that responsible borrowing is absolutely part of strong fiscal management. It helps with the preservation of capital, liquidity on management, and also return on investments.

The Yukon government's current borrowing limit is at \$800 million, which was set by regulations under the *Yukon Act*, which is federal legislation. The limit was increased by the Government of Canada in September 2020 from \$400 million to \$800 million. This was accomplished through an amendment to the *Yukon Act* regulations. That debt limit was raised for all three territories at the same time. This debt limit increase allows for more financial flexibility that may be needed in the future to support a growing economy and steadily transition to a clean energy future.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard this question from the members opposite before. The debt limit has been raised by the Yukon Party on a few occasions as well. I don't recall them ever looking for legislative authority to do so in the past. We are happy to see that the debt limit has increased. Again, we use it for corporations, as the members opposite did — the Yukon Development Corporation, the Yukon Energy Corporation, the Yukon Housing Corporation, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation — to currently access a modest amount of borrowing room available in order to deliver their programs and their mandates.

I am happy to answer further questions from the member opposite.

Mr. Cathers: Well, we know that the Premier is happy with the double debt limit because he asked for it.

For years, the Premier denied having any interest in increasing the debt cap. When the debt cap was doubled to \$800 million, he pointed to the federal government and tried to deny responsibility. Now we have learned that the Premier himself actually wrote a letter to the federal government on

October 11, 2018, asking for the debt cap to be raised. Previously, on October 24, 2017, was another time when the Premier denied wanting to increase the debt cap. Here is what he said then: “These are some tough decisions to be made moving forward, but to answer the member opposite’s question: Have we touched the debt cap? No. Do we want to? No, we don’t want to. We want to make sure that we work inside of our means...”

Yet, Mr. Speaker, he turned around and did the opposite when he wrote to the federal minister to say — and I quote: “...I would like to request that our limit is raised to \$800 million.” Why did the Premier mislead the House?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I’m not misleading the House at all. I do want to live within our means — absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

Yukon has an AA credit rating from Standard & Poor’s Global. The debt limit increase does not mean that the government has incurred or will incur that debt itself. Four of the corporations account for the bulk of the current total debt. That current total debt is \$228.4 million, as reported in the 2019-20 Public Accounts: Yukon Development Corporation, \$166.2 million; Yukon Hospital Corporation, \$29.8 million; Yukon Housing Corporation, \$2.2 million; and Yukon College, \$1 million.

We could ask members opposite who incurred most of this debt, and the answer would be the Yukon Party.

Now, we do have a debt increase to \$800 million. We have talked about how we are approaching an energy cliff, and we also have a 10-year plan from the Yukon Energy Corporation. Again, if we increase this limit, that’s one thing. The debt that is on the books so far — the majority of that debt is from the Yukon Party.

Mr. Cathers: As the Premier well knows, the government was using about half of the previous limit, but the Premier asked for that to be doubled. This is despite the Premier repeatedly telling the Assembly that he had no interest in touching the debt gap, but he secretly wrote to the federal minister and asked for that to be doubled.

He told the House this on October 2, 2018: “I’ll just say up front that we’re not contemplating taking on any extra debt for our five-year capital plan...” and that “... we are not contemplating borrowing.” But in his letter of October 11, 2018, he says this: “... I would like to request that our limit is raised for \$800 million. This will be sufficient to address our capital requirements for the next few years.” This is the opposite of what he has told the Legislative Assembly and Yukon citizens.

Can the Premier offer an explanation for how this situation could possibly be anything other than a choice by him to deliberately mislead the House?

Speaker’s statement

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge knows well that is not appropriate, and he will refrain in the future from using the final words that he just did.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, reasonable borrowing is absolutely a part of strong fiscal management. We have the

lowest borrowing so far of all three territories. The majority of that borrowing was done under the previous government’s hand. We have a current borrowing limit of \$800 million. The member opposite would have you believe that we were not vocal about the fact that the borrowing limit was increased.

We’ve been up in the Legislative Assembly many times talking about that increase. Talking about increasing your borrowing limit is not necessarily spending that debt. We’ve also talked about how, yes, we want to live inside of our means — absolutely. We are working with the federal government when it comes to climate change to see if we have alternatives — maybe there is federal funding. There are two mandates for climate change — the federal government’s and ours — that are very closely assimilated. COP21 in Paris — the Paris accord — there are some massive energy incentives on the horizon. We would love to look at a myriad of different ways of working with the federal government, and hopefully the First Nation governments as well, to make sure that we get off of this energy cliff.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we increased the debt limit. It was the Yukon Party that increased the majority of the debt that is currently on the books as we sit here and speak. That increase, again, was from the Yukon Party — a couple of different times with no legislative oversight, but now they are saying that we need the legislative oversight.

Question re: Yukon First Nation procurement policy

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, last December, the Minister of Highways and Public Works told this House that he had conducted extensive consultations with the business community on the First Nation procurement policy. He even claimed that he had conducted one-on-one consultations with businesses before announcing the policy, yet he was unable to tell us a single company that he had actually spoken to. Since that time, the Yukon Contractors Association has written a letter to the minister indicating that the government did not consult the business community.

Mr. Speaker, why did the minister misrepresent the views and level of consultation that took place with industry?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I’m happy to talk about the issue of First Nation procurement on the floor of the House this afternoon. It was in 1993, Mr. Speaker, that the conservative Yukon Party leader, John Ostashek, signed the *Umbrella Final Agreement* with Dave Keenan, Robert Hager, and Judy Gingell. They signed the agreement to make sure that we made good and brought the First Nations into our economy — chapter 22, Mr. Speaker. For 27 years, our First Nations have been waiting to be part of the Yukon economy, and this government this year has taken that step and brought them in through the First Nation procurement policy. We worked government-to-government with the First Nations for the first time to bring that policy into play. We worked respectfully with it. We informed the business community that this was happening. We have improved procurement consistently since we came to office, and we have worked very, very tirelessly to create relationships throughout the territory with our business

community and with our First Nations. We are working together, Mr. Speaker. This is in stark contrast with the acrimony and lawsuits that we've seen in the past. I'm happy to talk about this further.

Mr. Hassard: But actually, today we are talking about this minister's mishandling of this file and misrepresentations of the views of industry, which is unfortunately a reoccurring behaviour for him. You will remember that, back in 2017, the minister made false claims in this House and to Yukoners that he had consulted the aviation industry on the airports act, but he was later forced to take the embarrassing step of completely retracting that statement and even deleting the press release from the government's website because it simply wasn't true.

Now we are seeing the minister mishandle yet another important file and misrepresent the views of industry once again. It has actually gotten so bad that we are now receiving reports from contractors that Liberal MLAs and ministers have started to disparage and blame this minister for his mishandling of this file.

So, will the minister admit that he messed up and apologize for falsely claiming that he consulted industry on this policy?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I disagree with the preamble that the member opposite has just presented on the floor of the House this afternoon. Our government has built strong, respectful government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations to foster reconciliation. That is what we are doing. We are creating economic reconciliation with our First Nation partners. We are currently and have been since the policy was signed at the Yukon Forum — which we have handled consistently since coming into office. We have held 16 First Nation Yukon Forums, and because of that work and because of the relationships that we have built with Yukon First Nations, we have managed to sign agreements in Liard, Ross River, Carmacks, Dawson, and Mayo-Tatchun. We have signed these agreements because the First Nations trust and respect the work that our governments are doing together, and so they have managed to do this. Those agreements, Mr. Speaker, including the Teslin bridge, have brought more than \$430 million of new money into the territorial economy, benefiting all businesses and benefiting all citizens. That is the bigger pie that we are talking about when we work together, and that is what we are going to continue to do.

Mr. Hassard: Again, we see no answer from the minister.

Now, we know that he has developed a reputation of fighting with industry and misrepresenting their views and the level of consultation that has taken place. As we have said, this isn't the first time that this minister has been caught providing inaccurate information on important government files. Not only has he alienated industry, he has now started to alienate his own party, as members of his own Cabinet and caucus are complaining to constituents about him.

The economic recovery of this territory requires a team and competent leadership. Now it's clear that, due to the minister's mishandling of this file, the government is no longer a team.

So, will the Premier show competent leadership and remove this minister from Cabinet?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I vehemently disagree with the characterizations made by the Leader of the Official Opposition this afternoon. It seems that the Yukon Party can't help but stoke division in our territory; we've seen it for years. We have seen it on the Peel. We have seen it in the legal cases that they have lost. We see it in the inability of them to build the Teslin bridge in 2014, and here they are now — they're trying to stoke division in this team. Well, this team is united, Mr. Speaker. My colleagues and I have worked so hard together, and I will stand shoulder to shoulder with them any day.

Currie Dixon was the architect of the failed Peel plan and landed the Yukon Party government in Supreme Court, where they lost. The Yukon Party approach to First Nations is animosity and litigation, Mr. Speaker. We have a different approach. We have a different way. We are working together for the benefit of all. I have been working with the business community since early January, working on the implementation of this plan — that those talks are fruitful — and now we have decided to extend the procurement execution until the beginning of October. That's so we can work together and foster the relationships that this government thrives on. The benefits are already being seen by the business community — \$430 million of new money in the Yukon economy that Yukon contractors are bidding on right now.

Question re: Minimum wage

Ms. White: A few weeks ago, the government announced that it was rejecting a \$1.24 increase to Yukon's minimum wage — the recommendation that came from Yukon's Employment Standards Board, an independent board made up of representatives from Yukon workers and employers. Instead, the minimum wage will go up by only 14 cents to \$13.85 an hour.

So, I have a simple question for the Premier: Does the Premier believe that it's possible to live on a salary of \$13.85 anywhere in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, we have followed all the letters that we got directing us on the minimum wage from the Employment Standards Board. I'm not sure — there seems to be some misunderstanding about it. Since we've been here, the minimum wage has gone up by about \$2 and 70-some cents — I think around a 20-percent or 25-percent increase over the past several years.

There's a living wage as well, and we've closed the gap with the living wage by about \$2.50 — nearly \$3. The minimum wage is not the living wage; they are different things completely.

I'm happy to answer further questions, but we continue to take the recommendations that have come from the Employment Standards Board. Their last recommendation to us was that, this year, the minimum wage would go up by the cost of living, which it will do on April 1.

Ms. White: Sadly, within all of those words, I didn't hear an answer as to whether or not you could survive on \$13.85 an hour.

This Liberal government's decision to scrap a \$1.10 increase to the minimum wage is a textbook example of their approach to consultation. They asked an independent board made up of business and work representatives to review the minimum wage, but they didn't like what they heard, so they commissioned a different report that would tell them just what they wanted to hear. Workers and businesses know that a living wage benefits everyone. They know that no one wins when workers have to rely on the food bank to feed themselves or their families, but this government continues to refuse to listen.

This decision will cost Yukon's lowest paid workers more than \$2,000 over 365 days. How can the Premier justify his decision to keep \$2,000 out of the pockets of Yukon's lowest paid workers?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I will do is table what we got from the Employment Standards Board so that it can be here and registered with the Legislature.

The board did send a letter with suggestions. We wrote back to them for clarification and then they gave us direction. I'll table that — no problem.

The member opposite asked about how we support people — no, pardon me — she asked about whether someone can live on that wage. Of course, it really depends on whether you are a child who is living at home and starting to work or whether you are raising a family on your own.

There is a document that is produced each year by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition called the "Living Wage". I'm hopeful that they are able to get back with that project again this year. It's very informative for us. We look at the recommendations that are in the back and talk through — whether it is the Minister of Health and Social Services, whether it's Yukon Housing Corporation, whether it's a range of programs that we work at to try to make life affordable for Yukoners.

I'm really happy about one of those ones, which is universal childcare. I look for those ways in which we support all Yukoners.

Again, we'll table the correspondence from the Employment Standards Board.

Ms. White: I hope that he tables both reports.

Front-line workers have sacrificed so much since the start of this pandemic. The government even recognized that you can't live on the minimum wage by providing some essential workers a \$4 wage top-up. This program, which was entirely funded by Ottawa, was only available for eight months. Front-line workers are essential all the time but not just for those eight months.

There are lessons to be learned from this pandemic. A key lesson is that some of the lowest paid workers are always essential to our economy and they deserve a living wage, but this government hasn't learned. They just took a giant step back by rejecting a \$1.10 increase to the minimum wage. This is more than \$2,000 a year for Yukon's lowest paid workers.

How can this government justify taking away over \$2,000 a year from workers that they called "essential" during the pandemic?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Actually, what we did is that we took the recommendation from the Employment Standards Board; that's what we did. Again, I said that I would table that. No jurisdiction in the country has the minimum wage as the living wage. We have the fourth highest minimum wage in Canada. It's higher than the other territories. I appreciate that the member opposite is advocating that it go higher, but this does not indicate that we don't support workers in the territory, as we did throughout the pandemic, as we will continue to do through a suite of approaches that we have presented here around affordable housing, around universal childcare, around many of the fronts.

We'll work with partner governments to support with this — for example, the Safe at Home program and municipal and First Nation governments. We will continue to work to support all Yukoners to make sure that they have the ability to live their lives well in the Yukon.

I understand that the members opposite want me to say something different from what I got from the Employment Standards Board, but that's what I got. We're one of the few jurisdictions that still increases our minimum wage yearly by the cost-of-living increase.

Question re: Opioid crisis

Ms. White: This year, there have been three confirmed opioid deaths between mid-January and mid-February, and we're awaiting confirmation of a possible fourth death. In one year, from 2019 to 2020, the number of opioid overdose deaths doubled — a total of 36 opioid-related deaths since 2016; 36 friends, siblings, parents, children, and neighbours lost. This number doesn't include the Yukoners who died away from home. The magnitude of this tragedy cannot be overstated, yet the government's response, especially when compared to other public health crises, is nowhere close to what it should be. The solutions exist. Safe supply provides a safe medical alternative to street drugs. It's proven to save lives.

When will this government's response to the opioid crisis reflect the magnitude of the tragedy faced by so many Yukon families who have lost a loved one to an opioid overdose?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am pleased to rise today to speak to the opioid crisis that we are in the middle of. We have had some major challenges over the course of the last year. We have seen significant health challenges associated with mental wellness. It is tragic for sure — in recognizing that we have lost a number of individuals in our communities due to the opioid usage in our territory.

What we have done in terms of addressing the issues that we take very seriously on this side of the House is exploring what a safe supply chain would look like for Yukon. We are also working very closely with the chief medical officer of health as we look at implementation of our opioid strategies here. We have expanded supports with our partners, working with Blood Ties Four Directions. We are working with the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. We are also looking at the Referred Care Clinic in terms of demonstrating effective responses to opioid usage. We are working very closely with our health centres, our NGO partners, and our communities,

wanting to ensure that we have all of the harm-reduction methods, commitments, and safe supplies identified in our territory.

Ms. White: I am sure that folks are excited to hear that we are still exploring the options.

So, even one death from an opioid overdose is too many. These are our neighbours, our family members, and our friends. Opioid addiction doesn't care who you are, what job you have, your income status, or your background. So, for two years now, the government has talked about a safe supply for Yukon, and the minister has just said again that they are exploring the options and working with partners — and it goes on and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, people are dying. We need action now. In fact, we needed action years ago. Safe supply works. It saves lives, and it is already in place in other Canadian jurisdictions. What is this government waiting for, and when will this government implement a life-saving safe supply program in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am pleased to rise today to speak to Yukoners to let Yukoners know that this government is 100-percent committed to addressing the opioid crisis in our territory, within our communities. Recognizing that there are drug supplies in our communities that are not safe, we are taking measures that are necessary — exploring and expanding drug-testing capacity.

We are certainly reminding individuals to please not use drugs alone — don't do it alone and have a naloxone kit present. We are certainly looking at increasing our capacity within the Yukon.

We continue to explore the safe supply chain. We are taking every possible angle, and we are also in the process of looking at a wet shelter here in the territory. I can advise Yukoners that this has not been considered historically. It is part of our action plan going forward and we aim to implement that.

We continue to support Yukoners where they reside within their respective communities, and we are bringing the services and programs to the communities. The ideal vision for Yukon is to have a safe consumption site, and that is the direction that we are receiving and the recommendation. I want Yukoners to know that we are committed to providing supports that they require where they reside.

Ms. White: I am not sure that was an answer that I would cheer about. We can't afford to lose more members of our community. Blood Ties Four Directions provides drug testing seven days a week through the outreach van, but the funding for that very same van's extended hours expires this summer. They also train and provide naloxone kits to Yukoners requesting them — among many other services — and they have been leading Yukon's response to this crisis.

Blood Ties has also been advocating for years for this government to enact a safe supply. These approaches have a proven record of saving lives from overdoses in communities across Canada. When will this government end the exploration on a life-saving safe supply program and listen to the folks on

the front lines who are doing the heavy lifting when it comes to the opioid crisis and finally implement a safe supply?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to again reiterate to Yukoners that this government is committed to providing Yukoners with the supports that they require. There is certainly a stigma associated with drug use and, as the member opposite indicates, this is certainly not something that we want to celebrate; this is something that we want to work toward eliminating. We want to work to expand drug-testing hours, which we have done with our partners. We are looking at the options — as recommended by the strategy presented by our chief medical officer of health in collaboration with our partners — harm reduction, take-home naloxone kits, public awareness and education, opioid surveillance, opioid pain management, and to look at drug-testing services.

As well, it's important to note that a safe injection site in the Yukon is necessary. It is needed and this government aims to address a wet shelter and a consumption site in the Yukon to ensure that we don't lose any more lives. That is what we are committing to Yukoners to do — to ensure that we support them where they reside in our rural Yukon communities — particularly those who have been left out of decisions historically.

Question re: Fixed election dates

Mr. Cathers: In 2016, the Yukon Liberals committed to a fixed election date. Last fall, they tabled legislation to bring forward fixed election dates but not until 2025. The Premier said that fixed election dates — and I quote: "... will strengthen our democracy by being open, fair, and transparent about when the next election will be held."

Will the Premier live up to his promise in 2016 and his words from a few months ago and tell Yukoners when the next election will be held?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I agree with the member opposite — I am very happy that this Yukon Liberal team did put in the legislation necessary for fixed election dates — something that the opposition did not do. I don't remember — as the prince and princess were going around Yukon — the Yukon Party talking about when they were going to call elections. This is definitely an election year. We are hearing great names coming forward from all parties. I want to urge Yukoners to get out to vote when the election does happen. It is extremely important this year. Under the Yukon Liberal government, we have an elections list and it has identified thousands of people who don't normally vote in the Yukon.

We on this side of the House are going to definitely help to get the vote out for those folks who may not have historically voted. There are more options to vote.

Today is not the day that I'm going to be announcing the election. Today is the day that we are announcing a budget that we are very, very proud of. Of course, the members opposite don't want to talk about that; they want to speculate about elections.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, last fall, the Liberals made the case for fixed election dates, but conveniently, their bill does not apply to them. The Member for Porter Creek

Centre said — and I quote: “By eliminating the guesswork in elections, Yukoners will be able to be more engaged and up to speed...”

Does the Premier agree with the Member for Porter Creek Centre that knowing when the election will be will allow more Yukoners to be more engaged and up to speed? Does he acknowledge that, by refusing to actually tell Yukoners when the election will be, the Premier is in fact contradicting several members of his team? A simple question: Will he live up to his own commitments and the commitments made by his colleagues and just tell Yukoners when the next election will be?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am very proud of our record on this side of the House as far as certainty when it comes to a lot of things. When it comes to electoral reform, when it comes to fixed election dates, and when it comes to sitting dates in the Legislative Assembly as well, we have moved the needle further on a lot of these topics than the other two parties together, Mr. Speaker. It's not our fault if the members opposite don't want to work with us when we go into these pursuits.

We have set sitting days, Mr. Speaker, which never happened before. We have the new legislation as well that does have fixed elections dates moving forward. This is the same question that the member opposite asked several times during the 45-day session in the fall. We've answered that question, talking about how this is important to have these fixed election dates — things that the Yukon Party never contemplated. We're moving the needle on these things and we're very happy to see Elections Yukon as well have a permanent registry. We're very happy to see COVID guidelines coming out from there as well.

Again, when it comes to these things, we moved the needle further than the Yukon Party did in 14 years, and we did it in four.

Mr. Cathers: Well, there were a lot of problems with the Premier's preamble, including that he forgets that it was the previous Legislative Assembly that established the process for a fixed voters list, not the current government.

The Premier crashed the electoral reform bus by refusing to work with other Members of the Legislative Assembly and insisting on unilateral control.

Just a few months ago, the Minister of Community Services told the Assembly that Yukoners deserved to know when the next election will be held. He said — and I quote: “... one of the things that we're trying to do with this is to provide clarity and certainty that will allow Yukoners to plan.”

He said it was essential that Yukoners — whether they were individuals, businesses, or public servants — have the foreknowledge of when the election will be. So, does the Premier agree with his minister? If he does, will he take his minister's advice and just tell Yukoners when the next election will be held?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, we've had this question asked from the member opposite many times in the Legislative Assembly. We've answered this question many times in the Legislative Assembly. We've said, as well, that if we move the set election dates in this term, he would be the first one in the

opposition talking about how we changed the goalpost midstream.

We are moving on these commitments and we are doing more on these commitments than the Yukon Party did in 14 years. We believe that these set of dates — I do agree with my colleague. We believe that these set dates do make sense. We put the legislation in to make sure that would happen.

We also put in place set days of sitting. I would sit in opposition and not know when the Yukon Party would call the Sittings of the Legislative Assembly. Simple things like that went a long way for the certainty for the public servants preparing for legislative Sittings. We have done more on these things than the opposition did when they were 14 years in government, and we will continue to move these goalposts. We do hope that we get another term in the Legislative Assembly and we do hope to continue to do what the members opposite refused to do.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 207: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 207, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 207, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 207, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I present our government's fifth budget, the main estimates for the 2021-22 fiscal year. It is an honour and a privilege to be here on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council to deliver yet another budget focused on improving the lives of Yukoners.

It also comes at a critical time as our territory navigates the COVID-19 pandemic, which has presented unprecedented challenges for people of our territory and around the world. At the best of times, a budget creates conditions that allow individuals to thrive as the economy grows. In times of uncertainty, a well-crafted budget can provide the stability needed to steer through turbulence while charting a course toward calmer waters.

Our government remains focused on protecting Yukoners and supporting them through these extraordinary times. Now, with the prospect of brighter days on the horizon, we are forging ahead with investments that will ensure a prosperous future for our territory.

This year's budget includes estimated spending of \$1.786 billion. Capital spending accounts for \$434 million — a record amount. This is 17-percent higher than last year. Operation and maintenance spending is expected to be \$1.35 billion.

We have included \$15 million as a COVID-19 contingency in recognition of the potential for changing circumstances as we navigate the pandemic. The 2021-22 main estimates show a deficit of \$12.7 million that is entirely the result of economic and social supports as well as health services for Yukoners in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Along with the budget, I am pleased to once again present a five-year capital plan outlining how our government will prioritize the interests and needs of Yukoners through the procurement, management, and delivery of capital projects. The plan considers northern construction realities, aligning capital needs with the strengths of the local businesses in order to maximize the benefits for all Yukon communities. Our government's increased transparency around capital planning has improved coordination with our First Nation, municipal, and private sector partners and helped us to make the best use of federal funding to meet the needs of Yukoners in all communities.

I am also pleased to present a fiscal and economic outlook for the Yukon that shows that our economy is poised to experience robust growth in the coming years. The strong foundation that our government has built over the last four years, combined with swift and comprehensive relief measures, has allowed our territory to weather the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic better than most other jurisdictions. Despite unprecedented challenges, Yukon is one of the only jurisdictions in Canada to experience GDP growth in 2020, with growth projected to continue an average 4.7 percent per year out to 2025. This budget builds on the strong foundation that we have developed over the past four years and continues us on the path toward a brighter future for the Yukon.

Having returned the territory's finances to a sustainable path, we are taking significant steps to build a healthier, more vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive territory for the benefit of our people. We know that investing in Yukoners brings the greatest return. Their well-being is the foundation of Yukon's prosperity.

Just one year ago, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon was poised to host thousands of athletes and spectators from around the circumpolar north for the 50th anniversary of the Arctic Winter Games. Two days after presenting the 2020-21 main estimates, the games had to be cancelled to protect public health. Two weeks later, our first cases of COVID-19 were reported in the Yukon. That was a turning point for our territory, and the past year has presented countless challenges for Yukoners. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected Yukon families, businesses, governments, and organizations on a scale never before seen.

In times of crises, it is essential that government provide strong leadership to protect the health and safety of citizens and help them to maintain their livelihoods. Our government responded quickly and decisively to the pandemic and worked tirelessly over the last 12 months to keep our territory safe and healthy.

We declared a state of emergency under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* to ensure that we could act quickly to protect and to support Yukoners during an utterly unpredictable time. The state of emergency provided the authority to establish

controls at our borders, including self-isolation requirements for those entering our territory to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in the Yukon. We introduced measures to help Yukoners impacted by the pandemic, including protections from eviction, assistance with rent, and extended deadlines for tax payments. The office of the chief medical officer of health, Yukon communicable disease centre, and countless dedicated health care professionals across the territory have gone above and beyond to provide expert care and advice that has kept the residents of our territory healthy and safe.

In addition to providing for the health and safety of Yukoners, we prioritize economic supports to protect Yukon businesses and mitigate the impacts on local employees, employers, and organizations. Many important events — like the Arctic Winter Games and the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament — had to be cancelled on very short notice. We provided compensation to the community organizations that could not have foreseen that their planning and preparations would be thwarted by conditions beyond their control. We waived fees and supported local bars and restaurants impacted by the pandemic. In true Yukon spirit, we changed the Yukon nominee program criteria to support employers and nominees throughout the territory.

We worked with the federal government and local employers to provide a wage top-up for the essential front-line workers that kept our communities functioning — because, for them, staying home from work was not an option, provided that they were not sick. Our paid sick-leave program sparked national conversations and served as a model for employee support. The Yukon business relief program is recognized as the best and most generous in the country. As of February 2021, we have provided more than \$7 million to over 615 businesses across the territory. We also partnered with the Government of Canada to ensure that comprehensive relief is available to every Yukon business that needs it. We have allocated more than \$11.4 million to ensure that these programs are available to provide ongoing support this year. We will continue to provide support as needed.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses are the heart of Yukon's communities and the backbone of our economy. We delivered relief programs in close partnership with the private sector to ensure that the right supports are available when and where they are needed.

We also worked closely with the tourism sector to ensure that our tourism operators have relief from the pandemic and will be prepared for visitors to the territory as soon as it is safe to do so. Our government recognizes that tourism is a vital part of our economy, and we are committed to supporting the sector through this pandemic and beyond. With input from the Tourism Advisory Board and the Tourism Industry Association Yukon, we developed the tourism relief and recovery plan. It will provide up to \$15 million over three years to ensure that our tourism sector rebounds stronger than ever and that Yukon remains a world-class tourism destination.

Like tourism, Yukon's mineral sector is a major employer, and its activities have a ripple effect across the territory's

business communities. When the pandemic hit, we declared mining to be an essential service because of its role in providing much-needed material into the global supply chain. We also boosted investment in mineral exploration and worked to provide mining companies flexibility in safely accommodating employees to ensure uninterrupted activities. Yukon's mining industry took a proactive approach to ensuring that health and safety remained at the forefront of mining operations throughout the territory. Mining has continued to contribute to Yukon's economy throughout the pandemic. Under the leadership of John McConnell, Victoria Gold went into commercial production in 2020. Additionally, the historic Keno Hill mine went back into production last fall, becoming the third operating mine in the territory — a sure sign of the strength and resolve that has characterized Yukon's world-class minerals sector for more than a century.

Mining and tourism both rely heavily on air transportation to provide benefits for Yukoners. Aviation is critical to our modern northern lifestyle, keeping our communities connected and helping to grow our economy. Our government has supported Yukon's aviation businesses by waiving commercial fees and working collaboratively with the federal government to provide operators with financial support to maintain essential services.

In addition to historic investments in Yukon's aviation infrastructure over the past four years, over \$10 million in support funding was made available to our local aviation industry in 2020. Air North, in particular, has shown great resiliency and community spirit throughout the pandemic. Our local air carriers continue to improve our quality of life and are so very important in our territory's future.

Last year, we allocated over \$107 million to manage the pandemic, supporting Yukoners and providing relief to protect our economy. Our proactive and comprehensive response helped to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our territory while keeping Yukoners healthy, safe, and employed.

We have allocated nearly \$50 million in this year's budget to continue to support Yukoners as we look to emerge from a year of unparalleled uncertainty. There is no way to be fully prepared for the wide-reaching impacts of a global pandemic. Fortunately, the fundamentals were in place that have allowed our territory to navigate the pandemic confidently while staving off the most dire consequences.

We have seen GDP growth every year that our government has been in office, and the Yukon has had the lowest unemployment rate in the country during that time. The tax cuts that we introduced, starting in 2017, are saving businesses an estimated \$12 million, including \$2 million per year, starting this year, thanks to the small business tax rate dropping to zero percent as of January 1.

Our government's commitment to sound fiscal management ensured that we are positioned to deliver swift economic and social supports that have protected local businesses and bolstered vital sectors of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, the biggest factor by far that has kept the Yukon strong throughout the pandemic is the people who call our territory home. Yukoners have made immense sacrifices

over the past 12 months to keep our community safe. Yukoners have shown tremendous strength and resilience in the face of great adversity. Our collective efforts as Yukoners have minimized the spread of COVID-19 in the territory, keeping our case count low, and allowed us to lead the country in immunizations.

The coronavirus has tested the mettle of all Yukoners. They have responded with characteristic passion, resolve, community-minded spirit, and sheer determination that sets our territory apart and makes it such a wonderful place to live.

This year's budget puts Yukoners first by making life more affordable and invests in a healthier, more vibrant and sustainable future for all Yukon communities.

Last year, our government endorsed *Putting People First*, a road map to transforming Yukon's health and social services system into a more integrated, collaborative, and person-centred system that will better meet the needs of all Yukoners.

With funding in this year's budget, we will continue to implement the report's recommendations to enhance health and social service delivery throughout the Yukon. These investments will support Yukon's dedicated team of health and social service providers to deliver enhanced services to Yukoners in a more sustainable way for years to come.

We are committed to supporting Yukoners throughout their lives, starting with birth. New midwifery regulations will come into effect this spring to allow licensed midwives to safely support mothers through pregnancy, birth, and the post-partum period. This is an important step toward realizing our government's commitment to providing regulated and funded midwifery services as a birthing option for Yukoners. \$400,000 is included in this budget to integrate midwifery care into our existing health care system in a way that's safe, sustainable, and complements existing services.

We have also included \$677,000 to match federal funding under the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program to support prenatal initiatives in the Yukon.

Our government believes that all children should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning opportunities. To support Yukon families and make their lives more affordable, we are investing more than \$25 million toward early learning initiatives. This includes \$15 million to support a new universal childcare program for the Yukon that will put more disposable income in the hands of families, saving them, on average, \$700 per month, per child. A family with two kids would have an additional \$1,400 in their pockets starting this spring. This will support Yukon families and, in particular, will help women who have been hit hard by the pandemic — and men as well.

We will also expand to full-time early kindergarten programming in all rural Yukon communities. To support these initiatives and to ensure stronger coordination and collaboration across our early learning services, we are moving the Child Care Services unit to the Department of Education.

Education contributes to healthy, productive lives, and these initiatives will support Yukoners throughout their learning journey. We are also making significant investments in education facilities to support the growing number of

families raising children in our territory. More than \$10.5 million is budgeted this year to begin construction of a new elementary school in Whistle Bend. This will be the first new elementary school in Whitehorse in over 25 years, situated in the city's fastest growing neighbourhood. Following the successful model of the new French first language high school in Whitehorse, we look forward to this project providing economic opportunities and benefits for Yukon's private sector.

A total of \$8.7 million is budgeted for new learning spaces and modular classrooms, including \$4 million to add new learning spaces to the Robert Service School in Dawson City. This will ensure that the school continues to meet the needs of students and staff in the community. It is also increasingly important that learning opportunities are flexible and adaptable to remote learning. We have included more than \$2.6 million to improve online and digital learning technologies that will support modernized learning and teaching in all of our schools and a further \$1.9 million for supports to ensure that our students are successful in their learning during the pandemic.

As the territory's population continues to grow, our government is committed to providing quality programs and services to meet the needs of all Yukoners. Plus de 6 millions de dollars sont alloués dans le budget de cette année pour améliorer la façon dont nous offrons des services et communiquons avec le public en français. This was part of a \$28-million agreement with the Government of Canada to support French language services across government over the next five years. An additional \$1.5 million is included to begin work on a bilingual health centre in Whitehorse that will improve care delivery for Yukon's francophone population and will provide another opportunity and option for those seeking health care.

Since taking office in 2016, our government has prioritized inclusion, equality, and respect for all Yukoners. We believe that our territory's increasingly diverse population is a sign of its strength, and we have taken a multi-faceted approach to advance inclusion and to support Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ community. We've updated Yukon laws with more inclusive language, made it illegal to discriminate based upon gender identity and gender expression, and removed the requirement for sex reassignment surgery before a person can change the sex on their birth registration. We have provided funding to improve counselling services for transgender, two-spirited, non-binary individuals and their partners. The Yukon was the first jurisdiction to offer free training to health professionals to provide compassionate, culturally sensitive transgender care. Last year, we banned conversion therapy in the Yukon. We are proud to continue to work to advance inclusion in the territory. This year, we are providing \$120,000 to Queer Yukon to continue their important work to ensure that the Yukon is a strong, vibrant, and inclusive territory.

We have also worked with Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ community to develop an action plan to improve inclusivity throughout government, both as an employer and as a public service provider. Our government has a vision of healthy, vibrant communities where Yukoners feel safe and welcome

and are able to live their best lives. Supporting greater inclusion and equality of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners in our community is an important step toward realizing this vision.

Advancing equality and safety in our territory also involves supporting the wellness and healing of family members of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. Yukon is the first jurisdiction in Canada to develop a strategy to respond to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Changing the story to uphold dignity and justice, Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy outlines a territory-wide approach to addressing violence against indigenous women and girls and two-spirited people. Over the next decade, we will change this tragic national story from one of grief, desperation, and loss to one of healing, grace, and reconciliation. This is my government's pledge to all Yukoners. To help build capacity to implement this important strategy, we are providing \$300,000 to Yukon's indigenous women's organizations that continue to demonstrate leadership and advocacy while providing vital supports to survivors and family members. An additional \$600,000 is allocated for the indigenous women's equality fund.

We are also budgeting \$60,000 to continue the sexualized assault support line — a 24-hour confidential, toll-free Yukon-wide support line for victims of sexualized assault. This is part of the sexualized assault response team — SART — initiative that our government introduced to provide wraparound supports for victims where and when they need them.

When we took office in 2016, our government recognized that Yukoners throughout the territory urgently needed better mental health supports. We opened mental wellness and substance use hubs in four rural communities to expand access to mental health supports. We hired more than 20 mental health workers to help meet the needs of Yukoners, following years of inadequate services.

This year, we continue to invest in the wellness of all Yukoners. We have budgeted more than \$70 million for social supports, mental wellness, and substance use programs. We have also included \$5.7 million for a new secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital. A further \$3 million will support the implementation of IHealth — a modern, integrated health information system that will enhance Yukoners' experiences in the health care system and improve health outcomes across the territory. Making shingles, HPV, and COVID-19 vaccinations available free of charge for Yukoners is another way that our government is investing in preventive health care and the well-being of Yukoners.

While *Putting People First* will transform Yukon's health and social services system, Yukoners still need to travel outside of the territory for certain specialized medical care. More than \$1.4 million will make medical travel easier and more affordable for Yukoners. This year, we have doubled the medical travel subsidy to \$150 per day for multi-day travel and have expanded the eligibility destinations to allow more flexibility for patients.

In addition to helping Yukoners travel for medical care, we are also increasing supports available in rural communities.

Nearly \$2 million in this year's budget is to improve front-line health care and health system supports, including three additional community health nurses and two new nurse practitioners in Yukon communities. It will also enhance end-of-life care by providing direct funding to Yukoners in rural communities who have progressive, time-limiting illnesses.

Enhancing programs and services for Yukon seniors and elders will help them age in place in their own homes and communities, surrounded by family and friends. This budget includes nearly \$87 million for continuing care, home care, respite care, palliative care, and community day programs for seniors and elders across the territory.

In 2019, we declared a climate emergency in the Yukon — a clear acknowledgement that climate change is real and that we all — governments, industry, businesses, communities, and individuals — need to take action against this crisis. Yukoners are passionate about climate change and want to make sure that we do our part to make a difference. They recognize that a cleaner future for our territory is a stronger future and a smarter future and that addressing climate change presents new opportunities for innovation and economic growth in our territory as well.

Declaring an emergency is one thing; taking the necessary actions to address it is another. Yukoners want action and our government is listening. Last fall, we released *Our Clean Future* — an ambitious Yukon-wide strategy to address our changing climate in a comprehensive and sustainable way. With clear targets and tangible actions to reach them, the strategy marks an important turning point for the Yukon as we collectively take steps toward a more resilient future for our territory.

Our Clean Future includes 131 actions that our government will take over the next decade to address the impacts of climate change while building a green economy and ensuring that Yukoners can access reliable, affordable, and renewable energy. The strategy aims to: reduce Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent; generate 50 percent of our heating needs from renewable sources; reduce off-grid diesel use in communities by 30 percent; and ensure that 97 percent of electricity in the territory's main electricity grid comes from renewable sources, even as the population and economy continue to grow. It also sets a target of net zero emissions for Yukon's entire economy by 2050.

Developed in close partnership with Yukon First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, and Yukon municipalities, *Our Clean Future* is truly a collaborative effort that will establish that Yukon is a global leader in the fight against climate change.

Over the next decade, in partnership with the Government of Canada, our government will invest more than \$500 million to implement this strategy and to create new jobs in our green economy.

This year's budget includes more than \$50 million for the implementation of *Our Clean Future*, with climate change, energy, and green economy initiatives across 10 departments and agencies. This substantial investment demonstrates our commitment to ambitious climate action that Yukoners have

asked for. These initiatives will address climate change impacts, advance adaptation efforts, and build resiliency in Yukon communities. \$16 million will support community-based renewable energy projects across the territory. \$14.4 million will make government buildings more energy efficient and switch to renewable sources of heating like biomass which will also help grow our local biomass energy industry.

\$1.2 million is dedicated to making Yukon First Nation housing more energy efficient. \$6.1 million is for energy rebates to help Yukon families and businesses adapt to renewable sources of heating and make their homes and their buildings more energy efficient. These rebates will also support local contractors and tradespeople in the Yukon's green economy. Our government is committed to building a strong, resilient, and clean future for our territory for the benefit of all Yukoners.

We all have a role to play in addressing climate change and we will continue to provide incentives to help Yukoners continue toward this collaborative effort. This includes nearly \$1.1 million for clean transportation rebates to help Yukoners acquire electric vehicles, including e-bikes, to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and our dependence on fossil fuels.

We will also invest \$500,000 in fast-charging stations to support electric vehicle use in our territory. Our goal is to make it possible to drive between all Yukoners communities in an electric vehicle by 2025.

Our government recognizes the great leadership from our youth, and we are taking steps to empower the next generation of leaders. More than \$100,000 will be spent on Yukon's first-ever youth panel on climate change. This will provide space for Yukon youth from across the territory to share their perspectives and give advice on Yukon's climate change actions. *Our Clean Future* is truly theirs and it is important that they play a role in shaping it.

Yukon Energy Corporation's new 10-year renewable electricity plan complements and reinforces the goals of *Our Clean Future*. It represents a bold vision for our territory's sustainability while reducing Yukon's carbon emissions. This year's budget includes substantial investments toward renewable energy projects identified in the plan. There is more than \$4.5 million for a grid-scale battery that will be the largest battery project in the north and one of the largest in Canada.

\$2.3 million is included to complete the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line upgrade. This has replaced fossil-fuel use with hydro-generated electricity to support local residents and promote economic development in the region. The upgraded line has additional capacity to provide reliable, renewable energy to ensure that Victoria Gold's Eagle Gold mine remains on-grid, reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by up to 53,000 tonnes annually. A further \$10 million is included to advance the Atlin hydro expansion project in partnership with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation.

Mr. Speaker, these are the largest investments in renewable energy in more than a decade. They set the course for a responsible and sustainable future for all Yukoners, and they are just the start. Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable

electricity plan positions the Yukon to be a Canadian leader in sustainable electricity by 2030 in collaboration with First Nations and development corporations. It will allow us to continue with the rising energy needs and help us to meet the 97-percent renewable electricity goal in *Our Clean Future*.

At the same time that we invest in a clean renewable future, we continue to strengthen and diversify our economy for the benefit of all Yukoners. From NorthLight Innovation, the first innovation hub in the north, to an innovative partnership with the Yukon First Nation Investment Corporation and Panache Ventures to support entrepreneurial and investor capacity building in the territory, our government's strong support of innovation and entrepreneurship has been recognized nationally. This budget includes more than \$835,000 for the innovative and entrepreneurship program delivered in partnership with Yukon University.

More than \$20 million is budgeted for construction of the Dempster fibre line that will connect more than 70 communities across the north and provide more reliable Internet services and access. This project will stimulate further growth of Yukon's knowledge sector and digital economy while contributing to community resiliency.

The newly formed regional economic development fund will provide nearly \$2 million to advance strategic industries and support regional economic development. There is \$3 million for community development projects that provide economic benefits and opportunities in Yukon communities.

One of the strongest areas of economic development is in the Yukon's agricultural sector. Last year, we released a new agricultural policy following several years of work and engagement with agricultural industry representatives, First Nations, and all Yukoners. *Cultivating Our Future* outlines how the Government of Yukon will support the continuing growth of Yukon's agricultural industry in the coming decade and enhance our ability to be more self-sufficient in food production. From beef, dairy, and poultry operations to community and First Nation-based farms and greenhouses, Yukon's local capacity to produce food continues to grow.

We also have a strong local restaurant scene that is eager to serve more homegrown cuisine. Together, we can increase Yukon's food security and support a thriving and prosperous agricultural sector.

Our government has built strong and respectful government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations to foster reconciliation. True to our commitment, we revitalized the Yukon Forum, and we have met with Yukon First Nation leaders four times each year since taking office in 2016. These meetings have allowed us to advance joint priorities that benefit all Yukoners.

Finalizing the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* after 15 years of challenges under the previous government sent a clear signal to Yukoners and to all Canadians that our government is committed to respectful, collaborative partnerships and relationships with Yukon First Nations to support the people of our territory. The strong partnerships that we have developed during our mandate, guided by a joint priority action plan, have delivered tangible results, including a

memorandum of understanding on mining, a reset of the relationship under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, and the resolution of long-standing issues around resource royalty sharing under chapter 23 of the final agreements.

By working in collaboration with First Nation partners, we have taken significant steps to advance reconciliation and to map the way forward for our territory.

At the last Yukon Forum meeting, leaders endorsed the Yukon First Nation procurement policy — a major step toward realizing the vision of chapter 22 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* in achieving equitable and sustainable economic growth and prosperity for the Yukon. The new policy was developed through a collaborative drafting process with Yukon First Nations and was a first of our government, and it can serve as a model for future partnerships. Yukon's business communities support the goals of the policy to strengthen outcomes for Yukon First Nation people and businesses by providing opportunities for Yukon First Nation governments, businesses, and people to participate in territorial procurements.

This innovative policy will bring business opportunities for Yukon First Nations and advance economic self-sufficiency while moving government procurement policies in a more inclusive direction for all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon's public service should reflect the population it serves. In 2019, we released *Breaking Trail Together*, a 10-year strategic plan to achieve a representative, diverse, and inclusive public service. The Government of Yukon is the single largest employer in the territory. It is important that we lead by example when it comes to employment equity. Increasing the representation of aboriginal people within the public service will honour our obligation under the final agreements, ensuring that the programs and services that we deliver are inclusive and meet the needs of all Yukoners and advance reconciliation efforts with Yukon First Nations.

As part of our commitment to reconciliation, we are pleased to be working in partnership with Kluane First Nation to build a new Kluane Lake school in Burwash Landing. \$500,000 is included in this year's budget to support planning and design of a new school that will accommodate students from kindergarten to grade 12. The Kluane First Nation asked for this school to be built in Burwash Landing more than 100 years ago, and we are very proud to be working in partnership to support Kluane First Nation citizens to learn and to thrive in their community.

Education is a key area of our reconciliation efforts. In partnership with the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education, we established an Assistant Deputy Minister of First Nations Initiatives in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action 62. We also worked closely with the Chiefs Committee on Education to establish a Yukon First Nations school board, which will provide Yukon First Nations with greater control, authority, and responsibility over the education of their citizens and support self-determination.

We are also supporting First Nations' economic self-determination by enabling Yukon First Nation governments to register their settlement land in the Land Titles Office in a way that does not impact aboriginal rights or title. In 2018, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation received the first certificate of title for category A settlement land from the Yukon Land Titles Office. Last fall, we amended the *Land Titles Act* to support more First Nations to do the same. This is part of a broader effort to modernize the land titles system to meet the needs of all Yukoners.

Our government continues to make strategic investments to build healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities. We have allocated more than \$10 million for the new health and wellness centre in Old Crow. The new centre will be the first of its kind in Yukon, providing both health and social services with a collaborative care model.

A further \$1.4 million is allocated to complete the new Vuntut Gwitchin community centre as well as \$1.75 million for a Vuntut Gwitchin elders complex. More than \$2 million is budgeted for Kwanlin Dün First Nation's community hub to provide elders, youth, and other citizens with a welcoming, inclusive space to enhance vitalization of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation culture. More than \$3 million is budgeted for a new potlatch house in Beaver Creek, and \$500,000 will go toward a new Teslin Tlingit Council community hub.

We are also planning a new arts and heritage resource centre in Whitehorse to help preserve and showcase Yukon's rich history. Yukoners need municipal facilities that are modern, efficient, and environmentally responsible, Mr. Speaker. This year's budget includes \$3.5 million for a new public works building and fire hall in Faro, designed to exceed minimum energy standards by 25 percent. An additional \$3.5 million is allocated for a public works, fire hall, and emergency medical services building in Carmacks. More than \$3.8 million is included for work on a new public works and fire hall building in Watson Lake. \$1 million is budgeted for a new public works facility in Old Crow. More than \$2 million is included for upgrades and retrofits to facilities in Mayo, Teslin, Carmacks, and Whitehorse.

Nearly \$1.5 million will also support work on a new public transit hub and bus replacements in Whitehorse. New buildings above ground are of no use without the infrastructure beneath the ground that allows them to function properly. \$6.2 million is allocated for water and waste-water upgrades in Dawson City and a further \$2 million for the Dawson reservoir. More than \$4 million will support upgrades to infrastructure in Haines Junction, including the town's water supply and lagoon. Over \$11.3 million is budgeted for a variety of water and lagoon upgrades in Mayo, Carcross, Ross River, Old Crow, Faro, Pelly Crossing, Carmacks, Beaver Creek, and Mount Lorne. To ensure that our communities stay connected, more than \$54 million is budgeted for highways and bridges, including the Nisutlin Bay bridge.

We will also continue to modernize Yukon's aviation infrastructure with \$16.5 million for airports and aerodromes from Watson Lake to Old Crow. Mr. Speaker, providing Yukoners with access to recreational facilities is essential to

promoting healthy, active lifestyles. In support of this goal, this year's budget includes funding for the pool in Pelly Crossing and arenas in Mayo and Carmacks.

\$600,000 is allocated for a boat launch in Burwash Landing. \$345,000 is included for a new Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth centre to provide programming supports and traditional activities, along with \$250,000 to support and design of a new Dawson recreation centre.

More than \$3 million will go toward Mount Sima's snowmaking and electrical infrastructure to help move the ski hill away from its reliance on diesel and support the ski hill's transition to greener energy. Over \$1.2 million is dedicated to the completion of a new, state-of-the-art skateboard park here in Whitehorse. An additional \$250,000 will go toward upgrading the biathlon Yukon facility on Grey Mountain and upgrades are planned for the Polarettes Gymnastics Club. There is also \$1.75 million for upgrades to the Mountain View Golf Course irrigation system.

On top of this, more than \$3.1 million is included to improve infrastructure and enhance the experience in Yukon's parks and campgrounds guided by our new *Yukon Parks Strategy*.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that sustainable affordable housing is foundational to the health and well-being of all Yukoners. While Yukon's population has been growing steadily for nearly two decades, the housing needs of our growing population have been overlooked in the past. Together with our partners across the territory, we have worked hard throughout our mandate to increase housing options for all Yukoners and invested in the development of over 600 homes to date.

This year's budget once again includes significant investments to make housing available for all Yukoners. \$8.5 million is budgeted for the completion of a new 47-unit community housing project in Whitehorse that will provide safe and affordable housing that meets the needs of families and individuals including vulnerable populations.

An additional \$2 million will help the Challenge Disability Resource Group complete their 53-unit cornerstone project here in Whitehorse. Our government has supported Challenge with this initiative for several years and we are excited to see it take shape in the downtown core. It will provide additional supports and affordable housing for those most in need in Whitehorse.

We recognize that vulnerable populations need increased access to housing in our rural communities too. Building on the success of Yukon's first-ever Housing First residence in Whitehorse, we are including \$1.5 million toward a Housing First project in Watson Lake.

We have also budgeted more than \$6.1 million for a 10-unit, mixed-use housing project in Old Crow — a first for the community. Last year, our rural home ownership program helped 14 households buy or build homes in rural Yukon and we have budgeted \$3.2 million this year to build upon that success.

More than \$1.4 million is allocated for rental supplements. This includes the new Canada-Yukon housing benefit, which

provides Yukon households with up to \$800 per month to help them afford to rent a home that meets their needs. Our partnership with the Government of Canada is helping to address housing needs in our territory, Mr. Speaker. We recently secured an additional \$40 million as the northern carve-out under the National Housing Co-Investment Fund. This will support community housing projects across the territory to meet the needs of all Yukoners.

An additional \$1.65 million is included to help homeowners to stay in their homes and to keep them in good repair. We have also budgeted another \$3.6 million for the housing initiatives fund. We introduced this program in 2018 to increase the availability of affordable housing in our territory and it has supported over 350 new homes across the housing continuum. Another \$2 million for the municipal matching rental construction grant will provide further support for the development of rental housing.

Mr. Speaker, making land available for development is another important way to meet the growing needs for housing throughout the Yukon. This year we worked with the City of Whitehorse to release more than 250 lots — the largest-ever lottery and tender of lots in Whitehorse. We have included more than \$30 million in this year's budget for land development projects across the Yukon, from Watson Lake to Dawson City and beyond. In addition to more than 150 residential lots, we are looking forward to releasing more than 25 commercial lots in Whistle Bend this year.

Work on Champagne and Aishihik First Nation's Marshall Creek expansion project is underway and will provide more than 30 new lots for Champagne and Aishihik First Nation citizens. Lots will be made available in Mayo later this spring and planning is underway on residential projects in Teslin, Dawson City, Carmacks, and Watson Lake.

Working with our partners across Yukon to develop lots will increase housing options while providing additional economic and employment opportunities in our rural communities. Investing in housing and in community infrastructure projects is one way of supporting Yukoners; making government more open, transparent, and accountable is another.

Throughout our mandate, we have focused on modernizing government to make it more responsive and accountable to the needs of Yukoners. True leadership is informed by listening, and we have expanded enhanced engagement opportunities for all Yukoners on issues that matter to them.

We have also worked very closely with municipal and First Nation governments to understand their priorities and support community-led initiatives and solutions. Since taking office in 2016, my Cabinet ministers and I have made over 450 trips to the communities to meet with officials, in addition to more online meetings during this pandemic than we ever could have anticipated. Rather than denying access to information, the government's default should be to disclose it. A new, modern *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* will come into force on April 1. It will make government decision-making more transparent, increasing Yukoners' access to information and strengthening privacy protection.

It is also important to know who is communicating with government regarding important decisions that directly affect them. We have created Yukon's lobby registry to make this information readily available to the public. Our government is proud to deliver on significant commitments that we have made to Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, this 2021-22 budget builds on the strong foundation that we have developed over the past four years and continues us on a path toward a brighter future for the Yukon. Since taking office, we have listened to Yukoners and we have taken action on issues that matter to them. Yukoners asked for a more people-centred approach to wellness. Our government dramatically expanded access to mental health supports throughout the territory and we are implementing the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report to help Yukoners thrive. These bold changes will move Yukon toward a more holistic and person-centred system and will position Yukon as a national leader in health and social care delivery.

Yukoners asked for investments to build healthier, more vibrant and sustainable communities for their children and families to live in. Our government expanded home care and developed an aging-in-place strategy with seniors and elders to help them live safe, independent, and comfortable lives, surrounded by strong, supportive communities. We have increased funding for childcare operators for the first time in a decade and we are now introducing universal affordable childcare to support Yukon families and put more money back in their pockets.

We have made historic investments in land development and supported over 600 new homes to increase housing options across the territory. We have made significant investments in community and recreational infrastructure in all communities to support healthy, active living.

Yukoners asked for an end to the divisive practices of the past that led to increasingly expensive legal battles with First Nations. Our government revitalized the Yukon Forum and built strong government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations on the basis of respect, cooperation, and partnership.

We've changed the character of the territory by establishing a National Indigenous Peoples Day as a statutory holiday, finalized the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*, and worked with partners across the territory to develop a Yukon-wide strategy in response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Under our leadership, Yukon has earned a reputation across the territory and across the country as a leader in reconciliation that has benefited all Yukoners.

Yukoners asked for good jobs and a diverse, growing, and sustainable economy. Our territory has had the lowest unemployment rate in the country in addition to continuous GDP growth throughout our mandate. We have developed an ambitious 10-year strategy in partnership with municipal and First Nation governments to tackle climate change while building a resilient economy powered by renewable energy. We have made historic investments to modernize infrastructure in transportation networks to stimulate economic growth

throughout the territory while reducing the tax burden on businesses to help Yukon companies and entrepreneurs thrive as our economy continues to grow.

Yukoners did not ask for the COVID-19 pandemic to dramatically change their lives, Mr. Speaker. When it did, our government was there to support Yukoners through unprecedented challenges and provided relief measures to help our economy rebound swiftly. The past 12 months have brought into clear focus what is important and what is at stake as we look toward the future. By listening to Yukoners and by delivering on the commitments that we've made to them, our government has embarked on the path toward a stronger future for all Yukoners. This budget and its investments position the territory to move confidently and steadily toward an even brighter future together.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Merci. Mahsi'cho. Günilschish. Shāw nithān.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today as the Official Opposition Finance critic.

Motion to adjourn debate

Mr. Cathers: In keeping with a long-standing tradition on budget day, I move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on Bill No. 207 agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled March 4, 2021:

34-3-71

Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (March 4, 2021) (Speaker Clarke)

34-3-72

Twenty-fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees (January 25, 2021) (Adel)

34-3-73

Twenty-fifth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees (February 9, 2021) (Adel)

The following documents were filed March 4, 2021:

34-3-53

Shallow Bay area proposed zoning – problems with the process, letter re (dated February 16, 2021) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Cathers)

34-3-54

Potential impact of a 60-metre buffer from Horse Creek on Grizzly Valley homes, letter re (dated February 18, 2021) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Cathers)

34-3-55

Potential impact of a 60-metre Riparian Buffer from the Takhini River, letter re (dated February 25, 2021) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Cathers)

34-3-56

Potential impact of a 60-metre Riparian Buffer from the Yukon River, letter re (dated March 2, 2021) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Cathers)

34-3-57

Negative Financial Impact of the Shallow Bay Zoning Proposal, letter re (dated March 3, 2021) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Cathers)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 86

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, March 8, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Spring Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Vacant*
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

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Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Pauline Frost	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; Women's Directorate

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

Independent

Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun
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Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
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*On March 8, 2021, Mr. Hutton resigned as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, March 8, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

Prayers

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I have been informed by way of the letter that I am tabling that the Member for Mayo-Tatchun has resigned as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole and will sit as an Independent member.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.
Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Women's Day

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council for International Women's Day.

Today is a day to honour women and girls, to celebrate achievements of women, and to be emboldened for the work that is still ahead of us. The theme of this year's International Women's Day is "Feminist Recovery" here in Canada. Globally, the theme is "Choose to Challenge".

I am sure that every one of us know far too many women who have been challenged this year. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the lives of many women in Yukon. We have seen increases in gender-based violence, barriers to accessing services, and extra caregiving responsibilities required throughout this pandemic. We have also seen incredible leadership throughout the health crisis. Of the 14 provincial and national chief medical officers across the country, seven are women. Many more women serve as deputies, like Dr. Catherine Elliott here in Yukon.

I recognize and pay tribute to the women who came before me and who chose to challenge discriminatory systems, gender biases, and inequality. It is because of these women that I am able to stand here today and honour the work of women in our territory. It is because of the work of women that a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls came to be and that the Yukon was the first jurisdiction in Canada to provide a comprehensive response. It is because of the front-line work of the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, and the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society that so many indigenous women are honoured, supported, and restored to their traditional roles as matriarchs.

Women in the LGBTQ2S+ community — especially transgender women and people who identify as non-binary —

have faced decades of discrimination in access to health, justice, education, and economic security. With this awareness, we celebrate the work of Queer Yukon, All Genders Yukon, and especially the youth-led high school gender sexuality alliances' successful initiative to ban conversion therapy in Yukon.

The continued work, expertise, and vision of these leaders will bring the Yukon toward a more inclusive future. I am humbled by the support that women provide to one another throughout the territory. The work of the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Dawson City Women's Shelter, and Help and Hope for Families in Watson Lake provides advocacy for women and their children, system navigation, and community. The women in our territory also support each other through creativity, innovation, and occupation. Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, Rock the North music camp, and the women's entrepreneurship hub offer young women an opportunity to see themselves in spaces where they are underrepresented. Les EssentiElles and the Yukon Status of Women Council are working every day to break down the barriers that still exist for women and gender-diverse Yukoners through research, advocacy, and community building.

We recently completed the 2021 rendition of the Bare Essentials campaign here in the Cabinet Office and throughout government. Thank you to everyone involved in this important work. We are always blown away by Yukoners' generosity. People leaving an emergency situation may not have the time or resources to get everything that they need. This campaign aims to collect these essential items to help, and they are small items like toothbrushes, shampoo, and deodorant. I went to the VIC and looked at the mountain of products that were donated by very generous Yukoners, and every year we do this and every year I am so struck by how desperately these products are needed. Mr. Speaker, every single one of these products gets used every year in our territory. Think about that for a second. I challenge us to change this. I challenge us to all work toward a future where women are safer and where the need for something like Bare Essentials is no longer there.

The Yukon is home to so many hard-working, adventurous, skilled, compassionate, and innovative women. We see women in our histories, in our communities today who have chosen to challenge the inequalities and the prejudice set before them. To honour these women, I hope that we all continue to choose to challenge the injustices that our communities face and to cultivate a brighter, more inclusive future.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to International Women's Day, which takes place annually on March 8.

We celebrate and recognize the achievements of women who have fought throughout history for equality and for rights. Today, women are recognized in every sector and in every community for their incredible achievements to society. Our young girls have opportunities today that they have not been

afforded historically. It's a testament to the work done throughout the years in Canada and around the world to level the playing field and to reach gender equality in education, sport, the workplace, and beyond.

This year, International Women's Day is focused on the theme "Choose To Challenge". With challenge comes change. Whether it is historical norms or the status quo, there is room for growth and room for change. This theme was chosen because a challenged world is an alert world.

Challenge yourself to do what you can to see that change continues. Think about how you can assist other women, young or old, to challenge themselves, because every action counts.

Mr. Speaker, we didn't get to where we are through inaction. It was decades of choices by men and women to challenge the norm and to change the trajectory of society. There are so many opportunities here in the Yukon for our boys and girls to equally become involved in our society — opportunities to balance workplaces that were historically staffed with either men or women, opportunities for women to succeed in politics, law enforcement, justice, health care, and much more and to take on leadership roles and to excel in those roles.

So, thank you to all those women who have helped throughout the years to pave the way for our children today. Their achievements have set the bar and sent a message that anything is possible for anyone regardless of their gender.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. Hanson: I rise on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party and Independent member to pay tribute today, March 8, International Women's Day.

As we've heard today, the Canadian theme for International Women's Day 2021 is #FeministRecovery. We've also heard that it's themed "Choose To Challenge", and both are important; they go together.

As we mark the one-year anniversary of Yukon's collective realization of the impact of COVID-19 as the Arctic Winter Games were cancelled, it is timely to reflect on both the origins of International Women's Day and the absolute imperative of translating the social media currency of #FeministRecovery into action.

The seeds of International Women's Day were planted in 1908, when 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding shorter working hours, better pay, and the right to vote. Three years later, in 1911, International Women's Day was honoured for the first time in Europe, and 110 years later, the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has sharpened our awareness that #FeministRecovery is important for us all.

COVID-19 has revealed the fundamental gaps in our society. It has shown us how the pandemic has disproportionately affected women who are already marginalized, vulnerable, or struggling. On every front, the COVID-19 pandemic has eroded hard-fought gains for gender equality. From lay-offs to lack of childcare to increased unpaid work to the rise of domestic violence, women have been most deeply impacted by the health and economic crisis. There is a

certain irony, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that we have been quick to celebrate the front-line workers in our hospitals and long-term care facilities, including nurses and personal care attendants — again, the majority of whom are women. We called them "essential workers"; we called them "heroes". We celebrated the front-line workers who showed up for work every day to make sure our communities had access to groceries, essential goods, and quality childcare. The majority of those are women. We even offered them a wage top-up for a while. Through all of this, we have been seeing clear evidence of the unequal negative impact of the pandemic on women who had to leave jobs to stay home with their school-aged children or who needed to care for aging parents, on women whose jobs did not allow them to work from home.

Women have been affected in other ways, including increased violence toward women who could not leave their homes during lockdown and women who had to quit jobs to be at home with children attending school from home. The evidence is clear: Stop-gap measures are not enough. Our economic recovery has been aptly named by economists as a "she recovery". Until our social policies match our economic aspirations, we will fail to reach anywhere near full economic recovery.

As we celebrate the potential of a feminist recovery, Gloria Steinem's words ring loud: "A feminist is anyone who recognizes the equality and full humanity of women and men."

It is for that reason that we also pause to celebrate the fact that some of the leading voices as we have struggled through the past year have been women — whether it was deputy chief medical officer of health Dr. Catherine Elliot, who had the onerous duty to announce the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games — a decision that, as she said again this morning, was incredibly difficult, knowing the hopes and aspirations that were being dashed — or Dr. Theresa Tam, the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada who has guided Canada through a global pandemic that the world hasn't seen since the Spanish influenza.

Across Canada, many of our provincial health officers are women, including Dr. Bonnie Henry in BC and Dr. Kami Kandola in the Northwest Territories. These women are public and well-known faces across Canada. As women, they have been subject to harsh criticism, not because of the advice and direction that they offer, but because they are women. We are thankful for their hard work and for the sacrifices that they made. They are clear demonstrations that feminism isn't about making women strong; women are already strong. It is about changing the way the world perceives that strength.

Applause

In recognition of COVID-19 vaccination teams

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my Liberal colleagues, I ask you to join me today in recognizing the tremendous efforts of the teams of immunizers, nurses, and logistics staff who are supporting the COVID-19 vaccine efforts. Team Balto and Team Togo have been travelling to rural Yukon communities throughout Yukon, immunizing community members with first and second doses of the

Moderna vaccine. Team Fox has been hard at work here in Whitehorse, working the mass COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the Whitehorse convention centre.

After much planning and preparation, the mobile teams successfully departed on January 18 and are continuing to administer vaccines to community members across the territory. With around 52 team members, these teams are composed of selfless individuals across all departments within the Government of Yukon — employees from Wildland Fire Management, from Health and Social Services, from Finance, and others from Emergency Medical Services. They all raised their hands to take part in this historic moment. This is not to forget that community members in all of our communities are stepping up to help with the logistics as well, and I just want to give a shout-out to them. They have all graciously volunteered their time and energy to protect Yukoners. They are all our heroes, and we wouldn't be where we are without them.

We have even had some nurses come out of retirement to be a part of the great effort to ensure that Yukoners receive their shots. That passion and that commitment make me so proud. It truly demonstrates the heart of this territory and the profound level of care. I am humbled to see the efforts of both teams as they continue their second visits to the communities.

In partnership with the surrounding communities, Team Balto and Team Togo have ensured a safe and comfortable environment for community members to inquire about and receive immunization. We have heard countless comments from citizens about their upbeat personalities and how it has made a difference. The professionalism and positivity of all three vaccination teams have been truly inspiring to see. These individuals continue to demonstrate such zeal, perseverance, and warm devotion. They ensure that Yukoners' safety and well-being are of the utmost importance during such turbulent times. They know what it is to give, and we can all learn so much from them.

Together, let's celebrate the efforts of these teams that have risen to the occasion to provide Yukoners across the territory with immunization against COVID-19. This week, the mobile teams advance to complete the second doses in communities. I wish them the best and continue to support their efforts from afar.

Here in Whitehorse, Team Fox is working harder than ever as we embark on the second week of vaccinations open to the general public in Whitehorse. The immunizers and logistics staff have served thousands of Yukoners since the clinic opened its doors in mid-January.

In closing, I would like to ask my fellow members to recognize and acknowledge the efforts of teams Balto, Togo and Fox as they continue to administer vaccines and offer support within the communities throughout these coming months. Thank you, mahsi' cho, teams Balto, Togo and Fox, for your dedication, commitment, and the support that you provide to Yukoners. Your efforts are recognized and very much appreciated.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to give thanks to the mobile vaccination teams that are working their way through their second round of community visits.

Since early January 18, teams have circled the Yukon to ensure that all Yukoners willing and eligible are able to receive their first and second doses of the Moderna vaccine. As one can imagine, this was no easy feat. Not only were these clinics organized quickly and efficiently, but Yukoners showed up, waiting in freezing temperatures to be among the first in the country to roll up their sleeves.

The organization and management that goes into the vaccination campaign of this magnitude is immense, and we commend all those who have dedicated their time to ensure that all of Yukon is afforded the opportunity to receive the vaccine at home.

So, we are fortunate here in the Yukon, not only to have the ability to vaccinate all eligible Yukoners, but to have such a dedicated, hard-working group of people to get the job done.

My community of Haines Junction welcomed the vaccination team with around 150 ice candles. I think we made the national news. It was a pleasure to take part in the candle lighting. It was a challenge to get the candles lit sometimes, but being part of the set-up — setting the wall tent up with my fellow Ranger for the community to come to learn about the vaccine or the vaccination was wonderful. I want to thank those who volunteered in my community and those who took part in the clinic.

These teams have travelled to Beaver Creek, to Watson Lake, to Old Crow, and to communities in between throughout the territory, and they're not finished yet, as the minister said. So, thank you to those who make up teams Balto and Togo and those who are doing an incredible job here in Whitehorse on Team Fox, working long hours to boost vaccination numbers and keep Yukoners safe. Of course, thank you to all Yukoners who have stepped forward to get your vaccine.

Applause

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Independent member to celebrate the accomplishments of Yukon's rural vaccination teams.

We can draw parallels between Yukon's rural vaccination response and the 1925 Nome serum run. Teams of dedicated individuals both taking to the trail, the road, or the air to reach rural Yukoners in their home communities to deliver the important COVID-19 vaccine — aptly named teams Togo and Balto, after Leonhard Seppala's lead dogs that ran the longest and most dangerous leg of the 1925 serum run that saved the children in the small northern community of Nome, Alaska. Yukon's own Balto and Togo teams have been criss-crossing Yukon, setting up in recreation centres, community centres, and health centres to support Yukon's battle against COVID-19.

Our thanks and gratitude to all those behind this incredible feat. Thank you to those on the ground answering the questions and delivering the vaccine. Thank you to communities who have welcomed these teams with rolled up sleeves, knowing that we all have a role to play to keep each other safe.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Hutton: I have for tabling a report entitled *Strategies to Reduce Alcohol-Related Harms and Costs in Canada: A Review of Provincial and Territorial Policies*, which gives Yukon a failing grade in that regard.

Ms. White: I have for tabling the *Yukon Employment Standards Board Review of Yukon's Minimum Wage*, dated November 30, 2018. It contains the recommendation for a minimum wage of over \$15 an hour by April 2021.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 18: *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 18, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 18, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 18 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports the budget commitment of \$25.2 million for early learning and universal childcare.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reconsider changes to the use of individualized education plans for students in Yukon and ensure that students who need additional supports have appropriate resources.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to:

(1) review and update if necessary the avalanche safety plan for Transportation Maintenance;

(2) increase resources to Transportation Maintenance in order to deal with road closures resulting from avalanches; and

(3) work with commercial operators to mitigate the effect of avalanche-related public road closures on commercial traffic, particularly on the south Klondike Highway.

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

THAT, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting, if the Legislative Assembly stands adjourned for an indefinite period of time, the Government House Leader and at least one of the other House Leaders together may request that the Legislative Assembly meet virtually by video conference, with all the Members of the Legislative Assembly being able to participate remotely, notwithstanding any current Standing Orders regarding members' physical presence in the Chamber.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting, any Member of the Legislative Assembly who is unable to attend sittings of the House in person due to COVID-19 symptoms, illness, or protocols may participate in the sittings of the House by teleconference, notwithstanding Standing Order 8 or any other Standing Order, and by teleconference shall:

(1) be recognized to speak in debate, notwithstanding Standing Order 17;

(2) be permitted to vote, notwithstanding Standing Order 25;

(3) contribute to constituting quorum of the Legislative Assembly, under Standing Order 3 and the *Yukon Act*; and

(4) be considered to have attended the Sitting of the Legislative Assembly with no deduction of indemnity required under subsection 39(5) of the *Legislative Assembly Act*.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting:

(1) the Clerk shall keep a daily list of paired members, in which any member of the Government and any member of an opposition party may have their names entered together by noon on that day to indicate that they will not take part in any recorded division in the Legislative Assembly held on that date; and

(2) following each such division held, the names of any members entered into the list of paired members for that date shall be printed in Hansard and the Votes and Proceedings.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take immediate action to reduce alcohol-related harm based on the recommendations of the 2019 report *Strategies to Reduce Alcohol-Related Harms and Costs in Canada: A Review of Provincial and Territorial Policies*.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly should be amended to

remove the ability to use the guillotine clause to amend the *Elections Act* or the *Electoral District Boundaries Act*.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Government of Canada to take over the chief firearms officer position and ensure that the next chief firearms officer is appointed by the territorial government.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon Liberal government to live up to their promise to tell Yukoners when the next election will be and announce the date of the 2021 Yukon general election.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Universal childcare program

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government believes that all children should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning opportunities. That is why we are making the single largest investment ever in the territory to support early learning and childcare and help make the lives of Yukon families more affordable.

This year's budget includes more than \$25 million toward early learning and childcare initiatives. This includes approximately \$15 million to support a new Yukon-wide universal childcare program. High-quality childcare programs and early learning opportunities are the foundation for later success in school and in life. The new funding program is designed to address affordability and improve the accessibility and quality of early learning childcare. Moving to a universal childcare model on April 1 will put more disposable income in the hands of Yukon families, provide parents and guardians more choice if they want to work outside the home, help to close the developmental gap between Yukon's rural and urban children, and ensure that, regardless of income or employment, all Yukon families can access high-quality, affordable childcare options for their children.

Starting on April 1, families will save up to \$700 per month per child if they attend a licensed, participating, full-time childcare program. For example, a family that currently pays \$850 for childcare each month for one child will, under the new program, pay only \$150 in fees. This will put more money into the pockets of Yukon families to help them cover a mortgage payment, the cost of groceries and maybe extracurricular activities or save money for their children's future. These savings are significant and a key part of building a stronger economy and recovering from the pandemic. This program will complement our current subsidy model so that the lowest income earners will qualify for very low and, in some cases, free childcare. Also, grandparents solely responsible for their grandchildren and teen parents attending high school will continue to receive subsidies for licensed childcare.

In addition to supports for families, we will support existing operators in developing and maintaining high-quality early learning environments and foster the establishment of new centres to address demand. We are also increasing wages for early childhood educators in recognition of the important role that they play in our children's development and help us attract and retain early child educators.

We know that investing in universal childcare will support families on the road to economic recovery and set all Yukon children on a path toward a brighter future.

I am particularly happy to be discussing this on International Women's Day. We know that women are the primary caregivers of children in our territory, and this new program will support them to enter the workforce and participate in the economic growth of our territory.

We recently heard from a constituent who said — and I quote: "This program allows me to dream again." This will allow single parents and others to think about career advancement, starting a business, or going back to school. The choice is theirs. By putting money back into the hands of Yukon families, the doors of possibility can be opened. There is no question: When we invest in families and education, we create stronger, thriving communities.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to respond to this statement today as the Official Opposition critic for Education.

We believe that investments in our early learning and childcare systems have incredible benefits that stretch well into the future. While this was certainly the case before the pandemic, the experience of Yukoners throughout the past year has heightened our awareness of the importance of well-resourced, quality early learning and childcare. So, I would like to indicate that we are pleased that the government has finally made this a priority. We do note, however, that it took an election year for them to act on this — which is not entirely surprising, as this government has been known for being unable to get things done.

Despite our support of the idea of investing in early learning and childcare, we do have a number of questions about how this program will work. There are two main components of this program, as far as we can tell from the minister's statements: an affordability component and a quality enhancement component. With regard to the affordability component, it is our understanding that the new program will be run through childcare operators, which means that some sort of agreement will need to be signed by the individual operators. So, our question is: How will this work, and will operators need to send an application in for each child, and who will receive the application and verify it?

We have heard that the Liberals are hiring a number of new positions to deliver this. So, can the minister confirm how many new FTE positions are being created in the Department of Education to administer this program? We also understand that this will only apply to children and families who are already in care. So, can the minister tell us how many kids are currently

in registered spaces and what percentage of Yukon children they represent?

If a parent has left the workforce to care for a child and they have relinquished their childcare space, how will they benefit from this new program? If a parent has decided that they should stay home to deliver care to their own child, could the minister explain how they can take benefit from this system?

Switching now to the quality enhancement side of the program, can the minister let us know if it is true that the government is now going to regulate the pay for early childhood educators? Are childcare operators going to simultaneously face government-mandated fee freezes as well as government-mandated wages for ECEs? Can the minister also provide an overview of the consultation that occurred with these childcare operators in the development of this program and its policy?

We also noticed that the minister tabled changes to legislation earlier today. Can she explain if those changes are needed to bring this program into place? If so, what happens if the legislation is not amended by April 1?

We have many more questions, Mr. Speaker, but I realize my time is elapsing. So, I hope that the minister can answer these questions today and we look forward to getting into further debate on this program during the balance of this Sitting.

Ms. White: Yukoners need and deserve a universal childcare program. The Yukon NDP have long advocated for this and so we welcome others who have finally reached this same decision. The announcement today is a step in the right direction, but it's just that — it's only a step. Parents who do qualify will see welcome financial relief from current childcare costs. But the announcement won't help parents who have flexible work schedules and require part-time childcare services or services that match night shift schedules. It doesn't address parents who have children who are on a wait-list. There's concern that it could even lead to a situation where a parent who may be using childcare for only three days per week has to pay more than those accessing full-time service. That is not truly universal childcare.

While the minister's statement contains many words, it remains short on details; in fact, it raises many questions. After announcing universal childcare repeatedly for the last eight months, I think that many people were expecting more as to how this will roll out. Will it be money directly to families or to licensed childcare operators? Will it be a tax rebate? Will it be a cash transfer? Will it be monthly, quarterly, or yearly? How does one apply? Is it the same as the childcare subsidy, where an individual must reapply every month? Is this increasing the workload of childcare operators who are already burdened with required paperwork? This subsidy is available for parents with children already in licensed participating full-time childcare programs — families who already have childcare. Full-time childcare is great, but how can it be universal if it's not available to every family? What about working parents who only require part-time childcare? What about the parent who is self-employed and works according to

their contracts when the work is available? These individuals often find themselves left out of the childcare subsidies and now are concerned that they will be left out of the universal childcare subsidy.

Nowhere in this announcement have we heard about addressing the need for new spaces and new childcare centres throughout Yukon. We need a true universal childcare program that will take care of all of our children, and this means providing the funding and training for more early childhood educators, including those workers living in communities. This means providing ongoing investment and ongoing professional development for our early childhood educators, creating new childcare spaces to provide real, affordable, accessible, quality child education, not only in Whitehorse but throughout Yukon. I have heard from some childcare operators that they were not consulted ahead of these changes. Was the Yukon Child Care Board consulted on the rollout of this program?

While this announcement will provide welcome financial relief to some families, it may leave others behind and it doesn't address existing gaps in our system. One has to wonder why an announcement like this that could have changed things for so many families is happening right now on an eve of an election rather than in the previous four years of this government's mandate.

So, I will say it again: We need real, affordable, accessible, quality childcare — real universal childcare — that meets the needs of all families.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This is about Yukon families. Yukon families are extremely pleased to hear this information and are well aware of many of the details going forward that members opposite have asked questions about. There has been an extremely detailed engagement with operators — with the childcare services board and other operators — throughout the territory. That work has been happening for the last number of months and will continue to happen right up until this process is worked out.

The details coming forward are coming forward through families and through operators and to operators through the extremely talented team of individuals.

We are committed to supporting Yukon families and making their lives more affordable, Mr. Speaker. This has been a priority since we took office in 2016. In 2018, we increased the direct operating grant for the first time in a decade. Funding was increased by 14.5 percent, and rural childcare programs received an additional 20-percent increase to reflect the reality of offering early learning and childcare programming in rural communities. We agreed with the stakeholders at the time who told us that an increase was overdue, and we made it retroactive to April 1, 2017.

Our government believes that all children should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning opportunities. That is why we are making the single largest investment ever in the territory to support early learning and childcare and to help make the lives of Yukon families more affordable.

My colleagues opposite are somewhat cynical about election year. Election years come and go, Mr. Speaker. The truth is that this is money in the pockets of Yukon families and they are appreciative of the development of this program.

This year's budget includes approximately \$15 million to support a new Yukon-wide universal childcare program. This is in addition to roughly \$10 million we have already invested in childcare through the direct operating grant and other subsidies. This new program will make childcare more affordable and accessible across the territory.

Starting on April 1, families will save up to \$700 per month per child if they attend a licensed participating full-time child care program now or in the future. Existing subsidies — such as the teen parent grant and the grandparent grant — will continue to be provided.

We know that investing in universal childcare will support families on the road to economic recovery and set all Yukon children on a path toward a brighter future.

I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank the extremely talented team of individuals who have been working on this initiative for months and have led the development of this programming by reaching out to Yukoners, reaching out to operators, reaching out to the Child Care Board, and individually working night and day to determine how this program can roll out.

We are introducing real affordable accessible childcare here in the territory. The licensed childcare programs and services that are available will, of course, need to be expanded. We need to protect our early childhood educators and have them be properly paid, properly resourced, and properly retained into their position so that children in the Yukon can benefit.

I will clear up one misstatement by one of the individuals opposite. This will be pro-rated for parents who work or use childcare part time; it is available universally.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic public health measures

Mr. Hassard: In response to criticisms from the business community and the education community, the Liberal government released a document late on Friday afternoon entitled *A Path Forward*. The document was intended to give Yukoners a sense of what the next steps are for the government-imposed public health restrictions. Unfortunately, the document doesn't appear to give Yukoners much new information or a clear sense of timelines.

Since the *A Path Forward* document doesn't offer any new information for Yukoners, I would like to give the Premier a chance to address Yukoners directly. When can students, parents, and teachers expect to see a return to full-time, in-person learning for all Yukon students?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do appreciate the question from the member opposite, which gives us a chance to reiterate what we have been saying at the press conferences with Dr. Hanley, me,

and others. *A Path Forward* shows a glimpse of hope from relief to recovery. We are ahead of the curve compared to the rest of Canada when it comes to vaccines. Really, the devil is in the details about vaccines. We need Yukoners to step up. If you are hesitant, for whatever reason, the information is out there. These vaccines are safe. What we can do as a community right now is get ourselves vaccinated.

From *A Path Forward*, we explained that once we get to an effective level of vaccination, all of these things can happen. We can return to a sense of normalcy. We can return to full-time education here in Whitehorse for those high schools that aren't there. We can return to a sense of normalcy as far as gatherings and other things. We really need Yukoners to concentrate on the vaccination schedule. We have done a lot to get those vaccines front-end loaded, to get them here in the Yukon before the rest of Canada, and we really need Yukoners to step up.

Now, there is a variant right now from South America that the doctors and medical teams right across Canada are still very concerned about. Information will be coming very soon on whether or not the current vaccinations are able to affect the spike protein of these particular variants. Until then, we really need Yukoners to dig deep. The information is available in *A Path Forward* about the restrictions that can be lifted. Again, we can see the finish line from here.

Mr. Hassard: The Liberals new document, *A Path Forward*, is light on details or timelines. It does not reference any of the key metrics or data points that will drive government's decision-making. Yukoners understand that there will always be uncertainty and the possibility of change, but they would really like to have some clear communication from government about how they will make the decisions. These questions have been posed to us by Yukoners. Even the Tourism Industry Association has written to the Liberal government asking if their members should consider seeking different careers.

Since the document that the Liberals released is so scant on details, I would like to give the Premier another chance to speak directly to Yukon businesses. What should tourism operators plan for this season? Should Yukon outfitters plan for a hunting season in 2021, or should these Yukon businesses start looking for different careers?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, since the pandemic started, we have been very clear about how this Liberal government works when it comes to providing certainty for Yukoners in very uncertain times. That is that we will take the recommendations and the advice of the chief medical officer, and we will get that information out as soon as possible.

The members opposite may or may not be paying attention to the press conferences that we have on a weekly basis. I think that Dr. Hanley has been very clear about his hesitancy right now, and it is based upon that variant.

I think that Dr. Hanley has also made it very, very clear that all of the items that have been listed in *A Path Forward* are there for us to start working on recovery, a route to start working on a new sense of normalcy. By putting this documentation out, we are putting squarely into Yukoners'

hands that we need folks to get vaccinated. If you are hesitant, again, reach out to the government website. We have the most up-to-date information about the efficacy of these vaccines — really good news happening right now about the length of time between the first and second vaccinations.

As we look to the rest of Canada, and if they are going to become more mobile and if people are going to start moving around, well, it is about them getting their vaccinations on schedule. It is about those schedules being expedited, and we have been seeing that in the last few weeks. We have been seeing other jurisdictions cautiously optimistic that they also are going to get to herd immunity. We are seeing a planking of the curve. We are working together with the federal and other governments. The light is there, and we can see the finish line from here.

Mr. Hassard: So, we hear lots of talk from the Premier but no answers to the questions for Yukoners. You know, this is really starting to look like a step sideways instead of a path forward.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners understand that this is a difficult situation and that things could change at any point, but they want information. They want clarity about how the government will make decisions and they want to be treated like adults. All that this government has been able to do is offer platitudes about us all being in this together and an extension of the state of emergency for another 90 days. Our education community is looking for a path forward, our business community is looking for a path forward, and all that this government has been able to offer is a sidestep.

So, when will the Liberals show some leadership, start communicating with Yukoners, and create a real plan for guiding Yukon out of this pandemic and into a prosperous future?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I completely disagree with the member opposite's narrative. It was interesting to hear the Yukon Party asking us to open up the borders to Alberta, when we were closing down borders to the bubble to BC because of the health and safety of Yukoners.

It would be interesting to see what the Yukon Party would be doing with the chief medical officer of health's recommendations if they were in government at this time.

The member opposite says that we are not doing anything but offering platitudes. I answered his question. It is the variant in South America right now that all attention is on. I don't know why the member opposite isn't listening to the answers, but we gave him the answers to his very specific questions. When it comes to the actual work that we have done to support businesses and communities in Yukon over the last year, we have done much. We have worked with Ottawa to receive vaccines quicker than other jurisdictions in Canada. That is not nothing, Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite would have you believe. This is extremely hard work — that we were able to get ahead of the curve.

Whitehorse, this capital city, the first capital city in Canada, at least — I won't go into North America because I don't have all that data, but definitely in Canada — to receive general population vaccines.

The business relief program and the tourism supports — other jurisdictions can't offer this, yet the member opposite would say that this is nothing — that the business community didn't get these millions of dollars for hundreds and hundreds of businesses. The sick-leave provisions — I could go on and on with the supports that this government has given through COVID, but the members opposite just don't want to believe it, I guess.

Question re: Government of Yukon borrowing limit

Mr. Cathers: On October 2, 2018, the Premier said this — quote: "I'll just say up front that we're not contemplating taking on any extra debt for our five-year capital plan..." However, just nine days later, the Premier wrote the federal government and asked to have the territory's debt limit doubled to \$800 million.

Why did the Premier tell this House one thing and then do the complete opposite just days later?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I've said many times in answering this exact same question from the member opposite that, again, we were not at that time considering taking on debt; we don't want to take on new debt, but we do want to have the financial wherewithal to make sure that, if we have to work with First Nation governments and develop next generation projects and green projects for energy, we now have that capacity to do so.

The member opposite keeps on asking this question over and over again; I keep on answering this question over and over again. We did increase the borrowing limit through the federal government. They were the ones that actually do it. They did it to all three governments at the same time. The Yukon Party has increased that debt limit more times than we have. They never asked for legislative oversight. They're now asking us for that legislative oversight.

Mr. Speaker, the amount of debt that we have on the records right now is mostly from the Yukon Party. We did get the increase from \$400 million to \$800 million. We have that flexibility. I will say again that responsible borrowing is part of strong fiscal management that I'm very proud of in this territorial government.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's response is pretty hard to believe. He would have you believe that, just nine days before he wrote a letter to the federal government asking for a higher borrowing limit, he wasn't contemplating more borrowing. We know that the Premier has not been open with Yukoners about this subject, and we know that his words in the House are contradicted by his own letter to the federal minister.

On October 2, 2018, he said this: "... I don't think the member opposite is paying attention to it — that we are not contemplating borrowing." Yet, on October 11, 2018, just nine days later, the Premier wrote to the Trudeau government and said — and I quote: "... I would like to request that our borrowing limit is raised \$800 million." The Premier made the request. Why did the Premier mislead Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Silver: That is how time works. You make a statement and then we move on. It's not like we go back in time in those times.

The member opposite is right. In the Legislative Assembly, I did say that we weren't contemplating taking on more borrowing; that is true. I have a copy of the letter as well from February 19. Absolutely — we talked in the Legislative Assembly about this letter — and very soon afterward as well.

Mr. Speaker, increasing the borrowing limit is one thing; taking on debt is something completely different. Again, Mr. Speaker, if you take a look at the debt that is on the books right now — it is modest compared to the other two territories — the majority of that debt was taken on during the Yukon Party's time in government. We said that we wanted to make sure that we can partner with Canada. The federal government has an ambitious climate change plan. So do we. We want to make sure that we have next generation energy that is of a green nature. We want to make sure that we have as many variables as possible when it comes to how we can accomplish this.

I will give credit to the minister responsible for energy right now and the herculean effort that he has made to partner with First Nation governments to take a look at how we can actually work together for a green economy and the ability to get one of the biggest batteries in North America — again, without borrowing. That is what we are doing on this side of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and his colleagues are known for flip-flopping, but to have us believe that, in just nine days, they made a complete about-face on the issue of borrowing is not believable.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we are referencing the Premier's own letter to the federal government where he himself drew the connection to the request for the borrowing limit to be doubled and the government's spending plans. Yukoners expect MLAs — and especially the Premier — to come to the House with accurate information, to tell the truth, and to not say things to them that are not true.

On October 2, 2018, the Premier told this House that he wasn't contemplating borrowing. Then, a mere nine days later, he wrote to the Trudeau government asking the federal government to double our debt limit to \$800 million. It is his letter, Mr. Speaker, with his signature on it. How can Yukoners trust the Premier if the Premier will not tell the truth in this instance?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I stand by my words. We don't want to take on new debt to deal with next generation energy solutions. We have proven that we are able to partner with the federal government, which has a very similar climate change strategy when it comes to working with First Nations and when it comes to working on energy. We've managed to use those partnerships and the flexibility to get financing for a battery, which is great to see.

We are looking at every single option possible to not take on debt. But at the same time, we also want to make sure that we have the wherewithal and the stability of borrowing as an option — as one option. So, again, if we were in the Legislative Assembly with a great plan where we came forth with a First Nation government to expand hydro projects and if we didn't have the capacity, we would probably be getting just as much flack from the opposition.

So, again, Mr. Speaker, not wanting to take on debt — absolutely stand behind that. Raising the debt level from the federal government when they're raising it right across all three territories — we'll take that raise, absolutely. But we didn't spend a dollar of debt on that yet for energy projects. But again, we want to work with the Energy Corporation, we want to work with the First Nation governments, and we want to have every option possible.

Now, I know the Canadian government has their investment bank that they want us to use as well. We would like to see, in partnership with the federal government, flexibility on federal dollars to be able to do this.

Question re: Death of Yukoner in custody in Alberta

Ms. Hanson: Under the *Coroners Act*, an inquest is a legislative requirement when an individual dies while in custody. In July 2018, a young man, Maxim Baril-Blouin, died while under the care and direction of the Yukon Review Board in a remand centre in Edmonton. He was waiting to be transferred back to Whitehorse after charges arising from an incident in Edmonton had been dropped. No Yukon inquest, inquiry, or investigation of circumstances of his death has occurred despite the fact that this young man was in Edmonton under orders of the Yukon Review Board after being found to be not criminally responsible for earlier actions.

Mr. Speaker, why would the death of a person under Yukon Review Board orders due to his mental health and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder who subsequently died in custody not trigger a Yukon coroner's inquest?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This is an extremely delicate topic in which to deal with here in the territory because it involves the personal information of the Yukon family of a young man who died tragically in custody in another province, outside the jurisdiction of the Yukon Territory in relation to his custody level at the time.

I am aware that the individual's mother has been in touch with Yukon's Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services on more than one occasion. The information that she has sought has been provided to her. I don't think it is appropriate to go too much further into this particular matter. I want to be respectful of the family and I am happy to deal with this continually outside of this forum.

The question regarding the jurisdiction of the Yukon coroner is one that is available in the Yukon legislation. We will determine an appropriate answer and I will provide it to the member opposite, in relation to her particular question, but I am concerned about speaking any more freely about this in respect of the family.

Ms. Hanson: It is indeed delicate. It is painful, and the mother has asked us to raise it. She does not want to deal with it continually, as she has for the last two and a half years. Regardless of the fact that this death occurred in Alberta, the truth is that this young man was there under order from the Yukon Review Board, and under the *Criminal Code*, the review board and the Attorney General of the territory are responsible, even when a person is transferred to another jurisdiction. If I

read this correctly, not only is the review board still responsible, but the Attorney General — our Minister of Justice — has responsibilities.

When will the minister responsible do what is required and direct that a coroner's inquest be held into this young man's death?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will determine an answer to the question and I will provide it happily to the member opposite. I don't think that legal advice is appropriately given on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. It is the responsibility, pursuant to the *Criminal Code*, of the Attorney General. I take that responsibility extremely seriously. No coroner's inquest has been ordered — that is correct — to date, and I say that clearly expecting that we have no jurisdiction to do so. I stand corrected and I am happy to determine if that is in fact the case.

Ms. Hanson: The family has been looking for answers into the death of their son over two and a half years ago. Their questions and inquiries have been met with vague condolences but no answers. They have questions about what happened at a residential program that he was participating in and why he was placed in a hotel without supervision before he ended up in remand. They have been given no answers. Their son, Maxim, was to have been on his way back to Whitehorse, having not been able to complete the residential program.

He instead ended up in remand, which is police custody, where he died. The parents have questioned what happened between the program and remand. Who was providing supervision as required? Why has there been no inquiry?

Mr. Speaker, what do these parents have to do? When will there be a coroner's inquest into the death of Maxim Baril-Blouin?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am aware of the very important and serious questions that this family has in relation to what occurred with their son. I am aware that the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Services working together have provided as many answers as are available to them to this family. I am aware that many of the questions that they have are questions that cannot be answered by the Yukon government and, in fact, need to be answered by the Alberta government where this young man was in custody. I am happy to continue to pursue answers on their behalf to certainly take their matter seriously. It is a tragic situation and it is a situation in which the Alberta government has likely some responsibility, particularly because of the way in which he was held in custody. He was transferred in under their system. More answers are required. We will continue to work with this family to obtain those answers.

Question re: Affordable housing

Ms. White: Each and every day, Yukoners are struggling to find places to live that are both affordable and safe. We know that there are over 350 people on the Yukon Housing wait-list. This includes seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, couples, and single individuals. Rents continue to rise and availability is nearly non-existent. Projects announced recently by the Yukon government will barely make a dent in the 350-person wait-list.

If this Yukon government has an actual plan to house the 350 people who qualify for Yukon Housing supports, when will they share it with all elected members in this House?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am pleased to rise today to speak to Yukoners about the Yukon Housing Corporation's mandate and its vision to provide affordability and, of course, housing to Yukoners.

Over the course of the last four years, this government has worked very closely and realigned its support services and its loans program — its funding program — to direct grants to ensure that partners in our communities are well-supported to align with rural Yukon communities' supported needs.

With respect to the housing initiatives, we have put over 400 units on the market. We have 900 units currently within the Housing Corporation's portfolio.

We recently are building the 47-unit facility. We just received \$40 million from the federal government to work with our partners. We just now are reviewing the housing initiative process, which will align very nicely with Yukon communities' priority needs as we look at housing initiatives. We also have the rapid housing initiative, which we just announced, to support housing needs in three of our communities, and we have much more to offer Yukoners.

Ms. White: I don't know if I would cheer about that knowing that there are over 350 open cases right now on Yukon Housing Corporation's wait-list. Families and individuals are desperate to find housing. You can read desperate pleas every day on social media from people looking for places to live. Employers are unable to hire new workers from Outside due to the unavailability of housing. This is especially true in the communities. Housing prices continue to rise well beyond most people's ability to purchase.

Mr. Speaker, how is this government addressing the immediate need for housing, not just in Whitehorse but in the communities as well?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Creating safe and affordable housing for Yukoners is a priority of this Liberal government. We are making significant progress toward that goal. Since 2016, our housing investment activities have been guided by the Safe at Home community plan and our housing action plan. We will continue to use these for guidance as we go through the year. We just recently completed a virtual town hall with all Yukon communities to look at their community priority needs. We are in the process of transforming social housing to ensure that it better addresses the housing continuum and improves community housing outcomes for Yukoners.

We are implementing the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report with a focus to addressing the needs of vulnerable citizens while better meeting housing needs in Yukon communities. We have, through the housing initiative fund, another \$3.6 million in this year's budget for this important initiative. The new Canada housing benefit provides medium- and low-income renters with up to \$800 per month to help them afford to rent a home that meets their needs. So, no matter where you reside in Yukon, you are supported to ensure that you have affordability and a place to call home. We are happy about that.

Ms. White: Again, I am not sure why I would cheer about that statement either.

The minister can list all the projects that she wants, but the reality is that housing in Yukon has become less accessible since her government took office. Tenants and new homebuyers and those in communities know this very well. New hires are coming to the Yukon to work and turning around again and leaving. They either can't find housing or they can't find something that they can afford. This is not only happening with small businesses but with large employers as well, like the Yukon government; Whistle Bend Place is a perfect example.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister acknowledge this simple fact, and will they admit that housing has become less affordable in Yukon over the last five years?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We certainly have lots to cheer about. We would like Yukoners to know that the efforts of the corporation and our partnerships have put significant resources into our rural Yukon communities that have been sorely forgotten about. Historically, no resources, in fact, into our communities — so lots to cheer about — previously sat on \$20 million in cancelled affordable housing.

We have made significant dents in affordable housing. We are supporting 600 Yukoners to repair, buy, or build their own homes through our loans program. We have released more than 500 lots across the territory — and many more to come. We expanded the number of extended care beds for seniors. We are supporting initiatives to increase housing accessibility by supporting projects such as the Challenge Cornerstone project, Normandy Manor project, and more than \$6.1 million for a 10-unit mixed-use housing project in Old Crow. We currently have an initiative in Watson Lake that we're looking at with Liard First Nation and the municipality for a Housing First initiative. We are working with the community of Mayo to address the housing pressures there. We are also looking at supporting the market in Whitehorse. We just currently supported the Da Daghay Development Corporation for further social housing initiatives here in the city — so lots to celebrate.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

Mr. Istchenko: One year ago, we asked the Liberal government to take action to protect the tourism sector through the pandemic. One year ago, the Minister of Tourism and Culture said that it was going to be business as usual for the tourism sector. Now we see businesses on the brink of failure, and the minister still has not taken enough action to support their recovery.

In the fall, the minister announced \$15 million to support tourism recovery, but she still has not told us where approximately \$10 million of that money will be spent. Will the minister tell us today when the money will flow to Yukon tourism businesses?

Ms. McLean: Our government absolutely recognizes the value of tourism in our territory. It is the second most important part of our economic sector. We were quick to respond to business needs. We quickly established a Business Advisory Council. We also established our Yukon Advisory

Board. We have worked with TIAY — the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon — to find the right solutions for Yukon. Where we were at when COVID-19 happened in the territory and worldwide is that we had a plan. We had a *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. We planned when things were really good and we had three record years. We were on track for another record year. As a result of that plan, we have been able to develop a tourism relief and recovery plan that we have done in full partnership with all of our partners, and the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* was built on that foundation. We have committed \$15 million over the three years. There is money absolutely identified out of that \$15 million in the budget that we tabled last Thursday. We are really looking forward to, of course, discussing that more in the Legislature and I look forward to the next question.

Mr. Istchenko: That is cold comfort for those businesses that are just about to close their doors. I asked about the \$15 million and where \$10 million of it is going to be spent, and the minister can't answer that question.

A year ago, we asked the Liberals to work with all parties in the Legislature to support the economic recovery of the territory. I would have loved to have been part of that. Instead, they used their majority to shut this proposal down and the Minister of Tourism and Culture even suggested that it was "business as usual". It wasn't until seven months later that the minister finally took action and announced \$15 million in relief money for the tourism businesses.

So, can the minister tell us how much of the \$15 million has flowed to actual businesses so far?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I feel that the member opposite is not listening to the answers that I am giving. I did just talk about an allocation from the \$15 million in the next fiscal year's budget. We identified \$4 million toward relief in the last supplementary budget out of the \$15 million. We established three funds: the tourism accommodation sector supplement, the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement, and a not for profit. These are all supplementary programs, Mr. Speaker, to the Yukon business relief program, which has seen millions and millions of dollars go to businesses. We have just recently announced that all of these programs are extended through to September.

Again, maybe the member opposite needs to have a close look at the budget that was just tabled. Our commitment is still to work with our partners and we have worked very, very closely with them all the way through. The Yukon Tourism Advisory Board has been giving us recommendations. We've been adjusting and the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon — I've met weekly with them and we continue to work with our partners to find the solutions that are best for Yukon.

Mr. Istchenko: The question was: Can the minister tell us how much of the \$15 million has flowed to actual businesses so far? I didn't get an answer. I'm listening, but I didn't get an answer.

On February 22, the Tourism Industry Association wrote the minister asking her to give a clear answer to the industry on what they can expect for the tourism season this summer. They say — quote: "We need to know ASAP so we can advise

operators to cut loose, move to new careers and repurpose infrastructure.”

Will the minister give a clear answer today?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I’m happy to talk about the programs. Again, Mr. Speaker, I’ve talked about this a lot in the Legislature — the supplementary programs that we announced are supplementary to the Yukon business relief program. There was a cap of up to \$200,000 per business that was accessible. We have recently extended the Yukon business relief program.

At the end of February, the department had received 24 inquiries for the tourism accommodation sector and received 10 applications. A total of \$569,392 was awarded to three applicants. Other applicants were directed to other programs within Yukon government that were funded through the federal government. They have accessed money through that.

On the non-accommodation — we had 44 inquiries; we have had 25 applications; we have given out \$387,698 from that. The good news is that we are ensuring that businesses are tapping out of those other funds before they come to the supplementary fund, Mr. Speaker. This is good fiscal management.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Unanimous consent to move without one clear day’s notice Motion No. 419

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day’s notice, a motion that, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting, would enable the House to meet virtually by video conference should the House be unable to sit in person.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has requested the unanimous consent of the House to move, without notice, a motion that, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting, would enable the House to meet virtually by video conference should the House be unable to sit in person.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Motion No. 419

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting, if the Legislative Assembly stands adjourned for an indefinite period of time, the Government House Leader and at least one of the other House Leaders together may request that the Legislative Assembly meet virtually by video conference, with all the Members of the Legislative Assembly being able to participate remotely, notwithstanding any current Standing Orders regarding members’ physical presence in the Chamber.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting, if the Legislative Assembly stands adjourned for an indefinite period of time, the Government House Leader and at least one of the other House Leaders together may request that the Legislative Assembly meet virtually by video conference, with all the Members of the Legislative Assembly being able to participate remotely, notwithstanding any current Standing Orders regarding members’ physical presence in the Chamber.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This motion is identical to one that was passed during the early days of the Fall 2020 Sitting. The motion was introduced and passed to address the issue of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic should the House be required to meet virtually. I spoke late last week with the other House Leaders, and we agreed to bring these motions forward once again, hoping that we will never need to use them, of course. I would urge all members to support these motions for the benefit of the Legislative Assembly as a precaution.

I have two others that I will introduce this afternoon. Those are my comments with respect to the self-evident wording of the motion.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. Obviously, this motion and the other two that will be debated here this afternoon are ones that we in the Official Opposition support.

We would like to thank the Clerk’s office and the chief medical officer of health for coming forward with the plan, which includes, obviously, the masks that we wear and the unfortunate lack of pages as well as the new seating arrangement that we see in here today as well. So, thank you very much for that and we will be supporting this. Thank you.

Ms. White: All three parties worked hard on these motions in the fall of 2020, and I appreciate that they have been brought forward with date amendments. We, of course, will be supporting them.

Speaker: Is there further debate on the motion?

Motion No. 419 agreed to

Unanimous consent to move without one clear day’s notice Motion No. 420

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I request the unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day’s notice, a motion that, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting, the House enable the use the teleconference system for members who are unable to attend due to COVID-19 illness or protocols.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has requested unanimous consent of the House to move, without notice, a motion that, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting, the House enable the use of the teleconference system for members who are unable to attend due to COVID-19 illness or protocols.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Motion No. 420

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting, any Member of the Legislative Assembly who is unable to attend sittings of the House in person due to COVID-19 symptoms, illness, or protocols may participate in the sittings of the House by teleconference, notwithstanding Standing Order 8 or any other Standing Order, and by teleconference shall:

(1) be recognized to speak in debate, notwithstanding Standing Order 17;

(2) be permitted to vote, notwithstanding Standing Order 25;

(3) contribute to constituting quorum in the Legislative Assembly, under Standing Order 3 and the *Yukon Act*; and

(4) be considered to have attended the sitting of the Legislative Assembly with no reduction of indemnity required under subsection 39(5) of the *Legislative Assembly Act*.

Speaker: It has been moved:

THAT, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting, any Member of the Legislative Assembly who is unable to attend sittings of the House in person due to COVID-19 symptoms, illness, or protocols may participate in the sittings of the House by teleconference, notwithstanding Standing Order 8 or any other Standing Order, and by teleconference shall:

(1) be recognized to speak in debate, notwithstanding Standing Order 17;

(2) be permitted to vote, notwithstanding Standing Order 25;

(3) contribute to constituting quorum in the Legislative Assembly, under Standing Order 3 and the *Yukon Act*; and

(4) be considered to have attended the sitting of the Legislative Assembly with no reduction of indemnity required under subsection 39(5) of the *Legislative Assembly Act*.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As noted earlier by the other House Leaders, this is a series of three motions to put in place protections for the operation of the Legislative Assembly going forward — again, hoping to never need them during this 2021 Spring Sitting but nonetheless wanting to be cautious.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on this motion?

Motion No. 420 agreed to

Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 421

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I request unanimous consent of the House to move, without one clear day's notice, a motion that, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting, the Clerk shall keep a list of paired members and that pairings are recorded in any votes.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has requested the unanimous consent of the House to move, without notice, a motion that, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting, the Clerk shall keep a list of paired members and that pairings are recorded in any votes.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Motion No. 421

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting:

(1) the Clerk shall keep a daily list of paired members in which any member of the Government and any member of an opposition party may have their names entered together by noon on that date to indicate that they will not take part in any recorded division in the Legislative Assembly held on that date; and

(2) following each such division held, the names of any members entered on the list of paired members for that date shall be printed in Hansard and the Votes and Proceedings.

Speaker: It has been moved:

THAT, for the duration of the 2021 Spring Sitting:

(1) the Clerk shall keep a daily list of paired members in which any member of the Government and any member of an opposition party may have their names entered together by noon on that date to indicate that they will not take part in any recorded division in the Legislative Assembly held on that date; and

(2) following each such division held, the names of any members entered on the list of paired members for that date shall be printed in Hansard and the Votes and Proceedings.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, this is the third in a series of the motions as discussed by the House Leaders. I expect unanimous consent or support for the motion, the third of the series.

Speaker: Is there any further debate?

Motion No. 421 agreed to

GOVERNMENT BILLS**Bill No. 207: First Appropriation Act 2021-22 — Second Reading — adjourned debate**

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 207, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, Mr. Cathers.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of our Yukon Party team as the Official Opposition Finance critic. I will also be making some other remarks in relation to my other critic roles as well as in my capacity as the MLA for Lake Laberge.

I would like to begin this afternoon — as we start another Spring Sitting, I would like to thank my constituents for the opportunity to continue to work with them and for them as the MLA for Lake Laberge. I would also like to thank Currie, our colleagues, and our staff for their support as I perform my duties on behalf of our team. Last but not least, I would like to thank all Yukoners from across this beautiful land we call home who have trusted us and supported us in the work we do on their behalf.

In speaking to this final budget of the Liberal regime, I will talk about where things can be done better and some of our

concerns with government spending. As well, there are also things in this budget that we support, including a number of things that we pushed the government to do and are appreciative that eventually they did listen to.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, this is the fifth and the final budget of this Liberal government. Yukoners are telling us every day how eager they are for a change in government. It is our job to be the government-in-waiting and we are ready for the job. Along with Yukon Party leader Currie Dixon, my fellow MLAs, and all of our candidates and volunteers who are part of the Yukon Party team, I look forward to seeking the support of Yukoners in the upcoming election.

Mr. Speaker, the winds of change are blowing. Earlier today, we saw another indication that the Liberal ship is on the rocks and slowly sinking, as one of their MLAs crossed the floor and made some strongly worded comments about the Liberal government and the Premier on the way out. It also leaves the Liberals with a fragile majority of one seat. This means that if just one Liberal MLA leaves the sinking ship, the government may be unable to pass their budget.

As quoted by CBC, in resigning from the Liberal caucus, the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun said this: “I am deeply saddened that I have been pushed to the point that I have lost confidence in the Yukon Liberals and Premier ... Our communities deserve better than what they’ve been given by this Liberal government.”

A headline in tonight’s *Whitehorse Star* quotes him as saying, “Liberals prove a ‘deep disappointment’”. After falling to last place in the polls, this is one more indication of a Liberal government in trouble. We are also reminded of history and what happened with the last Liberal government when three MLAs resigned from caucus and then the dominoes started falling. A few months later, that Liberal government lost the election and was reduced to just one seat in the Legislative Assembly. Perhaps history will repeat itself in the 2020-21 territorial election. When MLAs start leaving the ship like this, it’s never a good sign for the government; it is never a good sign for the captain. The decks of the Liberal ship are awash and the ship is listing in the water. I expect that the Premier will dismiss this as he dismisses all criticism, but his government is clearly in trouble.

Turning from the news of today, on this beautiful March day, I would like to acknowledge the fact that it is International Women’s Day. I would like to thank all the women who have helped me personally in my life and in my career. I would not be who I am or where I am without you. I am thankful to have you as friends, family, colleagues, advisors, staff, and supporters. You make the Yukon a better place and our world a better place.

In speaking to this budget, as I noted, I will talk about where things can be done better and about concerns with government spending, as well as identifying where we think that the government has done some things that we do agree with. In particular, I will highlight those items that we have worked for on behalf of Yukoners and are pleased to see the government respond to, in response to our efforts on behalf of the people who raised them with us.

I will begin by talking about some of those items that we have pushed for and are pleased to see in the budget. As people who follow the Legislative Assembly may recall, the Yukon Party Official Opposition has spent most of this term expressing concern about the Liberals’ inadequate funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Members will recall that this began in the fall of 2017, when we expressed concern about the fact that the increase for the hospital’s budget that year was just one percent — less than the rate of inflation and much less than the rate of forced growth.

That neglect has continued throughout the Liberal mandate, including in the fiscal year ending last March, which, of course, was the 2019-20 fiscal year. The Yukon Hospital Corporation’s own year-end report shows that the government left them with a \$3.9-million hole in their funding that fiscal year. So, in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, they wrapped up that year with a \$3.9-million gap in funding for hospitals. The hospitals did not receive funding to fill that gap until after the start of the current fiscal year. Mr. Speaker, as you know, that literally means that the Liberal government didn’t provide our hospitals with adequate funding until we were in the middle of a worldwide pandemic.

I’m relieved to see by looking at the budget this year that clearly the political pressure brought by the Official Opposition and others has resulted in the government providing the hospitals with a reasonable increase to O&M funding this year. While I do look forward to seeing a more detailed breakdown of the funding — including clarity on how much of this actually represents an increase to the hospital’s core budget this year — it does seem that the increase is in fact more realistic in keeping with the hospitals’ needs than we’ve seen throughout most of this government’s time in office.

Now, I expect that the Premier may rise and spin the numbers, as he has in the past, and try to confuse listeners between new programs and cost pressures and increased drug costs and actual core funding, but I would encourage any Yukoners who are wondering about which version of events in the House is correct to simply look at the testimony provided here in the Legislative Assembly by representatives of the Yukon Hospital Corporation when they appeared last fall on November 19, 2020, as well as when they appeared here the previous November, and then look at the hospitals’ annual reports. The numbers are clear. The testimonies of the Yukon Hospital Corporation’s witnesses speak for themselves and they both prove what I have said here in the past and what I’m saying here again today.

Mr. Speaker, another area that the Liberal government was slow to act on is the new secure medical unit at Whitehorse General Hospital. As members know, when the emergency room expansion project was done by the previous Yukon Party government, there was a deliberate decision to put in place what was referred to as “shelled-in space” above the ER that was envisioning the potential for future use, with a secure medical unit being what was conceptually envisioned at that point in time.

The reason for doing that, of course, was to ensure that both the cost of the project and the speed of the emergency

room project were not delayed while allowing for the potential that, when the next phase of capital upgrades occurred at the hospital, the work could be done substantially cheaper than if an addition were required or a new space were required to be built at that point in time. Hence the decision by the hospital and government to do that so-called “shelled-in space” above the emergency room.

Now, in the area of the secure medical unit, after we pressed the government repeatedly on the topic, the government did take some action to commit to developing a new secure medical unit at Whitehorse General Hospital. However, after making a ministerial statement committing to move forward with it, the project seemed to have stalled for months because of the Premier and the minister’s lack of action on the matter. Now we are pleased to see that there is funding in this year’s budget for proceeding with the secure medical unit project, but the government can also correctly expect that we will continue during the remainder of their time in office — however long or short that may be — to press them on this topic and look for action, not just commitments.

Also on the issue of funding for the hospital itself, we will look for information, including a more detailed breakdown of the funding being provided and information about when that funding is actually being provided to the Hospital Corporation, including what is provided in the interim supply and what will be made available in April versus potentially later in the year, because cash flow does matter to government corporations, most especially to the one that is responsible for delivering our hospital needs.

So, we are pleased to see the funding in the budget for the secure medical unit. Another area in health care that the Liberals were slow to act on was the Meditech replacement project, now finally underway and renamed “1Health”. That’s another area where we went through hours of debate in this Legislative Assembly between the Premier and me, as well as other colleagues on behalf of the Yukon Party bringing forward this issue, to have the Liberal government focus on the past rather than focusing on the needs of the day and the needs of the future. In that area, after years of very slow progress, we are pleased that they did commit to it. They have renamed it “1Health” — the name is just a name — and does include funding in this year’s budget to continue forward with this project.

Next, another area that I would like to highlight is that I am pleased to see that the government has continued a pattern we started of regularly including funding for new fire trucks and ambulances in the budget on a more regular basis than had previously occurred. I recall my time as Minister of Health and Social Services, which at the time was responsible for EMS, and going on a tour of rural facilities and being made aware of the fact that staff didn’t even have confidence that some of the ambulances would actually start if necessary. We took steps to modernize the fleet of ambulances. We did so, as well, with fire trucks.

During our time in government, in addition to building fire halls and performing renovations at facilities — such as in Ibex Valley where we increased the water storage capacity of that

facility — we were pleased to see new fire trucks roll out across the territory, including new pumper tanker trucks to all of the fire halls within the Whitehorse area, including the two within my riding — Hootalinqua and Ibex Valley. I am pleased to see that, in this area, the government has largely continued to do what we had begun in that area, by ensuring that the capital needs of EMS and fire are considered in each year’s budget.

However, there continue to be issues, such as I’ve heard from rural fire halls, with some of the less exciting equipment such as pike poles and pumps in some cases being either missing and having challenges with getting them replaced or being old enough that they have issues with the reliability of the operation. I would encourage the government to focus on those needs as well and not simply on the more obvious and more photo-opportunity worthy, shall we say, needs such as fire trucks for those facilities.

Also, as the side events in Keno earlier this year have reminded everyone, there are gaps in fire service in Yukon. I noticed today that the government has announced a review of the current state of the fire service in rural Yukon with special attention to the community of Keno, according to their release.

This is a positive step, but it is one very much at the eleventh hour of this Liberal government. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, for people who have lost homes and businesses due to fire, this action also does come too late.

I do want to acknowledge that we realize the challenges that exist with providing services in rural Yukon, including the fact that, for EMS and fire, government and citizens largely depend on people who volunteer and provide those services, but ultimately, when gaps like that occur and when people see homes or businesses destroyed as a result, it does draw attention to the problem, and the problem clearly needs a solution.

I also want to emphasize the appreciation that my colleagues and I have for our rural EMS and fire volunteers and note that any initiative to support either service, if it is going to be successful, needs to recognize the importance of doing a better job of supporting our EMS and fire volunteers.

Similarly, the government needs to recognize the challenges faced by Search and Rescue, look at how it supports those volunteers, and do a better job in that area.

Another area that we are pleased to see in the budget is government taking some additional actions on wildfire risk mitigation. We would like to again thank the Yukon Wood Products Association, FireSmart Whitehorse, and other businesses and citizens who have been part of coming together and urging governments to take additional actions to improve wildfire risk reduction, to recognize and raise public awareness of the fact of some of the problems that have occurred in areas such as Fort McMurray, Telegraph Creek, and Lower Post, as well as fires in California that proved very tragic for those areas, and really recognize the fact that, through those private citizens and businesses who have worked hard out of a passion for this issue, we really all do owe them credit for the fact that they worked hard to put this issue on the radar screen for governments of every order in the territory and draw attention to the risk that exists within Yukon communities because, while we all do love the beauty of the boreal forest, we also have been

sadly reminded of the fact of the fire risk that also is brought by having coniferous trees close to homes and communities.

In the situation of those jurisdictions that I mentioned, the wildfires that have occurred there have reminded us of the tragic consequences of what can happen if wildfire risk reduction is not done effectively.

I would like to give credit to them for the work that they have done on this. As those who followed past sittings will recall, we supported those efforts shortly after they began and urged government to listen to those citizens and businesses. It is something that really, as many have characterized it — those fires in places like Telegraph Creek, Lower Post, and Fort McMurray were a bit of a wake-up call to people about the potential risks. I would just emphasize again — as I have in the House — that the solutions to this carry not just the need to reduce risk but also provide — if done right — potential opportunities for businesses as well as First Nation development corporations and others to see economic benefit — to do targeted harvesting and make use of that for uses such as biomass and other uses of the timber and brush-clearing of the area. We believe that there is opportunity in this as well.

We are pleased to see that it is a small start by government in taking action, as was pushed by Yukon citizens. Much more needs to be done in this area, but we do acknowledge this small start and we are pleased to see this part of the budget highlights for continued funding for a project announced last year.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to see government continue some of these successful programs that we started during our time in government, including the well program and the microgeneration program.

As my colleague, the Member for Kluane, reminded us earlier today in talking about last March, the Yukon — and indeed Canada and the world — has seen a year like no other within our lifetimes.

When we began the Spring Sitting last year, we were in the early stages of the COVID-19 health situation rolling out across the world. If memory serves, March 11, I believe, was the date that it was declared a pandemic officially. But in the early stages leading up to the official declaration, we were watching the news from around the world, but I think it's fair to say that the impact of this problem had not really sunk in to very many people. It was something that — past history and epidemiology had led to government staff and other planners warning us for years that there was the potential of another pandemic at some point. There was work as well that was done around the 2007 time period in the wake of the SARS epidemic and the H1N1 preparations. There was pandemic preparedness planning that went on in the Yukon, across Canada, and in some other jurisdictions. But largely, as time went on, everyone got busy with life and the events of last March came as a bit of a surprise. But as my colleague, the Member for Kluane, has pointed out, we saw a situation last March where the government was saying that it would be business as usual for tourism. It has been anything but business as usual for tourism or Yukon businesses.

There have been some that are doing well during the pandemic. There are others that are doing relatively well, others that are limping by, and others where it has simply shut them

down. So, the situations and the challenges that Yukoners in the private sector — particularly in tourism, in restaurants, and in some other exposed parts of the business community — have faced — those challenges vary widely from business to business, from community to community, and from person to person. But unfortunately, what we have seen with the government tabling the budget is that some of the rhetoric about how great the growth in GDP projects are has been very tone deaf to the reality being faced by a number of small business owners in the territory and employees. I have to remind members that, if your business is suffering — if you are suffering — hearing that someone else is doing well and that the overall GDP projections look good is very, very cold comfort.

As my colleague noted earlier, people do want clarity, and unfortunately, in the government's plan for reopening, what we don't see is a lot of clarity for Yukon's private sector. Now, most people understand very well the fact that the situation may change, but what I have heard from people is that they want government to listen to them, to treat them as adults, and to provide them with the information and clarity about (a) what government expects and (b) what some of the variables are that might change that. For example, as my colleague, the Member for Kluane, touched on, there are people in the tourism sector wanting to know whether they should be looking at opening up for the season or simply shutting down for this year and trying to make money somewhere else.

I have heard, as well — without compromising the personal privacy of a constituent who contacted me about it — someone who is in the tourism sector who is wanting information about whether he is likely to have a season — he knows that could change, but he wants to understand if it is likely that he is going to have a season. If not, that may affect both what he does for work and what he is able to keep in terms of stock and assets, because there is an effect on that. For many businesses, there is a cost to simply keeping somewhat ready to open up.

So, the government can rely on platitudes and pat themselves on the back for doing well, but again, what many Yukon businesses are looking for is more clarity about what is likely to occur this year and information on what the metrics are that might change that so that they can plan and make the key decision about whether they are trying to open up for the summer or simply cutting their losses, trying to manage with something else, and operating next year.

Now, those have been some of the problems with the Yukon's pandemic response, and of course, the responsibility for that lies solely on the elected government, but I want to move on with a non-partisan note and recognize one of the areas that has been doing well right now in the response.

I would like to thank the Yukoners who have worked so hard on the territory's rollout of the COVID-19 vaccinations. I know that this includes health professionals and managers, some of whom had retired and have chosen to re-enter the workforce due to their own personal commitment to our territory and to their fellow Yukoners. I note that, while we are doing well as a territory for vaccination rates in comparison to

other jurisdictions in Canada, the fortune that we have in the north by being able to get more vaccines per capita than southern jurisdictions has played a major role in it, but vaccines are of no use without the people who get those vaccinations out there. It is through the work of these Yukoners who deserve the credit for the successful rollout.

While politicians may try to claim credit for this work, the simple fact is that the heavy lifting is being done by front-line staff and those behind the scenes who are making this happen, including health care professionals, administrative professionals, managers, organizational support staff, IT professionals, and others, including those involved in transporting the vaccines. I am probably missing someone in that list, but I would like to acknowledge the work of every single Yukoner who is playing a part in this and recognize that they are doing this work because of their commitment to the Yukon and to our fellow citizens. It is not something that any one of us on any side of this House can claim credit for. We must give credit where credit is due — to the Yukoners who are making this happen and are providing the opportunity where our families have the opportunity to get vaccinated, which is simply not the case in southern Canada for most people.

Thank you, again, to everyone for all that you have done as part of this. Please keep up the good work and keep going.

I'm going to switch now to talking about some of the key problems with this budget in terms of the overall costs that we see here. I would note that, while the individual items within a budget often get more attention, it's also important to look at the financial resources and the spending trajectory. Those amounts are fascinating for those who are interested in numbers and less interesting for some, but they are fundamentally very important.

I want to begin by painting a picture, and what I'm going to use to paint the picture is the Public Accounts and the government's own projections. Now, as members know, the Public Accounts are prepared by government and audited by the Auditor General of Canada. When the Liberals took office, they had money in the bank left to them by the previous government, they had net financial assets, and they have taken this from — at the point of taking office, I should note, it was around \$100 million in net financial assets. From that, we've seen the Liberal government, during their four and a half years in office, take the territory from positive net financial assets — in simple terms, money in the bank — to an anticipated net debt this year of \$81.5 million and \$330.5 million in net debt projected for 2023-24.

Now, it's important as well to note that, during the time this Liberal government has been in office, the territory's revenues have actually grown at a healthy rate every year, largely due to annual increases in the territorial funding formula and other federal transfers. Despite this, they have spent money faster than it was coming in almost every single year. This is another area where the government rhetoric and their actions have not aligned with each other. So, again, revenues grew significantly every year, but despite that, almost every single year that they've been in office, the Liberals have spent money faster than was coming in.

The annual increases to spending are unsustainable and explain why, despite inheriting the best financial situation of any new government in Yukon history, the Liberals have taken our territory's finances from in the black to a lot of red ink. There's a lot of red ink on the balance sheet, and it was avoidable if the government had chosen to manage the territory's finances more prudently. They can correctly blame some of the spending recently on the pandemic, but their financial management had the Yukon on the wrong spending trajectory long before the pandemic hit.

Let's talk about what the numbers tell us. The Liberal government's first budget was in 2017-18. At the end of that year, the audited Public Accounts show that revenues increased at a rate of three percent. Expenses grew at a rate of two percent. That was the only year, it might be argued, that the Liberal government actually exercised some degree of financial restraint, although others would point out that delays in delivering capital projects contributed significantly to that financial picture. According to page 3 of the Public Accounts, lower-than-expected expenses totalled \$30 million that year, and of course, a significant portion of that is due to the delays in delivering on capital projects.

So, the Liberal government changed that the next year in 2018-19 where again, according to the audited Public Accounts — and most of this information by the way is on page 3 of the Public Accounts. For the 2018-19 fiscal year, revenues grew at a healthy rate of five percent, but expenses that year increased by a whopping 10 percent over the previous year — 10 percent, which is an increase of \$123 million in just one year.

The next year, in 2019-20, revenues again grew at a healthy rate of five percent, but once again, the Liberal government spent money faster than it was coming in, growing expenses at an unsustainable rate of six percent. Once again, that information can be found on page 3 of the audited Public Accounts for that year.

Now, fast-forward to this year, where the budget for the current fiscal year shows revenues growing again by 5.1 percent, but net expenditures are forecast to grow at a rate of 8.8 percent. So again, the trend continues — 5.1 percent in increased revenue — which is not bad — but net expenditures are expected to grow at a rate of 8.8 percent. I would point out that this is looking at the handout that the government provided us at the briefing. It is not just our calculations; it is found on the 2021-22 O&M summary provided by government to us last week.

So, to put that in real dollar terms: This year, we are receiving \$63 million more under the territorial funding formula alone — the largest transfer from Ottawa — but the Liberal government is spending beyond our means again and their plans show them doing that well beyond this current year as well. Their budget shows this year ending with \$81.5 million in net debt and taking the finances deeper into the red to a whopping \$330 million in net debt by 2023-24. This is despite having net financial assets when they took office.

So, in dollar terms, here are some of the annual increases by the government — again, I am going off the Public Accounts for reference, just for clarity and the fact that members know

that what is budgeted and what is actually done can be two different things. So, looking at the Public Accounts, the annual increase in expenditures in the fiscal year ending 2017-18 — according to the Public Accounts — was \$20 million. The next fiscal year, 2018-19, that grew to a whopping \$123 million. Again, that is growth in just one year of \$123 million. In 2019-20 — again, according to the Public Accounts — there was an increase over the previous year of \$81.5 million. Then, looking at the current fiscal year, the increase over the previous year — again, this is budgeted according to the government's budget, not actual — the increase is \$96.5 million. So, again, for a territory of 40,000, that is a pretty substantial increase in most of those years and that is not a sustainable trajectory.

As we look at the budget, it's also very obvious that 2021 is an election year. It contains a long list of promises — some of which are believable, some of which are not — and a list of items — including ones that the government promised in 2016 — that are currently in their pile of things that they promised but haven't actually delivered on.

I would also draw attention to another example of something that we're pleased to see in the budget: the commitment to midwifery. However, the government, after years of delay from when they originally committed to implementing it, has now, this year — at the tail end of their mandate — implemented it in a way that is actually going to create a gap in service. That's not good planning.

There was a way to do it better, but unfortunately, through the top-down, autocratic approach of this government, they came up with a model to plow forward and claim that they've checked the box on delivering on midwifery but do it while creating a gap in services that is impacting Yukoners this year. I know that this issue came up at the Community Midwifery Association Yukon meeting. I believe that the Minister of Community Services probably got an earful on that and I know that we in the Official Opposition have heard those concerns loud and clear from Yukoners about this gap in services.

I want to point out, again, that — especially after something that the Liberals committed to, as did the Yukon Party and the Third Party in the last territorial election — they took almost the entire mandate to deliver it and, when they delivered it, they delivered a gap in services — not a seamless move to funded and regulated midwifery. It could have been done better; it simply wasn't. They rushed it through at the eleventh hour, and they didn't get the transition right.

I have to remind all members that, beyond the Legislative Assembly and the political debates which occur here, there are real people being affected, there are expectant mothers being affected, and there are Yukon families being affected. When a gap in service occurs, unfortunately, people — Yukon citizens — pay the price for government's mistakes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I noted, it is concerning that, when we see the fiscal and economic outlook, the net financial debt is forecast to increase over the next three years. That refers to spending in response to COVID-19 as well as major investments in — and I quote — “needed infrastructure”. It is concerning again when government chooses to spend beyond their means but try to use the right branding campaign to

convince Yukoners that spending at an unsustainable rate is somehow a good idea.

I would also like to talk about the fact — in terms of getting things right or not getting things right — an issue that is, like the budget, coming into effect on April 1. That is part of the implementation of the Yukon agriculture policy which the government delivered last year. The policy was finalized a year late, according to their own target, and unfortunately, as part of the new rules that they've applied, I am hearing from constituents — I know that a number of my colleagues have also heard this from constituents — about people who have suddenly found out that, without any public consultation on the details, there are new rules being applied that will make it harder to get a building permit on your agricultural property. This includes for existing farmers and for people buying a new piece of property.

As the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes may be aware — since one of the sales that fell through was in his own riding — this has created a situation where people attempting to purchase agricultural property have looked at it and determined that the new restrictions would make it impossible for them to build a house or cabin, move there, and begin developing it, and it would limit their ability to build a primary residence within the first couple of years of being there. Understandably, this causes someone to walk away from doing that. It also has added an immediate negative value on existing agricultural land. These new restrictions — especially those on building permits — are not helping the housing situation any when government has proposed these actions.

So, I would urge the government to take a hard look at what they're planning to bring into place on April 1 and recognize that it has actually had a negative effect on the value of people's existing land and done so without consulting with those people. It's negatively affecting building permits, and unfortunately, the intent of this policy has been warped in its implementation and is actually negatively impacting the finances of Yukoners today and negatively impacting their ability to develop their agricultural property as well. So, again, it's not just a matter of ticking off the box and saying that you've delivered on your commitment; it's important that you work with Yukoners, listen to Yukoners, and deliver the right policy and the right results.

Again, of course, that has been a theme throughout this pandemic — that the Liberal government has very much, from the top down, been very focused on a top-down approach to managing the pandemic and has shown a resistance to working with Yukoners on the details of things, including the rules of funding programs and the rules of — or the details, pardon me, of the rules that are affecting people's businesses and their lives.

As Currie Dixon, the Leader of the Yukon Party, noted during interviews after seeing the budget, we see no path in this budget to get through the pandemic. We see no path forward for the economy. That's a troubling indicator for the private sector. We know that the tourism industry is on life support, and what everyone is looking for is a path forward and it's not there.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would also like to note — as you will recall — that earlier today, we discussed the territorial debt limit. Again, we've seen a lack of transparency from the Premier and Finance minister on what the government is or isn't doing and might or might not be planning on doing in that area. The fact that the Premier dismissed being called on his statements in the House conflicting with his letter of nine days later is troubling.

For the Premier to lay two mutually incompatible statements out in the public record and then claim that there is no difference is not just troubling, but it is really not in keeping with government's commitment on being transparent with Yukoners. Any decision to plunge the territory further into debt is something that will affect future generations of Yukoners because they will have to pay for it. In contrast to the current government, we have been clear about the fact that we believe a decision to borrow money should be made in the Legislative Assembly, not behind closed doors in Cabinet, and there should be the opportunity for the public to know about what is being contemplated before government signs a commitment to large debt that they and their children will be forced to pay for whether or not they agreed with government's decision.

It is important to remember — and it is unfortunate for some of our colleagues across the way that they are about to get a rude reminder of this — that we sit in seats that the public owns. The seats belong to the voters. The titles are temporary and the seats are on loan, and they are on loan from Yukon citizens. Ultimately, in the coming election, Yukoners will choose who they believe represents them and who they believe will actually listen to them, rather than simply doing what they believe to be best.

Mr. Acting Speaker, another area that I should touch on as well in terms of government proposals that are problematic, as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will be well aware, the agricultural land is being threatened, not just by the changes under the agriculture policy, but also by zoning proposals in the Shallow Bay area as well as the government's draft wetlands policy — both of which go after titled property and are causing uncertainty and fear for Yukoners who would be affected by this. In the case of Shallow Bay zoning, I would note that this zoning imposes a just-under-200-foot — 60-metre — no-development buffer after the fact on titled property and that this includes people's homes.

When you, as a citizen, see a proposal that actually suggests that, if the zoning is passed in the current form and your house burned down, you wouldn't be able to replace it, that is very concerning. Quite frankly, that proposal should never have been made. It is unacceptable that it is even out there. It has no place in the Yukon.

I would note as well that, in addition to the people who are affected by it today, there are many Yukoners who have a house, building, or property within 200 feet of a creek, lake, river, or pond. If it begins in Shallow Bay, the concern for them is: Where does it stop? Of course, in the area of the wetlands policy, as members will know, this is of great concern to farmers who have been told by government officials that it could potentially apply on their titled property. It is a concern

as well to the placer miners who see this as just one more threat imposed by the Liberal government to their way of life.

I will move on from that area for a moment, but I do want to note that, of course, within this budget and in addition to the items that I highlighted, there are some other areas that we do agree with. As members will know, we do not have confidence in the government and will not be supporting their budget, but we do look forward to going through parts of it, as well as identifying other areas where we think that actions have been taken that are reasonable or that may not differ drastically in some cases from what we would do if in government. We look forward to also presenting to Yukoners in more detail our own vision for taking the territory in a positive direction and responding to the needs of Yukon citizens in a positive way.

I would note as well that I am pleased that, after again some delay in the government actually responding to the needs of the school in my riding — Hidden Valley elementary school — we see that there is money committed for new learning spaces and modular classrooms. I understand, based on a letter from the minister, that one that is on that list does include Hidden Valley School. I look forward to seeing this in that area.

I would also — I had intended to mention earlier on the subject of agriculture that one other thing that the government is doing as part of the growing list of things that they've done that actually make life harder on farmers — we see the commitments on page 7 that talk in glowing terms about economic development in the agriculture sector, but I hear regularly from farmers in my riding and elsewhere about problems that they've had with government. For many, government is either their greatest problem or their greatest source of uncertainty. Despite the work that was done by the previous government on the agriculture policy and local food policy and commitments that were made by this Liberal government, I've heard from constituents about government commitments made to increase government purchasing of locally grown products that have not really translated into reality — yet another case where the announcement and the photo opportunity have sounded great, but the follow-through has been absent.

I have also heard concerns from constituents about how the government is reactivating the concept of developing Stevens Quarry. Previously, in 2013, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources had listened to the concerns of farmers, other business operators, and surrounding residents about the negative impact that developing that project would have and rejected the YESAB application to develop Stevens Quarry.

As the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will know, among the people most concerned about the impacts of this proposed quarry — the government is currently spending money trying to reactivate the previously shutdown proposal — are Yukon farmers who are worried about the impact of it being directly across the river from them or directly adjacent to them, and this includes cattle operations that are very concerned about the incompatibility of the quarry being right there with their own plans.

Again, we see government paying lip service to the agriculture sector but causing some Yukoners to question

whether they can continue with their farming plans as the government proceeds with ignoring past public opposition and plowing forward with a project that the Liberal government seems to support. There will be more to come on that in the future, but as members will know, the minister has been presented with a petition containing a couple hundred names of people opposed to development of that both because of those impacts and the negative impact on the research forest area to which it is immediately adjacent and which is much-prized as a recreational area by people out in the area as well as in Whitehorse. Again, this is something that is just one more reason that people are looking forward to the next election.

When looking at the budget — unfortunately, this continued pattern that members will recall me raising every single sitting since the Liberals took office about the decline in the information made available in the budget highlights — while it has gone from — it used to be typically 11 pages of information — it went down, at its worst, to four pages, heavy on infographics. It has increased this year to six pages, but some of the graphs and the pictures are bigger and there is a significant amount of it which talks about past budgets, not the current fiscal year. Again, there are areas where, even as people who are very familiar with budgets, as we go through looking at the budget and the capital plan, it is unclear what the costs of certain projects are. It is unclear what communities are seeing projects this year. In some cases, where it does mention them, there is a very wide range on the price tag for those projects.

Additionally, in looking at the budget — I will give another example where government has continued with some of the energy programs that we had initiated — such as the good energy program, the microgeneration program, and energy rebates — when looking at page 5 of the budget highlights. Under the banner of the government's tagline *Our Clean Future*, it talks about actions such as those. But even for somebody who is very familiar with the budget and has previously been the minister responsible for some of these areas, if one looks for the public transparency of what this document actually tells them, it doesn't indicate how much of the money for energy retrofit projects or residential retrofits or energy rebates or green infrastructure and retrofits is new money and how much of it is simply carrying forward money from previous fiscal years and slapping a brand new logo on it. So, the transparency is missing.

Mr. Speaker, there's much of this that, again, I'll delve into more details on as we get into other parts of budget debate. We are at this stage — because of the somewhat opaque nature of some of the budget documents — unfortunately, it takes us time going through this information with department officials sometimes to actually gain a clear understanding of what the high-level numbers actually mean — what is new money, what is simply repackaged and rebranded money being carried forward from previous years. Unfortunately, that is all part of the trend in government that we've seen of just less information being available to Yukoners to understand it.

This would seem to be a good opportunity to mention again the frequent complaints that we get about the website and how it has become worse during the Liberal time in office, including

that the staff directory is often very out of date for departments. If one is looking for information on local area planning or zoning initiatives, for example — those used to be readily accessible through the branch web pages. Now they're sometimes difficult to find, even if you know how to use the website. Ultimately, it's part of a general trend of talking a good line on openness and transparency but becoming less open and less transparent about the facts.

I think that I will move to wrap up my remarks at this point here, but I do want to make a few more additional points in closing — that this has been a very difficult year for people. The effects of it have not been universally difficult on everyone. It is probably fair to say that coping with the restrictions related to the pandemic and the economic impacts have all created some degree of difficulty for most Yukoners, but those effects are not universally spread across the board. It has been a much tougher year for some people than for others.

For people who are worried about their future and whether they can revive a business that they own that has been impacted by the pandemic, they are looking for more clarity from the government on what the path forward would look like. They need to make their own decisions as to whether they can hope to reopen or simply shut down and do something else until later. They are really looking for answers from government, and unfortunately, they have seen a tendency toward a lot of platitudes but not much in terms of details. It really seems to many of them that government doesn't want to be pinned down on the details. It is easier to make an announcement that is vague — and they can't really be pinned to the wall on it later. Unfortunately, in taking that approach, the Liberal government does a disservice to those Yukoners who are looking for help, who are looking for as much clarity as possible in information about what government expects to happen, when they expect it to happen, and what the key factors are likely to be that might change that.

Again, it has been a very difficult year for people. It has required Yukoners, other Canadians, and people around the world to make adjustments in their lives, some minor and some significant. As I reminded the House, while people are in a situation where almost everyone is experiencing some difficulty related to the pandemic, not everyone is experiencing the same amount of difficulty. Some people are making uncomfortable adjustments. Other people are looking at their future and trying to figure out how they are going to recover from the impact that the pandemic has had on their businesses or their lives.

I have heard from constituents and others who approached 2020 with optimism and are now, in some cases, just trying to figure out how to put one foot in front of the other, plan their way through, and hopefully recovery from this.

It is a big impact for small business owners in a number of sectors, and for many of these situations, it's also a situation where not only is their business at risk, but there is also substantial risk personally in terms of their financial future.

While we do agree with some of the actions taken by government, we will continue, during their remaining time in office, to push them on areas where government can and should

do better, because Yukoners who are experiencing tough times due to the pandemic and other factors are expecting us to listen to them, expecting us to bring forward those concerns, and are hoping that government will understand the importance of these issues to them.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I think I will wrap up my remarks for now. I look forward to further comments later on during debate on the budget. I look forward to providing additional comments in areas related to my critic portfolios as well as to things that are important to my constituents. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will cede the floor to someone else.

Mr. Adel: I would like to start by wishing the best to Yukoners who are struggling during this year in the pandemic. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues for putting together a forward-thinking budget that will, as time goes on, prove that there is a path forward. As a government, we are going to make this suite — the environment — such that people can find a way forward. I have great confidence in my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, a budget is a financial plan for a defined period, often one year. It also includes planned revenues, resource quantities, costs and expenses, assets, liabilities, and cash flows — all the stuff that sometimes, when you talk to people, you know they kind of glaze over a little bit. But it's important to understand that one of the functions of government is to put forward strategic plans with measurable metrics — things that people can follow.

Looking forward is what this budget is about. We have a five-year capital plan that has in it \$2.2 billion in capital spending. We have listened, as the Minister of Community Services says, through the Association of Yukon Communities, and all of the different towns and villages have put their priorities forward. We have listened and we have tried to work those priorities into those plans.

The five-year capital plan, moving forward — we can look back a little bit — a bit of a history lesson. We can look back at the last five-year plans and see where they have gone. We can see how this year's five-year plan moves forward and gives some security to where we are going with major capital projects.

The critic for the Yukon Party on the budget goes on at length about the credit limit. I don't know — perhaps he has not ever dealt with any major real estate investment or anything else like that, but at the time that you go ahead and deal with anything in that large a capacity, the first thing an agent or a financial advisor will tell you is "Go see what you are pre-approved for." This government went to the Canadian government and we got pre-approved for an \$800-million credit limit, which will give us the flexibility going forward as we move into larger capital projects that are going to provide this territory with substantial, reliable, renewable energy projects. That way, we are not waiting and waiting for approval. We have the money there in place to do it.

By the way, the Public Accounts, the Auditor General's report and the budgets are taken into account by Standard and Poor's, which has given us a double-A credit rating — second

from the top of their credit ratings — which basically says that the Yukon has a very strong financial picture and the ability to pay back any money that is owed in future without causing any financial hardship on people going forward — on our kids. I have kids who came back and are living in the Yukon as well. I don't want to have them saddled with a huge debt either. I think this budget takes a lot of that into consideration.

Government budgets and spending commitments heavily influence the shape and future of our territory. This government has experience in delivering meaningful financial commitments, and although it has not been easy or glamorous to navigate these past months during the pandemic, this government has proven its leadership on many fronts, as I will outline in this speech.

Commitments to capital projects and spending are what drive our economy forward, promote healthy business competition, encourage innovation across sectors, and ensure that taxpayers are rewarded with, functionally, a better quality of life.

Page 3 of our budget highlights — \$434 million in capital projects. By the end of March, more than \$200 million of those will be out the door. \$30.1 million for lot development — that is this year alone. Looking forward out, it is \$25 million to \$30 million a year for the next five years in the capital plan. That is an awful lot of money for lot development. There \$15 million for Resource Gateway projects and \$20 million for Yukon's diverse fibre line up the Dempster Highway to make redundancy in our fibre connection great so that we can have businesses here with digital enterprise and they can rely on the fibre. There is \$54.3 million for bridges and highways; \$16.5 million for airports — something else that drives the economy, our mining sector, and our tourism industry — when it comes back. There is \$5.7 million for a secure medical unit — I believe that the critic talked about that earlier — \$5.7 million and, going forward, there is more money in the next two years going out.

Whether through small business supports, enhancing our social security nets — including health care and housing — making education more accessible, or providing access to vaccines and financial supports during a pandemic, a budget is and always should be a commitment to investing in people.

Putting People First — \$86.8 million for continuing care, home care, respite care, palliative care, programs in community day programs — things that have been brought to the forefront during this pandemic. We have to look after our elders and our people who need help — the people who are compromised. \$70.2 million for social supports, mental wellness hubs, community practical nurses, substance abuse programs. There is \$25.2 million for early learning and universal childcare — another commitment to Yukoners so they can get back to work — so they can help themselves get back on their feet. I congratulate the ministers' hard work — Education, Energy, Mines and Resources, Highways and Public Works — all of these things — they put a lot of thought into where this money in the budget should go.

This government has proven that investing in people will provide the greatest returns of all. We understand that a better

quality of life — a healthy life — and a government that works for the people and with the people, rather than against the people, leads to a more productive, innovative, happy, and healthy society overall. These are givens, Mr. Speaker; we know this. The Liberal government has demonstrated that we understand this fundamentality better than the previous leadership. I am so proud to be standing here today with my colleagues to discuss the government's fifth budget and the main estimates for the 2021-22 fiscal year.

As many of you no doubt remember, last year, we were facing an onset of a global pandemic as it swept across our nation. I am humbled by how fortunate we are to be living in this territory, governed by strong leadership which has been incredibly successful in mitigating the risks of COVID-19. Yukon has set an example on the world stage with what a successful response to a pandemic looks like and I think that we should feel proud of the work that we have done and continue to do.

Mr. Speaker, relatively low case counts, community transmission rates — we know that we unfortunately have experienced a death in our community — our numbers remain strong overall. Strong fiscal management and responsibility is the cornerstone of strong leadership in government and the team continues to deliver both despite the major stresses incurred over the last year. This budget spending is an estimated \$1.79 billion, with \$1.35 billion for operation and maintenance.

As I said before, there is \$434 million in capital spending and, again, over \$200 million tendered ahead of the 2021 construction season. There is a \$15-million COVID contingency. It is like a rainy day fund at home. We don't know for sure what COVID is going to bring, going forward. We don't know for sure what the efficacy of vaccines will be, how they will affect the rest of the world, and whether they can come to us. There is a \$2.7-million deficit that is a direct result of the social, economic, and health support measures put in place for the benefit of all Yukoners as we collectively tackle this pandemic.

Within this budget are a number of capital spending projects that will greatly enhance our quality of living here in the Yukon, some of which are important to many of my constituents. On page 3 of the capital plan, we have — as I said before, if you go to 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 — close to \$2.2 billion for things like climate change and energy, community and First Nation infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, real property and asset management, and information technology moving forward.

There are some smaller things — some of the more intimate things that we deal with every day with people we know. For example, there is \$250,000 marked for Biathlon Yukon. This is looking forward to the 2027 Canada Winter Games. This again promotes healthy and strong living and teaches this segment of the population — the kids and the adults who have joined this — that there is a goal to work for. I spent a lot of time at that range over the years with my sons and other people's kids. From there, we have one Olympian and one who is attempting to become an Olympian. That is pretty good.

Also, Mountainview Golf Course will receive \$1.75 million to enhance their irrigation system, providing all Yukoners who enjoy the sport and all tourists — when we can have them back — a better experience during the regular season. It keeps an established sport facility going.

Sports and recreation are just a small component of our overall spending in the budget, but however we spend the money in the budget, it's with the lens of Yukoners first. My constituents in Copperbelt North have asked me over the years for different things that they need and they bring some great ideas forward, regardless of their stripe. It's not partisan. I'm happy to bring all the ideas they give me back to my colleagues here.

The Public Service Commission has made everyday life easier for Yukon public servants. The development of the *People Plan* enhances the workplace experience by fostering and engaging an inclusive workspace to attract the best quality of people and to shape a work culture that promotes continuous improvement in growth. Not only did they successfully negotiate new collective agreements with the Yukon Employees' Union and Yukon Teachers' Association, they also centralized human resources needs and supports.

Yukon Health and Social Services continues to be reshaped and enriched year over year. This budget is a great example of this continued effort.

We are implementing *Putting People First* with the early development of universal and affordable early learning and childcare to the tune of \$25.2 million.

We increased the travel subsidy — I think that's something we can all agree needed to be done — from \$75 to \$150 per day.

We improved vaccination access for vulnerable and at-risk Yukoners and successfully developed and delivered four community mental wellness and substance abuse hubs in Dawson, Haines Junction, Carmacks, and Watson Lake to the tune of \$70.2 million — important stuff as we reach out into the communities — page 4, if you're looking in the budget highlights.

We are also supporting Yukon health professions by providing free training from the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, as well as adopting or developing many new programs and services to better support Yukoners with their broad range of health needs.

The government has made progress on land environmental protection for our territory and worked directly with First Nation partners to finalize the Peel land use plan. We're developing a plan for sustainable management of our forests and we've worked with both the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Vuntut Gwitchin on habitat protection areas in the north.

This year, Mr. Speaker, we began implementing the *Our Clean Future* strategy on climate change, the green economy, and sustainable, renewable energy production in our territory. We have been working with Yukon Energy Corporation and the departments to bring the plan to move forward to being a 97-percent renewable, reliable baseload grid while incorporating wind, solar, and geothermal solutions through a

robust IPP program which will allow private sector and First Nations to benefit off investing in long-term energy solutions.

This is important to note, Mr. Speaker — we are an isolated grid. We need to protect ourselves from what we saw happen in Texas. We need to have reliable base power as the Yukon grows. I think, in looking at this plan, Yukoners can see that it is attainable, sustainable, and renewable. Yukon asked the government that listens and provides solutions. The government continues to deliver every day.

Moving forward with sustainable energy solutions, this government strategically partnered with the Government of Canada, Yukon Energy Corporation, and First Nations to fund a new energy storage system in Whitehorse which will store excess electricity from renewable resources such as the dam during low energy demand seasons to offset demand during peak periods. It will also be there if we have what is known as an N-1 event, which is that our largest power production plant, Aishihik, goes offline.

We have also implemented an independent power production policy which allows communities, entrepreneurs, and First Nations to generate electricity from eligible sources and sell it back to a public-owned utility. We are also working directly with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation in Atlin through the IPP as a creative solution to meeting energy demands here in the Yukon — to update megawatts of power. This will also facilitate the update of the Southern Lakes transmission area, which will allow power to be moved to different areas in the Yukon or hooked on to from IPPs — be it in Carcross or wherever people want to generate power with wind, solar, geothermal. The more we can make our grid bulletproof, the better off we are as Yukoners.

Over the past couple of years, we have invested in geothermal exploration with First Nation partners, conducting research into determining the feasibility of this unique power source. There was just an announcement last week from the federal government of another \$3 million working toward this. There have been great advances in geothermal, which could be one of the next green energy solutions that we need to look at. These are great examples of how we are working with Yukoners directly to find real, innovative solutions to meet the increased energy demands and enhance the security of our grid.

Our economic supports through COVID-19 are what helped Yukoners weather the storm as well. There has been a lot of talk about that today — whether we did or did not support people in a way where they could see a way forward.

Looking at the highlights on page 2: \$39.7 million for public health responses; \$11.9 million for pandemic responses; \$3.1 million for education support; \$1.3 million for parents of students; \$26.5 million for business and relief recovery; \$7.6 million for tourism and cultural industry supports; \$6.4 million for community and municipality relief; \$10 million for the aviation industry to keep them flying and to keep our connection to down south; and \$1.1 million for the mining industry so far. That is some pretty good support.

This government also reduced the small business tax to zero to help out our small businesses. The government reduced the corporate tax rate from 15 percent to 12 percent. We know

that saving businesses money means more room for growth and expansion, which creates more jobs and opportunities for Yukoners. We also know that investing in Yukon businesses is an important step in promoting innovation in our territory, which is why we supported the Women's Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub at Yukon University.

We are developing a community pilot program to support employers in communities to make it simpler for Filipinos to move to and work in our territory.

When COVID-19 hit, we knew that there would be a direct impact on our tourism sector in the Yukon. We are not alone in that. Cruise ship companies have cancelled entire seasons. Skagway, I am sure, is a ghost town at times, or it will be a ghost time at times, but we developed immediately — a Business Advisory Council was established early on so we could work directly with businesses impacted by this pandemic to provide supports where they were needed most. We can advance a recovery and rebuild an industry that is vital to Yukon and Yukoners. This Liberal government is investing \$15 million over three years to support the tourism sector through our tourism relief and recovery plan, which includes supplements for the accommodation and non-accommodation sectors.

When I started this speech, I spoke about investing in people. The best way to invest in anything is to understand the needs and desires and ensure that they are being met as effectively and efficiently as possible. The only way to do that is to work directly with your stakeholders. This budget and this government continue to demonstrate an unprecedented willingness to challenge the status quo and change the way government works with the people. I am proud to stand here and speak today about a budget with a team of dedicated, hard-working, resilient, and passionate individuals who are committed to reshaping Yukon into a territory that serves all Yukoners, rather than just a few. It is a territory that promotes diversity, cultural expression, sustainability, healthy economic growth, and a more direct and supportive system to combat the ever-changing path that lies before us.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard the numbers, you have heard the numbers, and they will be debated back and forth in this House, but I wanted this speech to be more about assuring Yukoners that we are looking forward. We can switch numbers any which way, backwards and forwards. I want my constituents and Yukoners to know that this Yukon Liberal team has their best interests at heart, we have the interest of the Yukon at heart, and we are moving forward. There will always be criticism and differences of opinion on government spending. It is undeniable that Yukon has fared very well under the stewardship of this Liberal government.

I am confident in Yukoners. I'm confident in this team, and I'm confident in this government getting the job done.

Ms. McLeod: It's my pleasure, as always, to rise to make just a few comments on second reading of Bill No. 207, being the main estimates for 2021-22.

First of all, I want to thank my constituents of Watson Lake for all of their support for me over the past number of years. I

can say that I really do miss all of those community events that Watson Lake is famous for and our time to connect as a community.

In my role as critic for Health and Social Services, I've had limited opportunity to debate health budgets in the past number of years. I'm hoping that, this year, we'll get to debate and maybe get some answers that we haven't been able to get in the past. The minister took the opportunity at our last budget discussions to filibuster any discussion on the health budget, and of course, that doesn't go unnoticed by Yukoners who want to know how almost \$500 million of their territorial budget is being spent.

I'm going to reserve a lot of my comments to debate in individual departments because I think that is probably a better use of our time during the second reading of this bill.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Good afternoon and hello to my friends and colleagues. It is a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Yukoners about how the 2020-21 budget will make their lives better.

First, a little context — what a difference a year makes. Last year, our budget was written before the pandemic swept into our country and was delivered in this Legislature as this then-mysterious illness crashed into us. Throughout our community, we erected Plexiglass and hand-sanitizing stations. We put arrows on the floor, station monitors on the doors, created online portals, and pioneered delivery services. We adapted and worked out ways to keep each other safe.

This year's budget was written as the country struggled with openings and closings and rising cases and tragic deaths throughout society. Fortunately, Yukon has been spared many of these things — these deaths and illness. In fact, the budget was tabled in this House last week as incredible teams of Yukoners are jabbing a brand new vaccine into the arms of citizens in record numbers. We are, without exaggeration, living in the safest place on the planet and leading the world in vaccine delivery.

To recap, a year ago, the illness was new and mysterious. This year, we have not one, not two, but four vaccines available to the country, working to curb the spread of the illness and give our lives back. That is frankly amazing. It is something to celebrate, and it is also a gift not to squander. So, I ask all Yukoners eligible for the vaccine to go and get it, because this scientific marvel can't end the pandemic if it's sitting in vials. It has to be in our arms bolstering our immunity to COVID-19. If we want to advance in our recovery, we need to embrace this safe medicine and to inoculate ourselves for our collective safety.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the residents of Whitehorse West who have been so thoughtful and supportive over these years. I've made it a point to canvass the neighbourhood every year, either on the street, the doorstep, the dog trails or, during COVID, by phone, speaking to people in the riding, hearing their hopes, dreams, and concerns. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I've been out speaking to people recently, and once again, I'm struck by their ideas and passion for the territory, for their friends and neighbours.

I've said this often, but it bears repeating: The incredible sacrifices over the last years and those of all Yukoners have saved lives.

There are people walking our streets today who wouldn't be with us had it not been for the absolutely amazing effort shown by the communities across the territory. There are people walking the streets who would not be with us without the diligence and care that Yukoners showed for their families, friends, and neighbours in following the rules — wearing masks, washing their hands, keeping a safe distance, and limiting social engagements.

There are some who dismiss our success as a mixture of luck and geography — we are isolated. That does Yukoners a grave disservice. The territory is on an international highway and saw thousands of Americans driving from the viral hot zone of the Lower 48 to Alaska and back again. Despite this, we have had less than 80 cases in the Yukon. That is because we were thoughtful, caring, disciplined, innovative, and respectful of each other. Yes, it has been a strange and lonely and often difficult time for many of us. Don't ever let yourself believe that those sacrifices were for naught. You saved lives and prevented lingering illness because of all you did. Yukoners are a hardy lot and have shown perseverance and resilience in the face of this pandemic and we supported that to keep Yukoners healthy, safe, and employed with more than \$107 million in nation-leading supports for business and tourism operators, for parents, for workers, for educators, and for schools.

Unlike many places in the world, our schools remained open. Restaurants, bars, and businesses kept operating. We avoided the whipsaw "open-close-open-close" that we have seen in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Québec. Working together, we created the safest jurisdiction in the country — arguably one of the safest places in the world — and we currently lead the world in our vaccination efforts. We are one of the only jurisdictions in the country to grow our economy throughout the pandemic and we still have the lowest unemployment rate in the country.

This budget aims to keep all this incredible progress going. Some will say that this is a pre-election budget, but that is only because of a date looming on a calendar — November. This is our fifth budget and it represents an extension of our previous four budgets. Think of it as the next volume in a great series, if you will.

So, where is the money being spent? It is being spent to support young families, to improve our mental and physical health, to protect our environment, to expand our green energy supply, to support Yukoners as we move beyond the pandemic, to support our tourism operators sidelined by global travel restrictions that are affecting every country, to diversify our economy, to improve our sewer and water systems, our buildings, our roads, our bridges, and our airports. So, I know people are asking: "What does it mean to me?" Well, I'm going to provide a little context.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of childcare has been a decades-old problem in the territory for families. I heard it on the doorstep in Whitehorse West many times. I heard it in 2016 in February, in March, and in April. The problem that many families are

facing is: Does someone work a 40-hour week, away from the children, and bring home 100 bucks a week? I was having this conversation with people just yesterday. Or do they pause their career and stay home with the kids? I get it. My wife and I couldn't afford to work and send the kids to childcare. That was 25 years ago.

Now, today, starting in April, parents won't have to make that choice. This year, with an unprecedented investment, we are launching universal childcare in the Yukon. Parents using this service will have \$700 more in their pocket every month per child — every month, Mr. Speaker. If you have two children — \$1,400 more in your pocket. That's a mortgage payment. It's more food; it's more groceries. It changes the entire economics of the territory, Mr. Speaker. It makes huge impacts on the wages that people earn and how much money they have in their pocket.

If a parent wants to work, they can. They don't have to pause their career because they can't afford to work. Businesses in need of labour will have access to more workers, Mr. Speaker. Our tight labour market will get a boost. This is an enormous step forward. We did it. We took the bold step that has plagued families for decades.

Midwifery — in the 1990s, as a journalist working in a tiny room at 3rd Avenue and Wood Street, I remember my colleagues and I speaking about regulating midwifery and bringing it into the health care system. People wanted it then. It was a public issue written about in the papers. That's more than 25 years ago, Mr. Speaker. We got it done. It is in the budget this year.

When speaking with constituents in Whitehorse West, I heard how important it was that we support early nutrition. I am very happy to see us spending \$677,000 for the Canada prenatal nutrition program this year to improve the health of pregnant women, new mothers, and their babies. Through this program, we are improving the health of babies and mothers, promoting breastfeeding. We are also supporting vulnerable pregnant women and new mothers.

We have also heard about the ghost pandemic, Mr. Speaker — the fentanyl crisis. Too many people suffering the disease of addiction have died through this insidious and conscious poisoning of illicit drugs. This is a societal issue. The deaths know no social barriers. We all know people killed by this plague. We also know people who are beset by alcoholism. Again, people are falling ill and dying from this disease. We recognize the problem and the grave need for supports. We are providing more than \$70 million for social supports, mental wellness, and substance use programs in this budget this year.

Across Canada, through the pandemic, we have heard about the warehousing of our seniors and the toll COVID has taken in these facilities. Here we have stepped up to provide supports that allow workers to dedicate their careers to the care of our seniors. In this budget, we will spend more than \$86 million for continuing care, home care, respite care, palliative care, and community day programs for our elderly and infirm Yukoners.

People in Whitehorse West have also told me how important it is that we have a secure medical unit. I wrote about

our jail being designated as a hospital back in the early 1990s. We spoke about it ourselves. It has taken more than 25 years, but our government is building a secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital. That work begins this year and, when complete, will end the practice of putting people who are sick in jail because that's the only place that they could go.

We know that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, so we're making the shingles and HPV vaccine available free of charge for eligible Yukoners.

For more than a decade, the medical travel subsidy has been an issue. Once again, I remember writing about this before 2010. The support was far too low in the face of costs when you went down to BC. It was last increased in 2006. Well, again, our government has taken action on this long-standing problem. We've doubled the medical travel subsidy to \$150 and expanded eligible destinations to give patients flexibility.

We recently built a French first language high school in Whitehorse — a project that contractors called the best project they have ever worked on, Mr. Speaker. Now, using that model, we're building more elementary schools in Whitehorse. The first is going into Whistle Bend, the fastest growing neighbourhood. I know that my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek Centre — and members who represent Porter Creek — has provided invaluable guidance for this project through his strong connection with the community. The new school will alleviate crowding and improve education throughout Whitehorse and is the first of other new schools to be built in the city. We have budgeted \$36.5 million for this project; however, the true cost will be confirmed after the tender closes. The project begins this year and occupancy is planned for 2023.

We are also spending \$1.9 million on education supports and \$2.6 million to improve online and digital learning to provide the tools and skills that children need to learn in this digital age.

Over the last four years, we've worked to advance inclusion. That work continues this year with \$125,000 for a pride centre for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. We are also the first jurisdiction in the country to respond to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It's seen as a model for Canada, and we are committed to implementing it over the next decade.

We know that people in the territory want houses. We're building lots at an incredible pace. We've built more than 500 lots since taking office, Mr. Speaker, and again, we're setting records, getting lots developed and making them available for the community because we know what an issue housing is.

Now, I know the conservative Yukon Party leader, Currie Dixon, has publicly said that there's nothing in this budget for business, but I respectfully disagree. The capital budget this year is \$434 million — \$434 million, Mr. Speaker. This is a 17-percent increase over last year's capital budget and almost 50-percent larger than the last Yukon Party capital budget in 2016. Not only that, but we're delivering the budgets we put on the table.

Contrary to the naysayers and handwringers, this is great news for our economy as we move into a recovery from the

pandemic. This increase is not altogether unexpected. As I've said, some of the growth is through the relationships that we've built with First Nations over the last four years. Repairing the distrust and acrimony of decades fostered by sneaky Senate bills, subversion of land use planning in the Peel watershed, intimidation, and forced legal challenges has taken a lot of work.

We are now in a better place, and that is building the Yukon economy. So far, over the coming years, we have more than \$430 million in new work in Ross River, Watson Lake, Teslin, Carmacks, and Mayo, all starting to flow into our budgets and swelling our budgets, Mr. Speaker, because we are working with First Nations, not against them. This is new money.

With the procurement file, I have had the pleasure of working closely with contractors and their associations, with business people, and with the chambers over the last four and a half years. We got the Procurement Advisory Panel's recommendations in place within two years, as promised. We have the \$1-million exceptions in play, which we used every year. The work that I'm talking about — all of this stuff — is new work that contractors are currently bidding on — contracts for construction, roadwork, engineering, architecture — you name it. It's all about economic reconciliation. We have to be careful. We have to support it. It's the future for the territory. We don't want to put in peril the hard-won trust that we have fostered over the last four years. It is important to build the territorial economy, to draw it together, and to make sure that all of its elements are working together in synergy.

It is also important that we restore and build new infrastructure, because some of the existing stuff that we have is well beyond its best-before date.

I am confident that this capital budget will go a long way to addressing the territory's infrastructure deficit. Some of this stuff isn't flashy. It sits in the ground or in a basement, but it is essential to our health, our well-being, and our progress into the future. Replacing some of this aged infrastructure is going to save money in the long term.

For example, let's turn to transportation infrastructure. We do a lot with a tight budget. We maintain more than 5,000 kilometres of road on a budget less than the cost of a single highway turnpike in Victoria. That's not bad for a wild, rugged jurisdiction with really extreme weather that is populated by fewer people than live in Campbell River, BC. Those roads and highways, as I said, that traverse some of the most remote and rugged country on the planet connect us to our families, our friends, our communities, and the services that we rely on.

The community of Ross River comes to mind — a remote First Nation community that has relied on a dirt road to this day, while every other community in the territory, save for Old Crow, has a BST or paved road servicing it. Why has Ross River been ignored for so long? Well, that's a question; it's not for me to answer. But I can say that Ross River doesn't have to wait anymore. Our government has already started work upgrading the community's roads and correcting past negligence. The good citizens of Ross River can rest assured

that they will soon have much safer and smoother roads to their community.

The capital budget also contains significant investments into the Carmacks bypass road, thanks to agreements that were signed with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. As I'm sure you can see, Mr. Speaker, the Resource Gateway projects are well underway in Liard, Ross River, Carmacks, Mayo, and soon up in the Dawson region. I look forward to touring them with my colleagues this summer.

Again, it's thanks to our productive relationships with First Nations, municipalities, and the federal government that we've been able to reprofile and deliver these important improvements to our network.

In Teslin this year, we will keep moving ahead with our plan to replace the Nisutlin Bay bridge, which is a critical piece of infrastructure, not only for Teslin but for the entire territory. This is yet another project that had to be pulled back because there was a failed relationship with First Nations. Having restored those relationships, we're now able to push ahead with this work.

Our \$157-million north Klondike Highway project is continuing this year after the work of last summer, which saw 13.5 kilometres of road rebuilt between Pelly Crossing and Dawson City. Again, the federal government deserves some thanks for providing the bulk of funding for that vital project, a road that has been ignored for a very long time. Construction tenders for this work will be released this spring, and I'm sure our local road construction companies will be on the lookout for those.

In the aviation field, we've allocated \$16.5 million this year to upgrade our airports and aerodromes. This demonstrates a continued focus on this sector. From day one of our mandate, we've greatly increased the budget for aviation. In fact, we've invested much more in this sector than previous governments. This, of course, included a major commitment of ours to pave the Dawson runway. That's also something that had been promised for years but was never delivered. Well, I am happy to say that we got this done in short order after being elected. I have the T-shirt to prove it.

We are a government that takes action, and I have heard on the doorstep that Yukoners appreciate that. This year, we have invested \$2.7 million in the Mayo Airport, which was recently upgraded from an aerodrome and made into an airport thanks to work over the last couple of years. This investment is for a lighting upgrade which will allow for scheduled and non-scheduled operations at night. That is something that the community of Mayo, Air North, and mining companies in the area have been asking for and something which we will now deliver.

For the Whitehorse airport, we have, throughout our mandate, invested in many areas, including the new airport bridge for passengers to transfer from the building to an aircraft and vice versa. We have also made investments in airport runway maintenance vehicles, which were badly needed, as the old ones were constantly breaking down and brought employees no end of anxiety and grief, as they had aircraft coming in and were wondering if the plows were going to work

— an absolutely terrible state of affairs and I am glad that we were able to rectify that.

We are currently in the final stages of replacing the baggage system, which was long overdue. This is something no one ever sees. It operates in the basement and looks like something out of *Mousetrap*, but it is vitally important to the airport and its operation. It is in the basement; it isn't flashy, so perhaps that is why, in the past, previous governments cut funding for this project when the airport was upgraded. It would have been a lot more efficient to do it then. For some reason, that money wasn't spent. Boring or not, Mr. Speaker, this is something that had to be done. Its condition was putting certification of our airport at risk, so we got it done. It will be finished in the next month or so.

At the Whitehorse airport, we are also replacing the maintenance facility, which is more than 60 years old and greatly narrows the Alaska Highway, which we are currently working to upgrade and make safer. We have done design work budgeted for this year and a review of the project schedule — all that work is currently underway. The project has a budget of \$10.5 million and a completion date of 2023. We are also planning other investments to the Whitehorse airport, which I hope to announce very soon.

As for the Alaska Highway, we are continuing with our safety improvements and upgrades. As you likely know, Mr. Speaker, we have already completed projects for the Carcross intersection, the north Klondike intersection, and a portion of the highway in Range Road in front of Valleyview.

Phase 1 of the Hillcrest area project costing \$12 million was completed last year and included traffic lights and crosswalks, which the community had been asking for and which we were happy to deliver. Phase 2 of this work continues this year and we have \$4 million budgeted for that with the same contractor who completed phase 1. This work will include signal lights at the Burns Road intersection and upgrades to the trail adjacent to the highway.

The Dempster fibre line project will kick into high gear this year as well, following planning and preparation work we've already completed. This project will give the Yukon the Internet redundancy it needs and is critical for all sectors of the economy. It will give businesses confidence to invest — the high-tech sector, especially — because they will no longer be left in the proverbial dark for periods of time following a disruption to our single fibre line to the south.

Staying on the topic of tech and information technology, we have budgeted \$2.5 million over three years to upgrade Yukon government's phone system to voice-over IP. Starting this year, the project is expected to be complete by 2023 and will save the Yukon government more than \$1 million per year. That is a significant saving — money that can be allocated to other government services.

We also have a new school site identified in Burwash Landing and funding has been set aside to support the planning and construction of it in this budget. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, we've made, and continue to make, education a top priority for the territory.

On the legislative front, we have now put in a new ATIPP act and regulations. The package we've put together is one of the most progressive pieces of legislation and regulations in the country while also greatly expanding information available to Yukoners and will ensure that their information is properly protected in a digital age. This is what Yukoners expect and, again, Mr. Speaker, we have delivered.

Our airport act regulations will be coming into force very soon, and in this budget, we are continuing to fund the rewrite of the *Motor Vehicles Act*, which is decades overdue. Everywhere I go in the riding, Mr. Speaker — Whitehorse West — I hear people talking about speeding, about noise, about trying to make sure that the people driving through our community do so better, safer, and — frankly — not while they're intoxicated. The new legislation will certainly bring those things into sharper focus.

Switching to the Public Service Commission, I would like to highlight the continued funding for the American Sign Language interpretation program in this budget. This is critically important to our deaf community, so it's one of the highlights of my time as minister to make this life-changing service permanent in the Yukon. I'm happy to say that it's now being used by more than 45 businesses and service providers, drawing a segment of society back into the fold where they can be heard and understood.

Within this budget, we have also allocated funding to continue dealing with the ongoing pandemic and all the disruptions it has caused within the Yukon government's civil service, which has just done an extraordinary job over the past year. With its management routines and management-employee relationships stressed and broken, with new technology, they managed to deliver — in record time — supports for Yukon people and businesses that have been vital to their survival through this pandemic.

The human resource management committee that was set up to coordinate this response has been doing a tremendous job on this front. I offer my heartfelt thanks to them. Despite the pandemic, the Public Service Commission remains fiscally responsible and anticipates financial changes due to COVID-19 to be close to net zero. The Public Service Commission's diversity and inclusion branch will continue to implement initiatives under *Breaking Trail Together*, our new representative public service plan which was launched in 2020. There is so much more that I could go on and on about in relation to the public service. My time this afternoon is running short, so I will have to leave some of it for our discussions in Committee of the Whole.

We have also done an awful lot on the legislative front in keeping people safe, improving the education system in the territory, our health and wellness supports for mental health and addictions — we have kept businesses operating through the pandemic.

We have done all that with a relatively — in relation to the size of the job — small deficit. It's just a little more than \$12 million. We have done all this, of course, through the incredible efforts of our public servants who continue to tirelessly support our agenda. We are getting things done. We

are successful because we work together as a territory, as a government, and as a caucus.

For the last four and a half years, it has been my privilege to work on behalf of Yukoners and my constituents in Whitehorse West, so on behalf of myself and my caucus colleagues — the team — I say thank you for all your sacrifices and thoughtfulness toward your families, friends, and neighbours during this pandemic. You have made the territory the best place to live on the planet. Working together, we will continue our progress toward a more prosperous, cleaner, more inclusive, and better Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you for the opportunity to rise today to speak to the mains. I would just like to begin by acknowledging that it was one year ago yesterday that we had to cancel the Arctic Winter Games. I think back to that time. I remember, in the week following that, being in lots of conversations with athletes and with parents and organizers and a lot of people were questioning whether it was the right call. But in just a couple short weeks after that, we saw that it was absolutely the right call. This is the challenge with taking these decisions.

At the time, when Dr. Elliot came and made her recommendation to us, to the City of Whitehorse as co-host and the host society, she explained that it wasn't because she assumed that people would be arriving with COVID; it was that, because the risk had increased, you would have to treat everybody who ended up with a cough as if they might have COVID, and so you were going to have to isolate everybody — the teams, the chaperones, the coaches — everybody. It just became an overwhelming challenge.

So, because we couldn't ensure, if someone had a cough, that we could keep everyone safe, we were going to have to cancel. I was in many conversations about whether that was overly cautious. Here we are, one year later, and I'm still in some of those conversations because it's challenging — COVID is challenging.

I think, today, as we've had this year together — as a territory, as communities, as a country, as a planet — as we've looked at this, we keep trying to make these hard, hard decisions in the face of uncertainty. But one thing I can do, as I look back to try to see how we've done — clearly, the three northern territories and Atlantic Canada have done better than the other provinces.

Some of that is going to be geography but not all of it. Some of it has to do with the choices that we made, and those were always tough choices, and they still continue to be tough choices today. The one that is clearly different has been this one to put in place border measures and isolation. Some people say to me, when they talk to me: "Look, there is no COVID here. Clearly, you are putting in place measures that are in search of a problem." Usually, the way I try to describe it back to them is "No, actually, I think we don't have COVID here because we put in place these measures." It is challenging to understand, and I will acknowledge the Member for Lake Laberge's comments that it has not been even or fair across the territory. I will also acknowledge that, for Yukoners, it has been a time

of anxiety for everyone to navigate. It has been challenging, but as the Premier said earlier today during Question Period, we can see a light there. We feel that we are getting to the end of this and there is some hope. I will talk about that, hopefully, as I finish up my remarks today.

I want to just start by talking about this budget, and I want to start by talking about the \$15 million that we put in there as a COVID contingency. Just for a second, I want to just imagine pulling that out and then thinking about what we have for a budget. Taking out that \$15 million, what we have is a budget that is in the black. It is a balanced budget, but that balanced budget includes \$35 million for COVID — the spending that we anticipate, that we can see, that we projected, that we have to spend to keep everybody safe. But we know that there is uncertainty, so we tried to put in that extra \$15 million, but just leave that aside for a second — \$35 million to deal with COVID, \$25 million to have universal childcare and early learning — and that is in that budget — that would-be balanced budget. There is \$50 million to address the climate strategy — to acknowledge that there is a climate emergency and we need to do lots on this front. *Putting People First* — a massive infrastructure budget. There is \$30 million for land development — all of it is balanced. Then we said to ourselves: "We need to be careful. We need to protect Yukoners, so let's put in an additional \$15 million as a contingency. Let's be transparent about it; let's put it there; let's show everybody that this is what we are looking at."

Just for a second, I want to talk about how we've done. My colleague, the Member for Whitehorse West, talked about how our health situation is strong right now because we put in place these measures to protect Yukoners, and that's good. I will acknowledge, as he did, that the praise goes to Yukoners for keeping us safe together, because it's a collective thing. It's a journey that we're taking together.

Just recently — I was looking at the economy. I had felt that we were doing better than other places, and I'm not talking about projections of GDP. There were some things that I looked at recently. One of the members of our Financial Advisory Panel, Mr. Trevor Tombe, was looking at Stats Canada, and he looked at the total labour compensation, month over month from February, and the changes to it over time so we could compare provinces and territories. He did this analysis of provinces, and he showed which provinces were spending more on employees' wages across their jurisdiction overall and which were not. I thought, "I wonder how the Yukon is doing and the other territories?" I went back and found that same data, and I replotted them. Here's what I found: Alberta is still seven-percent lower than last February in overall spending on wages across the province. Canada is roughly back up to last February, so Canada has recovered in terms of wages and earnings and, on average, Canada is back. Nunavut and NWT together — because the stats aren't listed for them separately — are up one percent above last February. PEI is the furthest ahead of all provinces at three percent. And leading the pack is the Yukon at four percent, so that's great news.

I'm not saying that every worker is doing better, but what I'm saying is that overall the Yukon has recovered the most and

overall there's more going to employees' wages now than there was pre-pandemic.

So, what are we doing in this budget with COVID and the work that has gone in ahead of that and on the trajectory that we've been on as a territory? Well, let me go through a few of the departments just talking about highlights that I think are worth noting. When the pandemic hit, we suspended in-class education.

The Minister of Education and her team, in working with schools, have now safely returned students to school. This is done where we can get them with as much face-to-face time as possible and as much in-person learning as possible. There still are many parents who want us to get grade 10 to 12 classes here in Whitehorse back full time. I know that we're working toward that and we're working with the chief medical officer of health, and we'll do it once it's safe because it's about making sure our kids are safe. We don't want to put them at risk; it's plain and simple.

Today, I had the pleasure of going over to a school because there were four students who had come up with a project talking about the Legislature and the stained-glass mosaic that goes across the front of the atrium — talking about the history of this place in time. They gave me a little quiz to try to see whether I could match up their cue cards with the various panels. It was wonderful to get to connect again with students. I would just like to give a shout-out to Luca, Lucas, Theo, and Seth for inviting me over. I'll invite them here to the Legislature to listen to us debate and answer questions.

We, as I mentioned earlier in the budget, have put in place now affordable universal childcare starting on April 1. We have early kindergarten programming coming for all rural schools as of this fall. That's in our budget. We're suggesting, through the bill that was tabled today, that early learning moves from Health and Social Services to Education, recognizing that learning starts at birth.

Last year, we transitioned from a college to a university — the first one in the territories, in Canada's north. We have money in our budget for that.

We have money in our budget for our first new elementary school which will be coming in Whistle Bend.

We amended our labour relations act to bring teachers on call into the Yukon Teachers' Association bargaining unit.

We have strengthened our relationship with the francophone community and we completed the first French first language high school and we reached an agreement with Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon.

I spoke with a constituent today about the importance of the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate and talked about reconciliation, working through those issues with the Yukon Forum.

The Member for Whitehorse Centre talked about FH Collins Secondary School. My part in that was just to help get some new sport infrastructure there — our first artificial turf and track north of 60 here in Canada. That's wonderful stuff. I know it will support our students, but it will support the whole of the Yukon.

I talked earlier about the \$50 million in the budget that we are investing in *Our Clean Future*. This one, for me, has been decades of work in coming. I have devoted a lot of my life to try to help our way of thinking about our economy to be smarter, to be thinking in the long term, to be working so that it will serve all our generations to come. I think about those people in our past who took decisions — for example, to build the Whitehorse dam or other hydroelectric facilities — I bet you that it was hard at the time, and I bet you that the choices that we have coming in front of us are hard, but I know that they're the right choices. I know that a lot of those choices are coming through aligning with Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable plan and aligning with the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources' strategy around our future. A lot of them have to do, as it turns out, with my riding because a lot of those energy projects emanate out of Southern Lakes, including Atlin and down toward Skagway.

So, that strategy with the \$50 million in this budget has 131 specific actions that we're committed to following that range from limiting our greenhouse gas emissions all the way to new rebates on electric vehicles. By the way, rebates on electric vehicles include e-bikes.

We now know that we have the new battery coming in here. It's coming into Whitehorse. It just really needs to be on the main grid somewhere. The beauty of this is that it will help us to meet the demand during peak periods and it also makes renewables like wind and solar all the more effective — those non-baseload renewables.

Other things that we have done that are worthy of note — we are starting to work on the *Motor Vehicles Act*, but we came out just recently with off-road vehicle regulations after a ton of consultation with Yukoners. We have now fully implemented a true independent power production policy that allows First Nation governments, communities, and entrepreneurs to generate electricity from eligible sources and sell it to our publicly owned utility. We helped the Teslin Tlingit Council to install 10 biomass boilers as a district heating system for 13 commercial buildings owned by the First Nation. I see that project as a good example for all of our communities. As noted by the Member for Lake Laberge, he appreciated the work that we are doing to reduce fire risk. That is how we can turn an environmental risk into an environmental opportunity for us.

We partnered with the Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council and the Ross River Dena Council to drill deep monitoring wells to measure ground temperatures and determine the potential for geothermal. Now more communities are getting involved. I just saw announcements about it last week. We have been supporting Old Crow in its move toward energy independence through a community-led solar ray installation and a contribution to purchase LED street lights, which consume less energy. One of the ways that we did that was to talk about avoided costs rather than — I remember that previously when I worked in this area, it was always about what the average cost is. Well, you don't want to use the average cost in Old Crow because, for goodness' sake, you have to fly diesel up there.

We revived the Gateway project. What we did was that we worked with communities by reaching agreements with

affected First Nations to make sure that those projects were the ones that made sense for the communities. I will just again acknowledge that the road between Ross and Faro was one of those agreements. I still have the little stone on my desk that I used in stick gambling and lost magnificently in Ross River when we were there opening the footbridge. Right as I was playing, they said that the stakes for this are paving — well, not paving; it was chipsealing. I don't want to get in trouble with the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. It was chipsealing between Ross River and Faro. I am glad to see that work happening through this budget.

I will just say a couple more things about environment and energy. We recently established the Youth Panel on Climate Change. I love that group. They were inspirational to talk to and I am sure there is stuff going on right now with Shakat and there are conversations happening around climate change. It is one of their themes. I just want to say that it was great to talk to that group of young folks. It is a little humbling because you can look at them and you see that you have been working on the issue of climate change longer than they have all been alive. They are sitting there saying, "Hurry up." They are saying, "Get on with it. What is holding you back?" So, I hope — and now I am talking to all of us as legislators in this Assembly — that we all work to move farther and smarter and further on the climate emergency.

Two more things I will just note with Environment in particular — we did finalize the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*, which was such a momentous occasion that I think it is worth noting again in this speech. In this budget, we are working to get the land planning process back on track.

One other thing I will mention is that I was really excited and talked with a lot of constituents about campgrounds and about how last year, during COVID, how much pressure went onto our communities around us, where people were trying to get outdoors and weren't always good campers. There is a campsite rule about how you leave places better than you find them, and that wasn't the case. I had many constituents who were taking me around to show me some of those pressures. So, I was really excited when the Minister of Environment announced that campgrounds would be opening earlier this year than ever before — as of May 1, I believe, is the target. But I also look around at how much snow there is out there and I know that we are going to have to put some extra resources into getting those campgrounds open, so that is part of the budget.

With respect to health, as I have gone around the territory meeting with communities, it is one of the things that we have talked about — and especially during this past year with COVID — it is our mental wellness and our mental health.

I just want to give a shout-out for the new mental wellness hubs. In particular, I just want to acknowledge some of the great counselling work that's happening out of Carcross. I think it's probably happening all over the territory. It just happens that I'm in contact with those folks and I think they do a wonderful job to assist in Carcross to make it a better place. I just want to also acknowledge that we're investing more.

I've already mentioned how we're investing in universal childcare.

We are increasing the medical travel subsidy from \$75 a day to \$150 a day, which is great.

I would also like to talk a bit about vaccines. I don't want to talk yet about the COVID vaccines — I will get there before I'm done — but what I would like to talk about is that we put in this budget to fully cover the SHINGRIX shingles vaccine for Yukoners between the ages of 65 and 70.

I do want to talk about midwifery. I was at the annual general meeting of midwifery recently. Often, the Member for Lake Laberge has been there, but he wasn't there this time — that's fine. What I heard from all of the members was that they were super happy and very pleased that we have our regulations passed and out. While the member opposite characterized it as an issue where there is now a gap, what I heard from midwives who have been hired as implementation coordinators to Health and Social Services — Yukoners who have been in midwifery for many, many years — is that this gap always has existed in every program that has come and what we're doing work on right now is to minimize that gap as quickly as we can.

I also would like to give a shout-out in this budget to expanding home care support for seniors to age in place. Mr. Acting Speaker, I think you are aware of my communities — Tagish, Mount Lorne, and Marsh Lake. They're kind of the oldest demographic communities in the territory. Aging in place is so important for my communities. They really care about being supported to be in their homes as long as possible and it's such a smart investment, because the longer that folks can live in their homes and be supported by their families and neighbours, then the better off it is for everybody's well-being.

Other things that we've had just recently — more improvements to the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter to support vulnerable Yukoners; connecting Yukoners in need of a doctor with physicians through the find a family doctor program; increasing seniors in long-term care at Whistle Bend, including a new community hospice house that offers 12 hospice, palliative, and end-of-life care beds and six long-term care beds; investing in telehealth; and investing in the secure medical unit. That's part of the infrastructure that we're investing in with the \$400 million plus that we're putting in infrastructure.

By the way, what I want to say is: You know where we've had a deficit here, Mr. Acting Speaker? It has been in infrastructure. This territory has lacked investment overall in infrastructure. When I went on those trips to communities and started talking to them, there was a need for that investment all over the place. So, I think of this as investing in putting people back to work coming out of the pandemic and investing in the future of the territory. That's what I think of it as.

We also just recently — we're the first jurisdiction in Canada to provide coverage for continuous glucose monitors for all Yukoners with type 1 diabetes.

I have just a couple of other things that are coming up shortly — not so much to do with the budget but just previous acts that we had passed. The *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Societies Act* are coming into force on April 1. I just wanted to acknowledge those.

Let me turn for a moment to lots and housing. We've worked in partnership with other governments, and we have, over recent years, developed more than 350 new affordable housing units. They are not all complete, but they are in various stages, and we have another \$3.6 million in this year's budget for this important initiative.

We have the Canada-Yukon housing benefit, which provides medium- and low-income Yukoners with up to \$800 per month to help them afford their rent and to support them. I talked about Housing First. The Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation has also stated that we hope to invest in a new Housing First project, and that will be in Watson Lake.

Earlier this year, we released more than 250 lots. In this budget, we are investing \$30 million for lots across the Yukon. I just very quickly want to look back for a second. I added up the investments by the Yukon Party during their term in office over the four years. In their final four years, it was \$7.7 million, \$3.4 million, \$2.6 million, and \$10.3 million respectively for a total of \$24 million in lot investment over four years. We are beating that this year in one year. We are going to be developing lots here in Whitehorse and in virtually all communities.

Just some other things that we have been talking about — we have been investing in the Challenge Cornerstone project. We just recently announced that we are investing in Normandy Manor, which is going to offer supportive housing for seniors. I will leave it there for a moment.

One last thing that I will mention is that we have secured \$40 million as part of the northern carve-out of the national housing co-investment fund to support housing projects across the territory. Again, that is money that we have hunted and brought into the territory. It will help us both on the housing front and also on the infrastructure investment side.

Let me talk about infrastructure for a moment. I am just going to talk about infrastructure that we are investing in across the territory. Let me start with Watson Lake. We have a public works and fire hall building in Watson Lake that we are investing in. In Ross River, we are building a new sewage lagoon. In Faro — a public works and fire hall. In Keno, we have announced the Mayo to McQuesten transmission line. In Mayo, we just completed a fire hall and we're also doing water system upgrades.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: In Keno, we are doing the Mayo to McQuesten transmission line.

Sorry, Mr. Acting Speaker. Now I understand the comment. Yes, we just announced in Keno that we are working on the review of our fire service.

I will say that when the Member for Lake Laberge was talking about investing in the fire service, I just went through and listed off — and I went, "Okay, where are we investing in the fire halls and fire service?" Well, the fire service is everywhere, but fire halls — Mayo, Carmacks, Faro, Teslin, Watson Lake — and here in Whitehorse, we're not investing in the fire hall, but what we are investing in is the new city hall, which has moved their fire hall over. So, that's great.

So, let me just keep going with Whitehorse, then — the public transit hub and the city hall energy upgrades we're investing in. In my own communities: in Carcross, lagoon upgrades; in Mount Lorne, we're investing in a new public well and water treatment facility — I think that's \$500,000 this year to do the planning work and \$1.5 million the following year to do the infrastructure work — which is terrific; in Haines Junction, land development in Marshall Creek subdivision; on Burwash Landing, we're investing in the school — I remember driving with the Minister of Education to talk to the Kluane First Nation and we had in hand a letter that was — from 100 years to the day before we were arriving there — requesting an investment in a school.

For Carmacks, we're investing in the public works building, the fire hall — as I've already mentioned — and that rink; I have to get that rink going again. In Beaver Creek, there is a new sewage lagoon; in Pelly Crossing, a swimming pool; in Dawson City, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth centre; in Old Crow, the community centre and the 10-unit mixed-use housing.

This is a tremendous amount of investment. When I hear members opposite say that we should be careful about how much we're investing because they're concerned about the net debt — by all means, I just encourage them to stand up and tell me which project they don't want. I'll go talk to the community and let them know that it's not appreciated.

From my perspective in talking with the communities, they have a list that's much longer than this. They would like us to invest even more. So, part of it is that we go, we talk to the communities, we get their priorities set by them, and we're investing in the territory.

Let me talk, just for a second, about further investment in the budget around COVID. We have invested in supporting northern aviation with Air North and Alkan to make sure that they are doing well — or as well as they can be under such a tough time; pardon me. We have increased the eligibility criteria and extended the timeline for the Yukon business relief program. We have extended the paid sick leave rebates. We have invested a ton in tourism and culture and we are working hard to provide relief and then to transition to recovery.

Everyone wants to know: "When is it done?" I do, too. We all want to know that. I wish that I could tell you that. The thing that the Premier talked about today — and I will just comment on it as well — is that we know that the vaccine rollout is going very well here in the Yukon. We need it to go well across Canada. We have some positive news that we hear about that. The part that we need to watch and just check to make sure on are some of the variants — in particular, the Brazil variant or the South American variant and how well the vaccine works against that variant. I think that the signs are encouraging, but we are not there yet — we don't know yet — but when that happens, things will move very quickly.

So, I would just like to build on International Women's Day, as I finish up my remarks. When this pandemic hit, I said earlier in my remarks that it has not been even or fair across the Yukon — the types of jobs that it hurt, the people who were more affected — really, women have shouldered a lot of the

burden — whether that has been through domestic violence or whether that has been through the types of work that were adversely affected by COVID — kids at home for school and being the chosen caregiver to stay home — it has been tough on women. Just for a moment, especially on a day like today, I would like to acknowledge what they have done for us. One of the things that I would like to say is that, through what they have done — I see that how we recover out of COVID and how we rebuild out of COVID is really going to also be led by women. That is why I was so excited about universal childcare. If there is one economic policy that I see in our budget that is a game-changer, that is it.

I don't want to try to belittle any of the hardship that people have gone through in dealing with COVID. I was speaking with a constituent this weekend and she was talking to me about how tough it is that, if you want to go Outside to see your family or bring someone in, that there's still this 14-day self-isolation. That has been really tough on people, and I know it. I think that we all know it. We have still with us the need for self-isolation — or at least that is the advice that we get from the chief medical officer of health until we can be sure about — or closer to confident about — being safe.

But here's where the light is at the end of the tunnel: I've been looking across — not just Canada but also North America about vaccination rates. The Yukon is topping out that vaccination rate. The Yukon and NWT are the fastest. The Yukon has now — and probably today will surpass — 20 percent. Twenty percent of Yukoners now have both vaccines. We made this choice to vaccinate our most vulnerable — that was elders, seniors, front-line health care workers, those who are vulnerable at other times, and our communities. At the end of this week, we will finish that vaccination — the second round of vaccinations in our communities. I'm just so excited about that work that's happening. I know that there are some Yukoners who are hesitant in their choice. There are some Yukoners who will choose not to get vaccinated. I respect that is their choice, but there are some Yukoners who are just waiting for a little more confidence or information or certainty and I will work hard to get them that information.

Of the American jurisdictions — the US is doing better than the provinces — not as well as us, but it is doing very well — but Alaska is leading which is terrific news. Then we got this great piece of news late last week, which is that the Public Health Agency of Canada is starting to say that the time between the first dose and the second dose can be extended. With that, what will happen is that more Canadians and the provinces will get their first dose because the provinces won't wait to hold the second doses. They will get them into the arms of Canadians who want to get them. What that will mean is that the risk profile will adjust.

I think that there is light at the end of the tunnel. I think that this budget is talking about that. We put in place this \$15 million to be safe and to be careful, but more than that, we are investing in the territory — whether that is through infrastructure, universal childcare, *Our Clean Future*, or *Putting People First* — with all of these investments. Now is

the time to invest. I am excited about the budget because it will help the Yukon to transition into a positive future.

Hon. Ms. Frost: It is an honour to rise today to deliver my response to our government's fifth budget, the main estimates for the 2021-22 year. The budget marks a major turning point as the last main estimates budget to be tabled by this government in this mandate. Here you can see what the future holds for the territory.

Our future looks bright. Yukon is leading the country in the rate per capita of immunizations delivered as of today. We have held strong together through the worst of the pandemic.

Outside of the pandemic, this government has worked hard to chart a bold path to reform Yukon's health care systems. Mr. Speaker, we are hard at work creating a gold standard of person-centred wellness for the first time in our territory. We have created an ambitious plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions, we are building a green economy, and we are protecting our incredible, vast wilderness for future generations. We have created strong programs in partnerships to take on affordable housing concerns for our territory. We are demonstrating that, through partnerships rooted in collaboration and respect, anything is possible.

Mr. Speaker, this collaboration started here with this Liberal caucus four years ago. This is what one government looks like. We are a strong, compassionate team of leaders who have bridged gaps between our own portfolios to improve what this government can offer Yukoners. Early learning is now becoming a part of education. Social services are collaborating with housing through a social housing transformation that better aligns with client needs. The list goes on.

When collaboration happens, everyone wins. I can't help but look back at the team around me and feel the deep acknowledgement of how much growth and leadership has happened in these last four years — growth for our caucus and growth for the Yukon as this team has worked tirelessly to chart a new path of leadership for our territory, and here we are — more than four years into our mandate and finally able to take a deep breath and look back at all that has been accomplished.

That looks pretty great, Mr. Speaker. We've moved mountains to get here today, to provide the services — the essential services to Yukoners, services that have been neglected, services that have not specifically been provided to rural Yukon communities.

It has always been my first and deepest honour to represent my community of Vuntut Gwitchin. I am proud to speak today to the members of my riding, my home, about what this budget means to them and the future of our territory. As I say — and I've said this before — as a child growing up in Old Crow rooted in my teachings, the Gwitchin knowledge, and the teachings of our elders — as the Minister of Environment and of Health and Social Services and the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation, growing up in my community has brought me the strength and the knowledge of my people. It has taught me lessons that serve me well in this government, in my time working with the federal government, and in my time working with First Nation governments. These are lessons of

perseverance, of collaboration, of community compassion and strength and the importance of family. It's about reconciliation — reconciliation with our indigenous communities. These are the truths that don't always make it to the political arena. There are lessons learned early on with respect to land management, family ties, and the values that guide us that should really guide us here in this legislative Chamber, speaking about the truths, speaking about the realities of our communities. This work — we're guided here to represent the voice of the people. The path has not been easy, but true strength comes not from fear but from the conviction that you are doing the right thing.

From day one in this role, I knew why I was here and where I was going, because the direction is not my own. It is the direction put before me by the elders and knowledge-keepers of our community. Throughout the past four years, I have remained connected to the elders as they have always guided me on the right path. In light of this support, the politics of this job have never mattered to the work I do. Why? It is because true leadership is never just about one person. It's about the progress that you can make as a community — the progress that you can make working in collaboration with all stakeholders. It's about listening and putting into place programs and services that align with the core needs of our communities.

In all of my work, on a personal level and a professional level, I feel strongly about the gaps in services and supports that we have not provided to rural Yukon communities and that we are now providing to our communities. These are the realities of life. I live it because I grew up in an isolated rural community. I grew up without housing. I grew up without running water. I grew up without food on the table. I know what it's like to fight for our very existence — indigenous rights in this territory, reconciliation. It's about making sure that people are strong and healthy and that supports are there to heal the trauma and support the families to come together. It is support for elders to age in their own homes. It is support for safe and affordable housing. Have we met all of the targets? Absolutely not, but we are striving to meet the needs of Yukon communities.

We have put in place innovative approaches to address social housing transformation, to allow the elders to age well in their home communities. As a lead working for many of the First Nations on treaty implementation, I knew what it was like to work on the other side and push forward policies and policy direction as it relates to changes in implementation on the Peel, on YESAA, on land management, and on social transformation.

A few key issues for me and my community include a long-term vision that cares for the environment and the land that we call home. There is nothing more important than the health and well-being of our environment because we rely on our land for our subsistence and survival.

The harsh realities of climate change are affecting us here in the north faster than anywhere else on the planet. It is incumbent on us here, in the north, to stand together with our regions to change the course and protect the earth. There is no economy without the environment. I thank my Cabinet colleagues for this acknowledgement in working toward *Our Clean Future*.

With respect to the work accomplished by the Health and Social Services department, one of the first things that I took on — that our government took on — upon coming into our term was to improve supports and funding to ensure that our children remain in their home communities and not apprehending children. We established the extended family care agreements, as the majority of children in Yukon government care are indigenous — 78 percent of children, in fact. These agreements ensure that First Nation children who come in contact with government care agencies are placed within their family or community whenever possible. These traditional adoptions have been the custom of First Nation people since time immemorial and this reflection in Yukon government is the new standard of practice. It's monumental for the success of our children and our families. We are breaking the cycle of apprehension. Children are our most precious resource, and as adults, parents, guardians, and decision-makers, we must ensure that they are nurtured and cared for. We need to ensure that they are safe from harm, that they are fed and clothed, and that they have a roof over their heads, and, more importantly, that they receive the love that they so much deserve. We need to think of all the things we do or wish for our own children and multiply that for all Yukon children.

As a mother, as an aunty, as a First Nation — *dinjii zhuh* — and as the minister responsible for the welfare of children in this territory, I know the long-term effects and benefits of an early start to life. Strong supports at home and in the community are essential. Reducing the number of children in care remains one of my top priorities.

We are increasing the Family and Children's Services budget by more than \$2.9 million this year to increase supports for children and families. We are doing this in collaboration with First Nations on a progressive approach to supporting First Nation children in care. We created a trilateral table on child welfare to establish strategic priorities for child welfare activities and to promote capacity within First Nation government to improve outcomes for First Nation children and youth.

In January 2020, we embarked on Honouring Connections, steps toward reconciliation initiatives which propose guiding principles and a way forward for the collaboration reconnection process. This was created in equal partnership with Yukon First Nations and the Council for Yukon First Nations.

Another area for work with youth was improving supports for children aging out of government care. We created a new live-in and outreach program to support youth at Nts'aw Chua, including those transitioning out of care. For years, youth who aged out of government care didn't have the resources and supports they needed to transition into young adulthood. We did this in the face of criticism from the opposition members who didn't support a group home residence in Porter Creek — a "not in my backyard" approach that only serves to further marginalize youth. However, we know that raising youth in a residential setting instead of the downtown core provides a better environment and opportunities to create healthy and important connections to the community.

For our youngest learners, we increased the direct operating grant to daycares for the first time in 10 years. We developed the rural sustainability pilot project with the non-profit daycare centre in Watson Lake and the Little Blue Daycare in Dawson City to help these important facilities to continue to provide daycare services.

In total, this budget invests more than \$25 million toward early learning initiatives. This budget also supports \$670,000 in matching for the federal government's prenatal nutrition program and \$400,000 for integrated midwifery into our existing health care system.

Another huge initiative that we are embarking on to support our children is universal early learning childcare, a recommendation from the *Putting People First* report, which this government is proud to be implementing. In this budget, you will find \$15 million to support this new initiative, which saves families, on average, \$700 per child per month. This program will bring benefits to our youngest learners but also to parents and families who are burdened with heavy daycare costs. This will allow many parents the opportunity to re-enter the workforce, if they so choose — another great example of how *Putting People First* creates benefits shared by an entire society.

As Health and Social Services follows the continuum of life, we have worked hard to better support Yukoners at all stages. Elders are very important to all Yukon communities as an integral part of the family who provide love, support, guidance, and wisdom — the wisdom in history that has been very much a part of our story and very much a part of Yukon's story.

Just as I am committed to improving the lives of children and youth and supporting them to be the best they can be, I am committed also to support our aging population by conducting the aging-in-place consultative efforts. Last year, we were able to come away with significant recommendations from that group. We have a number of recommendations to implement that are care models. We are fortunate to have a growing senior population. In response to the needs of our seniors, we have budgeted \$86.8 million in the 2021-22 budget for continuing care, home care, respite care, palliative care programs, and community day homes.

To better support our seniors, we have increased seniors housing and long-term care at Whistle Bend Place, including a new community hospice house that offers 12 hospice, palliative care, and end-of-life care beds and six long-term care beds. We are continuing to develop education and resources to support caregivers for those with dementia. We are integrating First Nation programming at Whistle Bend Place with protocols developed for culturally focused services and ceremonies in the healing room. Imagine that. We have never had that in the Yukon — recognizing and appreciating the uniqueness of our traditional communities and tying that into program supports, knowing that we have a lot of our seniors now residing in these facilities.

We have greatly expanded home care to support Yukon seniors to age in place through successful programs like the home first program, which greatly improves supports for

seniors to return home after time in the hospital. We've also supported seniors through our housing initiative processes to conduct retrofits and renovations to allow them to age well in their homes through mobility supports and renovations. We opened a respite and re-enablement unit at the Thomson Centre in December 2018, and we are continuing to support individuals working toward their personal independence goals as part of the home first philosophy.

Through these measures, we have decreased the number of people in hospital who are waiting to return home or to a permanent place in a long-term care home. Historic pressure on hospital beds has been greatly reduced — another great example of how putting people first brings forward solutions in the health care system.

We are working with Yukon Housing Corporation and the private sector on the Normandy Manor, an affordable, supported independent living facility for seniors in Whitehorse, which I will expand on.

Speaker: Order, please. The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 207 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled March 8, 2021:

34-3-74

Resignation as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole, letter re (dated March 8, 2021) from Don Hutton, Member for Mayo-Tatchun, to Hon. Nils Clarke, Speaker (Speaker Clarke)

Written notice was given of the following motion March 8, 2021:

Motion No. 426

Re: excluding bills amending territorial elections from Standing Order 76 (Cathars)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 87

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, March 9, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Spring Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Vacant*
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

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

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Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre

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Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

Independent

Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun
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*On March 8, 2021, Mr. Hutton resigned as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, March 9, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House that Motion No. 423, notice of which was given on March 8, 2021, by the Member for Lake Laberge, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as the motion is out of order.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask us all to welcome here today some folks from Engineers Yukon, who are here for the tribute for National Engineering Month. We have with us Ms. Kirsten Hogan, the president of Engineers Yukon; Mr. Chris Dixon, the past president; Kim King, the executive director; and Alison Anderson, who is part of the continuing professional development program and the 30 by 30 committee that works on increasing the number of women engineers in Engineers Yukon.

If we could welcome them, please.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today as the Minister of Education to welcome the Wood Street Centre ACES grade 10 class. They are accompanied by their teacher, Colin Abbott. We have with us today Will Taylor, Kalina Morrison, Neizha Snider, Kalie Bennett, Jason Schwalin, Paige Forester, Mackenzie Keefer, Olie Johnson, Sebastian Insley, Cambria Alford, Tenisha Mayes, Samantha Kirby, and Claire MacMillan. Thank you for being here.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors? Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Engineering Month

Hon. Mr. Streicker: On behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the Yukon NDP, I rise today to pay tribute to Yukon's engineers. March is National Engineering Month. Every year, this important event celebrates the invaluable role that engineers play in our communities. I unreservedly support its goal of inspiring young, diverse Canadians to explore and consider engineering as a profession. I think it is just terrific happenstance that we happen to have the Wood Street Centre School here today, so I get to give this tribute to them too.

Throughout the month, thousands of students, teachers, and parents will meet and interact with engineers to learn about what they do and how awesome it can be. Before studying engineering, if someone asked me what one plus one is, as the son of two math teachers, I would have said "two". Now I would say: "I'm pretty sure it is two, but we had better make it three, just to be safe."

Protecting the safety and well-being of the public, after all, is the engineer's primary function. It is a job they do so well that we often just take it for granted, whether it is satellites or cellphones, fibre optic networks, or roads, bridges, or dams, engineers ensure that our world works the way it is supposed to, as safely as possible. In the past, engineering professional conduct was largely concerned with safety, responsibility, and technical competence. While this is still the primary focus of professional development, the profession has expanded the view of its role to include wider environmental and social issues and to be more inclusive.

Today, Mr. Speaker, Engineers Yukon announced a landmark change to add caregiving as part of its continuing professional development program. I quote from their press release earlier today: "Engineers who are caregivers develop skills that both enhance the profession and enhance the public interest... Caregiving also enhances the protection of the public through the development of empathy and broader understanding of the needs of others." This is a first for Canada and coincides with International Women's Day and National Engineering Month, and I am so proud of what Engineers Yukon is doing to contribute to our overall well-being and bring in fresh, diverse ideas. Diversity is one of our greatest strengths, bringing different perspectives to the table, prompting us to re-examine our preconceptions, and it challenges us to try to do better.

We need to look no further than the team of hard-working Yukon engineers to appreciate this fact. They come from a range of backgrounds, from communities across the country and around the world, each bringing a unique perspective to their role as a result. This diversity of experiences and views enables them to develop innovative solutions to some of the territory's greatest infrastructure challenges and to do so while prioritizing the safety and well-being of the Yukon.

As Theodore Von Kármán, the Hungarian-American aerospace engineer, mathematician, and physicist noted — and I quote: "Scientists study the world as it is, engineers create the world that never has been." We see that here in the Yukon, Mr. Speaker, and our departments of Community Services and Highways and Public Works see that here in the Yukon as well. From the Nisutlin Bay bridge to grid battery storage, engineers are designing infrastructure that will improve Yukoners' lives for generations to come.

So, on behalf of the Government of Yukon and the Third Party, I would like to thank all of the territory's engineers. Through your dedication, innovation, and tireless work, you are helping to build safer, healthier, more prosperous communities for all Yukoners. Merci, thank you.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition and the Independent member to recognize March as National Engineering Month here in Canada.

Engineering is part of everyday aspects of society here at home and around the world. This month, we celebrate engineering achievement and advancement and look at the importance of inspiring the next generation of engineers. We don't have to look far to see the importance of engineering.

Using science and mathematics to make things work in the most effective, efficient, and magnificent ways, engineers are some of the most instrumental pieces to the fabric of society, of cities, of infrastructure, and more. Our buildings, roadways, subdivisions, electrical equipment, vehicles, engines — for these, we have engineers to thank. So, this month, we would like to recognize the work of engineers.

We would like to thank them for putting their brains to work for the greater good, for their ideas and forward thinking. Civil, mechanical, electrical, chemical engineering, environmental — such different fields, but all with the same goal: to solve problems. They work with dirt, construction material, cogs, pulleys, engines, robotics. They work with electricity, computers, and chemical components and so, so much more. Imagine a career where the sky is the limit and where different interests and abilities come together to create incredible things and solve impossible problems. Engineering could be that career.

I encourage all the youth who find they have an interest in any one of things I've mentioned today to explore a little further to see whether engineering might be an option for them. I think, here in the Yukon, such amazing work is done to get our youth involved and interested in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. We know that these important trades will continue to be major contributors to our economy and within each of our communities.

With International Women's Day taking place during National Engineering Month, I would like to acknowledge Engineers Yukon for their 30 by 30 campaign to increase the representation of women within the engineering field — their commitment to raise the percentage of newly licensed engineers who are women by 30 percent by the year 2030 from the current rate of 17 percent.

I would also like to commend Engineers Yukon for highlighting two of the women who make up the 17 percent during International Women's Day. The stories of Kirsten Hogan and Sandra MacDougall and the paths that they took in the fields of engineering can be found on Engineers Yukon's Facebook page.

I would also like to give a special shout-out to Engineers Yukon's newest female professional engineer and my friend, Jamie Davignon, who I was hoping would be here in the gallery with us today. I would like to thank these three engineering professionals for your leadership as more young women aspire to follow in your footsteps.

Once again, I would like to thank all of those involved in engineering here in the Yukon. Your contributions continue to

drive our communities forward and make our territory a better and safer place to live, work, play, and raise our families.

Applause

In recognition of Bonanza Creek gold discovery 125th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 125th anniversary of the Bonanza Creek gold discovery. In August of 1896, Skookum Jim (Keish), Tagish or later, Dawson Charlie (Kaa Goox), and Kate Carmack (Shaaw Tláa) and her husband, George, changed the history of Yukon and its people forever.

In what was known as Rabbit Creek, a small tributary that flows into the Klondike River, the group found the first shiny nuggets of gold. George Carmack wrote the name "Bonanza" on a piece of bark and nailed it to the discovery post. The name stuck and the stream became known as one of the richest and most famous gold-bearing streams in the world.

Little did the group know that the discovery would spark the beginning of a major change in Yukon and one of the world's largest industrial migrations, the Klondike Gold Rush. Thousands of people from all over the world caught gold fever and poured into the territory by whatever means possible with dreams of striking it rich. Dawson became the Paris of the North where gold dust could buy anything. Along with the miners, others also arrived in the Yukon, looking to make a new life. Business, government, entertainment and much more exploded on the scene, creating a vibrant, bustling city. The discovery of gold in Yukon coincided with revolutionary photographic technology. Photographers and journalists came equipped with the newest hand-held cameras. The Klondike Gold Rush became one of the most photographed events of the time.

Although it only lasted a few short years, the gold rush impacts and effects are still visible today. Our Yukon licence plate features a goldpanner, and driving into Dawson, the tailing piles are a visible reminder of the huge dredges that remodeled the landscape in search of gold. Placer mining around Dawson, including on Bonanza Creek, still continues today and remains an important part of our economy and the way of life here in the north.

Two national historic sites of Canada have been designated along Bonanza Creek: the Discovery claim and Dredge No. 4. Dawson also has a number of historic buildings from that time, including the Palace Grand Theatre and the old territorial administration building. People from all over the world visit Dawson and the Yukon to see the special place that sparked the stampede for gold.

I know that this time in history was not always positive and the impacts of development and colonialism are still felt today, but working together on reconciliation and sharing all the stories from this time are important. In fact, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has put forward an application to have the region and this aspect of its history recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Tr'ondëk Klondike is a testament to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's enduring relationship with the land and their successful adaptation to a dramatically changing world initiated

by the Klondike Gold Rush. The gold rush made a dramatic contribution to shaping the culture and society of the Yukon today. I encourage all Yukoners to reflect on the history and significance of gold's discovery 125 years ago and the many impacts it has had on the Yukon and its people.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, the New Democratic Party, and the Independent member to pay tribute to 125 years of Yukon history and the Bonanza discovery.

On Rabbit Creek near Dawson City in 1896, a group had settled for a few days in the area to fish. George Carmack, his native wife, Kate Carmack, Skookum Jim, and Tagish Charlie were synonymous with the discovery. Dipping into the crisp, cold, clear water of the creek, gold-coloured rocks caught their eye. "The rest is history" is the phrase we would use.

A year later, after a shipment of gold arrived in Seattle in 1897, news broke: "Eureka", "strike", "gold", "bonanza". With talk of the wealth in this far northern point, the Klondike stampede began. At the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon rivers, Joe Ladue and Arthur Harper staked and established a settlement called "Dawson City". From the swampy area of ground nestled between the rich hills, the population grew and grew to over 30,000 plus. Dawson City became the Paris of the North — the largest city north of Seattle — complete with dance halls, gambling, brothels, shops, and liquor.

What else was happening in the world at this time, you ask? Well, the first Olympic Games were held in Athens with 280 athletes. Marconi patented the first radio. Henry drove his first Ford through the streets of Detroit. The first movie theatre opened.

Oh my, the world was modernizing at an alarming rate. Up north, as the stamperders came, Canada realized that this area had to have a better system to protect Canada's interests, as the majority of the incoming were Americans. Three such Americans were Ira Van Bibber, along with his brothers Theodore and Patrick, who came from West Virginia to find their fortune.

Arriving at the Skagway port, they found they were not allowed to enter Canada without a large grubstake. So, all of them being well over six feet, four inches, they began hiring out their strong backs to haul for others over the trail. Once allowed into Canada, they had missed the main rush. The two brothers continued on to the Nome strike, but they missed that as well.

Theodore is now buried in Fairbanks and Patrick made it back to Washington State, where he is buried. Ira stayed, married Eliza, and their large family is well-known throughout most of Yukon.

Canada passed the *Yukon Act* in 1898 and made the capital of the new territory Dawson City. The price of an ounce of gold that year was \$18.90. The creeks had names that still resonate today: Hunker, Dominion, Eldorado, and Rabbit Creek, which was changed to Bonanza Creek. There were no road systems as we know today and the rivers plied the waterways with sternwheelers of varying sizes to move the ore, supplies, and passengers. These vessels also moved the gold. Joe Boyle, a

famous Yukoner, made his money by optioning land from the government and put his first dredge to work in September 1898. There were soon 12 dredges working along the valleys, churning and clanging slowly up and down the creeks in the Klondike region. The last dredge shut its power off in 1966. The companies that formed — the last, known as the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corp., or YCGC — constructed hydroelectric plants to supply power to those dredges by forming dams and ditches to channel the water to ensure that there was enough water to make power — innovative and challenging at the time, but it was done. The North Fork power plant and the diesel plant in Dawson City were sufficient for the area.

Within two years, the rush ended and Dawson's population dropped rapidly. I grew up in that sleepy, dusty little Dawson town with the relics of the history all around us, but we were oblivious to the values of the pieces of stuff about us.

One hundred and twenty-five years later, we are adept at sharing our history, especially the discovery of gold. When visitors started to come north in the late 1950s, there was a realization that we had something the world wanted to see and learn about this well-known part of history. As I can attest, born Yukoners have seen many, many changes, but in the scheme of the world, we have a young history and so much to be proud of, as we are a strong and resilient people.

I am going to end with my favourite quote from Robert Service's *Spell of the Yukon*:

I wanted the gold, and I sought it;
I scrabbled and mucked like a slave.
Was it famine or scurvy — I fought it;
I hurled my youth into a grave.
I wanted the gold, and I got it —
Came out with a fortune last fall, —
Yet somehow life's not what I thought it,
And somehow the gold isn't all.

No! There's the land. (Have you seen it?)
It's the cussedest land that I know,
From the big, dizzy mountains that screen it
To the deep, deathlike valleys below.
Some say God was tired when He made it;
Some say it's a fine land to shun;
Maybe; but there's some as would trade it
For no land on earth — and I'm one.

So, the 125th anniversary of discovery — cheers, Yukoners.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Istchenko: I have a letter for tabling dated October 29, 2020. It is from the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation to me, as the MLA for Kluane. It references a

gathering space for the St. Elias Seniors Society that they were evicted from.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No.19: *Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 19, entitled *Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 19, entitled *Act to Amend the Family Property and Support Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 19 agreed to

Bill No. 20: *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 20, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 20, entitled *Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 20 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Adel: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House supports:

- (1) plans to expand the existing Atlin hydro plant;
- (2) negotiations for an electricity purchase between Yukon Energy Corporation and the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership; and
- (3) the \$10 million allocated from this year's budget for this project.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation to allow the St. Elias Seniors Society and their seniors advocate to move back into the dedicated space in their building, as promised, after removing them during the pandemic for now-completed renovations.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works, the Minister of Education, and the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation to work together on employee housing priorities in the community of Beaver Creek by:

(1) identifying or reallocating housing for full-time employees and their families appropriate in size and functionality based on their family situations and length of employment; and

(2) considering renting rooms in local hotels to accommodate temporary employees.

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

THAT this House urges the Liberal government to cancel their plans to implement new rules for agriculture land on April 1, 2021, that negatively impact the market value of agriculture properties and make it harder to get a building permit.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the Liberal government's current plan to impose a 60-metre no-development riparian buffer on titled land in the Shallow Bay area is not fair to those property owners, especially those whose homes are impacted, and if approved by Cabinet, would set a dangerous precedent for such a measure to potentially be imposed on titled land in other zoning areas next.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize the changing demographics of downtown Whitehorse and work with families, the school council, and the Department of Education to address concerns that children residing in downtown Whitehorse are unable to attend the school nearest to where they live.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to:

(1) take immediate action to address the avalanche hazards caused by near record-breaking snowfall on the south Klondike Highway between Carcross and Fraser, BC and the number of road closures due to avalanche and avalanche risk;

(2) have a third-party audit performed by qualified avalanche professionals of the Highways and Public Works avalanche safety program; and

(3) immediately adopt British Columbia's threshold guidelines for avalanche safety measures to inform the travelling public of road closures in advance of closures coming into effect due to avalanche danger or avalanches reaching public roadways.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consult and work with the Selkirk Street Elementary School

Council to ensure that student safety and active transportation are factored in prior to finalizing plans for a parking lot and drop-off area behind the school on Selkirk Street.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consult and work with the Selkirk Street Elementary School Council to address the lack of available classroom space at Selkirk Street Elementary School before expanding enrolment in French immersion kindergarten.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Atlin hydro expansion project

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, this year's budget includes substantial investments toward renewable energy projects identified in Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable electricity plan.

There is \$10 million included to advance the Atlin hydro expansion project. The project would expand the infrastructure and power production capacity on Pine Creek from 2.1 megawatts to approximately 10 megawatts. The additional energy would increase our territory's supply of dependable renewable electricity. This project has the potential to bring 46 gigawatt hours of clean, renewable electricity to the Yukon grid, which represents about 10 percent of our total on-grid energy demand. This would reduce our need for rental diesel generators by four units, bringing both an economic and environmental benefit to the north, and would provide enough power for roughly 3,750 homes. It would also provide more renewable energy in the winter when our demand is the highest.

The project will make a significant contribution toward meeting our renewable energy generation goal for electricity generation under *Our Clean Future* which aims for 97 percent of our on-grid electricity to be generated by renewable sources by 2030.

Over the past three years, Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership, which is 100-percent owned by the Taku River Tlingit First Nation citizens, has invested over \$3 million in evaluating the feasibility of the project and completing some of the initial design work for the facility. Last fall, the partnership with Yukon Energy signed an agreement in principle to work collaboratively to advance the project and negotiate an electricity purchase agreement for the project. The partnership recently secured \$2.5 million in federal funding to complete preliminary design and engineering work, and in December, the Taku River Tlingit First Nation issued a clan directive to support the hydro expansion project and the partnership has submitted environmental permitting applications to British Columbia and permitting applications to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board for the project's transmission connection to Jake's Corner.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is pleased to support this partnership between Yukon Energy and Tlingit Homeland

Energy Limited Partnership. Collaborating with First Nations to expand renewable energy capacity will create economic opportunities and keep our economy strong and resilient. Expanding the territory's renewable energy capacity will increase energy security and economic self-reliance in our communities, making them more resilient, and it will reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

Access to funding is key to being able to move forward on these kinds of projects and ensuring that electricity costs for Yukon homes and businesses are managed carefully. Subject to legislative approvals, we are allocating \$30 million from the green infrastructure stream of the Investing in Canada infrastructure program over the next two years to this project and are actively engaging with our federal counterparts to find additional support that will ensure that electricity from this project will be affordable for the territory. A shared purpose, a shared vision, and a shared message will provide the critical foundation of making our case for funding support with the Government of Canada. Together with our First Nation partners, we can make a compelling story that will help bring this ground-breaking project to life.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement as the Yukon Party energy critic.

We support green energy and getting the territory off of fossil fuels. As you know, the Liberals have spent the last few years increasing our reliance on diesel as they have started to rent more and more diesel generators, shipping money to Alberta, leaving Yukoners with no assets, and even hiding some of those generators in Faro in spite of the additional cost to do so.

They currently have a rate application before the Yukon Utilities Board seeking to increase rates to Yukoners with money in there to install brand new diesel generators. So, seeing the Liberals focus on green energy and talking about that here today is a change that is welcomed.

I do have some questions about this project and what appears to be ballooning capital costs and the project going overbudget. According to Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable plan, this project was estimated to cost around \$120.7 million in 2019. However, in December 2020, while appearing here as a witness in this Assembly, the president of the Energy Corporation told us that the estimated cost had increased to around \$200 million. So, I am hoping that the minister can explain why the estimated costs have increased by around \$80 million and what the current estimated cost of the project is.

The 10-year plan from November 2020 said it would be a six-megawatt project, yet today we hear that it is going to be eight megawatts. So, has the project scope changed from November to now? I am hoping that the minister can elaborate on that as well when he is on his feet again.

Also, in December, the Energy Corporation told us that the project was expected to be on grid in 2024. Is that still the case today? The YEC president mentioned that an electricity purchase agreement was being negotiated and was expected to

be concluded in quarter one of this year. I am wondering if that is still the case, and if so, will that agreement be made public?

Negotiations were also underway with ATCO on upgrades to the portion of the line that they own from Jake's Corner into Whitehorse, and I am curious if that work has concluded as well. With respect to this project, the 10-year renewable strategy stated — and I quote: “Without federal funding, these projects are not considered cost-competitive, and would most likely not be approved by the Yukon Utilities Board.” It also states — and I quote again: “YEC and THELP are actively collaborating on securing government grant funding for the project, which will be critical to supporting the project economics while keeping the price of energy and capacity procured under the EPA affordable to Yukon customers.”

So, I am wondering if the minister can let us know if the money that he mentions today is sufficient enough to make this project cost-competitive and to have it approved by the Yukon Utilities Board.

Also, finally, when this project is all said and done, what is the minister expecting that the impacts to our energy bills will be?

Thank you very much for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, we wish to congratulate the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership on the leadership that they continue to show when it comes to developing clean, renewable power. I remember the first time that I listened to CEO Peter Kirby lay out the vision that was held by the Taku River Tlingit First Nation in the community of Atlin — one of 100-percent renewable power generated in the community, by the community, and for the community. This community worked long and hard to get the Pine Creek project up and going, and since then, it has been transformative.

In a Yukon Energy press release dated February 25, 2021, Peter Kirby, president and CEO of the Taku Group of Companies, said this: “TRTFN began operating its first hydro project in 2009. For over a decade, it has shut down polluting diesel generation and provided clean energy to Sunny Atlin. As our community moves toward clean energy, citizens in our homeland have also made personal decisions and investments to move from oil fired furnaces to utilize this clean energy to heat their homes. Our first project was a small step towards reconciling our collective history and this expansion project will be another significant step in that direction. Socially, culturally, and economically we are Yukoners and so we are honoured to be able to share our resources to provide a cleaner energy future for Yukoners and a brighter future for our citizens and all Atlinites.”

Then, Yukon Energy president, Andrew Hall, went on to say — and I believe that he sums up what we all believe future energy projects can look like when he said — and I quote: “This project is also special because of the opportunity it provides us to work directly with yet another First Nation government and development corporation to build the clean energy future that Yukoners need and want.”

So, Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to support this initiative between the Taku River Tlingit, Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership, and the Yukon Energy Corporation. This is an excellent example of what happens when partners truly work together. We look forward to seeing this project completed, knowing that Yukon will be able to reduce our dependence on fossil fuel when it comes online.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I will try to quickly do a speed round on answers here.

First of all, from the Yukon Party, I think that it is a mischaracterization to say that, while we are in government, we have increased our reliance on fossil fuels. What we have done is that we have ensured that we have a backup in place so that, if one of our main assets such as Aishihik were to go down, we would actually have a backup in place. I think that is first and foremost, and I think that, as people see this year again with water levels the way they are, we are going to again be in very good shape on the amount of renewable that we will produce, but still moving toward increasing.

As for the project, we are now getting to a point where the engineering work is being done. It is just starting, and it is project open. For my engineering friends here, they would sense that this is where we are scoping out what our budget looks like, what our cost is, and our business model that we are using.

I have seen this over and over again by the Yukon Party. They refer to numbers before the project has started, in the early stage of budget, and here we are now, working with the TRT to build this project. We will take this project and our electricity purchase agreement to the Yukon Utilities Board with complete accountability to show exactly what the deal is as it is inked, and that will give opportunity for them to go through the rigour and show.

I think that, so far, the group has been doing a fantastic job at looking at what it will be. I think that Yukoners will be extremely pleased with the costing of this, the model that is in place, how we can reduce the cap ex by leveraging money with our partners, as we have done already on this project, so I look forward to that.

I appreciate the kind words from the NDP toward Mr. Kirby and the work that they've done and the success of this project. Again, we have to remember that what is difficult about this is that shots about our budget on this and our financial approach to it from folks in the back of the Yukon Party hollering out — these are the same folks who spent \$4 million having roundtable discussions over a period of two or three years. It was almost \$5 million. The only thing to show was some pretty logos and some branding — no projects. When we wonder how we got to the place where we are now, all we have to do is go back just a bit in time and we would understand how we got here.

I am also happy that this year's budget will have \$4.5 million in it for our grid-scale battery, which will be the largest battery in the north and potentially in Canada. I think that is a very significant step forward. There is \$2.3 million included for the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line upgrade,

which is another significant piece — getting it done, building it, previous promises, and building being done. Also, as I said, there is the \$10 million for Atlin.

Again, I think it's also important to talk about those partnerships. The Haeckel Hill wind project — again, we are in partnership with Chu N'ikwān Development Corporation for that to be in place. Now that we are freeing up infrastructure funds — of course, because of COVID, there were some challenges, but we will be able to have the Old Crow solar project with Vuntut Gwitchin go live. Anyone who has listened to Chief Dickson will know that they are now procuring from a new source and their wind project continues to move forward with financing from the government and expansion on biomass.

I am happy to be working with the Carcross Tagish First Nation Energy Corporation on their feasibility work for their wind project, on the wind and storage project in Pelly Crossing with the Selkirk First Nation, as well as the work that we have embarked on with the White River First Nation. Again, there is a lot of work and a lot of thanks to the Yukon Energy Corporation, the Yukon Development Corporation, Energy, Mines and Resources, and all the folks moving these many projects ahead.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic public health measures

Mr. Hassard: Yesterday we asked the Liberals about their path forward to reopening. The Premier said that we can see the finish line from here when it comes to getting life back to normal in the Yukon; however, the *A Path Forward* plan that he introduced on Friday afternoon tells a different story.

It says that we can expect to remain in the next phase until the end of 2021 with no timeline to enter that phase; however, the old path forward plan stated that the next phase would be implemented once a vaccine was available. So, this new document announced last Friday adds additional requirements beyond vaccines to reach it, and unfortunately, it provides no metrics or numbers explaining how or when the Liberals will make the determination to switch to the next phase.

Can the Premier tell us: When are we going to reach the finish line?

Hon. Mr. Silver: A shout-out to Dr. Hanley and his ability this morning to reach out to folks on the airwaves to add to my voice as far as where we are right now with the variant and where we are with *A Path Forward*.

I will say that the changes that we made to *A Path Forward* are based upon the new realities. Imagine developing a path forward and talking about vaccinations nine months ago — not knowing that Yukon was going to be prioritized, not knowing which and when vaccines are going to come out, in what kind of order and those types of things. The work that the team at Health and Social Services and the chief medical officer of health, the ECO and I — working together to bring certainty to very uncertain times — is, I think, great work that has been done.

What we see with the new plan is basically a filling in of the fact that public health orders and guidelines must be followed. Testing and contact tracing are available and need to be used. The risk of importation needs to be minimized, and the health system has the capacity to meet the needs and to prepare if responses are necessary. We have proven that in the past by opening to a bubble to BC but also then being able to move backwards as well when epidemiology says that we have to for the safety of Yukoners.

So again, Mr. Speaker, we anticipate being able to lift restrictions very soon, and I'm going to continue to work with the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health and give those answers as soon as they become available.

Mr. Hassard: When we asked yesterday about a return to full-time, in-person classes, the Premier mentioned that we would be there — quote: "... once we get to an effective level of vaccination..." However, the *A Path Forward* document released on Friday also says that one of the requirements to go back to in-person classes is for students being eligible for a vaccine and that the vaccine needs to be effective against onward transmission for this to occur.

Can the Premier clarify: Is that determination only being made on "an effective level of vaccination" or is it also being made based on whether or not children are eligible for vaccines? When does the government expect students to be eligible for vaccines?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm going to have to look back to Hansard to see exactly what information the member opposite is putting forward. To me, it's about effective vaccination levels, and right now it's the adult population that can get vaccinated, so that's what we're talking about. We will be having an update press conference tomorrow. Dr. Hanley and I have been working tirelessly to update Yukoners every week, if possible, and we will continue to do that and we will do that tomorrow as well when we get the information. We're working with Justice right now; we're working with Education right now; we're working with Health and Social Services. All the departments are working together to get the most timely information out for Yukoners.

We're in a situation right now in Yukon where we are ahead of the curve. Where other jurisdictions in Canada are finally able to go into restaurants and open up sports clubs and then seeing sports clubs close down again, we are in the enviable position of most other jurisdictions in Canada. We are asking Yukoners to be a bit more patient here as the rest of Canada catches up to where we are. We are all asking people to — if you're healthy and over 18 years old and if you have any hesitance, please come forward and let us know and share what your hesitance is, because the best thing that we can do while we are in this situation is to get vaccinated if possible. If we get to those levels of vaccination here and in Canada, this will be a very, very bright spring and a very, very bright summer.

Mr. Hassard: It's not very bright when it doesn't appear that the Premier has even read this path forward that he announced on Friday. It indicates that there are four considerations that must be met to create a bubble with another

jurisdiction. One of them is that we need a high overall vaccination rate for the entire Yukon population.

So, a very simple question — what number is considered a high overall vaccination rate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the chief medical officer of health has been very clear on that. When we started with the number of 75 percent, that was a number that was guided by national conversations, both with his team and with my team as well, about what would be — we felt at that time — an acceptable level of people who would be willing to get the vaccination.

What is the actual number of vaccinations needed for us to stop variants that are now being tested in Brazil? The member opposite is asking me for something that the medical community at large doesn't have an answer to. With all due respect to the member opposite, I can't answer that question right now.

What I can say is that, since the pandemic became a reality within the Yukon, we have worked with the chief medical officer of health and our partner governments to keep Yukoners safe. We have followed the advice of the medical officers, the experts of the territory, because that's what we want to do — to follow science, not politics, when it comes to keeping Yukoners safe. We'll continue to do that.

Tomorrow will be another day of updates with the chief medical officer of health and with me, and I would ask members opposite to pay attention to those weekly meetings and to help us spread the information from those meetings to the general public in their ridings as well. The best thing that we can do as legislators working together is to help spread the best, most up-to-date information on the vaccine schedules and the availability of those vaccines and the information from the chief medical officer of health.

Question re: Government of Yukon borrowing limit

Mr. Cathers: As we pointed out on October 2, 2018, the Premier said this to the Legislative Assembly: "I'll just say up front that we're not contemplating taking on any extra debt for our five-year capital plan..." But then, just nine days later, the Premier wrote the federal government and asked to have the territory's debt limit doubled so he could take on extra debt for their five-year capital plan. So, the Premier told the House one thing and then did the complete opposite just days later.

Can the Premier tell us what changed between October 2 when he said that he wasn't contemplating extra debt and October 11 when he wrote the federal government saying that he is contemplating extra debt and wanted them to double the debt limit?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Increasing the ability to borrow is different from borrowing, so nothing changed; there is no difference between those two.

Mr. Speaker, I will say this for the record — and we have answered this question ad nauseum at this point, from the member opposite. It is the same question; it is kind of lazy.

When the government took office, we did inherit debt from the Yukon Party. As of March 31, 2016, the outstanding balance was reported to be \$201.558 million of debt left over

from the Yukon Party. This is directly attributed to the time that the Yukon Party was in power. Our government has paid \$30.591 million to reduce the debt over the last four years. That was not mentioned in my previous discussions, so I want to add this information for the record. After paying that \$30.591 million of the inherited debt, there is still \$170.967 million outstanding from the \$201.558-million debt as of March 31, 2016.

Now, if we look at the total government debt — not debt limits, but debt — as of March 31, 2020, we see a total of \$228.4 million in outstanding debt. Of this, 75 percent is attributable to borrowing from the Yukon Party.

Mr. Cathers: We are holding the Premier to his own words in the Legislative Assembly, which are contradicted by a letter that he sent just nine days later. Let's get the timeline straight. On October 2, 2018, the Premier said this in the Legislative Assembly: "... we are not contemplating borrowing." Then, on October 11, just nine days later, he wrote to the Trudeau government and said this — quote: "... I would like to request that our borrowing limit is raised \$800 million."

So, in just nine days, the Premier went from "I don't want to borrow money" to "Yes, I want to borrow up to \$800 million", which is, Mr. Speaker, of course, doubling the debt limit.

Can the Premier tell us on what day between October 2 and October 11 that he made the decision that he would ask the federal government to double the debt limit?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yeah, I can imagine. We've sat here for four years and been chastised on our ability to handle the finances — again, working with a surplus budget and now there's a contingency this year with the opportunity for surplus pending the outcome. Again, there was \$201 million in debt when we arrived in 2016 and then of course we're now at \$228 million, so folks can do the math once again. But I will say that what comes to mind is one of the biggest liabilities that I had to deal with in my responsibility, again, was the member opposite who is asking the questions — the architect of a \$40-million loan to be paid back over two years, Mr. Speaker, was the plan — with no plan in place. I walked into the briefing with the Yukon Development Corporation and was quickly told — I said, "Where is the money to pay this back in two years?" There is not.

I've never — can you imagine sitting with your business partner and saying, "Sorry, I took a \$40-million loan out; we're going to pay it back in two years" and a year into it, sitting back with that person and saying "You know what? I actually don't have any way to pay this back."

The Member for Lake Laberge was the architect of that. Yukoners and taxpayers are now paying that back over the next 40 years. I can't wait to hear the next question.

Mr. Cathers: It's not surprising that the Premier is choosing to hide behind his minister instead of answering why he said one thing in the House and did the exact opposite just nine days later. I would remind the minister: It's pretty rich coming from a gentleman who spent \$13.6 million renting

diesel generators to criticize the previous government's record on energy.

Mr. Speaker, we're talking about the Premier's statements in this House which were very clear on October 2, 2018, and then it was just nine days later that he wrote a letter that completely contradicted his statements. It's very hard to believe that in just nine days the Premier completely changed his mind and decided that he did want to borrow money after denying it here in the Legislative Assembly.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about the Premier's letter with the Premier's signature on it. How can Yukoners trust the Premier if the Premier will not tell the truth in the Legislative Assembly?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The member opposite has breached section 19(g) of the Standing Orders by using unparliamentary language. He has accused the Premier of failing to tell the truth in this House and in other locations. I note that this is contrary to the parliamentary language as set out in section 19(g). It is, in fact, insulting and it is improper for him to use that kind of language in this Legislative Assembly.

I note, Mr. Speaker, that in addition to the Standing Order itself, the annotated Standing Order notes that the context of the comments must be looked at by the Speaker in making a ruling — the intention of the conduct by the member opposite must be looked at. As a result, I submit to you that those are both improper in this instance.

Lastly, I note that the annotation in the Standing Order indicates that there is a concept of whether or not disorder has been brought about by the comments that are unparliamentary. I note in my submission to you, Mr. Speaker, that just because the members on this side of the House sit politely and listen to such improper language, it should not affect the ruling that you might give that such language is, in fact, improper, unparliamentary, and should not be used and should be withdrawn in this instance.

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

Mr. Cathers: I don't believe that there is a point of order. I would hope that the minister's long recitation of parts of the Standing Order will not count against the time allowed for Question Period.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I likely could have dealt with this quite quickly because the final words that the Member for Lake Laberge uttered were really — and he likely knows this — directly in contravention of Standing Order 19(h), where he was —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: I could have dealt with this unassisted, thank you.

Saying "not telling the truth" has the mental element of uttering a deliberate falsehood, so the Member for Lake Laberge well knows that.

As far as the time, in my view, this was relatively straightforward. We will take 10 seconds off the clock.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: It is upheld, but it would have been a quick finding. I also will review Hansard to confirm what I believe I had heard, but I take all members' points that it became a bit muddled because of the contributions of members. I am virtually certain of what I heard, but I will review Hansard and return, as required.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, if it helps at all, I did press pause on my timer as we started into the Point of Order and I do have a timer of 12 minutes and 35 seconds for Question Period, if that is helpful.

Speaker: If you just have a moment, I will confer with the Clerks.

The Clerks will provide me guidance as to what the cut-off time is, but as I indicated, I estimate that it would have taken me approximately 10 seconds to make this determination.

Let us continue.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, you know, we just think that it is really important to correct the record, going back to 2001, \$201 million in place and now \$228 million. Shouts from across the way to answer the question — I think it was more accusations than questions.

When I look at my notes here — just for the good people of Lake Laberge — one thing I would add is that, if you want to talk about saying one thing and doing the other, today there was a motion tabled by the Member for Lake Laberge and then a fear tactic on a riparian zone from a recommendation — so, just to add, the Member for Lake Laberge scaring people about a 60-meter riparian zone. I think, again, that he forgets that, while he was in government, he — in his own riding — put in a 100-metre riparian zone. So, what we consistently get here is one action and it not lining up with the values that are being shouted.

Again, when we talk about debt, our biggest liability that we had to deal with was the \$40-million loan. He was the architect of it. He said that it would be paid back in two years. The CFO who was there at the time was the person who briefed me, and there was no plan to pay it back. That's the way things used to be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Early learning and childcare programs

Ms. White: The Premier has stated and budget documents show that \$25 million will be invested in early childhood education and childcare. The funding for this programming used to come from Health and Social Services, but now it's coming from the Education budget. Yet the Education budget is only going up by \$18 million, not \$25 million.

So, Mr. Speaker, the \$7 million question is: Where's the money coming from? Is the government cutting \$7 million from elsewhere in the Education budget?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can be laid at rest to know that \$25 million is being dedicated in this year's budget to early childhood, which includes the early childcare piece but also some work on pre-kindergarten as well as some amazing initiatives here. I don't recall making any cuts, but again, the two different ministers in Committee of the Whole will have an opportunity to speak in-depth about each one of their budgets.

I will talk with them as well to make sure that everything's copasetic, but yeah, I don't recall cuts to the Department of Education in order to fund the universal childcare. What we'll do is we'll take a look to confer, but there is \$25 million available for this initiative and we're very, very happy and proud of the work that the two departments have done together to make sure, as we come out of COVID and look toward the new normal, that part of that new normal is more supports for parents who are raising young children in the education system and in the daycare system as well.

Ms. White: I thank the Premier for that answer, but he didn't explain where the \$7-million difference was coming from, so Yukoners are left to wonder.

Last October, without any consultations with parents or education partners, this government moved more than 130 students away from individual education plans. As a result, many students lost their educational assistants and other protections under the *Education Act*. The move was denounced by the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, Yukon Learn, the Yukon Teachers' Association, Autism Yukon, and parents and caregivers, yet this government has refused to listen and reverse their decision.

Why did the government choose to cut supports to students who need it most, and when will the Yukon Liberal government reverse their decision to unilaterally move students off of individual education plans?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I disagree wholeheartedly with much of the information that is contained therein as a result of work that has been ongoing in relation to individual learning plans in the territory. The most important part of the situation at the moment for Yukoners to be aware of — and we have been working diligently to make this in fact the case — is that there is a review of special education initiatives with respect to determining how students, how children, how families are experiencing the current situation. We began this work back in 2018. It was indicated to the Auditor General at the time that the work needed to be looked at by the Auditor General, that our current situation needed to be reviewed by them and, in fact, was the case. As a result, the report that came out in June 2019 from the Auditor General indicated that, in fact, Yukon schools were not doing the best job that could be done in relation to supporting our students who have special and individual needs.

I look forward to continuing this discussion.

Ms. White: The minister can disagree all she wants, but the Yukon NDP stands with the Yukon First Nation Education

Directorate, Yukon Learn, the Yukon Teachers' Association, Autism Yukon, parents, caregivers, students, and teachers. So, the *A Path Forward* plan published last Friday doesn't include a commitment to returning grades 10 to 12 in Whitehorse to full-time, in-person learning. The minister will say that this is because of epidemiology, but grades 10 to 12 students outside of Whitehorse are in school full time. Why is that? Well, it is because communities have had appropriate resources, both the space and the staffing, to do it safely.

We know that mental health and education outcomes of grades 10 to 12 students in Whitehorse have taken a hit this year. By September of this year, it will be 18 months since the start of the pandemic. Mr. Speaker, why has the minister not the resources to make sure that everything is in place to return Whitehorse grades 10 to 12 students to full-time, in-person learning this coming September?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: On March 3, I met with representatives of the Yukon Teachers' Association, Autism Yukon, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, and Yukon First Nation Education Directorate. The four organizations met with the department, with me, deputy ministers, and senior officials. We had an excellent conversation regarding the feedback and ways that we can improve communication with school communities and collaboration on the issue of special and inclusive education.

I urge families who have experience with special and inclusive education supports and services that are provided through schools to participate in the current review that is happening. It is independent of the department. We are coming to the end of phase one. It is absolutely critical that we hear from the students and families who have these experiences, because we know that the issue does exist and has existed for many, many years and that the supports and services that are supplied to students may not be meeting their needs. We need to improve this. We need to improve these experiences for students and for families. We urge them to participate in this process.

We have had great feedback so far, and the work is continuing so that inclusive and special education — all learning types of plans — can actually achieve what a student needs.

Question re: Alcohol-related harm

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, 23 percent of Yukoners self-reported heavy drinking in the Yukon health status report in 2015. Our own chief medical officer of health, Dr. Brendan Hanley, the author of the above-mentioned report, has been sounding the alarm for years that Yukoners drink much more than the average Canadian. In the communities that I represent, we all personally live the struggle of illness, violence, and death caused by alcohol addiction, yet six years after this report, our territorial government has taken no action. This inaction has cost the health and lives of many people in my communities. This is not a political issue. This is a real-life struggle for the people I represent.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier of the Yukon understand the real and devastating impact of alcohol-related harm —

Speaker: Order, please. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. To answer his question very quickly: Yes, I do. I completely do agree. We have been having lots of conversations over the years, and even over the last few weeks here, about how it's really important that we grapple with not only the alcohol issues in our communities, but the opioid issues in our communities as well. So, to answer the members opposite's question, I absolutely do agree.

Mr. Hutton: The 2019 report, entitled *Strategies to Reduce Alcohol-Related Harms and Costs in Canada: A Comparison of Provincial Policies*, evaluated all provinces and territories for their implementation of the best current practices to reduce alcohol-related harm. The Yukon received an F grade, meaning that we scored below 40 percent.

Two years ago, this report set out proven evidence-based policy action that the Government of Yukon could take to reduce alcohol-related harm, yet our territorial government has taken no action.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier of the Yukon: Why has he refused to take action on the recommendations from this report?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm happy to rise today to speak to the report that the member opposite is referring to — the 2013 to 2017 report. In 2018, the report came out with specific recommendations.

What I would like to reflect on for a moment is that this Liberal government over the course of the last four years has built up mental wellness and substance use supports in rural Yukon communities from almost nothing — two support counsellors to over 22 counsellors. We have now four mental wellness hubs in our communities. We recognize that these rural hubs are supported by the Yukon First Nation communities. We are working with our rural Yukon communities. We are working with the communities to address substance use in our communities. We are working with our mental wellness counsellors. The three hubs have provided and offered substance use counselling, trauma counselling, and outreach services to a number of programs, which I would be happy to refer to — outpatient counselling services, rapid access counselling, early psychosis intervention, intensive treatment programs, day programming, and safe withdrawal. On top of that, Mr. Speaker, we have been working very, very closely with the First Nation communities on their land-based initiatives, which I'm happy to speak further about.

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the luxury of looking the other way while people in my community struggle and are hurt by alcohol addiction. This is a health issue, a community issue. This is our responsibility in this House. What will the Premier do to reduce alcohol-related harm in our communities? When will this government take action?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like, first off, to advise Yukoners and the communities of the member opposite's riding that we absolutely respect the communities. We have had significant input; in fact, we have had feedback stating and certainly acknowledging that there's more work to be done. We have incorporated and recognized the pressures in all of our communities.

What we have seen is problematic; what we have seen is traumatic. In four years, we have provided support to rural Yukon communities — significant resources that have not been there historically — two positions, two social workers, no psychologist, and no supports. This government supports mental health, addiction services, and has improved services for our territory — four years, foundational framework running across the territory — because we care. We care about Yukoners, and we will endeavour to continue that work.

We put in place resources with the First Nations to develop and design wellness initiatives, and we know for a fact that this is very effective. We know that there was a men's treatment facility program that was just concluded in Selkirk First Nation and a women's program that they are about to embark on. All of the communities are working toward a wellness plan. We are very much a partner in that process. I acknowledge that —

Speaker: Order, please. Just a quick notice: The new cut-off is 33.05, as advised by the Clerks.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

Mr. Istchenko: I will follow up on a question that I had asked yesterday.

Over a year ago, we asked the Liberal government to take action to protect the tourism sector through the pandemic. At that time, the Liberals said that it was business as usual for the tourism sector. Well, sadly, they acted very slowly to get this relief money out the door. First, it took them seven months to finally announce the tourism relief package.

My question today is — based on what we heard yesterday, the minister said that the Liberals have only delivered less than \$1 million of this relief funding. So, 12 months after we started asking questions, they managed to deliver 15 percent of the funding.

So, can the minister tell us today when the rest of that money will flow to Yukon tourism businesses?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the follow-up question from yesterday.

Our government acted very quickly when the pandemic happened a year ago and we put in place some of the most — well, I would say the best programs in Canada. Those programs are still running today. One of them was the Yukon business relief program. Businesses are still eligible for that. We also worked with Canada on the northern relief fund. More than \$6.5 million has been processed through that program to date. The tourism relief programs are supplementary to that. We are ensuring that businesses are maximizing those funds before they go into the supplementary fund, Mr. Speaker.

I went over the numbers yesterday of those two programs where we have administered funds. Again, it was just over \$569,000 from the accommodation fund. The non-accommodation fund has seen \$434,000. I'm happy to go into further details about other programs.

Mr. Istchenko: Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, when we went into a briefing on the department, both opposition parties asked — you know what? If we had this information, we wouldn't have to ask these questions.

A big reason behind this is because the Liberals have created large amounts of red tape and hoops for businesses to jump through to get access to this funding. They bounce you around from program to program, from department to department, and from government to government. Instead of this mess of red tape and bureaucracy, they should be focusing on supporting these businesses and making their lives easier.

So, will the Liberals agree to cut the red tape and just start supporting these businesses and start rolling this money out?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Our departments are working tirelessly, and so is the Yukon Tourism Industry Association, to support businesses. We've supported the Yukon tourism association to hire two navigators to ensure that businesses are actually maximizing all of the programs that are available to them.

I know that our departments are working very carefully with each and every business to ensure that they are maximizing what is available to them.

The member opposite has mentioned the briefing. I asked my department if there were detailed questions that came from the opposition around the specifics in the budget, and I was told that there were no questions, really.

Anyway, we're working hard with our business community to ensure that they are maximizing the programs. We've had other programs that businesses have accessed under the accommodation fund through the labour force market program that has seen tremendous benefit to those businesses.

Mr. Istchenko: Yesterday, when we asked the department, we were asking about the different programs that they had, how many accessed them, and what the dollars were out there. That is pretty specific, and we were told that we would be given a legislative return. I had asked if I could get it before I went to the general debate so I could ask and have some information on questions.

On February 22, the Tourism Industry Association wrote the minister asking her to give a clear answer to the industry on what they can expect for the tourism season this summer. They said that we need to know ASAP so that we can advise operators whether to cut loose, move to a new career, and repurpose infrastructure.

So, will the minister in this House today give a clear answer, or will she just ignore the tourism industry?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, our government absolutely values tourism in Yukon. We have invested more over the last four years than the previous had in fact over 14 years, because we actually planned when things were really good. We released the tourism development strategy, the first one in 18 years. That has helped to guide us through this.

We absolutely do have a plan, and we have worked with our partners. It is the tourism relief and recovery plan that has 19 actions in it. One of them is relief; the rest is recovery.

We are still having to provide relief programs to our businesses, and we hope to get back to — and we do have light at the end of the tunnel, as the Premier has said. Our vaccinations are going very well. We released *A Path Forward*, the next version of that. We are absolutely in step with our businesses to ensure that they survive. Mr. Speaker, I have

talked about this a lot of times. We must protect our infrastructure, our airlines, our hotels, our experiences.

We are still holding on to the goal of increasing tourism over the next 10 years and I look forward to working with our business community as we go forward.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, March 10, 2021. They are Motion No. 417, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South, and Motion No. 426, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

Speaker: Is there any further private members' business?

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 207: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 207, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, Ms. Frost.

Speaker: Minister of Health and Social Services, you have 22 minutes and 50 seconds.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I commence my debate on the budget, I would like to just reflect a moment on where we left off yesterday. We were speaking about the Yukon Housing Corporation and, of course, the significant investment — the private sector investment with Normandy Manor, an affordable supported independent living facility for seniors. It's significant to the Yukon in that we have an aging population. We have an innovative approach to address seniors housing and supports in Yukon.

All of our work to support people, young and old, falls under the guidance of *Putting People First* and the Yukon Liberal government's plan to dramatically improve health and wellness in our territory. The 76 recommendations in the final report of *Putting People First* represent a path forward that will be achieved through continued discussion, engagement, and involvement from all of our partners, including NGOs, allied health professionals, health care providers, physicians, communities, First Nation governments, and of course Yukoners. The best care and support that we can offer Yukoners comes from a system that is integrated and where care is collaborative and holistic.

This budget invests \$1.4 million to make medical travel easier and more affordable for Yukoners. We increased the medical travel subsidy from \$75 a day to \$150. We created a new \$75-a-day subsidy for escorts. We have expanded medical travel destinations and have created a new care coordinator and medical travel unit. This unit supports Yukoners from the

time they leave their community to the time they return. Health and Social Services typically processes more than 700 medical travel cases per month, and every one of these clients will benefit from these improvements.

We have improved access to vaccines by publicly funding the shingles, HPV, and COVID-19 vaccines.

We are working with indigenous partners to provide more culturally safe and respectful care, including providing mandatory cultural safety training for all HSS staff.

We are projecting more than a \$1-million savings this year by successfully reducing the costs of prescription drugs by reducing pharmaceutical markups to follow through on our commitment to bring supports to Yukoners where they reside. We have adopted a social pediatrics model with the help of three resident pediatricians, expanded ultrasound services to Yukon hospitals, and created positions for full-time nurse practitioners in Mayo and Carmacks.

We have brought on a second orthopaedic surgeon to decrease the need for visiting orthopaedic specialists. We have reduced ophthalmology wait times from 37 months to nine months and invested in IHealth, which will be one of the most modern health information systems in Canada. In this budget, you will find \$3 million to support this initiative.

We have connected Yukoners in need of a doctor with physicians through the find a doctor and find a family doctor program and supported Yukon health professionals to receive training from the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. We are putting in place regulations and standards for the practice of midwifery. We introduced universal coverage of the medication used for medical abortions to ensure that Yukoners have low-barrier options and more equal access to abortion services.

We worked with our partners to fully implement the sexualized assault response team in Whitehorse. We have budgeted \$1.5 million to work with the francophone community to review options for creating a bilingual health centre in Whitehorse that would be integrated into our existing health services. We created a departmental diagnostic and support clinic to provide both FASD assessment and diagnosis to adults and autism assessments and diagnoses for children and youth. We have reduced the number of children and youth who need to go out of the territory for autism assessments.

We have budgeted nearly \$2 million to improve front-line health care supports, including three additional community nurses and two new nurse practitioners in Yukon communities. Now more than ever, Yukoners need access to strong mental health supports. In the 2021-22 budget, there is \$21 million to support mental wellness and substance use services in our territory. We can acknowledge how hard this year has been on our collective mental health and well-being.

When COVID-19 hit, Yukon was well-positioned to respond after nearly three years of steady investments in mental health supports by this Yukon Liberal government. As such, four mental wellness hubs — substance use hubs in Dawson City, Carmacks, Haines Junction, and Watson Lake. These hubs offer a range of high quality, accessible, and consistent counselling services. A new agreement with the Canadian

Mental Health Association Yukon Division to provide counselling services in Whitehorse while expanding the scope of counselling services available in Yukon communities — we created a new delivery model expanding counselling services in Yukon through All Genders Yukon Society to provide services to transgender, two-spirited, and non-binary individuals and their partners.

We began providing counselling services at Whitehorse Correctional Centre. We increased resident psychiatric supports in Yukon through improved access to care. We hired a full-time cultural counselling coordinator with Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.

We introduced a rapid-access counselling program to reduce the time to connect to a counsellor to 72 hours at the wellness hubs. Critical crises intervention, which used to take months, can now be accessed and reached within a community within 24 hours. We have improved access to the specialized services in our communities. We have signed new agreements that allow this to happen.

We are providing an opioid treatment program with access to Suboxone and methadone in Whitehorse, which is expanding to Dawson City. We are increasing virtual and online support. We are coordinated, and we are looking at our substance use programs with the Jackson Lake program. We are looking at land-based initiatives with all of our communities and the wellness plans that we have worked so hard on over the last four years.

Mr. Speaker, after four years of investments and leadership from the Yukon Liberal government, the landscape of rural mental health and addiction support is unprecedented.

Let me pause for a second to say it again: This government supports mental health and addiction services, and we have improved services in our territory. With four years, a foundational framework up and running across the territory, we can now take an even further step to help Yukoners because we know how much further we need to go, but we have not paused for a second.

We are exploring a safe supply and way to provide take-home drug testing in communities. We are exploring a wet shelter. We are exploring ways to grow our land-based healing programs. In fact, in its report, *Putting People First*, the independent expert panel recommended that we work with First Nation governments and the federal government to fund a rural, on-the-land mental health and substance use treatment centre. This will be a part of the *Putting People First* implementation plan going forward and will be done by working with our partners.

Responding to addictions isn't one easy answer. It's trauma counselling, it's low-barrier housing, it's education and employment opportunities, and it is support from families, friends, and communities. It's a continuum of support that will span across a lifetime. Real change is possible, but it is not something that can be accomplished in isolation, and we are working hard with our partners to improve addiction services offered in our territory.

For anyone to stand up and say that nothing has been done is really a sad disservice to the progress made by this territory

— in particular, the services and the supports that Yukon rural communities are working so hard to address. It is a disservice to the hard-working staff at the four mental wellness hubs built in Yukon rural communities. It's a disservice to the communities that are working hard, working together, and collaborating to improve health and wellness for their citizens.

We made quick adjustments to mental wellness and substance use services during COVID-19 to respond to support Yukoners while following the guidelines of the chief medical officer of health, which includes supporting virtual, phone, or in-person visits, as appropriate and safe for clients and staff.

We co-developed a campaign with the Council of Yukon First Nations that addresses some of the indirect and unforeseen circumstances and consequences of children and families of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We made improvements at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter to ensure that it was a low-barrier facility used by all who require support. It has been an enormous amount of work to bring the care of the shelter to where it is, and this work continues.

We are providing a full-time social worker and outreach workers to support guests and help connect them with the resources that they need. Since 2019, there has been an EMS paramedic station at the facility every day. They have provided pre-hospital and emergency care for over 2,500 client visits. Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is also providing direct mental health services at the shelter.

We have also enhanced integration with the Referred Care Clinic through shared outreach nurses at the shelter to provide health services. We are supporting mobile fentanyl testing through the new outreach van operated by Blood Ties Four Directions. We are exploring what a safe supply program would look like in Yukon. We have promoted the use of take-home naloxone kits, which are available in every community and multiple locations throughout the Yukon.

Through the income support branch in 2019-20, we spent approximately \$10 million in supporting over 1,000 low-income Yukoners with housing and/or help in maintaining housing. Community outreach services has secured 118 permanent housing placements for individuals experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness since the creation of the program in 2018.

We provided financial support to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in emergency shelter in Dawson City. We are working to open an opioid treatment service clinic in Dawson City. We are investing over \$600,000 for nine FTEs at the Referred Care Clinic to provide integrated multiple supports for individuals with mental health and addiction challenges.

On-the-land treatment options are also a priority and have been for a number of years. We will continue to invest in the Jackson Lake healing camp for \$400,000. We will continue to coordinate our substance use treatment programs at the Jackson Lake healing program and through our other land-based initiatives across Yukon. We have requested and are providing them with clinical supports such as clinical counsellors, mental wellness support counsellors, mental wellness support nursing staff, and occasionally the opioid overdose prevention

coordinator. HSS routinely incorporates land-based healing components into its youth programming and intensive treatment programs through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.

In its report, *Putting People First*, the independent expert panel recommended that we work with First Nation governments and the federal government, and we will continue to do that on substance use treatment options. This will be a part of the implementation plan going forward, and it will be done in collaboration with our partners.

A driving force behind the *Putting People First* report is focusing on preventing harm rather than dealing with illness. To support this principle, we have become the first jurisdiction in Canada to provide coverage for constant glucose monitoring for all Yukoners with type 1 diabetes. We regulated vaping, and we are fully covering the shingles vaccine — SHINGRIX — for Yukoners between the ages of 65 and 70 and have worked with pharmacists to deliver this service. We have fully covered the costs of prep medication for individuals at risk of contracting HIV. We created community health nurse mobile positions specifically dedicated to health promotion, disease prevention, and wellness activities in Haines Junction and Mayo.

A major item in this budget is our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this budget, there is \$39.7 million for the public health response to the pandemic as we continue to do all we can to ensure that Yukon maintains its strong position against the virus. This past year is one that will be remembered by all Canadians and by all Yukoners. Keeping Yukoners safe has been our government's top priority. We have done a great job of listening to the science and doing all we can to keep our case counts low and Yukoners safe. We are winning this battle, and we are grateful for the effort that everyone has made and we continue to make.

In response to COVID-19, I am proud of the variety of financial supports offered to Yukoners, such as COVID-19 relief funding, which helped more than 195 families in our territory. We established the Health Emergency Operations Centre to coordinate and lead the government as the territory responded to the pandemic.

We continue to work closely with the chief medical officer of health, Environmental Health, and the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit to ensure that we have appropriate guidelines in place as we adjust to our new normal. The COVID testing centre was set up to provide a central location to test Yukoners for COVID-19 and other influenza-like symptoms. We established a self-isolation facility at the High Country Inn to provide individuals with an alternative place to self-isolate for 14 days.

Through the dedication and hard work of all our front-line health and social support workers — from doctors and nurses to social workers to continuing care workers to personal support workers to the custodial and cleaning staff who supported our chief medical officer of health — we have not only protected Yukon but have continued to offer the services and supports that our citizens rely upon.

Our territory is in a good position today due to the ongoing work of all Yukoners. My deepest thank you to all citizens who have followed our public health measures and adapted their business practices and changed their habits as required. Yukon should be proud of all of your work to keep us safe.

As the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, my mandate is clear. I'm guided by the housing action plan and the Safe at Home plan. With a steady and growing demand for housing in Yukon, the work has been cut out for us, and we have applied ourselves in the last four years to address the pressures.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the fantastic work of the Housing Corporation. It is only through continuous effort and perseverance of the team that our government is steadily improving the housing situation in Yukon. We all know that housing is the single largest expense of a Canadian household. Housing is a source of concern and anxiety for far too many, both in the Yukon and across the country.

Our work has been putting affordable housing at the forefront of our activities and emphasizing that it is essential to the health and well-being of Yukoners. This is a value that I am proud to cherish. I promoted a robust, cooperative relationship between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Housing Corporation, which is paramount to a person-centred approach that helps Yukoners.

In the budget that has been presented, we have the figures that embody these investments in Yukoners across the housing continuum. These investments showcase a transformation of the social housing landscape in Yukon. We are working hard to provide solutions across the housing continuum and improve the community housing outcomes for all Yukoners. Housing needs vary widely. There is no quick fix, nor is there a perfect solution. That is why our government is working hard and refining the solutions for Yukoners.

I want to take this time to highlight some of these items as reflected in this budget. These include supportive housing, energy retrofits, subsidized community housing, and rental subsidy programs.

First let's talk about the Canada-Yukon housing benefit for a moment. This direct, two-house rent subsidy program was co-designed with the federal government to combat inflation and reduce stigma for Yukoners who have trouble affording rent. Launched in November 2020, the Canada-Yukon housing benefit is currently directly supporting over 170 households, including seniors and non-seniors, families, and individuals in the private rental market. This totals about \$750,000 in this fiscal budget.

I would like to also showcase our housing initiative fund. By working in partnership with other governments and the public sector, more than 350 affordable housing units are in various stages of completion across the Yukon. It is important to note that this figure does not include the most recent fourth intake of this fantastic and versatile fund. With the \$3.6 million budgeted for this fund, even more brave and innovative housing partnerships will be created and ultimately result in even more units added to the housing market in our territory.

All Yukoners deserve to be met where they are when it comes to social supports. To better meet the needs of Yukoners, we have opened the first Housing First residence north of 60 to tackle homelessness — a 16-unit facility. We are investing in new housing projects in Watson Lake to the cost of \$1.6 million. We are seeing a growth in housing initiatives across the housing spectrum, and we are certainly looking toward ensuring that we provide all the supports that are needed across the Yukon.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, there are further resources allocated in the budget to address other pressures to our rapid housing initiative through the recent announcement on the northern carve-out. I want to thank the members of this Liberal caucus for their collaboration and hard work and, of course, the departments that I am responsible for. Thank you. Mahsi' cho for doing an exceptional job for Yukoners. Mahsi'.

Mr. Hassard: It's a pleasure to rise today to respond to the 2021-22 budget.

I would like to begin today by again thanking my constituents of the amazing riding of Pelly-Nisutlin for their continued support over the last several years and, of course, as well during these strange and uncertain times that we've been going through.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to give a huge thank you to my family for their continued support and understanding.

A lot has happened during the 34th Sitting of the Legislature. While all of our seating arrangements are a lot different thanks to the pandemic and the need for social-distancing requirements, et cetera, some of us have even seen our seats flip all the way over to the other side of the Legislature. With all of these changes and things that have happened during this Sitting of the Legislature, the one constant has been that the Liberal government remains unable to make decisions, unable to take action, and certainly unable to consult and listen.

On that topic, I would like to take a few moments to first speak about the First Nation procurement policy, which as you are well aware, Mr. Speaker, has received a lot of attention over the past few weeks. Two years ago or thereabouts, the Minister of Highways and Public Works came to the Legislature and talked about a new procurement policy, but whenever the opposition asked questions about that new policy, unfortunately, there was total radio silence. Of course, again unfortunately, that has been a bit of a constant with this minister. There is a complete lack of understanding or mishandling of his files. As I mentioned, the Liberals, and this minister in particular, have been very bad at consultation with industry, so while the minister originally claimed that he had consulted with industry on this policy, it was later revealed that this was not the case at all.

Everyone in the contracting world agrees with the principles of the policy and with moving forward and implementing the economic provisions under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, but the best way to ensure that a policy is successful is to actually involve the people in the consultation.

We want this policy to be successful. We want it to be implemented so that we can increase First Nation involvement in the economy, but we want the government to consult and work with all Yukoners, so it is disappointing that the government chose the path of divisiveness rather than a path of collaboration and ultimately success. This approach of inaction has unfortunately caused a number of problems across the territory.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Hassard: You can't hear me?

Sorry, I will try to speak up. I don't want you to miss any of this, John. It is very enlightening information.

So, if I could, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about Ross River. You know, there was an example of problems. During the 2016 election, the Liberals promised that all communities matter and they made grand, lofty promises for what they would do for rural Yukon, but since that time, we have seen inaction and inattention from this government. Over four years ago, the Minister of Highways and Public Works stood in this Legislature and promised that he was paving the Campbell Highway from Faro to Ross River. Now we know that this certainly hasn't happened. As a matter of fact, on the highway from Faro to Ross River, there has been zero roadwork done — zero improvement made to that stretch of road.

Now, interestingly, the government has touted their five-year capital — what I call the “five-year capital concept” — and yet the past two years have shown proposed Campbell Highway work that has not come to fruition. It has been in there for years and, despite continued promises from Liberal ministers that they would pave this road — nothing. There goes the idea of certainty that this capital concept was supposed to provide — not just for contractors, but for the communities as well.

I guess it kind of goes to the same note that there goes the slogan that the Liberals ran on — that “All communities matter”. On that note of all communities matter — or lack of matter — I would just like to read a letter from the Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce to the Premier, dated January 19 of this year. In that letter, the Watson Lake chamber wrote to the Hon. Premier: “The Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce ... is writing to you today to express our dissatisfaction with the Yukon government's consultation and communication practices.” That is a direct quote from the letter.

Further in the letter — I will quote again: “There have been limited community meetings from this government, even prior to the circumstances that have arisen from the Covid-19 pandemic. As an organization, we have reached out to several ministers to invite them to meet with us to discuss topics such as the South-East Yukon Forestry Management Plan, economic development, and the tourism industry, to name a few. To date, there have been no responses received and no meeting attempts have been made.”

Further on in the letter, Mr. Acting Speaker, I will quote again: “It is hard to trust a government that claims open communication is happening, when we know first hand that it is not. We are urging the Yukon government to step up to the plate, and start having conversations with all Yukoners. Online

surveys and closed-door meetings with municipal and First Nation governments are not enough. If we want to truly move in a direction of collaboration and partnerships, we need to start with an honest and open territorial government that is making sure that all Yukoners are informed, which can be easily achieved by having real conversations.”

These sections really paint a picture of a government that has treated Watson Lake and other communities in rural Yukon as an afterthought, a government that hasn't earned the trust of Yukoners, and a government that continues to share inaccurate information about what they are doing and when they are doing it. This is important because, in the upcoming election, Yukoners are going to have to choose who they actually trust to lead the territory.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if I could go back to the five-year capital concept, I would be remiss to not mention the disappearance of funding for the resource access roads, as well as the rural road upgrade programs. These two in particular are great funding pots for great projects. As well — and maybe just as importantly or more importantly — they are opportunities for our smaller contractors here in the Yukon to have the opportunity to bid and be successful in getting work for the territorial government.

I will go back to Ross River if I can and maybe talk about the Ross River School for a few minutes. We have heard mixed messages from this government. We have heard everything from that they are paving the parking lot to they are building a new school. I can guarantee you, Mr. Acting Speaker, that when I was there two weeks ago, there was no talk of a new school and there is no talk of paving the parking lot.

They are just more empty promises. It's unfortunate for the community to have the government come in and make all of these promises and then not deliver on any of them. We've seen a steady decline in the money allotted to this project and the five-year capital concept. Every time there is a new version of it printed, the money has gone from \$2 million to \$5 million a year to \$1 million to \$3 million a year to \$500,000 — it just seems to decrease continuously every time it's rewritten.

Another very important piece of infrastructure for Ross River that this government has seriously neglected is the swimming pool. Two years ago, volunteers filled the pool and had it ready to go. The government came along and said, “No, you can't do that. It's not suitable to be used, but we're going to fix it.” Unfortunately, there is still no pool for the people in Ross River.

We'll move down the road a few miles, down to a place best known as Yukon's best kept secret, which most of us know is Faro. Again, we see the results of this government's inability to — to quote one of the government ministers, “Get 'er done”.

Now, there's a fire hall and a town shop getting tendered this year — we're happy to see that — but not until after years of delay under this government.

A new RCMP detachment for the community of Faro — you know, it has been lost in this quagmire of political red tape since they got elected. But one thing that Faro did get was seven shiny, new, dirty-diesel-burning generators, but they didn't ask for those, Mr. Acting Speaker. They just showed up, and it's

certainly to the displeasure of several community members, but unfortunately, it's the way of this government, it appears.

So, now, thanks to the decision by this Liberal government, we're burning more diesel. We're producing less green energy, and now we even have to burn extra fuel because we have to haul for the generators an extra 400 kilometres. So, it just doesn't appear to make a lot of sense to be burning even more fossil fuels when the idea was to try to reduce that number. But I guess that's Liberal logic.

I'll move on now to my hometown of Teslin. So, we travel down the Alaska Highway to the shores of beautiful Teslin Lake and, of course, Nisutlin Bay. For the past four and half years, we've heard from this government about a new way of doing business, but unfortunately, that new way of doing business still hasn't produced a tender for the replacement of the Nisutlin bridge. The Teslin Tlingit Council have done an amazing job. They've taken the unprecedented step of building a biomass system to heat many of their own buildings. They even have one system set up in a subdivision to heat multiple buildings and it really is a great story of progress. I know the Minister of Economic Development has talked a lot about this project and how impressed the government is on what the community has been able to do.

Interestingly, the Teslin Tlingit Council even went so far as to hook up the Teslin school into one of their biomass systems. Unfortunately, it has been over two years since the system was hooked up and ready to go. Yet when I wrote a letter to the Minister of Highways and Public Works this spring asking why this system was not being utilized, the response was that it wasn't ready to be turned on. This unfortunately once again shows his lack of understanding for his own file because, like I said, it has been ready for two years. It is just the fact that the government can't negotiate a real agreement with the Teslin Tlingit Council for paying for that heat. Again, we see the government continue to burn diesel fuel, fossil fuels to heat the Teslin School, when there is absolutely no need for it. The infrastructure is there; it is in place, hooked up, and ready to go. It is just a matter of this government signing the paper and making it happen. So, it really is unfortunate, but it is just another example of this Liberal government talking a good game but clearly not being able to deliver.

I think that the final piece I wanted to touch on is the lack of plan or vision in this year's budget for a path forward to be reopening our territory. You know, instead of an actual plan, we have gotten more platitudes, no timelines — not even explanations as to how the government plans to make decisions moving forward. Unfortunately, this has only served to create more uncertainty for the territory, for families and businesses here in the territory. It is really unfortunate because this is a time when people and businesses really need the government to stand up and provide some certainty and some clarity on where we're going and what they can expect in the near future, as well as the long-term future. It is unfortunate that the government seems to have taken the attitude that it is not such a big deal because we are still collecting our paycheques every other Wednesday, but unfortunately, these businesses have not seen

a paycheque for several months and they need to know when they are going to see another one.

Like I said, this unfortunately and sadly has become a trademark for this government. You know, lots of talk but very little action. I think that more and more Yukoners have become disillusioned with the Liberals and the government as a result.

With that, I certainly hope that the government is listening to all of us over here in opposition as we make our pleas, and we certainly hope that they pull their heads out of the sand and actually take some advice from the words that we're saying and hopefully provide some of that clarity and certainty to Yukoners as we move forward through these strange and unusual times. With that, thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Ms. Van Bibber: First and foremost, I thank all the constituents from the riding of Porter Creek North. Knowing that I have been able to assist many with their issues has made me realize that, yes, I can make a difference here. Most often, the work we do behind the scenes doesn't make headlines. But the ability to assist people with everyday problems and worries has been pretty good.

To my husband, Pat, and all my family, I would like to thank them for their support and care during my time as MLA as well.

The problems that have arisen over the past few years that I have been in office are too many to list here. But specific to my riding, the amount of money spent on the aging-out home for eight teenagers is amazing. The total cost from purchase to renovating, retrofitting, and outfitting these very high-end apartments is still unknown. The problem was not the concept or the actual helping of teenagers who had no other home to go to or the "not in my backyard" that some residents are accused of, but the cost that is associated with this over-the-top facility, and it is still being discussed.

The lack of turning lanes from the Alaska Highway into Porter Creek were asked for by me many times in the Legislative Assembly and they were ignored. The crosswalks in the same area have gone ignored by this government for four and a half years. With broken crosswalk signage, unlit and uncontrolled, we have seen many pedestrians try to scoot across the highway in recent years, unnoticed by highway drivers.

In late December 2020, a call was put out for input and comments on the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board's website, along with the outline of a proposed project for Alaska Highway upgrades through Porter Creek. This was on changes to the whole highway from the top of Rabbit's Foot Canyon to Azure Road with frontage changes, service and access roads, changes in installation, water and sewer upgrades, and much more. Luckily, I was able to work with some very well aware citizens and thanked them for being the vocal opposition to the lack of public consultation. The project was postponed, giving time for the government to consult affected residents and business owners. I hope this consultation will begin soon. Again, there were no plans and no forethought. The consultation that is always bragged about by this government just did not happen and there was no resident who was talked to.

There will always be pros and cons to every project. I also realize that you can't please everyone at all times. But one must give proper information and communicate what is happening if it will affect someone's property, their property value, their business, or their quality of life.

I attend school council meetings in Porter Creek schools and so admire those people who volunteer to put their names forward to sit on councils. The issues that they face and make decisions on are not trivial issues and they have a lot on their plates, so kudos to the school councils and their support staff.

Urban and rural issues are brought up many times and at times they're at odds. We all need structure and social licence to be able to live together in harmony. When this breaks down, it pits groups or areas against each other, and it doesn't need to be so blatant at all times. We need the openness and transparency this government promised when they were elected. Yukoners are resilient and we can be agreeable for the most part, but we long for the days when the government didn't alter our lives so drastically and so quickly.

As our population grows, we have to make allowances for certain issues, and it would be healthy for all if we could access the simpler lifestyle that we all crave. We need to make life easier, not harder. We need to cut red tape for businesses to carry on serving Yukoners. We are drowning in legalese.

I have taken the time to go through the budget. Within the budget, there are so many broad statements and vague promises that it's hard to know where to begin. There are line items that are listed as large numbers with a title. We have department briefings, and thank you to the great department staff and the deputy ministers who ensure that we ask them questions, and they are forthcoming with the answers. Why the budget document could not break down the items so that everyone can see where the dollars are allocated immediately instead of pulling teeth to get the amounts — well, it's beyond me.

It seems that the floating and ever-changing five-year concept that is prepared is deliberately written to confuse the public. Many of the community highlights in the five-year capital concept are just repeats of some of the last ones, such as the Burwash Landing school and Ross River School stabilization. For this fiscal year, last year in the plan, it was \$3.4 million. This year in the plan, it's \$2.3 million. The Challenge Cornerstone, listed at \$2.3 million — and now in this fiscal year, it is \$1.2 million. These are items that are not new but re-announcements, if you will, with either the same or new dollar amounts allocated to them. One is never sure what is what.

COVID has added a lot of uncertainty to our lives. It appears that it will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. We appreciate all citizens who are being responsible and caring for each other during these months — all the front-line workers in stores and restaurants and the cleaners. Of course, there are the vaccination teams that we tributed in the House yesterday.

We are facing another crisis, and we have been for a number of years. This crisis is related to opioids and is taking the lives of Yukoners. The issue is not being handled but rather is growing in momentum. We know that it's not limited to

Yukon, but it is impacting our communities, our families, and our friends.

I urge everyone to check in on your friends and loved ones. Mental wellness checks can make a difference to many. Reach out. Even a smile or reassurance that all is not lost will go miles for someone. A hello or just hearing someone acknowledge you is good. You are not invisible — maybe not recognizable due to masks, but you're not invisible.

I would also like to send out a special thank you and kudos to our incredible office team. Ted Laking, Robin Boss, Tim Kucharuk, and also Madi Pearson, who left us this past summer to move abroad. Without their hard work, political knowledge, and sense of humor, some of us would be very lost. They make it enjoyable to be part of this journey.

To all Yukoners, please make sure that you reach out, should you have concerns or issues that will affect you. To my riding in Porter Creek North, I will continue to work on your behalf, this being an election year. Along with leader Currie Dixon and our team, I look forward to continuing to be your voice and your MLA.

Mr. Istchenko: I am proud to stand as the MLA for Kluane to respond to the 2020-21 budget. The riding of Kluane is one of the largest in the Yukon, from the Takhini River bridge on the Alaska Highway to the Canadian border at Beaver Creek and south down the Haines Road to the Canadian border at Pleasant Camp. I am proud to say that these roads were a war effort to help protect our big country of Canada. Every time I drive and pass one of those signs dedicated to veterans, which my colleague from the riding of Copperbelt South and I dedicated during my first term in government, I am so thankful for those who contributed so many years ago to building that highway, but also thankful for those who came after, building our communities, and those who worked on settling land claims and who worked on making sure that there were community activities to keep people happy and keep our communities safe.

Unfortunately, I can't help but have a feeling of disappointment in the lack of attention, action, and interest that the Liberal government has paid to our riding but, even more, to the concerns of individual constituents who have raised issues over the last many years.

The Member for Pelly Nisutlin just said that their commitment was — they said that all communities matter. It doesn't seem that way. I can tell you that because this side of the House is growing.

Our riding is mainly dependent on tourism and, during a pandemic, it is so important to find ways to support the industry in rural Yukon. Press announcement with lots of dollars but no real plan — those are just hollow words.

We need action when it comes to Shakwak funding. The north Alaska Highway is affected greatly by permafrost, and when the funding dried up, it was time for action. Instead of ignoring it, this government had time to work on renegotiating the agreement or at least allocating funds to work on sections of the road that needed attention. Nothing done on our roads up there sure shows it — no funding. They have an O&M budget that they work hard to — but it needs extra funding. The

residents of Beaver Creek have told me that they were disappointed when the Minister of Highways and Public Works thought that they were constituents of Alaska — comments in this House — disappointing.

One other thing about the residents of Beaver Creek: They actually need a gym for their school kids and a pool in the summer. These are things that they once had. I brought these concerns forward — actually, I proposed solutions, but nothing happened.

Year after year, the government announces work on the design or the building of a school in Burwash Landing — something the previous government negotiated during my time in government. Well, it has been five years. To this date, there have been no public meetings to discuss planning for the new school, housing for teachers, or what will happen to the old school. I wrote a letter to the minister about that. Now I'm hearing that there was a tender out, and hopefully they actually talk when they have the community meeting with residents — but until now, no action.

In this budget, the five year — and this is what I like to call it: “The five-year capital, fluid, always changing, never solid concept”. It doesn't show any construction of that school in 2022. We're in an election year — and still no school. You know, right in the budget from 2016 on, there was always money in the budget for planning for that school.

I wonder about — and I listened in debate today in Question Period. One of the projects that the previous government started — there was \$1 million put toward clean energy to help in cutting diesel generator emissions in Burwash and Destruction Bay. I was at the sod-turning with the minister and the Member of Parliament. There's still nothing happening. I understand that this is where ministers are responsible for these files. They need to work with the First Nations or work with the proponent to make things happen.

All in this House will remember the pressures from constituents, letters from First Nations, and many letters from me on the Destruction Bay marina. You might remember that. It made the media more than once. I was glad that finally something was done, but the job is not finished. There's still more to be done. Now I'm happy actually to see the \$600,000 allocated for a new marina in Burwash Landing, which is great and I hope the drop in water levels will permit it, but they have to finish things. There still needs to be work on the Destruction Bay marina.

When I brought up the issue of the planned street upgrades in Destruction Bay, I had issues because they weren't using local equipment. So, what happened? The minister halted the project. As of today, nothing has been done. Here we are in March 2021 — and this is something that's super disappointing — and the tender for the water and sewer upgrades for Haines Junction — and I've been to two public meetings and pressure from me as the MLA. I got a hold of residents — “You need to come and listen so we don't have the issues that we had on our last tender.” Well, guess what. The tender is not out. It takes time to tender, award a successful contract, and then they need to order supplies, which can take months during a pandemic.

It's starting to look like we'll miss another year of construction, putting us three years behind under this Liberal government.

Now we'll be two years during a pandemic when the business community could have used the business and our community is empty in the summertime. You know, the government should be tendering seasonally dependent contracts earlier, and they should have local content in these contracts that gives some guarantee to our local businesses, especially during the pandemic when the local business community has been devastated.

Another thing that was brought to my attention — and it's a good thing that there were food programs — federal food programs and food programs that came out, which the ministers knew about. But we have local stores in our communities that sell those groceries. You know, they're small stores, but I'm sure that if we had engaged them and had a conversation with them, they would have been able to provide some of that food and create some much-needed jobs and revenue.

One of the other big things that I hear about from my constituents is about land availability. I think we hear about it from across the Yukon. There has been local area planning going on from Takhini River bridge to Haines Junction on that portion of the Alaska Highway that started back with the previous government. For some reason, it stalled and has gone nowhere under this Liberal government.

I was so happy to see, when it comes to lot development — the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations worked hard. The previous government started the land titles process so that they could actually get out there and do that. I am looking forward to — construction is already underway — seeing those lots come out. In order to grow, we need affordable land available of all types. This is what we need. We need residential, country residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial. It needs to be affordable; that is the key thing. There needs to be options and affordable opportunities, especially for our youth. I am hearing this a lot. As they look to move into home ownership, they need to have an opportunity.

This came up in the House today too from one of the MLAs responding to the budget. I have seen tenders go out for upgrading aging infrastructure, like our heating systems. We have so much potential in our riding for biomass, but instead, this aging infrastructure is being replaced with a propane system. The St. Elias Community School and our liquor store got a propane system. We have biomass. The government said that they would support the biomass industry, but they need to be doing it. They need to make sure that the wood permitting system is streamlined and more efficient. One of the largest wood providers — I was talking to him the other day — is basically out of wood. He is waiting for permits. The red tape goes on.

In Haines Junction, our pool closed because of structural issues, among other things. I have been hearing from residents for the last couple of years here, and there was an online petition with over 800 signatures asking for the mayor and council to look at a new one and other opportunities. I would like to see this happen. The government needs to sit down with the residents and municipality and have public meetings. They are

the ones with the budget. With the budget that we see — the 2021 budget — we don't see anything in there. They need to sit down and plan, cost stuff out to see how to undertake a project of this magnitude, but they need to meet and be out there so that they can be heard.

Currently — and I brought this up in a motion today — our seniors advocate and our seniors society are still not back in the existing facility after being forced out for repairs. The Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation said that they would be back, and that was late November. I'm disappointed, to say the least, but no more than those seniors who have no place to gather and work with their advocate on these important issues, especially during the pandemic.

I might add that — and I'll throw this out again like I do every year: Will the minister go meet with the St. Elias seniors? It's probably a no; she hasn't yet.

I want to talk a little bit about dumps because they are important in my riding and many others because we have many of them. A number of concerns were raised around our local dumps and transfer stations. Tipping fees have been implemented on rural users to complement — you know, of course, there are already higher taxes. You know what? The Minister of Community Services talked about shutting down the Silver City dump. So, for the Minister of Community Services, he received much opposition from the locals. I'm not sure if he has received letters from the First Nation and the local renewable resources council. This government campaigned on a promise that Yukoners would be heard. Lately, all we've seen is little more than Yukoners being told — told things like — when the minister is at a meeting, apparently — “We have a surplus of electricity, so just put your garbage in a deep freeze.” Yeah, that works when you're on solar panels and a generator at Silver City. It doesn't work. You create issues when it comes to human-wildlife conflict. That dump needs to stay there.

The Champagne dump — there were issues with the Champagne dump. I raised these issues to the minister and am thankful for a local who stepped up to the plate to solve these issues. So, the tender just was awarded and that local who — the residents of Mendenhall and the residents of Champagne were so happy that he had taken over because he's local and he understands people's schedules and times. The schedules were changed through the working with the communities of Mendenhall and Champagne. They changed the schedule for the dump. Now the contract came out; I read through the contract. There wasn't much in there for local content or anything that would give locals a benefit. So, now, the low bidder is not from that area, so I've already put the residents there on record that, if you have issues, let me know, because — you know what? We'll see. We hope no issues happen.

So, the decrease in the budget for essential services in rural programs definitely isn't what we needed. They closed the highway camp for a summer. Not supplying our camps with appropriate equipment leads to extended road closures affecting our public safety. We've seen our roads were closed for record times, especially during the pandemic, when the travelling public has 24 hours to go through and they're being hounded because they're an American who has to go from point

A to point B, but they can't get out, and they're being told to go back. We're thankful that the minister corrected that when we had that conversation. I asked him and it was brought to his attention that there was an issue. He said, “As long as you're staying there and not interacting with the community, it's good.” But that stuff doesn't need to happen.

My fellow colleague from Pelly-Nisutlin brought this up: No dollars for rural roads or the resource road upgrade program. That's a sign of how out of touch the government is. My riding is one of the largest ridings. The people at Champagne — the association wanted to put in for some money to do a road upgrade so maybe they could get on the rural road maintenance program. I have people who live closer to Whitehorse and people between Beaver Creek throughout there that see this as an opportunity to grow. You know what it's about? It's about public safety. It's about meeting standards so that our school buses may be able to travel down there, so that RCMP can get down there, ambulances, or any services — maybe a fuel truck or somebody who needs to provide something. There are miners in the community; we have a pretty active region of miners there. In the Gladstone area — up in the Twelfth of July Creek and Fourth of July Creek, that road in there would have been a great opportunity to apply for the resource road upgrade program, but it dried up.

Takhini and Mendenhall needed turning lanes and highway brushing. The government did some major road construction that happened for the better portion of the summer. I'm sure the minister got tired of me asking about cracked windshields. Like I said, they did major construction and we needed turning lanes at Takhini and Mendenhall, but that didn't happen. The roughest portion of the road where you turn off to Takhini — between there and the Takhini River bridge, where the two roughest parts are — they just didn't do anything. So out of touch and not listening, and the minister not paying attention to his budget and what his department is doing.

When we speak of clean energy and projects — that's why it was important for me to work with Kluane First Nation at the very beginning on their wind project. I sure hope to see that through to fruition. But we need to work with the First Nations and the business community to acquire investment in major clean energy projects here in the Yukon.

I think we have heard enough of this, but it has to be repeated because people are asking me this. I said, “Well, their only solution” — there are some long-term solutions, but their only solution right now — and the Energy Corporation has said is — is for the next 10 years to rent more dirty diesels — which is not affordable or sustainable, especially as this territory grows. As a result of that, our power rates continue to rise higher and higher, year after year. It is not sustainable; it is just hurting Yukoners.

I just want to talk a little bit about fish and wildlife. The importance of working and respecting our renewable resources councils, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and the many organizations as they work through their mandates — they need increased funding to do their work rather than funding cuts — some of the organizations — and the minister actually needs to meet with them. The Premier should meet

with them, too — I think he promised. They need to work together for the sustainability of our fish and wildlife populations.

As we continue on navigating the effects of this pandemic, I would like to close by saying that we need our government to be working on behalf of all Yukoners and all Yukon business owners. Businesses need support now. They need less red tape and we need the private sector to lead the charge when it comes to economic recovery.

So, in closing, I would like to thank my family, my friends, and of course my constituents for the love and guidance that they provide to me as their MLA. It has been a very tough year, and I put “love” in there because it has been so difficult to meet. We have had funerals. I just lost a very important person in my life not even a week ago, and to see a heart on a Facebook post, knowing that person would have given you a hug if you had the opportunity to see them — to see the Dakwakada drummers, the dancers drumming someone through town on their way to Burwash — someone who has passed. I have to thank the constituents for finding ways to celebrate someone’s life, mourn someone’s life, to get through this. You know they have to travel to Whitehorse for supplies and they have to travel for appointments and still have to try to live our life. It is so important, now that we have been vaccinated — most of us have — and hopefully we start to open up sooner rather than later. It has been hard for me. I am a guy who likes to get out and see and talk to people and that needs to happen.

Thank you for your time in this House today.

Mr. Gallina: I would like to take this opportunity to thank the constituents of Porter Creek Centre for their support of me in the past four and a half years, in working with me as we address community issues and we debate challenges and talk ideas about ways we can have a better community and live together. We have all been challenged over the past year with the pandemic that has rocked the world. It has been an honour to represent the constituents of Porter Creek Centre. They have been on a journey with me and I have been on one with them, but it has changed my life for sure. It is eye-opening being a part of a territorial government, working with your colleagues to address issues that are far-reaching and touch everyone in this territory in one way or another, making decisions on behalf of all Yukoners.

I am thankful that I have the support from my family to be able to do this job to the best of my ability. I thank my wife, my father, and my children who have grown with me as I have become a community leader in many ways. I thank them for that.

For many Yukoners, this budget does come at a time of uncertainty, but this year’s budget does make life more affordable and it builds on our progress. I am excited to keep the good work going. While members opposite speak of inaction — that we are unable to consider the opinions of Yukoners or that we are unable to deliver — I am going to take some time and speak about what this government is doing and how this government is moving forward with a solid budget that addresses many aspects of life here in the territory.

I’m going to talk about collaboration. I’m going to talk about partnerships. I’m going to talk about projects that are done and that are getting done. I’m going to talk about success, and I’m going to do that today here in this speech.

During uncertain times, you want to be confident that your government is working with you. Over the past 12 months, we’ve seen how this pandemic has reshaped our nation and our territory. We have seen first-hand what meaningful support looks like, and we’ve witnessed, from afar, tragedies unfold due to a lack of meaningful support.

A new standard has been set in our territory. The proverbial shoes that this government stepped into in 2016 have been recrafted into boots, and Yukon is poised for a swift and resilient recovery from this global pandemic.

For many Canadians, COVID-19 has affected everyday life like never before. It certainly affected my life. My father has had medical procedures delayed and rescheduled. Some have been cancelled, like for many Yukoners. My children have adjusted to new activity schedules, to new measures in being safe and understanding space from their friends that they had never experienced before, and to new schedules at school.

Mr. Speaker, supporting Canadians and supporting Yukoners is a fundamental necessity when combatting any emergency. Targeted financial support and relief for business owners, both large and small, and financial aid for families and individuals are essential components to ensuring that you maintain social stability.

This government has provided creative solutions to meet the needs of Yukoners during their greatest time of need. Support such as paid sick-leave rebates for employers and the self-employed, which has assisted 113 Yukon employers with \$448,000 in relief to ensure that they were able to make the responsible decision in staying home while necessary.

The Yukon essential workers income support program provided wage top-ups and paid over \$2.9 million to 110 Yukon businesses to support our essential workers during this time of great need. I’ve heard from many businesses, business owners, and entrepreneurs who have received supports, and I thank the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Tourism and Culture, who have mobilized, responded, and listened to constituents — and, in working with me as an MLA, to bring forward those concerns of constituents. I’m thankful for the opportunity that my colleagues have given me to collaborate on these programs.

The Yukon business relief program has provided 543 applicants with over \$6.3 million in non-repayable grants to cover fixed costs of businesses that experienced or continue to experience financial trouble because of the pandemic.

We overhauled our internal infrastructure to support government employees to work from home. This was a herculean effort. This was not something that was originally planned for at this degree. I thank the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission for working with his team to mobilize and to be able to support Yukon workers to be able to continue to offer service to Yukoners while working in a new environment and setting up the ability for all departments to be

able to continue to provide service to Yukoners while we were dealing with this pandemic.

Enhanced wellness and mental health supports across the territory provide access to information so Yukoners can remain informed every step of the way. Perhaps most importantly, we work directly with Yukoners in the business industry and tourism sector to develop relief programs that target the areas of support that communities needed most. This budget includes close to \$2 billion in spending, including \$443 million in capital spending and \$1.35 billion in operation and maintenance. Our capital budget is a 17-percent increase over the capital budget last year and almost 50-percent larger than the Yukon Party capital budget in 2016. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite question action and deliverables. I look at this budget and I look at these numbers, and this speaks to me. This is significant capital spending, and our government has done a prudent job in delivering on the capital budgets that have been committed to.

Last year, this government allocated over \$100 million to support Yukoners with relief through the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, we're allocating an additional \$50 million to ensure that Yukoners have adequate relief and support as we transition from a period of complete uncertainty to one that is better understood. Despite the economic challenges faced, our territory remains resilient. The government has seen GDP growth every year since we have held office. Combined with the lowest unemployment rate in the country, we are poised for strong economic recovery. Mr. Speaker, these numbers don't lie. This is the current situation. Yes, businesses are struggling, but we are seeing positive indicators that we are doing well here in the territory and that we are poised for strong economic recovery.

This isn't to say that there aren't businesses that are hurting right now. We know that this is an unfortunate reality, but as I have mentioned previously, we do have strong supports in place for those businesses that are suffering.

With a territory-wide immunization program underway, I am confident that we will emerge from this pandemic stronger than ever. Thank you to all Yukoners for your continued efforts and for your sacrifices. Times like these are not easy, but your resilience and determination are largely what have kept us safe.

Mr. Speaker, over the last 12 months, this government has made several commitments, including universal childcare and early learning education for Yukoners. This government recognizes the significance of childcare access for Yukoners. Last session, we debated the *Putting People First* report, which included a recommendation, among many others, for fully funded universal childhood education for all Yukon children over the age of one. This budget has identified \$25 million toward early learning initiatives, including \$12 million to support universal childcare. I am thrilled to see this come into effect, not just for my constituents, but for all Yukon children and families across the territory.

Fully subsidized universal childcare will go a long way to helping Yukon families. It will provide Yukon families with children and licensed childcare programs with flexibility and certainty. It will allow Yukoners to redirect childcare expenses

to investments and expenses here in the territory like never before, for Yukoners to pursue business opportunities that they recently thought were out of reach for them. As the Minister of Education stated, it allows Yukoners to dream again.

Mr. Speaker, with \$400,000 to integrate the new midwifery regulations into our health care system, Yukoners will have more flexibility and self-determination when it comes to bringing a new life into their world. This was a platform commitment that we made to Yukoners in the last election. I am proud to be a part of a government that has delivered on this commitment. I know that tremendous work has taken place within the medical and health community, along with the Minister of Health and Social Services, to get us to where we are today. I thank those who have worked tirelessly to get us here.

New parents can also expect \$667,000 toward the Canada prenatal nutrition program, which will support prenatal initiatives here in Yukon. Many young people today are making a decision to avoid having children due to the high associated costs or lack of support. The government is clearly demonstrating a commitment to enhancing those supports and reducing the associated costs of raising children here in the territory. As my riding of Porter Creek Centre continues to grow with new families — young and old alike — these supports will go a long way in ensuring that these children and families have the best chance at success. Mr. Speaker, education is a price we cannot afford.

I am also very excited to see that the community of Whistle Bend will be receiving the first new elementary school in over 25 years. Having immediate access to education for the young families in Whistle Bend will make daily commutes less stressful, it will relieve pressures, and it will relieve pressures throughout the Yukon school system. This budget is committing \$10.5 million toward the construction of this new school, and I thank the Minister of Highways and Public Works for including these dollars toward the construction of this new school, which will greatly benefit the community. For those interested, the Whistle Bend elementary school project is outlined, with considerable detail, on the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board's website. It includes road traffic studies, detailed maps, proposals for speed limits, and building design styles.

Since the declaration of a climate emergency, this government has taken action to deliver creative needed solutions to meet the Yukon's growing energy demand while ensuring that we are able to reduce our total greenhouse gas emissions. *Our Clean Future* is a bold strategy that involves strategic partnerships, economic stimulation, innovative solutions, and the development of a local green economy to ensure that our future remains green, clean, and vibrant.

Over the next 10 years, this government, in partnership with the Government of Canada, will invest over \$500 million to implement this strategy — creating jobs, new industries, and ensuring that our energy demands are being met using local renewable solutions.

\$16 million for community-based, renewable projects will help curb our reliance on diesel power generation, and

\$6.7 million is for energy rebates to assist Yukoners and Yukon-based businesses. The adaptation of renewable heating sources will help address the growing cost of living while improving efficiency in the north.

I, like many Yukoners, desire a clean future for my children and their future families. Strategies like these give me great confidence in their success for the years to come, and I am proud to be part of a team that shares this vision with me.

Since we first came into office, this government has passed some of the most inclusive legislation that Yukon has seen to date. Prioritizing equality and inclusion, we have updated laws that made it illegal to discriminate based on gender expression or identity. We removed the requirements for sex reassignment surgery to change the sex on birth registration. We provided funding for improved counselling services for LGBTQ2S+ persons and banned conversion therapy in Yukon. I want to thank the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and the Minister of Justice for leading those initiatives and ensuring that our legislation was modern and was inclusive for all Yukoners.

This Liberal government has a vision for an inclusive Yukon. It includes supporting all walks of life without passing judgment and without persecution. In 2021, we will be contributing \$125,000 to Queer Yukon to establish the first-ever pride centre in our territory. We want everyone living on this shared land to feel welcome and safe, and we are proud to be supporters in that.

Part of ending discrimination means changing the narrative and upholding dignity and justice for Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and two-spirit-plus people. Together with First Nation people, we are moving forward down a path that supports healing and wellness as opposed to one of neglect and ignorance. I'm thankful to have been able to work with the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, the Minister of Health and Social Services, and the Minister of Justice, who have put forward a leading strategy to address the recommendations made in reports for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Part of moving forward with reconciliation means acknowledging the losses and the trauma and finding ways to support families and individuals who have lost loved ones and continue to grieve. The significance of this work cannot be overstated.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard from many Yukoners the growing concern for affordable housing in the territory. For my constituents, a \$20-million commitment in Whistle Bend land development means that we're working to address the growing market demand for houses, which we expect will slow the ever-rising costs of homeownership for those attempting to enter the market. Rental and purchase costs are higher than ever. This government recognizes that investments like these address the supply gap in the housing market of tomorrow and, in turn, will make living in Yukon more affordable for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, since winning the 2016 election, we have steered the territory forward in a positive direction, and this budget continues that momentum — a direction that includes necessary modernization of our legislation to bring Yukon up

to speed with the rest of the nation. We've come so far as a territory that for decades lagged behind the rest of the nation to one that is leading responses and revolutionizing the way we work directly with our stakeholders.

Our leadership under a Liberal Premier — the MLA for Klondike — and our team made up of indigenous leaders, climate defendants, school teachers, attorneys and social justice advocates, business and community leaders — we are making a difference. We are creating a better life for Yukoners by improving health care, planning and building new schools, expanding housing developments, fixing roads and airports to be safer for all, and cutting taxes to save Yukoners money. In this budget, we continue to establish respectful relationships with all levels of government, which means less time in the courtroom and more time in the meeting room, getting things done. We continue to show that Yukon can balance support for the mineral industry along with environmental stewardship to protect this place that we love and call home.

When COVID-19 emerged as a real threat in the Yukon, our team acted quickly to get financial and social supports in place for Yukoners. In this budget, we continue to manage the risk of this deadly virus to keep Yukoners safe and develop some of the strongest business supports in the country to keep our economy growing and moving forward. Unemployment has remained low, and through "buy local" promotions, retail sales have increased year over year during this government mandate.

Our aggressive approach to updating and developing new laws has made Yukon a more modern, inclusive place to live, and I'm proud to be sharing this territory with many folks who live here and who come from all different walks of life. This budget is strong and our record is strong, and we will stand behind this record. It demonstrates an unparalleled willingness to find creative solutions to problems that we face.

Mr. Speaker, it's undeniable that one of the most significant problems we're facing right now is the pandemic. While some may dispute the risks, the significance of the impact is undeniable. This Yukon Liberal government has worked hard to navigate the territory through the COVID-19 pandemic, and this work speaks for itself. Under this Liberal leadership, the government acted quickly to create support programs that set a gold standard across the country and ensured that businesses stayed afloat and Yukoners were supported when they needed it most. This budget will continue this good support work.

We implemented community health measures that have done a great job in curbing the spread of COVID-19. In fact, we remain the only jurisdiction in the country with no community spread.

Mr. Speaker, this government has shown a willingness to trust our medical science partners and community, which have played a significant role in maintaining safety in our territory, so much so that we see record numbers of people moving here. A strong economy, strong employment, and strong social supports are the basis of a well-functioning society, and we have that here.

We brought in paid sick leave and rent and eviction protection and have extended this support. We have developed business relief programs. It has also been extended once again. These are the strongest business relief packages in Canada, and these supports are fixed in this budget. To address this pandemic, we changed regulations so that seniors could continue to drive even if their licences expired during these challenging times. We adjusted regulations to make it possible for societies to continue to work where they do by meeting virtually.

We suspended in-classroom learning in the spring and reopened it on time in the fall with safety plans in place. We have subsidized childcare costs so that early learning childcare providers could stay open and support essential workers. We have offered wage top-ups so that employers could pay their employees. We obtained an isolation hotel. We obtained a respiratory assessment clinic to take the pressure off of our hospital. We have created a call-in line and a comprehensive online tool to provide Yukoners with all the information they need to manage this pandemic. We even appointed a committee of business people to provide direct and immediate information about what Yukon businesses needed in terms of support. We have worked with our stakeholders, not against them.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud of our work to ensure that the Government of Canada has considered Yukon a priority population for the vaccine rollout. We will have enough vaccines this spring to vaccinate every adult Yukoner who wants one. We did our part to get the doses, and if enough Yukoners choose to accept the vaccine, Yukon is positioned to be one of the first jurisdictions in the world to reach population immunity. There have been hurdles — delayed deliveries of doses and overloaded booking systems — but despite some challenges, Yukoners are being vaccinated. This is something that we can all be proud of and we should be proud of, regardless of our political alignment.

I want to thank the incredible work that is being done by the vaccination team — the nurses, the health care workers, Health and Social Services and logistics, and, of course, our essential workers who have remained vigilant and continue to persevere.

Undoubtedly, Yukon's tourism sector is a large economic driver of our territory. Globally, tourism is the hardest hit sector by the COVID-19 pandemic outside of health care. Our government was one of the first jurisdictions in the country to respond early to support local businesses affected by the pandemic. In fact, we were one of the first jurisdictions in the country to roll out a business relief program. Again, I will take the opportunity to thank the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Tourism and Culture for including their team and the community and continuing to connect with the community to ensure that the supports that are being rolled out are relevant and timely. The goal of response efforts has been to stabilize Yukon's tourism businesses by developing relief programs immediately to stabilize the industry.

A number of supports in Yukon's tourism relief and recovery plan have been extended. These include the extension

of the \$4-million tourism accommodation and non-accommodation sector supplements to September 30, 2021, a \$450,000 contribution to Yukon's Elevate business mentoring program, and a \$300,000 enhancement to the tourism cooperative marketing fund, bringing the total to \$1 million. Right now, our focus is to keep operators going to ensure that we have a strong tourism industry ready for when travel restrictions ease.

As we continue our necessary public health and safety response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the preservation of our local tourism economy is forefront in our minds. Mr. Speaker, strong responses to unforeseen circumstances require strong relationships, and this budget shows the strengths of our relationships. This Yukon Liberal government has proven that it can work with all levels of government to achieve goals for all Yukoners. Through strong collaboration with the federal government, we have seen unprecedented support to our territory through initiatives like the Gateway project, Normandy Manor and affordable seniors housing, the Arctic energy fund, and the investing in community fund, as well as money for green energy projects.

It is very important for us that we always remain open and transparent with Yukoners about why we are in the state of emergency. We are working with point-in-time legislation which never contemplated or took into account extended periods of emergency such as a global pandemic. Despite these challenges, this Liberal government has found creative ways to utilize its outdated legislation and provide confidence and leadership for Yukoners when they needed it most.

All orders put in place are to protect and support Yukoners. Without the state of emergency, all the ministerial orders we have made under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* would expire. We would no longer be able to enforce self-isolation, border controls, or the use of masks in public to keep Yukoners safe.

Our objective is to remain responsive to the dynamic situation and to protect the health and safety and livelihood of all Yukoners. We want to modernize the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. We proposed a committee to modernize it and the opposition took offence to us having the most qualified individual from our team working with this committee which was for the benefit for all Yukoners.

Many Yukoners are struggling with affordable housing in this territory; we recognize that. We also recognize that stable, affordable housing is foundational to the health and well-being of Yukoners. We've taken action and this budget builds on that action to address housing. We've invested in the development of more than 600 homes since taking office. The housing initiative fund has supported over 350 homes since we launched it in 2018. We're completing a new 47-unit community housing project in Whitehorse to provide safe and affordable housing. We have supported the Challenge Cornerstone project — a 53-unit supported and affordable housing development. This year, we worked with the City of Whitehorse to release more than 250 lots — the largest ever lottery and tender of lots — in Whitehorse. These are historic investments and they speak for themselves.

We know that if supply matches demand, the cost will stabilize. Providing avenues for that supply is paramount in ensuring a more affordable market here in the territory. A huge part of affordability rests with childcare and early learning. We believe all children should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning opportunities.

We are committed to ongoing engagement and working closely with First Nation governments, stakeholders, and others as we integrate universal childcare and early kindergarten in all rural Yukon schools. In this budget, we are committed to an early learning childcare subsidy, and as I have mentioned, it will save Yukon families \$700 per child per month.

With respect to IEPs, we are committed to providing educational approaches that accommodate students with a diversity of learning needs, and this budget reflects our priorities in education. We are listening to your feedback and that is a change from the previous government.

We are committed to the review of inclusive and special education to determine how best to serve Yukon students and to see if the supports that we provide are meeting their needs. We are committed to that.

First Nation relations have never been stronger in our territory. The Yukon Forum has been an incredible success and we are building off that momentum with the First Nation procurement policy. This innovative policy will bring business opportunities for Yukon First Nations and advance economic self-sufficiency while moving government procurement policy in a more inclusive direction for all Yukoners.

It has already added more than \$430 million to the territorial economy. This is new money — new money stemming from agreements that we have been able to sign with First Nation governments. I know that the Minister of Highways and Public Works and his team have worked tirelessly with the business community and have been listening to the business community, and despite the criticism received earlier from the Leader of the Official Opposition, who stated that the minister wasn't listening to the business community at all — I challenge that. I know that the minister has been listening and has adjusted the schedule for this policy to roll out, to give the business community time to work with the department and to ensure that the policies make sense for every Yukon business. That is happening.

At the last Yukon Forum, leaders endorsed the Yukon's First Nation procurement policy. It is a major step toward realizing the vision of chapter 22 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. The Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nation partners will continue to meet with the business community to ensure that the implementation of this policy is a success for all Yukoners.

Following feedback from these meetings that I spoke about, Yukon businesses will get more time — until October 4, 2021 — to prepare for the two most complex measures under this new policy: bid value reductions and the verification process. This work is ongoing. The collaboration is taking place with the Yukon business community. Additionally, the Government of Yukon and its First Nation partners are now inviting business representatives to participate

on the Monitor and Review Committee. These changes are being made to help ensure that the policy meets its goals and supports competitive procurement in the territory.

This team and I recognize the struggles we have all faced over the last year and we are working hard to make life more comfortable, more affordable, and supported for each and every one of us who call this territory home. A lot of work has gone into reshaping Yukon into a more prosperous territory, one that leads and seeks innovative solutions for problems that we collectively face. I have confidence in my team and in this government and I do look forward to serving Yukoners for another term.

As the MLA for Porter Creek Centre, I do take pride in supporting my community and the people who reside in this beautiful riding. Over the past four years, I volunteered in community cleanup initiatives, worked directly with my constituents on their unique challenges that they faced, and I have engaged in outreach through various campaigns and collaborations with the community associations of Porter Creek and Whistle Bend.

Over the recent holidays, I worked with Yukon children to develop Christmas greeting cards that were hand-delivered throughout my riding. I received many compliments about how people were appreciative to receive these unique local cards. Most recently, I held a gratitude campaign where I received over 50 artwork entries from Yukon kids, which included both writing and drawing where they individually expressed what they were thankful for. Five pieces were selected to be displayed in various forums to promote positive messages and showcase and stimulate creativity within our community. These greeting cards were also hand-delivered to all constituents in Porter Creek Centre and throughout Whistle Bend. I have since held interviews with several media outlets that included these children. The feedback from the community has been incredible.

As a father of four young children, I know first-hand how hard this past year has been on families. Restricted visits with friends, changes in activities, and altered schedules for school and family life have made it hard for our young ones, so providing an avenue for positive expression is an important outlet that promotes positive mental health and stability for everyone.

I would like to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to my constituents and families who participated. I look forward to future creative engagements with my community and constituents. The support that I have received through this has been heartwarming and greatly positive. Thank you again, everyone, for your continued support with these children's activities and their creative expression.

In closing, this year's budget does make life more affordable and it builds on our progress. I am excited to keep the good work going. I look forward to building on our progress. I want to thank my constituents, I would like to thank my colleagues, and I would like to thank my family for their support over the four and a half years.

Hon. Ms. McLean: It's my pleasure to rise today to respond to our 2021-22 main budget.

I rise today as the MLA for Mountainview and to speak also as Minister of Tourism and Culture and the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate and the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I would like to start by just really expressing my sincere gratitude to Mountainview for giving me this tremendous opportunity to be in a leadership role in Yukon. I have not taken that for granted one minute of any day since I took this office.

I also really want to thank my family, particularly my husband over the last year and all the support that he has shown me to do the work that needed to be done in Yukon. It's really great to have that kind of support because that's not something that I had for the other few years in this position. I want to thank my sons and all my family and my friends for just standing by me and supporting the work that we're doing. It's not easy being in the Legislative Assembly. Sometimes it's a very painful place to be some days. I really cherish their support and I am thankful that they don't give up on me. I've said this a few times, but they keep reaching out even though sometimes I just don't have the time, because we're giving a lot here and for very good reason, particularly this last year, Mr. Speaker. You cannot be the same person after going through what we've gone through in the territory and worldwide. It has been an honour to be the MLA for Mountainview over the last four years, and I'm so eager to continue the work to improve community safety in Granger, Hillcrest, Valleyview, and McIntyre.

During this challenging year of 2020, more than ever, I've made it my priority to have all lines of communication open to the Mountainview constituents. I'm humbled that so many folks in the riding really trusted me with their most intimate issues. It has been an honour to work alongside them. Hearing that safety is one of the number one issues in the riding, I met with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, our community associations, and the RCMP to bring everyone together to make some much-needed positive changes. As a result, we now have a Mountainview community safety and wellness committee. I'm really proud of that. I know that our government is investing in community safety.

I think that is our job as MLAs — when things are happening in our riding, to actually take an active role and step up. That is what I stepped into this role to do, so I am proud of the folks in Mountainview who will carry this on. I know that it will make a difference.

McIntyre has particularly seen some really tremendous infrastructure changes from their new community hub, which is scheduled to be finished this spring — I am super excited for the community. It is a new, incredible space that I know they will be eager to share with all Yukoners. Also, there is their new fun and safe playground, and there is so much more in the community. I always encourage folks to just take a drive through the community and get a sense of the feel there.

After decades of previous government stalling, the Alaska Highway project is finally nearing completion. Phase 1 of the Hillcrest area project, which cost \$12 million, was completed last year and included traffic light improvements and proper

turning lanes to enhance safety on our highways. Phase 2 of this work is continuing this year. We have budgeted over \$4 million to continue this work. I really thank the Minister of Highways and Public Works for making this a priority project in our capital budget. You can now enter and exit Hillcrest, Valleyview, and the airport in a safe manner. I think that is a tremendous improvement from where we were when we took office four and a half years ago.

While I'm mentioning these, I would also like to discuss a couple of other capital projects, including airports and highways. This year, our capital budget will invest \$2.7 million into the Mayo airport, which was recently upgraded from an aerodrome. Over \$150 million will go into the north Klondike Highway project to continue the reconstruction of the road between Pelly Crossing and Dawson City. These are some of the examples where our government is investing in communities across the territory.

Mr. Speaker, when I put my name — and I know that when we all put our name — on the ballot in 2016, not one of us thought that we would be governing through a global pandemic three years in, but that certainly is what happened.

I'm so proud of the team that we have and the work that they've done to keep Yukon safe. I feel immense gratitude to be in Yukon during this global health pandemic. COVID-19 is a completely unprecedented and unforeseen event. Our Liberal government responded to the pandemic quickly and decisively. I think that a lot of credit has to be given to a steady hand. I think that's what we had.

I've heard my colleagues say, "I would stand shoulder to shoulder with this team." I echo that. We have worked alongside our partners to make sure that Yukoners get the support they need while remaining one of the safest jurisdictions in the world. I'm so proud of the resilience displayed by Yukoners and the steps that we have taken to protect one another's health over the past year.

One of the things that I've been reflecting on recently is that whole notion of resilience. A couple of years ago, my nation went through wildfires that devastated the landscape and changed our people forever. When we were in that, I always felt that we're in a really historic moment and our people will never be quite the same. I think that's exactly what I've reflected on through this.

One of the things that I want to say to Yukoners is that we're more than resilient, because "resilience" means that we're going right back to the same place where we were. I think that we're beyond resilient, and that's what I felt about the Tahltan people when we went through the wildfires and how I feel about the pandemic and the preparation that the crisis had on me as an individual to be prepared for this.

I don't take for granted any decision that we make, that we've made, or that we will make into the future because we know that every single decision that's made is going to have a lasting impact. I know that, during the last global pandemic, my people were almost totally wiped out from the Tahltan Nation.

Being a leader in this territorial government at this time has certainly — those are thoughts that I have had — that we have a chance to make different decisions and protect people so that

our indigenous communities and those sometimes most at risk are protected. So, I am proud of the work that we did together to protect Yukoners. One loss of life is too many. Our goal was zero. I really am saddened by the loss that we had in our territory and my heart really goes out to the family, friends, and community of the person who has been lost in our territory as a result of this pandemic.

I want to say that our partnerships with the business community, NGOs, and public servants all came together as a society, really, to respond to the pandemic in a responsible way. Still, this year has been so incredibly challenging and the pandemic has had a significant impact on our economy, our social well-being, and our communities. There is no portion of our lives that COVID has not touched.

I know that it has been an incredibly difficult time particularly for our tourism industry. Restricted travel immediately halted our tourism industry. When social distancing was implemented and reduced gatherings, it affected cultural practices and experiences. These industries were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, and I am proud of the Department of Tourism and Culture for their responsiveness and ability to adapt plans, programs, and funding to support our tourism and cultural sectors. Thank you so much to all of the staff at the Department of Tourism and Culture for all of the work that you have done to be adaptive and to be on the job, sometimes way beyond what — again, Yukoners stepped up, and the staff really worked hard alongside Economic Development to be responsive.

It is not lost on me, for sure, that businesses that work in the tourism industry have dedicated their lives to it. They have invested a lifetime for some businesses to share the Yukon with the rest of the world.

I know that there has been a tremendous grieving process that has gone on over the last year. Our department is, of course, actively collaborating with Yukon's tourism industry, the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, the local chambers of commerce, all the other Government of Yukon departments, Destination Canada, and Yukon's chief medical officer of health to monitor and assess the impacts of the COVID-19 virus on the tourism sector. Our priority at the Department of Tourism and Culture is to protect Yukon's rich cultural heritage, promote its history and diverse forms of artistic expression, and to market and grow Yukon's tourism industry. I know that we will come back stronger and that's the spirit of Yukon and Yukoners.

During COVID, we honoured all of our existing funding agreements. This applied to museums, cultural centres, as well as art facilities, individual artists, and non-profit organizations. We also established the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board last year and the advice has been essential as we navigated our new normal. As we move through this phase and into post-pandemic recovery, I want to thank the hard work and dedication of this brand new board that came into effect during this particular time. A special shout-out to Denny Kobayashi as the chair and Lisa Dewhurst as the co-chair for stepping up and for doing this work. The department and Yukon's tourism industry are committed to putting people and their well-being first. We

know that we are stronger when we work together. I think that's what we've certainly seen — particularly this last year, but even prior to that — as we build new relationships with one another during other planning processes, which I'll talk about in a moment.

The *Yukon Parks Strategy* — which will be a strong tourism driver in support and environmentally respectful path forward for our territory — is a really important element of this budget. It also provides new opportunities for Yukoners to experience their own backyard, and we encourage residents to take advantage of the many incredible parks and campgrounds across the Yukon. I'm really excited that the campgrounds are going to open on May 1; that's the plan right now.

Our Clean Future is providing certainty for Yukon's sustainable future and enhances industry innovation and creativity. We are creating a new green economy, working directly with Yukoners and industry to shape Yukon into a sustainable and environmental leader, so \$240,000 has been allocated from this budget to advance sustainable tourism to meet the objectives of *Our Clean Future*.

Another example of a one-government approach — despite our small footprint, Yukoners are very passionate about environmental protection, such as the movement for the Peel watershed. We want to make sure that our strategies represent Yukoners in the best way possible. I know that this was a key issue in my riding and throughout Yukon during the last election. I was very proud — it was an emotional day — when we were in the community of Mayo to have that ceremony together and ground it in ceremony in that moment. I know that for every one of us, that will be one of the days we remember — and there are a lot of days that we will remember for sure.

Putting People First will challenge the current standard model for social services and health care in the territory. The vaccine rollout for the territory is going very well, and because of the careful management of the pandemic response, Yukon is in a very unique and advantageous position when travel opportunities become safe again.

Prior to COVID-19, we experienced three straight years of record-breaking performance for Yukon's tourism sector and forecasts were for continued growth throughout 2020. It was during this time that the first *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* in 18 years was released. We are a Yukon that leads. We planned when tourism was thriving during the best time that we have had in our history of tourism, and this growing industry makes significant and irreplaceable contributions to Yukon's economy. We are committed to enabling the tourism sector to not only survive this global downturn but to rebuild and strengthen for the future.

The *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* is not a government strategy; it's a value-driven, all-of-Yukon approach, and I think that we did see those values shine through in this last year as we worked together. Sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities.

Through greater alignment and collaboration, we can maximize our competitive advantages and take tourism to the next level. This cutting-edge plan gets to the heart of who we are as Yukoners, why we are passionately proud to live here, and how we want to engage with visitors. It has guided us through the biggest challenge of our lives. This work with our partners laid the foundation for a sustainable tourism sector in Yukon and directly informed the COVID-19 tourism relief and recovery plan.

Through this plan, we are investing \$15 million — as I've said many times in the Legislative Assembly — over these three years to support the tourism industry during the unprecedented impacts of the pandemic and to position Yukon as a premier wilderness and cultural destination. \$6,475,000 has been allocated for Yukon's recovery and relief plan. That breaks down to: rebuilding confidence, industry adoption of standardized safe travel protocols, resident perception of tourism research monitoring, rebuilding trust to invite visitors — \$225,000; place brand for Yukon story is \$500,000; the Elevate program is \$450,000; enhancement to the base of the tourism cooperative marketing fund is \$300,000, which will bring it up to \$1 million; enhancing marketing — \$1 million; and then the continuation of the relief programs of \$4 million.

Under the tourism relief and recovery plan and through working with our colleagues in Economic Development, we launched two important relief programs as supplements to the existing Yukon business relief program. We created support for the tourism sector through the tourism accommodation supplement and the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement. Together, these programs have \$4 million available to the industry, and we recently announced the extension of these programs to September 30, 2021.

To help businesses respond to COVID-19 and to prepare for recovery, we are a partner to the Elevate program — a program to assist businesses to modify, adapt, and enhance their services now and post-pandemic. I've already mentioned that we've allocated \$450,000 to that work and we're really working with Canada to continue our partnership with them and to support artists during this challenging time. We doubled the Advanced Artist Award and immediately allocated \$1.8 million to the temporary support for events funding. Those were initiatives that we had in place in the early days of the pandemic.

We also created the cultural and tourism non-profit sector supplement and allocated \$300,000 in support of organizations impacted by the pandemic. We worked with the non-profit society to help administer that program. The silver lining of COVID has been the opportunity to re-evaluate what holds importance in our lives. Artistic expression is part of the human experience and creativity is the meeting place of imagination and knowledge and the backbone of culture. With in-person gatherings limited, many of us are spending more time at home and it is the creative and cultural industries that we have turned to for our entertainment for sure.

The creative and cultural industries are a distinct and important part of Yukon's culture, providing economic and social benefits to the territory. These industries are quite diverse

but essentially include all industries which generate culture, artistic heritage products, and content for consumers and marketplaces. Creative potential advancing Yukon's creative and cultural industries is the first-ever strategy to support and grow these important industries and I am extremely proud of the work that has led to this great strategy that we have worked alongside Yukoners to develop. The 10-year strategy guided by seven principles, 22 actions, under four strategic objectives will help the sector rebuild and recover from the pandemic.

A prosperous, creative, and cultural industry sector will not only strengthen our creative community, but implementing this strategy will also contribute to Yukon's broader economic recovery and overall well-being. For example, to protect and preserve Yukon's art and heritage resources, we have committed funding in the five-year capital plan to build a new arts and heritage resource centre.

We are also investing \$300,000 in the implementation of the creative and cultural industry strategy. We know that tourism and cultural experiences need to be safe, supported by residents, attractive for visitors, and provide economic viability. The Department of Tourism and Culture and the Yukon government as a whole will continue to innovate and adapt to meet the needs of Yukoners and, when the time is right, inspire travellers to safely visit, because we know that the Yukon is the place to be. I think that it's not just a place people want to be; it's a place people need to be. I know that we'll have that experience for folks when the time is right.

Our territory is increasing, and a diverse population is a sign of our strength. We are proud of Yukon's modern society that sees people of all backgrounds thrive together and live happy lives. Still, there's always a lot more work to do.

Putting People First is an ambitious reimagining of Yukon's health and social services. This budget contains dollars for some of the 76 recommendations that come from that plan, including allocating \$677,000 for the Canada prenatal nutrition program and \$400,000 for midwifery.

COVID has impacted the lives of all Yukoners, but some groups have experienced disproportionate economic, social, and health-related impacts. We know that women are particularly hard hit by the impact of COVID-19. Women have disproportionately assumed extra caregiving responsibilities, and in recognition, we are supporting women through the sick leave programs, access to funded childcare, and essential workers and eviction protection. The universal childcare will be launched on April 1, and that's an investment of \$25.2 million. Parents receiving childcare will save an additional \$700 a month per child. These savings can then be used at the discretion of the family and go toward the well-being of Yukoners.

I want to say that a lot of the discussions over the last year with women and gender equality with our federal, provincial, and territorial partners have included a lot of discussion around "she-covetry", which is a term that's being used around the recovery from the pandemic. One of the key elements to that — to she-covetry — is childcare. We heard it from experts from around the world at the last FPT saying that, if there's

something to invest in around economic recovery and social recovery from the pandemic, invest in universal childcare.

That is what we have done — whether it's saving for future education, making the family bills more affordable, or perhaps covering the unexpected life costs that hit us when we least expect them.

On that note, over \$86.6 million has been allocated for continuing care, respite programs, palliative care, and community day programs to support Yukon's aging population. The pandemic has also contributed to an increase in gender-based violence and has created barriers to accessing services. In response, we have budgeted under one of the programs that I am directly involved with — the sexualized assault response team. One of the initiatives within that is to provide a 24-hour confidential toll-free Yukon-wide support line for victims of sexualized assault. The Women's Directorate is directly responsible for working with our organizations to support that, and \$60,000 has been allotted for that contract. This is under the sexualized assault response team initiative, which we are very proud of. We have worked very hard on it and are looking forward to the next level of that initiative.

In tandem with this program, we took quick action in April 2020 and partnered with Northwestel and the Yukon Status of Women to provide cellphones to women in need. These actions are not only about protecting Yukoners today but also protecting the generations to follow us. Rates of sexualized violence against women and girls — and particularly indigenous women and girls — are high, and we are working hard to change that reality. The Yukon is the first jurisdiction in Canada to develop a strategy in response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy* outlines a territory-wide approach to address violence against indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people.

I thank folks from the Legislative Assembly for the support that you have shown. I think that, whatever the party line is, the goal of that strategy was to bring every single partner to the table, and we did that. I am really proud of that work and I'm proud of Yukoners for standing behind it.

It's deeply personal and difficult work, and there has been a lot of heartache throughout this process for all of us who have worked on it. It's not easy, and we've had a lot of difficult moments as we worked toward developing this. Keeping families at the centre of the work was always our goal. I'm looking forward to the implementation of this important strategy. The Yukon strategy on MMIWG2S+ is extremely important and establishes guidelines on how we move forward together as a territory. The main theme emerging from other conversations that we had — and we included it — is the emphasis on land-based healing, the role of men and boys, the need for accountability of the Yukon strategy of MMIWG2S+. To help guide capacity to implement this important strategy, we are providing an additional \$600,000 for indigenous women's equality to the indigenous women's equality fund, and \$300,000 has been allocated to work with the indigenous

women's organizations to continue their advocacy and to move to a place of implementation.

I believe that this particular strategy will be a very deep dive into many of our systems in Yukon. Our goal is to absolutely change the story. I know that, by changing the story for indigenous women and girls, we will change the story for all Yukon women and girls because these system changes are at the heart of this strategy.

Advancing equality and safety in our territory remains a priority. Our government has a vision of healthy, vibrant communities where all Yukoners feel safe and welcome. Supporting greater inclusion and equality of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners in our community is an important step toward realizing this vision. Our government has fundamentally committed to fostering an open and inclusive society.

In this budget, we have budgeted \$125,000 for Queer Yukon to continue their important work toward realizing a pride centre to further support and celebrate our LGBTQ2S+ community. I'm committed, as a minister, to work alongside the LGBTQ2S+ community to realize that dream and to see it come to reality.

We listened to Yukoners and banned conversion therapy in the territory with the passing of the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act*. The work that we have done alongside the LGBTQ2S+ community has resulted in a number of acts being updated, including the *Vital Statistics Act*, the *Human Rights Act*, *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, *Equality of Spouses Act*, and the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*. We repealed the *Married Women's Property Act*.

We are working with Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ community to improve inclusivity throughout the government, both as an employer and as a service provider, and the LGBTQ2S+ action plan will do just that.

We provided funding to improve counselling services for transgender, two-spirit, non-binary individuals and their partners. Yukon was also the first jurisdiction to offer free training to health professionals to provide kind and culturally sensitive transgender health care. We are taking steps to reshape what it means to be an inclusive government, and we recognize the societal changes that have occurred over the years and are working to challenge the stigma and change the narrative.

The steps taken to implement safe workplace training will enhance the physical and psychological safety of individuals in all areas of life.

I can't mention safety without highlighting the important work of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. Protecting the rights of workers and providing them with appropriate support is for the betterment of all Yukoners. Workers must be protected from workplace hazards, including violence and harassment, and we are making sure that acts and policies put in place achieve this goal.

After extensive public consultation through the fall of 2019 and 2020, the *Workers' Compensation Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* have undergone a full review. Our government is committed to reducing the number of workplace incidents and injuries, increasing the efficiency of

claim administration, reducing red tape and delays, and maintaining a solvent compensation fund. Modernizing this framework enables Yukon employers and workers to stay safe and healthy in their workplaces and establish a fair system of compensation in the case of workplace injury. Under one new comprehensive statute, the *Workers' Compensation Act* will provide clear and effective legislation that ensures workers' safety and is in step with changing workplace conditions.

The importance of mental health has been captured in this modernization to protect and preserve Yukon's small but mighty workforce. COVID has shone a spotlight on societal mental well-being, but mental health was a priority for this government well before the pandemic. In the beginning of our mandate, I tabled amendments to provide post-traumatic stress disorder presumption to recognize a unique and often traumatizing nature of emergency first-response occupations. These amendments in the act established presumptive PTSD legislation for first responders, which means they won't have to prove their post-traumatic stress disorder in work related under the compensation board.

Further, if any worker covered under the *Workers' Compensation Act* is diagnosed with PTSD and the cause is determined to be work-related, the worker is eligible for compensation benefits. When we passed that act, we also passed an act to prevent psychological injury in all workplaces. I'm really proud that the regulations have been passed and this will come into effect in September. Prevention is more effective than treatment for sure, and regulations that support prevention reduce the stigma attached to mental illness.

I just want to go back — modernizing the acts that govern the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board's business brings Yukon in line with other Canadian jurisdictions and will provide Yukoners with safety and a compensation system that works for them when they need it most. We value inclusive governance and support all Yukoners to stay safe and return home to their families every day. I'm proud to lead the passing of new legislation that addresses the realities of safe workplaces and mental health in the 21st century.

We are a government that listens. Taking a people-centred approach to our work upholds our values and has been integral to our success. Our Liberal government will continue to prioritize the interests and needs of Yukoners and support Yukon businesses because we are all in this together.

In closing, I am deeply honoured to be the MLA for the riding of Mountainview. I am proud of the work that this government is doing to improve the lives of all Yukoners. We have achieved so many of our commitments to date and I am excited to keep the good work going.

Ms. White: It's something else to be here and standing for another Budget Address in another year. I guess that I am in my tenth year now, so it has been quite a few.

Of course, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the folks in Takhini-Kopper King, a riding that goes all the way down the Fish Lake Road, where we have houses that are off-grid. We have houses that have been living the renewable lifestyle for a long time. We come, of course, all the way back and I have the

pleasure of having three mobile home parks. I have old Takhini duplexes and new Takhini construction, soon to be home to Normandy Manor, which will be interesting for traffic along Range Road. We have condo corporations and stand-alone houses. It is an exciting place. It has Yukon University, it has the correctional facility, the youth correctional facility, and the John Howard transitional housing, which has been an adventure, mostly due to the lack of communication on all sides with my neighbourhood, but it goes on and on.

The one thing about the folks in Takhini is that, no matter where you are, it's like you are in a neighbourhood. One of my favourite things is that we have a tiny library in front of my house and that has been lovely. I say this because folks in my neighbourhood get out. They walk around, they talk to each other, and it has never felt less than a neighbourhood, which is great.

I have been elected since 2011. I was here under the Yukon Party and now we are here on the cusp of the end of the Liberal government's term. I can look back, I can look forward, and I can look to the present. When I was elected, it was a Yukon Party government. In fact, their current leader and I were elected in the same election. We were both elected at the same time and media did some parallels, talking about how we were both young, though it turns out that the Member for Lake Laberge is actually younger than I am by a bit. So, the Leader of the Official Opposition and I were elected at the same time. It's important to note that he played a leadership role in that government because it's hard to separate what was to what is now and to what may be in the future, because the Yukon Party government was driven by ideology.

What I really lived through between 2011 and 2016 — or folks outside this Chamber lived through — was that it was government that just didn't listen to people; they just didn't listen.

I learned how to speak in this Chamber with the sound of drums outside my back shoulder, because every first day of the Legislative Assembly, there were dozens and dozens if not hundreds of people outside this Chamber because they wanted to be heard.

I came in here and some of my friends have passed now — like, I think about Gerry, who sat in this Chamber every day that I was in this Chamber between 2011 and 2016, with his T-shirt that said: "Protect democracy, protect the plan, protect the Peel". It was a Yukon Party government that tried to develop the Peel. They wanted to rewrite the Peel plan, and that's the leader of the Yukon Party who was part of that.

I guess there are some parallels though, because we can look at what's happening in the Indian River wetland right now under the Liberal government, where the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation has said, "Please, stop staking; put in a moratorium until we get a wetlands policy", but that's not happening.

Under the Yukon Party, the housing crisis reached a tipping point. When I was first elected, there was a tent city on the lawn. There was a tent city on the lawn. But I feel like we're getting closer to that again. The challenge with that though is — because under the *Financial Administration Act*, the Yukon Party passed a law that says you actually can't camp on

government property like that anymore, but if that hadn't been passed, I imagine we would be reaching that point again, because under this Liberal government, the housing crisis exists again.

The Yukon Party tried to sell off Yukon Energy to private interests. That got dragged to the light; that stopped. They took tens of thousands of dollars from Outside mining companies. Well, there's a parallel there, because in 2017, the Liberal Party did too. It's harder to see in 2018 and 2019 because the reporting has changed, but if you go to Elections Yukon and take a look, both parties accepted money from Outside mining companies. I got told by the housing minister at the time that housing wasn't a human right. That answered a lot of questions about what was or was not happening.

I think about all that and we flash-forward to the 2016 election. I don't think it was surprising when Yukoners decided that they had enough. I like to think that it was with optimism that they voted for change.

I mean, of course, I was disappointed that the Yukon NDP didn't form government in 2016. We had a great platform; we made some really solid commitments. You know, one of the many that I feel sad about is electoral reform. But I was optimistic like everybody else; I really was. I was hoping that the Liberals would be different from the Yukon Party, that they would bring about the real change that people were hoping for, because people felt like we needed the change.

In the 2016 election campaign, the Liberals had their platform under the title of "Be Heard". They said that they would listen to Yukoners, and by all accounts, I guess we could say that there are lots of ways that you can be heard with endless surveys, consultations, and meetings, but whether or not you are actually heard when you say the things is different. It turns out that it is not enough to hear what people say, because you actually have to take action on that, too. You can't ask for feedback and then not incorporate it, because then we are going to see what happened with the multi-year Peel plan. The big concern was that folks would stop wanting to participate in the land use planning process, because they participated in that one for almost a decade. But then we see the halting of what happened and what is going on right now with the Klondike land use plan. It has ground to a halt. We had a chair resign because of feelings that what was being asked wasn't being granted. Again, the Indian River wetland — the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation is asking for it to be protected. There is that going on. We still know that staking rules all — right? — because we haven't gone to successor resource legislation. There are parallels there.

So, Yukoners wanted action on the housing crisis. There was a housing crisis in — I mean, the first time I ran was in 2006, you know, and it was maybe before it really took off, but by the time I ran again in 2011, it was full-blown. When I was knocking on doors in 2011, people were concerned about housing, and they weren't concerned about housing for themselves because they were housed, but they were concerned about it for their neighbours. In 2016, people were still concerned about housing. I am sure — like my colleagues in this Chamber, I have been out, and I am hearing on the doorstep

that people are concerned about housing. It is unaffordable; it is unaffordable.

Knowing that I live in a neighbourhood of 1950s duplexes — it will go across the spectrum — knowing that houses have been sold in my neighbourhood for more than \$450,000 — that was the asking price. They sold above — duplex, 1950s, half of the duplex — not the entire thing — not both units. To know that, in the last four-plus years — we are into our fifth year — housing is even tighter than it was in 2016 — we see houses being sold in Whistle Bend and lots being sold in Whistle Bend, knowing that as soon as a rental opens up — people just can't keep up.

I tabled a petition with the Yukon Party government asking for protection for mobile homeowners. I asked the mobile homeowners to be treated differently than renters of apartments because they are different. They own the asset; they rent the land. More than 400 people signed that petition — nothing happened. We had an election, and I thought, "Well, okay. I guess I will do it again." I took out another petition, and I had close to 400 signatures the second time. I took it to a second government and said, "Hey, this continuum of housing is really important. People who live in mobile home parks are important. They deserve certainty. They deserve the ability to plan for the future." Guess what happened. Nothing happened. I got an e-mail today, which I also sent to the Minister of Community Services, because I asked that person to send it on, saying: "My pad rent is going up by \$20 again. It's going to be \$480 a month." At what point does it stop?

I think about my property taxes, and I think that it is \$240 every three months or something. I think about that comparison, and pad rent is substantially more. So, mobile homeowners asked for support. That didn't happen. In the fall, I brought forward a motion for debate. I don't know why I was surprised by the reaction. I should know better by this point. I asked that we look at putting a freeze on rent until July. I thought, man, if we could just give people a little bit of space. I brought that forward because I had been contacted by people who had both a 30-percent increase and a 40-percent increase. Yes, people were following the law; they gave them three months' notification that their rent will go up by 40 percent in three months from that day. That was following the law. It's legal, but is it right? That is the question. Lots of people will have different opinions and I appreciate that, but you know, I thought that we could give people just a little bit of space.

Yukoners wanted action on the environment. Who doesn't want action on the environment? We talk about climate. In 2019, I was amazed — it was great. Yukon declared a climate emergency. It was such a big deal that it was picked up by news media outlets around the world.

Yukon declared a climate emergency. I thought, okay, this is the opportunity that we're looking for. This is the opportunity. I thought, okay, here's the chance where every decision we make with infrastructure will use a climate lens and things will change. Then I waited, and then I asked the question and I waited some more. I thought, okay, maybe something is going to come out. Then we get the *Our Clean Future* document. There are lots of things that are really good in it;

there are. The challenge that I have is that it doesn't consider mining emissions. Even if we accomplished every single goal set out in that, Yukon is still 25-percent short of our climate targets; we're still 25-percent short. It has just the very concept that, even if we do every single measure that we can do in the next 10 years, we're still going to be short by 25 percent, and it's not included in there.

I think about the fact that we still don't have species at risk legislation. I've been told by the minister a couple of times now that it's on the way. In 1996, Yukon signed that accord — 1996.

Comparisons between the Liberal Party and the Yukon Party — I asked the Yukon Party government every Sitting for five years about species at risk legislation. I have asked the Liberal government every Sitting for four solid years, and I'll probably ask this spring sometime because — maybe I'll ask this spring. Who knows? I don't know when the election is going to be.

Species at risk legislation — you know, we still have mining happening in wetlands. Wetlands — they are like the biodiversity haven. They are where life comes to start. Wetlands are so valuable, and the fact that we allow them to be mined is disappointing.

Yukoners — they understand poverty. When everything shut down last spring and seniors, of course, who were vulnerable and didn't know what was going on with the pandemic, the Whitehorse Food Bank — the average age of a volunteer there is retired. I just thought I would start with that. It's phenomenal. The Minister of Education — her mom is a fantastic gardener and spends a lot of time there. But the food bank — we saw record numbers of people come to the food bank.

Of course, we saw the meal program when we separated the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and the meal program that is being delivered out of the food bank — the partnership with the Boys and Girls Club, the food bank, and all those things happening. What I saw was more of a need than I could have ever anticipated in our community. That's what I saw. The need was so great that the food bank that is based in Whitehorse — the initial aspiration of what they were going to do is to focus on Whitehorse — started sending hampers to communities. Then to know that you're sending just about 100 hampers to Haines Junction, you're sending more than 100 hampers to Watson Lake, you're sending them to Mayo, you're sending them across the territory — food hampers — and people are asking for that support not because it's glamorous and not because what you're sending from the food bank is like all those luxurious extras — it's the staples.

So, Yukon understands poverty, especially now with rents at the rate they are. When I was asking about — I wasn't even asking to raise minimum wage. I just said to send it to the board because we're not keeping up right now. I was told that, until we fell below the 50-percent mark, we were fine. So, then we dropped, and we were like, I think, seventh in the country or something, and I was like, okay, now we're going to get a look at it.

The Employment Standards Board had an extensive consultation period. I went. I submitted. I went there and I

presented about why I thought we in Yukon should look at raising it to a \$15 minimum wage using what was learned across the country.

To know that minimum wage this year, on April 1, goes up by 14 cents — 14 entire cents — 14 cents an hour. To know that the Employment Standards Board, with the recommendation that they had made when they submitted that report, it would be \$15.20 this April — what that translates — from \$13.85 to \$15 — to is that it's up to \$2,000 a year that this government is taking out of the pockets of the lowest wage earners in Yukon. That is appalling.

Yukoners wanted investments in mental health services. I appreciate the idea behind the hubs — I do; I really do — but they're overstretched and they are under-supported.

I didn't even think about it until it was pointed out to me by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — that Dawson City has a regional hospital. They have health care providers, they have doctors, and they also have a mental health hub. But a community like Mayo doesn't have access to a hospital. They don't have the doctors, they don't have the nursing staff, and they don't have facilities, nor are they the home base for a mental health hub. I have the privilege of travelling around the territory. I like to do it, and I have done it in a safe way in the last year, but there is not a single community that is served by a mental health hub that I don't go to — when the staff fly in — where there is not the hope that they can get just a little bit more or that the visits can be just a little more regular or maybe the people coming back will be the same, whether it is in Mayo or in Old Crow or wherever it is.

FASSY had this great advertising campaign for Rendezvous. I imagine that everyone got it in their mailbox. There was this cute little card and there were two cups of hot chocolate on it. It had "Rendezvous for two" on the label. On that label, it had the numbers for addiction treatment. I know this because, when someone was in crisis and they were trying to support their friend, they called that number. There was no help available.

If you want to go to detox right now, instead of having 14 beds in Whitehorse, there are only eight beds available. If you are at that crisis point and you are finally ready to get help, it doesn't mean you can get it. It means that the help that you need and that you want and that should be there for you to access isn't there when you need it.

I think about the opioid crisis; think about that. There were three confirmed cases between January and February of this year of people dying — a possible fourth. I can think about the 36 folks who have died since 2016 — 36. Compared with our population, that puts us up there in the top three in Canada for overdoses. Each of those overdoses is preventable. Instead of taking action, what we hear is that we are investigating solutions — solutions that have been proven to work in Ottawa, in Vancouver, and in other jurisdictions across the country, whether we're talking about a safe supply or safe consumption or managed alcohol programs. Instead, what I get told is: "We're going to continue to investigate; we're going to look into it." People in our communities continue to die. It's just incomprehensible.

Again, I'm lucky and I get to travel around. I get to travel. I was in Old Crow and someone who is much smarter than I am said, "Two years ago we were told that we're going to get the health centre. But two years ago, we didn't start the gravel process, so now I'm worried that when this project goes out to tender — and there's this big push to get it started this year because it's an election year — how is my community supposed to have the gravel ready when it's going to take us two years to do it?"

Then I was told that you can put in all these fantastic buildings. You can put in these new buildings. So, the new rec centre is beautiful. What I was told was: "But what we really need is programming. If we get this building now, will we get programming? Will we get that support?"

Then I was just in Pelly on the weekend. If we want to talk about housing, I had a conversation with this lovely human — a 55-year-old guy. He said, "You know, I'm 55 and I live at home with my mom and my adult brother. It's because every government promises me that there's going to be housing, but still, I have to live at home with my mom because there's not housing. But you know, we have almost \$2 million for an irrigation system at a golf course." That's kind of a harsh comparison.

I was in Watson Lake. I happened to be in Watson Lake two years ago when all these folks got together to talk about the importance of a men's shelter and everybody in the community was saying the same thing which is: "There's just no housing in Watson Lake." Since that meeting happened almost two years ago, the apartment building was condemned and 22 units shut down there. Watson Lake has such a housing crunch right now — it's such a crisis that it overflows into everything. It overflows into everything.

I was in Beaver Creek last summer. I was talking to the chief and the chief said, "Yeah; yeah, it's hard." We heard from the Member for Kluane that there needs to be staff accommodation in Beaver Creek. I mean, the principal lives in the basement of the school — talk about work-home separation. That is just a challenging thing and that is not her complaining about it; that is just me merely stating that, really, we should be able to have that separation.

I think about Burwash Landing and I had a meeting with the council this last summer, and they said: "You know what, if you could just get the Yukon government to understand that we would really like the boat launch in a spot that makes sense for the community. This is where we would like it; this is not where they are going to put it."

You can look around; you can look around. I think it's fair — what would I do differently? I mean, if I am going to criticize the budget, what would I do differently? Here are six things that I would do differently. So, we have a budget that is almost \$1.8 billion. It is shocking to think that, when I came in — I think initially, like in 2011, we had just crested — we were at \$1.1 billion. It felt like a big deal when we hit \$1.2 billion and now here we are at \$1.8 billion. So, a \$1.8-billion budget doesn't mention at all government's choice to reject the \$1.10 minimum-wage increase that was recommended by the Employment Standards Board. So, we have the government tell

us a lot about YAPC's calculation for the living wage and now we have even had the Minister of Community Services say that they have a better job of bringing that up, but it is still a \$5 gap between the living wage and the minimum wage for Whitehorse, and everybody deserves economic dignity.

I appreciate that universal childcare is something that we are all talking about now. I think that is really exciting. I do; I think that is really exciting. Families desperately need this help. This has been a really long thing. I mean, this is a feminist decision; I think that is fantastic — a really long time in the making, for sure. It has been a federal commitment multiple times; it has never followed through. I think this is really exciting, but the childcare plan, as far as we can tell, doesn't have any funding for new spaces or the ability to hire and train more educators. The reason why this is an issue is that wait-lists are very long and sometimes parents have to compromise or settle for fewer days or something that doesn't necessarily work with their schedule, or they have to travel to a facility that is really far from home because that is what the option is. So, I think we also need to consider how we are going to create new spaces to give parents better options. That doesn't even begin to discuss the K4 issue, because when I talked about K4 in every school, it was before we all got on the same page about universal childcare and I was just like — anything to help out families.

But you know, Watson Lake — the elementary school — I went for a walk around it at the time I was there and he was just like, "Well, I think we could probably re-jig some things and maybe get a classroom open." But, you know what? The playground in Watson Lake is not designed for four-year-old children; it's not. Because there's a difference between early childhood education and early development. That is what I've learned. There is a big difference.

Then Dawson City says, "No. There is no room in the school for K4." What the Dawson City school would like to do is they would like that money to get funded to the Little Blue Daycare, which does have a purpose-built facility, which does have the right playground equipment.

And this doesn't address Pelly Crossing, where they have been working really hard. But, here's a sad thing: Their daycare burned down last year. There is fire equipment, but there was no volunteer fire department. We could touch on Keno at the same, but we'll come back to that. But in Pelly Crossing, they worked really hard to prepare their kids for school. They've been running a K4 program through the daycare and they're just about getting ready to move into a house, because that First Nation has done a really good job and they're opening 11 units right here in the near future.

So then, if we go toward housing, and I think about looking at the Yukon housing and land development and all those things, but it doesn't come close to clearing the more than 350 folks on that Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list. Those who do have a place to rent face uncertainty every time their rent goes up with no cap on increases and no ability to plan for the future. Unlimited rent increases; 14-cent minimum-wage increase. So, to have unlimited increases and stagnant wages —

well, that's a toxic combination. The families I've met across the territory are at the breaking point.

Then I think about addictions. The budget speech doesn't even mention the opioid crisis — I would say the opioid pandemic. I would say that we were in a crisis long before this point and I would say that there are two parallel pandemics happening right now. Knowing that there have been 36 opioid overdose-related deaths since 2016 is a tragedy. That's on top of the harms caused by alcohol, which keep taking the lives of our neighbours. And yesterday, we saw when the Member for Mayo-Tatchun bravely resigned from the Liberal caucus over this issue. That took more guts than I think I will ever have. But he reached the breaking point.

We need a safe supply for drugs. We need to stop talking about it. We need safe consumption sites. Something I have learned as well is that we don't need a safe-injection site per se because not everyone in the Yukon uses needles. We need a safe consumption site because of the way drugs are used here. We need a managed alcohol program. We need to treat people like people, as opposed to just their addictions. It's all about dignity.

I think about health care. The budget speech talks about putting people first, but it is not taking significant steps right now to bring people the care that they need when and where they need it. There is no commitment to make hemodialysis available in Yukon. I think about my friend and colleague for Whitehorse Centre, and she has lost a friend to kidney disease here because the choice was dying outside of the territory or dying here. Then my friend Terry came home to die. It's just been over a year. There is no commitment to making hemodialysis an issue here or to expand home care. What about pharmacare? I have sent a lot of casework letters.

When I turned 30, I shattered a bunion on my foot, which then led me to a bad cast, which led me to being on blood thinners for an extended period of time. Not all blood thinners are created equal, so if you are an older person and you're on blood thinners, depending on which one you are on, you might have to go to the hospital weekly to get blood tests done to make sure that you are at therapeutic levels. This is fascinating to know: There is actually another blood thinner that is not significantly more expensive and you only have to go once every six months. It might cost a bit more, but what does it cost for that person to go every single week? Every time I send one of those letters out, guess what happens. I get told that, no, it's not covered under the pharmacare plan.

I send a lot of casework letters about dental care. Who knew that there would be some bones in our body that we would consider luxury bones and that they should only be taken care of for people who can afford it? When I aged out of my parents' insurance, I didn't have dental coverage again until I got my job at the correctional facility in 2009. I hadn't been to see a dentist from when I was 18 until whatever age I was in 2009, because cleanings can be \$400. I don't think that this is a luxury. We're talking about basic maintenance of the entry into your body where food goes. Why aren't we talking about dental care when we talk about health care?

Then I think about climate change. I tell you how I think. We had this real opportunity. The media around the world was looking at us when we declared the climate emergency. There was an awful lot of pressure to get those traffic lights where people could push the button — not that they could reach the button because it's covered in snow — to be able to cross the highway at the airport, because that was really scary — trying to cross the highway without a traffic light. For people on bicycles, that was really scary.

You think about the fact that in *Our Clean Future*, we can only reach three-quarters of our target if we do every action in there because it's not planned for. It says that in the future we'll talk about it. We don't even talk about mining. It says we're going to talk about it in the future. It's just something, isn't it?

The opposition sides — we're left at the mercy of government. We don't know when the election is going to be called. I think it's a really valid question. We passed legislation last year that sets it out for the next government, but the current government is excluded. What a luxury to say: "Behave as I say and not as I do." So, we're on the eve of an election. I'm probably not alone. I thought that maybe it was going to be called yesterday, but that changed. Maybe it's going to be called next week; maybe it's going to get called tomorrow. Maybe it won't get called until the end of the Sitting. Who knows? The Premier won't tell us. I keep on telling everyone I see when they ask me, "When is the election?" I say, "I don't know, but if you know, let me know. If you hear something, let me know."

In the fall, the Premier said that it was going to be the Liberal Party's election planning committee that would decide when the election was going to be called. As if there was ever any doubt that this was a question of political strategy — I guess that would be the answer.

Mr. Speaker, this might be my last time speaking in the 34th Legislative Assembly to a budget response. I want to tell Yukoners not to worry, because I'm ready. I've been building a really exciting team, because it turns out that if you invite people to join you to do something that's really different and you go out looking for people who are passionate about their communities — and maybe not the political types — it's pretty fun. So, Yukoners have made it abundantly clear that what they want is a government that follows through on its commitments and delivers results.

I can hear the government. I listen to them say all of the things that they have done, and they have checked the list and checked that. I also remember when this government said that they would work with everyone for good ideas. It turns out that good ideas only come from one side of the Legislative Assembly. That is what I have learned.

Yukoners have also been clear that they want a government that puts Yukoners first. It's true. That makes sense. This incredible group of people that I'm working with — we have people who are in health care and education. We have parents and we have children. When we were talking about minimum wage, it turns out that I don't have to look too far to find someone who makes minimum wage right now. That is not a child; it is not a child or even a youth.

Mr. Speaker, we have the budget. It definitely looks like an election budget. It has to happen sometime this year, but we don't know when. What I'm really looking forward to is to give out my vision of what we can do. I think that Yukoners are ready for differences. I think that they are ready to see what the three of us are going to offer. If the Liberal government is not going to deliver, I'm ready to give it a shot.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, it never ceases to amaze me sometimes how you could proceed on budget debates. While I appreciate many of the comments that my colleagues across the way have brought to this — the responses to the budget speech — it's quite fascinating to me that, in the representation of all Yukoners, there is almost nothing that pleases anyone.

Nonetheless, we heard from the Premier on Thursday for well over an hour about all kinds of things that have been put into this budget to respond to the needs and wishes of Yukoners — and, in particular at this time, the leadership of this team to keep them safe.

It is truly my honour, Mr. Speaker, to speak about our Yukon government's 2021-22 budget today. I am a proud representative of Riverdale South. I stand as Minister of Justice and the Attorney General and as Minister of Education, all of which I am honoured to do on behalf of the people of the Yukon.

Our Liberal government and our team have always been clear that, every day, we work for the people of the Yukon. We are dedicated to doing our work collaboratively with integrity, with initiative, and with fairness. This has always been our approach. It was our approach for the past four budgets, the pre-COVID budgets, and it was the process followed in developing this, our fifth budget and the only territorial budget developed during a world pandemic that we are all experiencing.

I dare say that everything may now be divided into things that were done, drafted, or happened pre-COVID and someday, we hope, post-COVID. Others — our elders, grandparents, and great-grandparents — have lived through life-changing events like the Second World War or the Spanish flu or others, and they would be able to tell us about the effects of such events — that they will have on our lives as we go forward. I know that we are looking forward to the post-COVID-19 pandemic world. I know everyone is, but that is yet to come.

What has occurred in the past 12 months is the usual, regular, and everyday business of government: health care; program and service delivery; court systems; capital projects; infrastructure building; supporting NGOs; highway projects; schools and education; policy development; Yukon University; and drafting and introducing laws. But in addition to all that usual, regular, everyday work of government, we have all spent the last 12 months working daily to keep Yukoners safe and respond to a world pandemic.

I dare say that no one in this House expected that would be part of the mandate when they chose to seek election in 2016. It has truly been unprecedented work. I know that word is sometimes overused these days, but this is a great example of its correct usage — “unprecedented work”. No government in

the history of the Yukon has had to rise to such a challenge — to such a pandemic and public health crisis.

I know that it is hard for us to remember — particularly up here in our little left-hand corner of Canada where we have been relatively safe and where we have pulled together to keep each other safe and healthy.

Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debated on second reading of Motion No. 207 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following document was filed March 9, 2021:

34-3-58

Gathering Space for St. Elias Seniors, letter re (dated October 29, 2020) from Hon. Pauline Frost, Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, to Wade Istchenko, Member for Kluane (Istchenko)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 88

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, March 10, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Spring Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Vacant*
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

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Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Pauline Frost	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Minister of Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; Women's Directorate

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Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre

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Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Takhini-Kopper King
Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

Independent

Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun
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*On March 8, 2021, Mr. Hutton resigned as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, March 10, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The following motions will be removed from the Order Paper at the request of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. They are Motions No. 52, 67, 70, 86, 101, 190, 224, 253, 289, 294, 317, 335, 347, 357, and 389.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to help welcome some guests today for a tabling of a bill later in the Order Paper. Chair Mark Pike, for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board — welcome. We also have Kurt Dieckmann, who is the CEO for the board, and Kathleen Avery, director of Legal Services, and Catherine Jones, director of Corporate Services. Welcome, and thank you for being here today.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Percy DeWolfe Memorial Mail Race

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise today to pay tribute to the Percy DeWolfe Memorial Mail Race, which celebrated its 45th anniversary this year. As many are aware, the race honours the legendary Percy DeWolfe, who courageously carried the mail by dog team, horse-drawn sled, and boat between Dawson City and Eagle, Alaska from 1910 to 1949. Percy carried the mail year-round, through summer and winter, through all kinds of temperatures, and through poor road and river conditions. Percy battled ice floes during the spring breakup and fell through the ice more than once. He lost horses and his sled to the open water, but he never lost the mail. Percy DeWolfe risked his life every day to get the mail through 340 kilometres of Arctic terrain.

During his 40-year career, Percy earned a reputation for stamina and dependability. The Percy DeWolfe Memorial Mail Race was organized in 1977 in celebration of the man and his character, and it is now a qualifying race for the Yukon Quest and also the Iditarod long-distance races.

Forty-five years later, the race is still going strong, attracting mushers from all around the world, thanks to the herculean effort of volunteers. The race has had to adapt to

challenges created by climate change, and this year, on March 6, it had to adapt to the global pandemic.

This meant that the race didn't travel across the US border to Eagle from Dawson. Instead, it followed a 177-kilometre loop starting at the Top of the World Highway in West Dawson, down the Fortymile River to the confluence with the Yukon River, and then down the Yukon River back into Dawson City. The Percy DeWolfe organizer crew — which has worked extremely hard to ensure that the mushers who participated — faced an extraordinary challenge, as it has in previous years, but now with this new route.

Many thanks — a huge thanks — to all of the volunteers, Rangers, and others who have made this possible — not only this year but every single year, especially the race committee, trail-breakers, vets, officials, checkpoint crew, and photographers as well.

This year's race marshal was Brent McDonald, and Rob Morin deserves recognition as well for his work to ensure trail safety. The board members are incredible Klondike constituents, including Gaby Sgaga, Sally DeMerchant, Louise DeMayen, Andrea Magee, and also Rob Cooke.

Congratulations to the mushers who participated last week in the 45th Percy DeWolfe Memorial Mail Race and special congratulations to Connor McMahon on finishing first in the race this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the "Iron Man of the North", Percy DeWolfe, as we celebrate the 45th anniversary of Dawson City's annual Percy DeWolfe Memorial Mail Race. As we spoke of the discovery of gold in yesterday's tribute, a young man from eastern Canada, Percy DeWolfe, along with a friend, decided to join the stampede. Arriving in Dawson in June 1898, he was one of the ones who was too late, as all the ground was staked.

He had fished back home, so that is what he decided to do, and he sold his catch to the booming city of Dawson. Later on, he got a contract to be a mail carrier. Percy DeWolfe travelled the Yukon as a dedicated mail carrier for many years, facing many winters of severe, freezing temperatures and adverse weather. He carried mail by horse and sleigh, by dogsled, by road, and by river. Percy worked between Dawson City and Eagle, Alaska from 1910 to 1949. He was a unique individual with qualities synonymous to Yukoners today — resilient, brave, and dedicated. He defied the elements and beat the odds more than once, oftentimes with them stacked heavily against him.

Perhaps the most famous story to result from Percy DeWolfe's almost 40-year career was carrying 20 bags of mail, the ice gave way, and he fell through the ice of the river with his horses and sleigh. He tossed all 20 bags aside, but his horses, still tethered to the sleigh, did not make it, but Percy survived, as did the mail — every piece delivered to Dawson on schedule.

In 1935, Percy DeWolfe received a silver medal for his public service to the Yukon and the Queen's mail from King George V. After a long, eventful, fulfilling career, Percy retired in 1949. He passed away in February 1951 at St. Mary's Hospital in Dawson after a brief illness.

The Percy DeWolfe mail race began in 1977 to honour Yukon's most notorious and celebrated mail carrier. Each year, one lucky musher competing in "The Percy" is chosen by a draw to carry the commemorative mail from Dawson to Eagle and back. Last year, the race was cancelled due to the sudden pandemic announcement. This year, due to COVID protocols and border restrictions, the race looked a bit different, but it was on. Mushers went from Dawson to Fortymile via Top of the World Highway and returned on the Yukon River — a total of 110 miles, or approximately 180 klicks.

Congratulations this year goes to Connor McMahon, who arrived first with a runtime of 11 hours and 47 minutes. Thank you to all participants, organizers, and volunteers for making sure the legacy of the "Iron Man of the North" was able to carry on for this 45th anniversary year. Also, thanks to his family who were present for the start of the race as the start was not open to the general public — a proud of moment, I'm sure. Well done.

Applause

Mr. Hutton: I rise on behalf of myself and the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the 45th running of the Percy DeWolfe memorial race. Congratulations to the Yukon organizers and mushers who participated not just this year but all those previous 45 years.

This year, it was Yukoners mushing the route that was adapted due to COVID. As has been mentioned by colleagues in this House, Percy was an amazing northerner who demonstrated true northern courage. He came to the Yukon in 1898 in search of gold but ended up serving others. From 1910 to 1949, Percy DeWolfe delivered the mail. We have all heard the saying: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

Though attributed to the US Postal Service, these words are from an ancient book by a Greek historian that refers to messengers in the Persian Empire, but they work well for Percy, who delivered the mail between Dawson City and Eagle, Alaska by dog team, by horse, and by boat. Nothing stayed him from his rounds.

So, congratulations again to all those involved this year in another successful race, and here is to another 45 years.

In recognition of Nutrition Month

Hon. Ms. Frost: For more than 30 years, dietitians of Canada have celebrated Nutrition Month in March. This is a time when dietitians all over the country work together to raise awareness of the importance of food in our lives and encourage everyone to eat well. The theme for 2021 is: "Good for you! Dietitians help you find your healthy." This year's theme is unique, as it explores how culture, food, tradition, personal

circumstances, and nutritional needs all contribute to what healthy looks like for you.

Eating well looks different for everyone. There is no "one size that fits all" when it comes to eating well, and a dietitian may help you to interpret what that means. Nutrition North is one element that supports healthy eating in the north and healthy access to food, but that isn't always possible, given the circumstances of living in far, remote, northern communities, like Old Crow, where there are many challenges that sometimes prevent you from eating well and having access to the nutritious foods that you need.

Dietitians understand the science of nutrition and the unique needs of each person based on their health, preferences, culture, food, traditions, and situations. They are key members of a multidisciplinary team and can support both individuals and communities. There are several reasons to contact a dietitian. For example, if you live with a chronic illness, have allergies or intolerances, are pregnant or breastfeeding, or are making significant changes to your eating patterns, a dietitian can help you to build health habits.

Dietitians are found in long-term care facilities, hospitals, health centres, and in our communities. They can teach individuals to shop, cook, prepare, and explore food options. This provides individuals with necessary food skills but also uses other skills such as planning. Eating well is about sharing experiences. It's about enjoying food, the transfer of knowledge, connection, and listening to your body. It's also about family, memories, and emotions.

We invite you to embrace and enjoy your own food, your culture, your traditions, and to share with others. I encourage all Yukoners to take the time to explore what food means to you and to find your approach to eating well. Food touches all of us and is an important part of our lives. Mahsi'.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, the Third Party, and the Independent member to recognize March as national Nutrition Month. National Nutrition Month began in 1970 as Nutrition Week. Over time, it has developed into a month-long public awareness campaign to promote healthy lives through nutrition.

This year, the Nutrition Month theme is: "Good for you! Dietitians help you find your healthy." This theme touches on the fact that healthy eating is different for everyone, based on dietary restrictions, allergies, needs, cultural considerations, and more. Dietitians can work with individuals to tailor a plan for healthy eating that works for them. Canada's food guide was revamped in 2019 to promote new recommendations that are wider in scope, replacing the old cartoon rainbow and pyramid depictions with visual representations of real foods and new guidelines to follow, such as: have plenty of vegetables and fruits equal to half of your plate; eat protein foods equal to one-quarter of your plate; choose whole grain foods equal to one-quarter of your plate; and make water your drink of choice. These guidelines are not always easy to follow, but the updated food guide certainly makes healthy food choices more appetizing by visual standards.

March 17 will mark Dietitians Day in Canada, and it's held on the third Wednesday in March. This day will celebrate registered dietitians across the country and their work providing important dietary advice and promoting healthy eating and living. They are passionate about food, the way food affects the body, the science behind it, and providing information to Yukoners on their dietary choices and overall health.

I would like to thank Yukon dietitians, physicians, and health care workers who work to promote nutrition in accordance with a balanced, healthy lifestyle for all Yukoners.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Kent: I have two letters for tabling here today. The first is dated December 3, 2020, and is addressed to the Premier of the Yukon regarding the Yukon education review of inclusive education 2020-21 and is signed by the executive director of the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, the president of the Yukon Teachers' Association, the president of Autism Yukon, and the executive director of LDAY Centre for Learning.

I also have a letter for tabling here today, dated January 14, 2021, addressed to the Minister of Education from me, regarding the change of individuals with respect to the individualized education plans.

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling here today a letter to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources dated March 9, 2021, entitled "Potential impact of a 60-metre riparian buffer on titled land by Marsh Lake".

Hon. Ms. Frost: I have for tabling today three legislative returns.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Hassard: I have for tabling the *Standing Committee on Public Accounts Seventh Report — Yukon Public Accounts 2019-20*.

Speaker: Are there any further committee reports to be presented?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 22: *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McLean: I move that Bill No. 22, entitled *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board that Bill No. 22, entitled *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 22 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports the budget commitment of \$400,000 for midwifery in Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to help people and businesses recover from the devastating financial hit resulting from the pandemic by increasing opportunities for tourism in the Kluane region with actions including:

(1) meeting with Parks Canada, the Village of Haines Junction, local First Nations, businesses, the St. Elias Chamber of Commerce, local advisory councils, and residents to discuss shared priorities in promoting the Kluane region;

(2) cutting red tape and making it easier to do business; and

(3) developing more tourism options to help improve the Yukon's attractiveness as a destination when our borders open to tourists again.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Midwifery regulation

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Our Liberal government recently completed a key step toward providing regulated and funded midwifery services as an additional birthing option for Yukoners. Midwives are health professionals who provide care to patients during pregnancy, birth, and post-partum.

Earlier this year, the midwifery regulation under the *Health Professions Act* was approved by Cabinet. The regulation will come into effect on April 15, along with the standards of practice and code of ethics. Our goal is to provide Yukoners with additional options within a range of health care services that support healthy pregnancies, positive birthing experiences, and quality care after childbirth. This important regulation will allow licensed Yukon midwives to practise as they do elsewhere in Canada, supporting clients through pregnancy, birth, and postpartum.

The development of the regulatory framework for midwifery in the Yukon has involved extensive engagement, consultation, and research over the last four years. In addition to seeking the advice of a midwifery advisory committee made up of key health care partners, we have also engaged Yukoners, midwives, physicians, and nurses.

During public engagement in 2018, we heard from more than 600 Yukoners. The purpose of this engagement was to understand Yukoners' needs and perspectives as we progressed toward regulating funding and integrating midwifery into the Yukon's health care system. Overall, a strong majority of those we heard from supported regulating and publicly funding midwifery. They also understood our proposed approach to begin by establishing midwife-led birthing in Whitehorse and then moving forward with pre- and postnatal midwifery services in the communities. We also consulted with the Canadian Association of Midwives and regulators of midwifery in other Canadian jurisdictions, and we have incorporated best practices from other jurisdictions into our regulations.

The Yukon midwifery regulation establishes a framework that is similar to that of British Columbia. It allows us to adopt many of their standards of practice. It was also important that we ensure that we regulate the profession in a way that makes sense, given Yukon's unique context. To that end, we have also developed standards that are unique to the Yukon. Over time, the registrar of midwives will work with the advisory committee established under the regulation to review and adapt these standards, as needed, to reflect the evolution of the profession and of Yukon's health care system.

The regulation prescribes such items as education and practice requirements, required professional liability insurance, the range of services that midwives can legally provide, and the creation of an advisory committee. With the regulation coming into force in a few short weeks, the Yukon now has a solid foundation to continue developing a midwifery program in line with the Canadian model of midwifery care, which we anticipate will launch later this year.

Successful implementation of Yukon's regulated and funded midwifery program will require the ongoing engagement of all health system partners, First Nations, and communities, and we are committed to continuing to work with them.

I am very grateful for the input and support that we have received from the community partners, such as the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation. In particular, I would like the newly formed Yukon Association for Birth Choices — formerly the Community Midwifery Association of Yukon — for their strong and ongoing participation. It is a privilege to be part of this momentous step forward toward providing safe, regulated, and funded midwifery services in the Yukon.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to respond to this ministerial statement, let me begin by emphasizing that the Yukon Party fully supports the goal of having the option of regulated and publicly funded midwifery services available to Yukoners. Our 2016 election platform included a commitment to regulate and fund midwifery.

If we are successful in the upcoming election and form the next government, the Yukon Party is committed to ensuring that publicly funded and regulated midwifery is implemented in the Yukon as soon as possible. If we are elected to

government, we will make implementing publicly funded midwifery a priority, including continuing with a plan to hire midwives as well as making public funding available for midwives who choose to operate in private practice.

My colleagues and I want to express our appreciation to the Community Midwifery Association Yukon, now renamed the Yukon Association for Birth Choices, for your advocacy and work in support of moving the Yukon toward publicly funded and regulated midwifery. We would also like to thank the health professionals and public servants who have worked on this initiative.

The goal of implementing publicly funded midwifery in the Yukon as soon as possible is one we share with you. However, we are surprised to see the minister patting himself on the back with this statement. In the Speech from the Throne in April 2017, the Liberal government said — and I quote: "... the government anticipates licensing the practice of midwifery later next year."

The Liberal government repeatedly failed to meet the timelines that they promised for implementing midwifery. They promised to implement by 2018 and are missing that target by three years. Now, at the eleventh hour, they have finally brought forward regulations. The government has promised to hire two midwives as employees but has been unable to say exactly when that will happen. They say that it will probably be in the fall of 2021. They chose not to match this timeline to the regulations coming into effect. Unfortunately, there is a significantly problematic side effect of this plan: a large gap in service beginning on April 15. The regulations will prevent the only midwife currently providing services from practising in the Yukon as of that date. This means that any expectant mothers who are planning to give birth between April 15 and some undefined date in the fall will be left without access to midwifery services.

This serious issue was raised with the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Health and Social Services at the Yukon Association for Birth Choices virtual AGM held just a few weeks ago. At that meeting, multiple expectant mothers who have a due date after April 15 asked what it would mean for them. They asked what options were available to them. Some even asked if they should be booking tickets Outside to be able to access midwifery services for their births. Unfortunately, the minister was not able to offer any answers to these questions other than "We're working on it."

Mr. Speaker, mothers have told us that pregnancies are challenging enough as it is, and adding in this type of uncertainty does anything but help to alleviate the stress and anxiety facing these mothers.

So, I would ask the minister to use his closing comments on this ministerial statement to respond directly to those expectant mothers. What can someone who is pregnant with a due date after April 15 expect to receive in terms of midwifery services? The minister wasn't able to answer that question at the association's AGM, but since he's decided to do a ministerial statement on this issue, I hope he has some better answers today.

I know that the mothers who raised these questions will be reviewing his answers carefully as they begin planning for their births. I hope that since the association's AGM, the minister and his colleagues have come up with a solution to this serious problem they're creating. Without a clear answer to that question, it seems quite apparent that this is nothing more than a last-ditch effort to get regulations in place and announced before calling an election rather than developing a plan and system that will actually work smoothly for mothers who choose to use midwifery services.

I look forward to hearing the minister's response.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party to respond to the ministerial statement on midwifery. I believe I echo the heartfelt sigh shared by so many of "At last; finally". After years of promises by successive Yukon Party and Liberal governments, exhaustive studies, consultations, and resistance from certain sectors of the medical community, Yukon is on the cusp of joining the rest of Canada and the world in recognizing the integral role midwives can play in providing care for women or pregnant people and their babies during and after pregnancy.

We congratulate all of those, past and present, who have worked so hard to get us to this place — a place where choice is the foundation of birth. We salute the Yukon Association for Birth Choices whose tireless commitment to choice and support of personal agency before, during, and after birth endures to this day.

As a woman who, over 35 years ago, chose the support of a midwife when my children were born, whose sister was a licensed, registered midwife, whose niece practised midwifery in the Philippines and in Rwanda, where she was instrumental in establishing a women's health clinic and training centre for midwives, I have been astounded at the reluctance of successive Yukon governments to support access to choice and evidence-based care in birthing.

As welcome as this statement today is, the minister's statement made clear that this is another of the serial Yukon Liberal government announcements that we have sadly come to expect. The headline sounds good: Midwifery finally recognized in Yukon. Unfortunately, what he also said is — quote: "... over time..." and "We anticipate launching midwifery later this year."

I believe we heard similar words last year and possibly the year before.

Over the years, Yukon health care practitioners trained and registered as midwives have exhibited a level of patience and professionalism that is unparalleled. Many have had to make hard choices that have meant separation from family and home in order to maintain their professional certification, all the while trusting that, this time, government was serious about implementing regulated and funded midwifery in Yukon and that it was not just another "on the cusp of an election" promise.

As we acknowledge the progress made on integrating midwifery into Yukon's health care system, we do have questions that they hope the minister will address. For example, how does the proposed regulatory framework ensure that all

populations, including LGBTQS+, francophone, Black, indigenous people of colour, and those who wish to incorporate traditional birthing practices — how are they ensured that they will be served? How will people from communities access a midwife-led birth if they cannot be followed by a midwife through their pregnancy if, as the minister indicated, midwives are to be based in Whitehorse? How will people from the communities access home-based birth settings? Will they really see any changes at all from this or is it just for Whitehorse parents?

Given the limited number of midwives the Yukon proposes to engage, how are those who want to access midwifery services pre-, during, and post-birth assured that they will be able to exercise this birthing choice? Do the regulations provide midwives with hospital privileges? Has the government established a plan for a birth centre in Whitehorse?

Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I continue to be hopeful that the statement today is not simply a partial checkoff of another partial promise completed. Fully integrated, regulated, and funded midwifery is too important for gamesmanship.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I would like to thank both members opposite for their support for midwifery. I don't think this is about me patting myself on the back. I actually think it's an achievement for the Midwifery Advisory Committee and, in particular, the Yukon Association for Birth Choices. It's those folks who have worked so hard, along with the folks from Community Services and Health and Social Services, who have been working long and hard over these past several years. It certainly didn't arrive out of the blue. It arrived due to everybody's hard work. I would just like to thank them for it.

I'll say to you, Mr. Speaker, that when I was at the AGM with the Minister of Health and Social Services, people from the Yukon Association for Birth Choices were cheering; they were clapping; they were ecstatic; they were really happy.

In terms of the amount of time that it has taken, yes, it has taken much longer than we wanted; I will acknowledge that, but I will never say that people weren't working hard to achieve it. They were working extremely hard and I would like to thank them for that work. It is an important piece of regulation and it is important that we get it right. I thank everyone for their work.

I will also say that, if we are talking about timelines — I will take the responsibility, as I wanted to get it here for 2018. I was not able to do that and we worked since then to get it here. But I think that midwifery has been asked for since the early 2000s and maybe before. I think that the Member for Lake Laberge, who stood up to talk about midwifery today, was elected in 2002. I noticed that he didn't mention anything about the time from 2002 to 2016. I agree with the Member for Whitehorse Centre that this was a gap. Okay, fine. I think it is really important that we get there. I think we all agree with that. I looked across other jurisdictions to understand if there is typically a gap between when there are regulations in place before and when it gets implemented, and it has always been that way.

I also note that two of the midwives in the territory were hired by Health and Social Services to act as implementation coordinators to help to make this transition work well. I talked with the midwifery association to find out when would be the right time to bring in the regulations. They suggested mid-April because the acting president is going out for international bridging. We found a time when there were not going to be midwives active in the territory so that the gap would be less of a hardship on those mothers who are pregnant now and hopeful. What I can say is that, from that conversation, there was a lot of energy put there by Health and Social Services to make sure that this gap will be as seamless and as short as possible.

My understanding is that the Minister of Health and Social Services and her department are working now to get ready to hire the first midwife to come on board to assist with that transition. I believe that everyone is working to support all members of the community from the LGBTQ2S+ community as well.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have an announcement about the time of how long that gap will take. What Health and Social Services is doing — and we will support them as much as possible — is to make sure that this gap is as brief as possible because we all want to see midwifery here in the territory.

Again, I wish to thank the Yukon Association for Birth Choices for their tremendous work on getting us here today.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic public health measures

Mr. Hassard: So, the path forward documents that the Liberals released just five days ago state that, in order to return high school students to full-time, in-person classes, the children must be eligible for the vaccine. This morning, the government announced that students will return to full-time, in-person classes next month. While this is very welcome news, as far as we are aware, children are not currently eligible for the vaccine. So, five days ago, the government said that this was a requirement. Today, it appears not to be the case, so what changed in just five days for the government to change their criteria on this?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, we always follow the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health. We have been doing that for the last year, as we have gone through the pandemic — the trials and tribulations therein — and again, every time that we make a step forward, we update ourselves, we take a look to see what is the safest possible path forward, and that pathway forward could be in more regulations or it could be in less regulations or guidelines. By following the lead of the chief medical officer of health, we were extremely thrilled to be able to stand today at the press conference and say that the high schools in Whitehorse can get back to full-time classes within a month.

Working with the Minister of Education, we know that we have a lot of work to do. I know that she was on the phone all last night and into the early morning as well making sure that

folks knew that this announcement was coming, and now we have conversations to continue. I know that the school community is thrilled as well. So, lots of conversations with the Yukon Teachers' Association are coming — the councils and the education community, the students, and the parents.

This is really good news, Mr. Speaker, and again, today it is based upon the advice of the chief medical officer of health. Nothing has changed.

Mr. Hassard: The question was: "What changed in those five days?" So, now the question is — the Liberals released the *A Path Forward* document just five days ago that said they were supposed to provide certainty and answers to Yukoners on how to get out of this pandemic. The document stated that, in order to get back to full-time high school classes in Whitehorse, children would need to be eligible for the vaccine. Now, don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker — we have been calling on the government to get kids back to classes for months now, so this is welcome news. When the government releases *A Path Forward* that is stale-dated just mere days after it was released last Friday, all that does is create more uncertainty.

So, Mr. Speaker, what other criteria or requirements in the *A Path Forward* document no longer apply?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that the members opposite do support full-time classes for the three high schools in Whitehorse. That is excellent news to us. Again, what is really good news is that we are seeing the finish line and that we are seeing movements forward and guidelines being relaxed based upon, yet again, science and based upon the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. I only need to guide folks to the press conference this morning where the chief medical officer of health, again with clarity, spoke about epidemiology, spoke about the vaccination rates in the Yukon, spoke about his confidence in us being able to move forward for this extremely important move when it comes to the education of our students.

Mr. Speaker, what has changed? We are still following the advice of the chief medical officer of health. As you know, as we have been going through the pandemic, lots of things change. We know more about masks now than we ever did. We know more about the vaccinations and their efficacy than we ever did. Every day there is new science; every day there is new information that we get about traceability of variants. But what hasn't changed is this Liberal government not acting politically but acting based upon the most up-to-date recommendations from the chief medical officer of health and then getting that information out the door as soon as possible, but I guess that's not good enough for the Yukon Party.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, it makes you wonder why the government would go through the hoops and gyrations of producing a document if it is just going to be outdated within a mere few days. To be clear, the *A Path Forward* document released five days ago says that children need to be eligible for vaccines in order to get Whitehorse high schools back full time. Today, that does not appear to be the case. Will the Premier be releasing a new path forward document with up-to-date information?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I always support making sure that we have the most up-to-date information on our websites, absolutely. But clearly, I guess the members opposite do not understand the fluid nature of the pandemic and this government's ability to respond to the benefit of Yukoners. I don't know if they are making some kind of suggestion about the validity of the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. We've seen that in the past from the Yukon Party government, so I wouldn't be surprised if that is what we are seeing as well here today.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we will follow the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. We will continue to do that because we believe in the science, we believe in the ability of the chief medical officers right across Canada to provide us with the most up-to-date information, and we are also willing to accept that, on a day's moment, a month's moment, things do change very fluidly and we will make sure the most up-to-date information is on the website for Yukoners.

Question re: COVID-19 vaccine

Mr. Kent: The Moderna vaccine is not approved by Health Canada for people under the age of 18. The Pfizer vaccine is, however, approved by Health Canada for those 16 years and older. We know that the government made the decision to turn down the Pfizer vaccine last December, even though they originally told us that they were ready to accept it and were procuring the freezers to store it.

Will the government reconsider its decision of last year to not approve Pfizer vaccines so that Yukoners aged 16 and up can be vaccinated?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I hate to correct the member opposite, but it wasn't us, as a government, who said that we would say no to Pfizer. We said that we would absolutely take on any vaccination. We actually even said that we do have the capacity and the refrigeration to do that in Whitehorse. We do know that the medical community nationally — I guess that doesn't matter to the members opposite — said that the most important thing is that it's hard to transport this vaccine; it's very fragile.

However, we never said that we wouldn't accept Pfizer. We said that we were ready, willing, and able to take it, but we did work with the national community to make sure that we did what was most safe and effective, and again, what we see is an opportunity for us to get ahead of the curve and to be vaccinated at a rate far beating every other jurisdiction in Canada right now. We're very proud of the efforts of the team at Health and Social Services and the whole collaborative approach — the teams of folks who help with the vaccination process but also mayor and council and chief and council working together in every community to make sure that we had the most safe delivery of the vaccines.

If Johnson & Johnson becomes an option, we'll accept that as well. We'll follow the chief medical officer of health, absolutely. He talked today about the exciting new vaccines that are on the horizon, vaccines that don't need massive degree changes in temperature, that can be stored in refrigeration — but the member opposite should know that we never said no to

Pfizer. We said yes to working with every single jurisdiction in Canada.

Mr. Kent: For the Premier, you must be able to transport the Pfizer vaccine, because it's made in Europe and it has to get to Canada somehow.

Anyway, that said, *A Path Forward*, released five days ago, also says that, in order to get students back to full-time class in person in Whitehorse, we need to meet a criterion of — and I quote: "High overall vaccination rate for the entire Yukon population".

Can the Minister of Education tell us what number is considered a high overall vaccination rate, and is going back to full-time, in-person class contingent upon reaching that number?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It's clear that the member opposite does not listen to the medical advice of chief medical officers. To say that, for some reason — the member opposite questioning whether or not we can travel with this vaccine and that maybe, somehow, we made a poor decision on travelling — again, these are decisions that are being made nationally with the Council of the Federation, with the medical teams — but I guess the member opposite knows better.

The member opposite knows exactly that it's not that fragile, that it should be able to be travelled all the way to Old Crow — no problem. That is interesting, Mr. Speaker, but really, what we've been told is that the least amount of travel for the Pfizer vaccine increases the very precious cargo in that vaccination. Again, we will continue to not listen to the Yukon Party's political advice when it comes to vaccinations. We will follow science; we will follow the chief medical officer of health.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't think they like the answer to this question, Mr. Speaker, because clearly, they keep on talking off-mic because they don't want to hear the answer. They're not listening to me, they're not listening to the chief medical officer of health, and they're not listening to science. That's fine.

Mr. Kent: As we have said, *A Path Forward*, which the Liberals released just five days ago, says that, in order to get students back to full-time class in person in Whitehorse, we need to meet a criteria of — and I'll quote again: "High overall vaccination rate for the entire Yukon population".

We and so many other Yukoners are just wondering what exactly this means. What number is considered a high overall vaccination rate? The Premier couldn't answer that question yesterday.

The government has announced that students can go back to class next month, which is welcome news, as we've said, so the government must be confident that they will reach a high overall vaccination rate by that time frame. What is that number that they are trying to reach by next month?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the chief medical officer of health has been very clear — and again today. I guess the members opposite don't listen to the press conferences.

Seventy-five percent of the adult population has always been the goal, based upon a lot of things early on in the

vaccination rollout. One thing is acceptability. We believed, at that time, that 75 percent of the adult population would accept having a vaccination. We still, as the doctor has said again today — that's still our goal.

Now, is that the rate that's needed to get herd immunity in these communities? The scientific community cannot answer that question today. Now, the members opposite can pin that on me as much as they want, but again, Mr. Speaker, the scientific community is cautiously optimistic that the trends that they're seeing right now, not only in Yukon but in Canada — the rate of vaccination is good enough for us to continue on a path where we will see fewer restrictions. This is not good news for the Yukon Party, I'm hearing.

Question re: Early learning and childcare programs

Ms. White: Yesterday, I asked the Premier why the Education budget, aside from early childhood education and childcare, appears to have been cut by \$7 million. The Premier answered — and I quote: “I don't recall making any cuts...”

I remain quietly optimistic that his memory is correct, but I think parents and educators would appreciate a bit more clarity from the Premier.

Can the Premier explain today what was cut by \$7 million in the Education budget?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Nothing.

Ms. White: Well, it's pretty simple — the Education budget went up by \$18 million, but universal childcare represents an additional \$25 million. So, there is \$7 million missing from somewhere. The Premier wants us to ask questions about his budget, so here I am doing exactly that.

Yesterday, I asked the Minister of Education about returning to full-time classes for grades 10 to 12 students in Whitehorse. While she ignored the question yesterday, we were happy to hear from Dr. Hanley today that this is expected to happen next month. The students, parents, and educators who answered a government survey this fall were very clear that education outcomes and mental health have taken a hit because of the pandemic and half-time classes.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell students, parents, and educators what extra support students and educators will have access to when they return to full-time, in-person classes?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think I should first note, in addition to the Premier's comments regarding the Education budget, that in fact — actually, I am very happy to hear the question from the member opposite because we have been scrambling to try to figure out her calculations with regard to a \$7-million problem. What I can indicate — and now, from her question, get a bit of information — is that the Education budget for 2021-22 that has been tabled has an overall increase of 7.4 percent, including a 12.6-percent increase for educational support services.

I can also indicate that when the long-awaited return to full-time, in-person classes for grades 10 to 12 occurs in the next little while — I am very excited about that being the case — that the current supports that exist — an additional 11 FTEs to assist with teaching and special supports — will remain in

place. They will be distributed as they are currently in the high schools. Students will be supported through the readjustment to full-time classes in the three high schools and with their graduation plans.

Ms. White: The results of the survey of students, families, and educators were damning. Over 60 percent of students reported emotional or mental health challenges. Over 50 percent reported academic challenges. These kinds of numbers call for a much more ambitious response from this government. Imagine the anxiety that these kids are going to be going through.

This is about Yukon's future and our students have clearly said that they need more support. Instead of answering that call, this government also unilaterally moved over 130 students off IEPs, and somehow, on top of it all, there are less EAs in our schools today than there were two years ago.

So, Mr. Speaker, how can this government justify the disconnect between the needs clearly expressed by students, families, and educators and the government action — or lack thereof — in our education system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am going to stop to say that, in my view, we all have responsibility in this Legislative Assembly to give accurate information to Yukoners, and if you are not doing that, you are not helping families and individuals cope with the stresses of this particular pandemic and the stresses that it has brought to all of our homes. Inaccurate information that EAs have been cut — in fact, I will look for the number — it has increased in fact from 171 to 246 — I stand corrected; it might be 243 — in the last four years. I can indicate that, as a result of the responsibilities that the Department of Education has to serve students through this pandemic and through their educational paths on a regular basis, supports and services have been increased. I think that the member opposite just heard me say that there is a 12.6 percent of the budget increase for educational supports. I think that she just heard me say that there is a 7.4-percent increase in the overall Education budget. That means more services, more supports, and more programming for students, which is our key goal.

Question re: Individualized education plans

Mr. Kent: So, the transfer of students off of individualized education plans, or IEPs, has caused concerns throughout school communities. Parents, students, teachers, and NGOs have all reached out to us — and I believe members from both sides of the floor — with their concerns. The most that we have heard from the field is about a cost-cutting exercise by the Liberal government. We have heard that the moves started in the fall of 2019.

So, can the minister tell us when the decision was made to move students off IEPs and what consultation took place with stakeholders prior to that decision being made?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am very pleased to have the opportunity, not only now but later on today, to debate this particular issue because, again, all members of this Legislative Assembly, in my view, have the responsibility to provide accurate information to Yukon families and to Yukon students

and to Yukoners generally about the concerns that they have. This is not accurate information.

I can indicate — as we will be debating later on — that the most important part of the review of inclusive and special education for the department and for Yukon families is understanding the experiences and the perspectives of students and families and school staff, Yukon First Nations, and education partners so we can learn what is working well and where we need to focus our efforts for improvement.

I can wholeheartedly and definitively say that no direction was given from my office or from the deputy minister with respect to taking students off IEPs — their language, not mine —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm certainly responsive to the needs of the students with respect to this.

This is a situation where no one in the Yukon government, for the past — I'll say — 20 years, has taken on this very important issue, and we are.

Mr. Kent: It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. On one hand, the minister says that there was no direction from her, but in her closing remarks, she says they're taking on this important issue that hasn't been dealt with in 20 years. I'm very curious as to what exactly she found to be inaccurate from the question that I asked.

According to a December 23 *Yukon News* article, the Yukon Teachers' Association indicated that "... the Yukon government moved 138 students off IEPs onto Student Learning Plans or Behavioural Learning Plans..." last year. The most recent Education annual report from 2019 made no mention of the Liberals' decision to switch students off IEPs. In fact, it stated that 538 students were on IEPs, with no mention of how many students were on the SLPs.

Can the minister provide us with updated information here today? How many students are currently on IEPs, how many are on the student learning plans, and how many have been moved off the IEPs?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The IEPs, the SLPs, and the behavioural learning plans are critical for Yukon students to achieve their best education. Supporting students with diverse learning needs so they can be successful in school is our top priority. We know that students with diverse learning needs will be successful in school if they are provided with personalized, timely, and effective learning supports.

We also recognize the need to improve the learning supports that we provide to students, which is one of the reasons why we have initiated a comprehensive review of inclusive and special education — something that has never been done, to my knowledge, in the history of the Department of Education.

It is critical that we understand what programming is provided, whether or not it is meeting the needs of students, and ultimately how those assessments are being done and how students can benefit from improved learning supports.

Mr. Kent: I am not sure if the minister heard my question. I was looking for data on how many students are currently on IEPs, how many are on SLPs, and how many have been moved off of IEPs since this 2019 data.

In a December 3, 2020, letter that I tabled earlier here today from the Yukon Teachers' Association, Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, Autism Yukon, and the LDAY learning centre to the Premier, they referred to the transfer of students off of IEPs as — and I quote: "... a significant shift with substantial repercussions."

They go on to state that this decision being made — again, I quote: "... without the knowledge of stakeholders raises further concerns." Unfortunately, over the last four and a half years, this Minister of Education has developed a reputation of being unable to work with or consult with the school communities, and sadly, this time, the minister's decisions are going to negatively impact students. Will the Liberals reverse this decision and properly engage with the stakeholders?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is clear that the member opposite maybe wasn't listening to the response that I gave yesterday to almost the exact same question, in particular with respect to the letter that he has made reference to.

On March 3, I and senior officials from the Department of Education met with the Yukon Teachers' Association, the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, Autism Yukon, and the First Nation Education Directorate on this specific issue. I also indicated that, at that meeting, we had quite a productive conversation. We agreed that, together, during that conversation, communications needed to be improved. In fact, the four organizations agreed to work with the Department of Education on improving that communication.

We talked about a website, for instance, so that information on learning, programming, and student services could be updated quite quickly and so that individuals would be able to go there from time to time. We talked about looking at the indications of IEPs, student learning plans, and behavioural plans together. We talked about reviewing the files with respect to what information they had, in addition to providing the information that they had from individuals who were concerned about these situations with us. It was productive; it was cooperative; it was collaborative; it will continue.

Question re: Early learning and childcare programs

Ms. McLeod: Earlier this year, the government announced that all rural Yukon communities would be moving to full-time early kindergarten in schools starting at age four.

The two communities that this announcement impacted the most were Dawson and Watson Lake. Shortly after the announcement, representatives of the early learning childcare and education communities in those locations began raising some serious questions about this decision. Adequate space in schools, impacts on staffing at childcare facilities, and child-teacher ratios were among the many issues of concern that were raised.

It seems that, in the minister's rush to make this announcement for the election, the minister once again forgot to consult with some of the most important stakeholders in those communities.

Can the minister confirm whether or not she consulted the school councils in both Dawson and Watson Lake about this decision? What feedback did they provide?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is a good question, but again, there is much in the preamble that is not accurate.

We have continued to work with the rural school communities and Yukon First Nations to determine the best ways to enhance early learning programming in rural communities, including the provision of early kindergarten programs. Early kindergarten programs are for children generally four years of age, providing a literacy-rich, play-based learning environment to support their transition to kindergarten.

There is optional early kindergarten programming currently available in all but two rural schools. The programs that are half day will be considered for full day. The programs that don't currently exist in Watson Lake and in Dawson City will, in fact, be worked on with those school communities.

We have heard from the folks in Dawson City that this might not be their first choice this year. We have committed to working with them going forward. If the fall 2021 is not optional for that school and that school community and the parents and children there, then it will not be proceeded with until those details are worked out with the individual school communities. The same goes for Watson Lake.

We commit to work with every school community to the benefit of those K4 children.

Ms. McLeod: Now, in speaking about this to the CBC, the president of the board of directors of the Little Blue Daycare outlined a number of serious concerns about the minister's decision. She said — and I quote: "If you know anything about our school, it's completely overcrowded. It's not possible."

She went on to note that there are issues with lack of proper infrastructure, a lack of space in the school, and a lack of qualified staff to work with younger children. Many of these concerns were echoed by stakeholders in my community of Watson Lake.

So, can the minister tell us why she is rushing to implement this change before an election instead of working with the communities to get it right first?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I understand if the members opposite don't listen from yesterday to today, I guess, but I just said that we will work with every community, including those communities of Watson Lake and the community of Dawson, to implement K4 to the benefit of the students and the families and on the options for those families in those communities, with those communities. That is what we will do. That is what we committed to doing. There is no rush to anything. I don't even want to repeat the comments that have been made, because the idea is about what is in the best interests of our K4 kids, what is in the best interests of the families in those communities, and whether or not they will have options, including universal daycare and including K4 options for their children so that they can follow their dreams.

Ms. McLeod: Many of these issues could have been addressed if the minister took the time to actually consult and listen. By leaving this to the last minute, there are a number of

issues that have been overlooked. In both Dawson and Watson Lake, the recruitment and retention of adequately trained early childhood educators has been a real challenge over the years. Only recently has this situation been stabilized in Watson Lake, but we know that EC staffing is always a challenge for Dawson as well.

In speaking about her announcement, the minister said that teachers and early childhood educators would be working together in the schools. Can the minister confirm what she meant by that? Will the Department of Education be hiring early childhood educators to work in the schools in Dawson and in Watson Lake, and if so, can parents expect similar staff-to-child ratios for their four-year-olds that exist in childcare centres?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Actually, it is quite interesting to me that the first two questions were critical of the fact that I would be directing things and the third one asks me to direct things.

Here is what we are going to do: We are going to work with the school communities in every community in the territory to increase K4 options for families. We are going to work with the school communities in Dawson City and in Watson Lake to determine what is best for their school communities — for their schools, for their current daycares — and to expand and support early childhood educators.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 417

Clerk: Motion No. 417, standing in the name of Mr. Kent.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Copperbelt South:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reconsider changes to the use of individualized education plans for students in Yukon and ensure that students who need additional support have appropriate resources.

Mr. Kent: This is obviously an extremely important issue that many of us, I'm sure, have been hearing about over the past number of months, just since we rose just prior to Christmas. I know that it's something I have heard a lot about, and I'm pleased that, in talking with my colleagues, they identify this as an important issue and an important enough issue that this will be the first private member's motion that we bring forward for the final Sitting of the Legislature during this mandate, the 2021 Spring Sitting.

I'm going to be the only member from my caucus who speaks to this. I'm obviously anxious to hear from other members in the other parties here. One of the things that I did want to walk through was a bit of a timeline. I think the important thing to start with is the 2019 Auditor General's

report on K through 12 education in Yukon, which referenced the inclusive education piece. Another aspect that I want to touch on is about some questions that my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, asked at the Public Accounts Committee hearing into that Auditor General's report in December of that year.

Then, I want to touch on some of the Yukon Teachers' Association's concerns with the inclusive education review and their lack of engagement, because I think the lack of engagement piece is something that we've heard from many individuals when it comes to this, and that's spelled out in the letter that I tabled earlier today from the four organizations addressed to the Premier of the Yukon, which led to some media reports, both before and after Christmas, which I'll reference.

I wrote a letter to the minister — I tabled it earlier today — in mid-January. I believe that January 14 was the date that I sent that letter. Oddly — or not so oddly — at 1:00 p.m. today, the response finally arrived for us, and I thank our staff for sending that in to me. I haven't had a chance to properly review the response from the minister, but I'm assuming that she will address in her response to the motion today some of the things contained in here.

I also understand that there's a potential for an amendment to the motion by the government. The minister did reach out to me today. It's kind of funny that I haven't heard from any of the ministers across the way on our motions or potential amendments until today. I think a lot of that has to do with the change in math in here with the numbers on either side of the House being equal, whereas prior to this, the Liberals had a clear majority and were able to vote in favour of their amendments or against our motions as they saw fit. But that said, I do have an open mind and I will see if there is an amendment and take a look at the wording, and our caucus and I will make a decision based on that.

As I said, I wanted to touch on the Auditor General's report, the K through 12 education in Yukon. There were a number of observations and recommendations in here specific to inclusive learning, and of course, the individual education plans were referenced as well.

As I mentioned, I think that this is an important starting point because it was shortly after this report was finalized and delivered by the Auditor General that some of the changes that we saw were initiated in the Department of Education when it comes to transferring students off of the individualized education plans, or the IEPs, and moving so many of them to SLPs or the behavioural learning plans that we spoke about earlier on in Question Period here today.

So, one of the titles in the Auditor General's report is that the department did not know whether its approach to inclusive education was working. What the OAG found was that, in particular — I'll quote from the report: "In particular, we found that the Department did not monitor the delivery of its services and supports for students who had special education needs. Nor did it monitor these students' outcomes."

In the next part of the OAG report, it says: "Our analysis supporting this finding presents what we examined and

discusses the following topics: Supports needed to implement inclusive education not identified; No reviews and evaluations on the overall approach to inclusive education; No process to prioritize students who needed specialized assessments; Poor oversight of services and supports for students who had special needs."

The auditor concludes that why this finding matters is: "... because if the Department does not know whether its approach to inclusive education is working, it cannot determine: whether students and teachers are receiving the services and supports required for students to reach their maximum potential; whether any patterns in service use or outcomes might indicate particular schools, groups, teachers, or subject areas that need more focused attention from the Department; whether processes affecting students and teachers should be changed to improve the delivery of inclusive education; and whether there are adequate resources to respond to student needs in a timely manner."

The Auditor General does have a recommendation with respect to that, which I will mention here in a little bit, but I do want to talk about some of the analysis that the OAG did to support this finding that they made. They examined whether the Department of Education delivered inclusive education by establishing the services and supports needed to meet all students' needs. As part of this, they examined how the department assessed students who had special education needs and whether the department monitored and evaluated the impact of its services and supports to students identified as having special needs. This work included surveying K through 12 public school teachers in Yukon to determine whether they thought the department gave them suitable tools and resources to support their teaching responsibilities.

The supports needed to implement inclusive education — not identified. So, what the OAG found was that the department did not identify the supports that schools needed to implement the inclusive education programs, and without that, the department did not know whether teachers and other school officials had what they needed to support students. For example, they found that, although the department's annual report for 2017 showed a 31-percent increase in the number of EAs allocated to schools between 2014-15 and 2016-17, the department could not determine whether this increase made any difference in teachers' ability to implement inclusive education or improve student outcomes.

The Auditor General also identified: There was no process to prioritize students who needed specialized assessments; no reviews and evaluations on the overall approach to inclusive education; poor oversight of services and supports for students who had special needs. They did take a look at the school level. The OAG reviewed 41 files of students who had IEPs. Of course, that's the subject of what we're talking about here today. They covered both the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years.

These files were randomly sampled from five schools across Yukon. Over this two-year period, this meant that they had examined 82 IEPs in total. They examined whether students who had these plans got the services and supports that

were identified as being needed. They also examined whether the students' progress was monitored and plans updated.

Of those 82 plans, they found: Five percent — only four of them — showed that the services and supports recommended by specialists or school staff had been delivered; two of them had the required progress reports; and five, or six percent, had been reviewed and updated, as required.

When we move on to the recommendation that the OAG made with respect to their review of the inclusive education piece, of this overall audit — again, I'll quote the actual recommendation, which is in the report at bullet 70. It says: "The Department of Education should conduct a full review of its services and supports for inclusive education. It should exercise a leadership role by, for example, engaging with teachers, parents, and specialists to determine how the Department can help teachers maximize student success. The review should include examining how best to..." — and there are a number of bullets here — "... evaluate whether its approach to inclusive education is working, determine whether services and supports are having the desired effect, determine whether sufficient resources are in place to support inclusive education, prioritize students for specialized assessments, assess and track specialist recommendations, and assess and track teachers' use of recommended strategies."

That was the recommendation from the Auditor General. The department's response was that they agreed with the recommendation, and I'll quote again: "The Department of Education will seek to collaborate with Yukon First Nations governments to conduct an in-depth review of its services and supports for inclusive education. This review will ensure all students have access to quality education by addressing their diverse learning needs in a supported environment that allows them to meet their maximum potential. The review will start in fall 2019 and provide recommendations by spring 2020, and will result in the development of appropriate strategies, to be implemented starting in the 2020–21 school year."

Obviously, we know that the review being conducted by Dr. Yee has been delayed due to the pandemic, so we understand that these timelines are pushed out a little bit. But again, I go back to a remark that the minister made earlier today in Question Period about how the Yukon Liberals are taking this bold step and reviewing inclusive education, but none of that started until the Auditor General recommended it, so it's a little disingenuous for the minister to do a victory lap on her government having the courage to take this on. I think that the Auditor General helped them along with that courage by conducting the review and issuing this particular recommendation that the department has responded to.

I am just going to finish on those timelines that are in here that have obviously slipped for reasons beyond the control of the Department of Education. "The review will focus on inclusive education supports and services for Yukon students, including the delivery and monitoring of special education ... with Yukon First Nations because they are best placed to understand and respond to their citizens' educational needs and to direct targeted resources to support the success of First Nation students. The review will also consider perspectives

from Yukon educators, parents, school councils, the Yukon Francophone School Board, and the Yukon Teachers' Association, all of whom have important responsibilities in supporting students."

I will come back to that YTA issue, because there were some concerns raised early in 2020 by the previous president of the Yukon Teachers' Association on how this review was being conducted, so I want to make sure that we note those for the record here today.

Just to conclude the department's response: "The Department notes that the actions it takes in response to other recommendations contained in this audit report will also improve its ability to improve inclusive education services and supports to all Yukon students."

Again, this Auditor General's report was from the summer of 2019, so when we look ahead to the fall of 2019, that's when I understand the changes started to be made where students were being migrated off of IEPs and on to SLPs or the behavioural support plans. That is an important action that — in talking to representatives, teachers, and others, trying to figure out exactly where this started — it was the fall of 2019 when that work started.

Again, not having read the entire letter — so the context might be out of place — the response I received at 1:00 p.m. today from the letter I wrote the minister two months ago — it says — and I'll quote: "As a result, presentations to school staff were given in fall 2019 to review the requirements to the Education Act and to clarify the criteria used for different learning plans..."

So, that lines up. I'm not sure exactly what the minister will say were the results of that or what precipitated that, but again, I believe that it had a lot to do with the Auditor General of Canada's report.

In talking to teachers and others about it, that's when communications started to go out to parents who had students on IEPs about how they would be migrating over to SLPs.

I think one other thing that's important to note, when it comes to that too, is that many of those parents — some whom I've heard from anyway — have relayed a concern to me that they were told, when they were to be moved off of the IEPs into these other plans, that if they remained on IEPs, that would mean that their students were not on a path to graduate, which is extremely alarming for so many parents.

Obviously, everyone wants their children to be successful. Everyone wants their children to be able to graduate. So, to tell parents that they have to move off of IEPs on to these other plans or they won't be on track to graduate is extremely alarming. It's extremely alarming for those parents whom I talked to about this. Many of them, of course, decided to move to the SLPs or the other ones with the fear of their children not being able to graduate hanging over their heads and without the full knowledge of what the IEPs provided and that they were recognized in the legislation, whereas the student learning plans and others were not. Again, that's the fall of 2019.

Now, when we move into December of that year, the chair of the Public Accounts Committee — my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin — asked a question of the

Department of Education officials who were in attendance here in these chambers for that hearing. I will quote from a document that I will provide to Hansard. It is available on the Legislative Assembly website reports. It was prepared by the Yukon Department of Education for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to provide additional information that the deputy minister committed to providing to the Public Accounts Committee. So, this is the follow-up from after the actual hearing, and what I'm going to quote from starts on page 414 of that document — but again, I'll provide this to Hansard once I'm done today.

The chair again asked a question. "I have a question regarding individual education plans, or IEPs. There are two parts to it, I guess. The first would be: How are these plans tracked between teachers in regard to priority? Also, I have heard over the past couple of days that IEPs are being changed or phased out. Is there something changing with IEPs as well?"

The deputy minister committed to a written return at that time, and she did get back to my colleague and other members of PAC, saying: "... (IEPs) are a priority for the department. IEPs continue to be an important and mandatory tool to support students with special educational needs. The current and continuing process for IEPs is based on the eligibility parameters provided in the Education Act. If a student is eligible for an IEP, then the school staff have 60 days to develop and begin to implement and evaluate an IEP for the student. The IEP must be reviewed with all relevant parties three times throughout the school year.

"The Schools and Student Services Branch has been working to clarify the process for developing IEPs to ensure that practices at the school level are aligned with the Education Act, and that IEPs are used for cases where students have intellectual, behavioural, physical or multiple challenges that make them unable to meet the curriculum goals and require a modified plan to set personal expectations and outcomes geared for a student's unique needs.

"Alternative tools, such as Student Learning Plans, are used to support students who may need adaptations in order to meet curricular learning standards, either at or below their grade level. The Student Learning Plan provides documentation of the adaptations that are in place as a student transitions between grade levels and teachers to ensure the student has continued access (as needed) to the adaptations and the student's performance is assessed using these supports.

"IEPs are responsive to the changing needs of students, and are updated three times a year to assess current goals and how success has been demonstrated. In Yukon's new curriculum, staff can now develop personalized and flexible learning goals for students with IEPs to demonstrate their learning and development, and support students with IEPs to meet the curriculum's broader core competencies of communication, thinking, and personal and social responsibility in a way that is meaningful to the student. We can then adjust the IEP over time as the student progresses in their learning.

"Within a school, principals are responsible for ensuring the learning goals of IEPs are being met, and that the plans are evaluated and updated at least three times a year. The Learning

Assistance Teacher (LAT) case manages IEPs within the school, and tracks IEP progress as a student moves between different grade levels and teachers. If a student moves schools, the new school's principal will become responsible for the IEP and the LAT in the new school will case manage the plan along with existing IEPs in the school. All IEPs hold equal priority.

"Students with IEPs and their learning goals are tracked in the student information system. Teachers are responsible for the implementation of an IEP's goals and objectives and can access and view a student's IEP through the system.

"The new Communicating Student Learning guidelines that are part of Yukon's curriculum redesign also inform communicating about learning progress and goals for students who have IEPs. In fall 2019, updates based on parent and teacher feedback, were made to the *Communicating Student Learning Teacher Resource and Professional Development* AppleBook. This tool includes updated supports for teachers to help them identify meaningful ways to assess students with Student Learning Plans learning. Using this guide, we are helping teachers provide meaningful assessments for students with IEPs so these students can demonstrate success in a way that is personalized to the student's needs and aligns with the Dogwood Diploma and Evergreen Certificate pathways."

The deputy minister goes on to provide further information with respect to IEPs and their documentation on the student information system, known as Aspen. They have not made any changes to how this data is recorded and stored; however, they are currently focusing on how they are using this data system to produce more relevant and meaningful reports on IEPs.

Nowhere in there am I able to — there's an awful lot of language about how important IEPs are and how they will move with the student and how there are meetings three times a year but much less when it comes to student learning plans. Obviously, this precipitated a lot of concern among parents, students, and the teachers in various schools. That is something that we have heard. There really was no answer to my colleague's question about whether or not IEPs are being changed or phased out, as there's something changing with IEPs.

I am kind of interested to hear that, because again, this came to us from parents in the schools who were hearing about these changes and then again in the letter that I got from the minister today. She did reference that presentations to school staff were given in the fall of 2019 to start to review the requirements of the *Education Act* and clarify the criteria used for different learning plans. Again, these are challenges that we see when it comes to the timeline.

When it comes to consultation, I don't think that it is a secret that the Liberal government has fallen down quite a lot on consultation. I will just quickly reference a February 26 article in the *Yukon News* from the former president of the Yukon Teachers' Association who felt that the teachers should have been consulted on the ground floor of an independent review of inclusive and special education in the territory now underway. She is quoted as saying: "Teachers are the experts", arguing that the Yukon government not consulting with the

teachers union at this stage...” — as she determined — “... is a “snub.”

I raised this in this Legislature with the minister, but I think it just speaks to the fact that the Liberals have a tough time with consultation on certain files. This minister and the Minister of Highways and Public Works are two of the bigger offenders when it comes to skipping steps on the platform tagline of “Be Heard”.

I will fast-forward to a letter that I tabled earlier today that was signed by leaders of the four organizations I mentioned: the First Nation Education Directorate, the Yukon Teachers’ Association, the LDAY learning centre, and Autism Yukon. I think that a lot of concerns are quite obvious in here.

I will quote from this letter on page 2: “We are seeking a meaningful explanation from the Yukon Government why it made the decision to actively remove vulnerable students from IEPs and put them on Student Learning Plans or Behavioural Learning Plans. Results from recent grade 7 assessments (2018-19) indicate that 73% of Yukon First Nations and 26% of Non-First Nations students are not on track or extending their learning in numeracy. A shameful result that should have generated immediate action. Without the legal protections that an IEP provides, chances are that many of these students who need very specific and consistent interventions will not be successful in secondary school.”

Mr. Speaker, the letter also states that, following the release of the 2019 Office of the Auditor General report on K to 12 education that I spoke of earlier, “... a decision to revise the process for identifying students’ special education needs and the way students access supports, was made by the DOE. The decision, which resulted in the migration of 138 students with IEPs to Student Learning Plans/Behavioural Learning Plans is a significant shift with substantial repercussions. Moreover, the fact that the decision was made prior to the completion of the review currently underway...” — again, that is the inclusive education review being conducted by Dr. Yee — “... and without the knowledge of stakeholders raises further concerns.”

The letter goes on to say that “More than one third of students recently moved off IEPs in the last year were vulnerable students and youth of our Yukon First Nations. Yukon Government has implemented new rules which means these 138 students, designated as special needs under the Education Act which specifies IEP not STLP, are no longer guaranteed the necessary allocation of inclusive education resources and supports. Our parents are telling us their children are falling further and further behind and they have had to seek support for their children outside of school from other agencies including LDAY. Teachers in the schools have also reported concerns with the lack of training they need to support the complex needs they see in their classrooms.”

I’m just going to go on to one final paragraph from this letter: “As education stakeholders and concerned members of the community, we are allies in challenging the Yukon Government’s decision to make this drastic and damaging change to inclusive education services before any outcome or findings of the current review of inclusive education, and given

the poor outcomes of First Nations and vulnerable students reflected in the Auditor General’s report.”

The four very reputable organizations that took the time to pen this letter to the Premier about their concerns with respect to the IEPs — I guess that is one of the main drivers for the motion that I brought forward urging the Government of Yukon to reconsider those changes, to reconsider migrating students off of IEPs, and to ensure that students who need additional support have appropriate resources. I think that is extremely important. I’m sure it’s something that the — the resource piece is something that we can all agree with here in this Legislature.

It is extremely important for students to have all of the resources that they need to be successful, but again, the missing piece here is that, in 2019 when this started — where there was communication to parents — obviously communication to these organizations that students were starting to be moved off of IEPs and on to SLPs. Again, although it is not referenced there — parents whom I talked to were informed that students on IEPs were unlikely to graduate from high school, which is an extremely scary thing for families to hear. Of course, in many cases, they would have moved their students to SLPs just to ensure that they still had an opportunity to be successful in their education — in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary.

I guess the other question that I am hoping the minister can answer here today — when moving from IEPs to the other plans, many of the students who would have graduated with an IEP — which is recognized at post-secondary institutions outside of the Yukon — whereas it is my understanding from talking to one of the stakeholders that the student learning plans would not be recognized by those same institutions. So, it is curious why the IEP was so readily abandoned, and as I mentioned earlier on in Question Period today, what I have been hearing is that it was done so for the Liberal government to save money because resources weren’t guaranteed. I am hoping that the minister can clarify what the reasoning was to move these students off of IEPs, but in the absence of anything from her, parents are just left to wonder. I will be curious to hear her response as to why this decision was made to migrate those 138 students.

Something that I did ask as well in Question Period today and didn’t get an answer to — I did mention the 2019 Education annual report and the numbers identified for IEPs. Curiously, that report didn’t mention anything about transitioning students to IEPs, as has been suggested and corroborated by the four stakeholders that signed off on this letter. It does have statistical numbers for the IEPS but is missing stats for the student learning plans and behavioural support plans.

Just having quickly perused the letter that I received at 1:00 p.m. today, it says — and I quote: “As you are aware, the Department of Education reports on the number of students with IEPs each year in the annual report but does not currently include reporting on other learning plans in the report, however we are committed to working on collecting this data going forward.”

I’m hoping that perhaps the minister will have some of those stats for us here in her response today when it comes to

how many students — again, the most recent numbers that we have are from 2019, so if she could provide us with the most up-to-date numbers on how many students are currently on IEPs, how many are on the other plans — the SLPs or the BSPs — and then how many have migrated from the IEPs to these other plans since the fall of 2019 when this direction was given.

I'm anxious to hear from others here this afternoon, so I'm going to conclude my remarks. When I am on my feet again to close debate on this motion later on this afternoon — as Education critic, I received a number of e-mails and phone calls and other outreach from parents, so in a confidential way, obviously, I do want to relay some of those concerns and make sure that they're on the record here today so that, before members decide how they're going to vote on this, they get a chance to hear from our constituents and Yukoners, our friends and neighbours, on some of the concerns that they have with respect to what's being done.

With that, I'll conclude my remarks and listen to others on this important topic here today.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the Member for Copperbelt South for bringing forward this motion because it is a matter that we too, in the New Democratic Party, have heard a significant amount about from not only the groups that have been named in this Legislative Assembly and who sent thoughtful and carefully worded letters to opposition members as well as to the minister, expressing their concerns about the unilateral action of the Yukon Liberal government in terms of its decision to make changes that are not only inconsistent but actually contrary to the law and to the *Education Act*.

I have a number of concerns about the approach being taken by the government — by the Minister of Education. I want to say just at the outset that, when I speak to this, I speak to it as a parent — a parent who had a child, who in grade 2 was told — notwithstanding the fact that there had been a significant amount of effort by her parents and, we thought, by the school and notwithstanding that the teacher never indicated — she was told on the first day of her third year of school that she had failed, which is a fairly devastating thing to have your child have to deal with — to be told, as she is sitting in a grade 2/3 class that she is not in grade 3 and that she is in grade 2. That child had the wherewithal that she needed to speak to the school counsellor — when we demanded that there be a meeting and a discussion about how this could happen and, secondly, what would be done to address the apparent failure of this child. We were told not to worry — she was smart, she was bright. We had no doubts about that, but the school system wasn't recognizing it.

My husband and I had not suffered the trauma of residential school. We came from — notwithstanding the fact that I was the eldest of six kids in a single-parent family in an era when people didn't think that single women could raise kids. Notwithstanding that, we had self-confidence and we had education, so we were able to prevail and to insist that the department do a thorough assessment of that child's learning capacity and gaps.

Again, we were cautioned — “Oh no, you shouldn't do that. It will stigmatize the child.”

Our response was: “Have you not stigmatized this child already? By failing?”

Flash forward to grade 9. We have a child who is demonstrating that they're very unhappy at school. Without the intervention of an educator from whom that child had sought guidance and support in terms of trying to understand math, that child would have been on the path to failure because the school had not offered supports. Thank god for one educator who said, “You need to intervene and you need to have your child properly assessed.”

That child was not going to graduate from high school on that path. As a result of the ability of the parents — who, as I said, unlike many parents in this territory, had neither suffered a trauma or intergenerational trauma of residential school nor faced economic hardship — and with the cooperation of the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, a qualified psychologist did a full assessment. As a result of that, an individualized education plan was put in place.

I was in a conversation or in a meeting or gathering of folks the other day, and that young woman, in response to a conversation that was going on, said: “You know, if I hadn't gotten that support and if I hadn't had that IEP, I would not have graduated from high school and I would not have a master's degree.”

What I am concerned about when I hear and when I see — not just hearsay, according to the minister or the government — that there have been changes made — I have been in meetings and school council meetings where I've seen the triage on the blackboard — and this is several years ago, so I'm not sure what happened between 2018 and 2021 — but the triage in terms of determining who would get educational assistance. It was significant in terms of not looking at — as the act says, when we look at the requirements under the neurodevelopmental specifications for an IEP criteria review — a 14-page review that identifies all the criteria that could lead to an IEP — cutbacks by the government were saying that we only want the most severely — we're only going to provide an IEP where there's active engagement — we have pressure to put on it to have it — again, going back to who gets the services. When you triage it and go to those who have familial involvement with the justice system and the child welfare system — you wonder.

It is my understanding that, in fact, the number that was cited by the Member for Copperbelt South underestimates and understates the number of children who have been removed or transitioned away from individualized education plans. It is my understanding that you can't change what is legislatively required and you can't change the law by policy. If the government had been more forthcoming and had been more clear in its intent and if it had simply said that we're going — as we saw yesterday with the tabling of an amendment to the SCAN legislation — if they wanted to amend the *Education Act* to remove or change the notion of individualized education plans, then the right thing to do would be to do so by legislative

amendment and to have that debate in this Legislative Assembly.

To simply assume that somebody — that the minister and her officials have the authority to contravene the act by putting in place a policy that's inconsistent with the act — I don't know how she can stand in front of educators, parents, professional associations, and non-governmental organizations that have worked tirelessly over the last 30 and 40 years to work with kids and their families. I don't understand that.

We have heard that the government is making adaptations or modifications. Quite frankly, that's a red herring. "Adaptation" is used to describe various techniques that can be used to assist a child in learning, and that's also included in the Department of Education's adaptation checklist. I have a copy of the adaptation checklist. I am not going to go through it at length, but it's there. "Modification" refers to a change in the curriculum of such a degree that a child could not ultimately satisfy the requirements for what we call a "Dogwood Diploma".

Nothing in the *Education Act* distinguishes between adaptations or modifications for any reason, either as a precondition for qualifying for an IEP or as a reason for denying eligibility for a child who otherwise meets the special education needs. Even if this were the case, at what age is a child's assessed ability to graduate with a Dogwood Diploma assessed — kindergarten, grade 3, grade 9?

There's a lot that needs to be said and should be said about this, but fundamentally, it boils down to how you can't mislead the public and parents. I have many concerns. Over the 11.5 years that I have been a Member of the Legislative Assembly, we have had many parents come to us and say that, because of the increasing lack of transparency around individualized education plans and how parents access them. I can remember my colleague, the previous Member for Mayo-Tatchun, who was an educator and was the previous president of the Yukon Teachers' Association, raising many concerns in this Legislative Assembly about the fact that, if you don't tell the parents, then they won't know that it is the right of their child under the act to have this individualized education plan developed for them.

Yes, governments like to curtail and contain expenditures, but when we see repeated failing grades of our education system — as we have heard not just today but previously — repeated failures of our education system to service children throughout this community — then we start looking at a multi-tiered system — because those who have and those who get — and what we start to see — and what I have seen over the last number of years — is that parents become so frustrated with the lack of access to support within the school system for their children who have fulfilled criteria established on the neural developmental specifications, or the IEP criteria review sheet — the 14 pages — that they have been forced to move out of this territory. What are consequences of that?

We often lose people — the children's parents, who were contributing members of our economy and of our community. It is fairly short-sighted, and to assume that, because a child needs, at certain stages of their life, those additional supports

that are identified in the neurodevelopmental specifications IEP criteria review sheet — anywhere — I mean, if you look at page 5, which speaks to the criteria that are used to determine the supports and how you assess with respect to the autism spectrum disorder — I'll come back to this in a second.

There are many neurodevelopmental disorders, or neural developmental issues, that need and can — with the qualified professionals that we have in this territory who want to work with kids — those can be worked with so that children do succeed. Who are we, and who is the minister, at any time in that child's development — at any time in that child's parents' desire to see the best for that child — to predetermine the outcome, to say that you're not going to have the opportunity to gain an education that you could gain if we helped you with the necessary supports at specific times in your development?

We have the science; we have the professional spectrum of expertise in this territory. Why aren't we using it, if we truly believe that every child deserves — as I have heard this minister say — all that we can offer and that every child deserves a good education and not the sham of a school-leaving certificate? Seriously — how insulting is that to a child?

Curiously enough — I would be interested to know from the minister what stage she is at with respect to the review of the neurodevelopmental specifications — the individualized plan criteria review sheet. As I mentioned before, it is a 14-page review setting out various criteria that cover the various situations that might present — or see a child and their parents presenting — to access supports through an individualized education plan. This has been under review since 2013 — eight years.

So, I am curious as to how that fits in with the now multi-year contract that the department has set out for the new language that is being used around what was, should have been — and still is, under the act — individualized education plans — everything for how we deal with gifted and talented children and how we deal with the criteria around communication disabilities or learning disabilities — whether it is dyslexia or dysgraphia, intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

I would be interested in hearing from the minister how many of the IEPs are currently in place and how many of the IEPs that were withdrawn were for children with FAS. The criteria also covers mild and moderate emotional behavioural needs and identifies the kinds of supports and what needs to be presented — the presentation of evidence — and what the documented individualized education plan will provide. Severe emotional and behavioural disabilities, medical disabilities, visual disabilities and blindness, hearing disabilities and deafness — which of these life conditions that a child presents with does this government think is not worthy and does not merit the investment to ensure that the child reaches their full potential?

There was a period in time when we said, "Blind kids — you're not going to make it in school, so we'll set up an institution for you. Deaf kids? Institutions for you." We've gone beyond that. I don't understand the logic of what is being proposed by this approach that says, "We are not going to work

with a child. We are going to make assumptions about what your potential is.” Think of all the human beings — Stephen Hawking — would he have qualified for an IEP under this system? Sounds like it is not likely.

If you just do it the right way the first time, you avoid having people — such as parents, students, professional associations, non-governmental organizations, and the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate — becoming alarmed, and then being forced to question what the true intentions are of this government. We don’t need to be on the defensive — a proactive approach on this to disclose what your intentions are — if your intentions were and are to change the legislation, say so. Let’s have a discussion about that.

That’s not what we’ve heard. We’ve heard communication spin. Quite frankly, from my experience as a parent, the last thing that I will tolerate is spin. Having the experience that we had and that I know many parents share, your children are your most important — I want to say “legacy”, but there’s nothing more important than them. If somebody is going to set up a barrier to their success, you can expect that you are going to have a lot of parents — and you are going to also have children who are now adults who had the benefit and succeeded because they had the benefit of individualized education plans.

This harkens back to how the government handled its approach to the alternate learning situations of kids when the pandemic hit. Instead of thinking through that this is where those kids succeed and that this is where the centres of excellence are, they thwarted them. It’s an unfortunate approach.

One of the things that I would be curious to hear is that — when I look at and recall the various — when you enter into an individualized education plan, there is a parental consultation when you’re establishing an individual education plan. The form is clear. It is to ensure that the parent has been consulted, and it outlines the section of the *Education Act* for these IEPs where it’s set out, and there is a step-by-step guide for completing them. I’m curious as to how often or whether — I’ll have the minister explain to us how the withdrawal or transition from IEPs to student learning plans or behavioural support plans — because I would be interested to know whether the parents clearly understand what SLPs and BSPs are. In fact, it could, if they are done properly, comprise part of an individualized education plan. That’s part of the education policy. I can cite it if you want.

I know that my colleagues have had many conversations more recently with many people who have been affected by this decision over the last months by the minister and the department and by the lack of clear and coherent communication around the intent and the proposed outcomes.

I just want to make it clear — as I hope I have — that this is a serious issue. When people have experienced the difficulty and the challenges and the distress that a child can endure in a school system, when they don’t get the support they need to succeed for years — and then to see the transformation that occurs, that can occur, with a properly executed individual education plan — I, for one, am not prepared to see that changed without full debate, full discussion, the involvement of

all — from the students to the education experts, to the non-governmental organizations that work with those children and families, to the First Nation Education Directorate. I am not prepared to stand by and see a change that is effectively contrary to the *Education Act*.

If you want to change the act, as I said before, then have the guts to pull the act forward, but don’t try to do it under the guise of calling it a policy change, because it’s not.

I hope that I have made it clear that I do support the motion as brought forward by the Member for Copperbelt South. I think that his language is moderate. He is urging the government to reconsider changes. I would be much more emphatic than I think I have been — drop it until you have had the proper consultation, until you have, as a result of that proper consultation, determined that there is a need to amend the *Education Act*.

Mr. Gallina: I thank the Member for Copperbelt South for bringing this motion forward. It is an important motion in that it affects many Yukon families in the territory — here in the Assembly, as we have heard by the Member for Whitehorse Centre. This particular discussion impacts my family and I considerably. I have four children in the Yukon school system. Two of them are benefiting from the support that they are receiving from our education system.

Before I get into what I am seeing and what I would like to share with this Assembly and with Yukoners, I just want to take a minute to thank some folks, because it really does take a community to get our children through and to support our children in our education system. I know that I required a community when I was a young man going through the education system, and I know that it takes many people to support our children going through our education system.

I want to thank: teachers who take the time to meet with my wife and I to explain where our children are and how they are progressing, what their challenges are, how they’re bringing our children forward, what our children are learning, and what they want to share; counsellors who make it a priority to help all of the students who come before them, who go above and beyond to provide supports, to provide tools for children to become independent thinkers and independent learners and citizens of our society; and learning assistance teachers who also take their personal time to help all of the children who come forward.

It’s amazing to see that, when you are in this as a parent and you have children who are connected to this and you see the supports that are coming, it can sometimes be overwhelming to really appreciate what your child is going through. I know that many people step up to support our children in the territory, and I want to say thank you.

I want to also acknowledge the tremendous amount of work that stakeholders are providing to students in the territory — educators, school councils, parents, and volunteers who listen to the concerns of students and families and who bring those concerns forward and are the foundation of our school communities — the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, the Yukon Teachers’ Association — to provide the tools

necessary for teachers to be able to deliver curriculum and work within our education system — Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees, the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate, and NGOs that I know we have benefited from, such as the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon. I have had two children who have been helped with their reading, and LDAY has been a tremendous support. All of this is to say that the Gallina family has benefited from the supports that are available. It's not easy to navigate. There isn't a simple book that you can pick up, as a parent — like you would go through the phone book and just decide to reach out to certain supports. You have to actively communicate, share, and understand what's going on with your child.

As other members have received casework from constituents who have questions and who also have children in our system — that they did have questions and were wanting to get some reassurance about individualized education plans and ensure that they were receiving accurate information — I thank those constituents for bringing those issues forward to help me communicate with the Department of Education and the minister.

I had written to get some clarification, on behalf of my constituents, to understand, and I did receive a response from the Minister of Education. I'll read a little bit in here. From this letter, dated January 22, 2021, to me — and I quote: “No changes have been made to the supports that students can receive to ensure they are successful at school. Further, no directive has been issued to remove students from their IEP if they are already on one. As part of our ongoing work to ensure students are properly supported at school, we work with school staff to make sure they are working with families to confirm their child is on a plan that best outlines the supports they need to reach their maximum potential. In some cases, this has meant that school staff have worked with families to shift a student to a Student Learning Plan or Behavioural Support Plan instead of an IEP if the student requires minor adaptations to fully meet the curriculum. However, no change can be made without agreement from parents/guardians. This is in no way about reducing the supports for students, it is about providing every student with the tools and services they need to be successful in school, whatever that success looks like for them.”

I read that into the record as I hear the Member for Whitehorse Centre convey that there weren't supports available for students and that she was concerned that supports had been significantly reduced or even eliminated. I'm not seeing that; I'm not seeing that in my own experience, and I'm not sharing that with my constituents from what I have received from the Minister of Education.

We know, as the Member for Copperbelt South stated, that in 2019 the Auditor General did audit the Department of Education and recommendations were made and that the Department of Education agreed to the recommendations. As a result of those recommendations, a considerable amount of work has been done to address supports for students in the territory. The Member for Copperbelt South talked about consultation and had some criticisms for ministers on consultation. I hear those criticisms — okay.

I just want to draw attention to the report that I believe the Member for Copperbelt South was reviewing and the work that has been done to deliver on the recommendations that the Auditor General had made. A consultant had been engaged to address the Auditor General's report, and we look at student support services — and unit focus groups have been complete. Curriculum assessment with unit focus groups have been complete. First Nation initiatives branch focus groups and Yukon school administrator focus groups have been complete. This is January and February. Between March and August, as members have noted, there was a hold on this review for unforeseen circumstances. As we looked to the fall of last year — September 2020 — an advisory committee for Yukon education introductory sessions was completed. As well, in September, there was an announcement of a review extension and release of an interim update from the consultant. An advisory committee to develop an online tool — that online tool was shared with families, with educators, and with the school communities to provide their input. There were focus groups with the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate and the Yukon First Nations Education Commission.

All 14 First Nations have been met with and have had discussions. Specifically, meetings with Yukon First Nations have taken place and continue to take place to address the recommendations that have been made by the Auditor General, and I believe — and from what I am seeing in the correspondence that has been shared with me and the report that I am reading — that progress is being made in these discussions. I have confidence from what I am seeing.

The type of learning plan that a student has in no way precludes the student from receiving any type of learning support. Learning supports are available to Yukon students — full stop. Each learning plan is designed to provide learning supports that each individual student requires to be successful in their school. Again, the type of learning plan that a student has in no way limits the type of learning supports that are available to that student. In fact, as we have heard, this government and the Minister of Education, in Question Period today, have initiated a comprehensive review of inclusive and special education programming, with a report expected soon.

The Department of Education continues to work to ensure that each student receives the necessary supports for their learning needs and that the approach to these needs are consistent and effective, and I can vouch for that. I can vouch that the Department of Education is continuing to work to ensure that each student receives the necessary supports for their learning needs. I am speaking from personal experience, with two children who are receiving supports from the department in collaboration with the school council, with learning assistants, teachers, educators, and NGOs.

As for the recommendations from the Auditor General in 2019, we are working with a consultant who is leading a review of how inclusive and special education programs are provided across our territory.

In what I have shared with constituents and from the support that I have been able to work toward with my family, I am seeing that the government is not restricting access to

individualized education plans; I don't see that they are restricting access to individualized education plans.

I see that the government is offering a variety of supports to children to ensure that they are successful. Because I receive correspondence from constituents, I appreciate that, when there are reviews and when changes happen, that is concerning. People want accurate information and people want to have confidence that the support that they are receiving is going to continue and, if it's not going to continue, what does that look like?

I am suggesting that access to individualized education plans is not being restricted; it is still there — contrary to what the Member for Whitehorse Centre would have people believe in suggesting that this government was misleading people in that individualized education plans were no longer available or that children were not going to receive the support that they need. That is not what I'm seeing and that's not what I'm stating.

In looking at this motion, the Member for Copperbelt South is asking this government to reconsider changes to the use of individualized education plans. That is the crux. I am seeing, I am feeling, and I am presenting that the government is not restricting access to individualized education plans and that individualized education plans are still a tool that is being used to support Yukon students. I think that the government should continue to use individualized education plans as one tool to support Yukon students.

With that, I would like to make an amendment to this motion.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Gallina: I move:

THAT Motion No. 417 be amended by:

- (1) deleting the phrase "reconsider changes to";
- (2) and adding the phrase "continue" in its place.

Speaker: I have had an opportunity to review the proposed amendment to Motion No. 417, and have been advised by the Clerks-at-the-Table that it is procedurally in order.

It is moved by the Member for Porter Creek Centre:

THAT Motion No. 417 be amended by:

- (1) deleting the phrase "reconsider changes to";
- (2) and adding the phrase "continue" in its place.

The proposed amendment is that the motion will read:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue the use of individualized education plans for students in Yukon and ensure that students who need additional support have appropriate resources.

The Member for Porter Creek Centre has three minutes and 40 seconds on the proposed amendment.

Mr. Gallina: In closing, this is an important issue. It touches many people. I'm thankful that the Member for Copperbelt South has brought it forward so that we can have a debate to discuss what is happening with individualized education plans, with student learning plans, with behavioural

support plans, and with the supports that are available for children.

I am communicating with my constituents, and the information that I am seeing and that I am reading is that no directive has been issued to remove students from their IEP if they are already on one. No changes are being made to those children who are already on one, and that there are tremendous supports available for students.

I'm seeing that this government agrees that student learning plans are an essential component to success for each student. It's recognized that each student faces different learning challenges and that our education system should be flexible in supporting those students in the best way possible to assist them, as they carve their path toward success.

As a parent, my children have benefited tremendously from Yukon school learning plans and it is important to my constituents that individual education plans as well as student learning plans and behavioural support plans continue to provide the necessary supports that Yukon children require to be successful. That is why I moved that we amend this motion to state that we continue to use individualized education plans.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Disagree.

Mr. Hutton: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yea, nine nay.

Speaker's casting vote

Speaker: Standing Order 4(2) states that, in the case of an equality of votes on an amendment to a motion, the Speaker shall give a casting vote. In general, the principle applied to amendments is that decisions should not be taken except by a majority and that, where there is no majority, the main motion

should be left in its existing form. I, therefore, vote against the amendment and declare the amendment defeated.

Amendment to Motion No. 417 negated

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion?

Ms. White: I initially had thought that I would listen to comments and not make comments myself today.

I really appreciate that the Member for Porter Creek Centre has not heard of people having bad experiences with IEPs or being moved to student learning plans in the riding of Porter Creek Centre. I thank the Minister of Education for that.

Unfortunately, in my experience, that is not what I have heard. I have had conversations with parents in Dawson City; I've had conversations with parents in Whitehorse; I've had conversations with parents in other communities. There is concern.

So, for the government to say that everything is fine when we have four champions of education — we have the YTA, we have the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, Autism Yukon, and LDAY — send a joint letter, which is a pretty unprecedented thing, to say that they have concerns, that's an issue.

It goes further than that. I appreciate the words and it sounds great, but concerns have been raised.

When we have asked how many students have been moved off of IEPs since 2019, it's a significant number, which begs the question: Why? It was explained to me, when I was going through this, that an IEP is helping someone to reach their high school graduation, their Dogwood Diploma, and it means that they still meet the curriculum, but how it's delivered is different. If you are on a student learning plan, you'll get to grade 12, but you won't be at curriculum level. You won't be at grade level, so it's not the Dogwood Diploma; it's a completion diploma. There is a big difference.

There are stories across the territory about people who have been on IEPs and who have gone on to do other things, so the concerns that we're raising here are incredibly valid, I think. There is going to be a difference of opinion. It's kind of how it works between opposition and government. It seems that there's a difference of opinion. But more importantly, although some members across the way have said that they haven't heard any problems, well, we have. The challenge becomes that, if you as a parent don't fully understand what's happening or you as a parent don't have the ability to advocate or you as a parent are busy taking care of other things — those are the people who, right now, we're trying to support — the children who were put on IEPs and supporting those families. That's what this is about.

It's important to know that, within the *Education Act* — we heard from the Member for Whitehorse Centre that, within the *Education Act*, IEPs are protected. You are able to ask, you get progress updates, and it's protected within the *Education Act*.

The problem is that, with the student learning plans or the behavioural plans, it is not in the same way. I used to sit next to

Mr. Tredger for all those years, and a lot of the work that he did was supporting families through the challenges of asking about where their students were, knowing that they could make appeals and knowing that they could go through that tribunal, but that is protected with the IEPs.

It has been highlighted by others, but there are concerns with the Auditor General's report from 2009 and then in 2019 — where it is called out — that education is failing some Yukon students. It is interesting that the changes were made ahead of the review that is happening right now. I think that this is the biggest concern — that there is a review of special education happening right now and there was a move to switch things around ahead of time. When you talk to people about that process, about trying to get their stories heard and trying to have those conversations, it has not been as easy as all that. It has not been as easy as all that. If you are supporting a child with complex needs and on top of that trying to advocate at every stop, every doorway, and every corner you reach, that is just one more process. In some cases, people in communities were told that the school council would speak on their behalf. I am glad that it got resolved and now people can speak directly to the person who is doing that review.

But why would there be such a change in this process ahead of that review being complete? If there is not a problem, is the government saying that the Yukon Teachers' Association, the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, Autism Yukon, and Yukon Learn are wrong? Are they saying that the concerns that the families have had are wrong and the ones that educators have had are wrong, and EAs — they're wrong? What we are trying to say at this point is slow the roll. Let's not make these decisions, especially when they adversely affect children. There are stories; there are stories of kids who are on IEPs who go on to do great things, but without that, they wouldn't have made it through, so I think what is being asked for is really reasonable. I do.

We talk often in here that we come from different angles at this, and what side is the truth? But I guess the question is: Is the government saying that those four organizations are wrong, that parents are wrong, that teachers are wrong, that families are wrong? Is that what is being said?

So, today in Question Period when the Member for Copperbelt South asked questions about the numbers of students on those plans, we didn't get an answer. I appreciate that in Question Period it is a lot more challenging to get that kind of information, but maybe we can get it here. I guess my question to the minister or to the government is: Is everyone who has spoken out and everyone who has highlighted concerns — are they wrong? I will just leave it there.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have had a lot of time to hear the debate this afternoon. I have listened to the questions in Question Period. We have a difference of opinion in this House. That is clear. That is really at the heart of what we are talking about this afternoon. It comes down to individualized education plans, which I have also spoken to constituents about. I have spoken with my colleague, the Minister of Education. I have spoken with my colleagues and team on this side of the House.

My colleague, the Minister of Education, has been absolutely clear in her conversations with me, with my colleagues, and with the community. There have been no changes within the Department of Education — no direction given from her officials to change or remove children from IEPs or change IEPs. IEPs are laid out in the *Education Act*. They are protected by the *Education Act*, and my colleague has said on the floor of the House and in correspondence to groups — to us — that there have been no changes. Frankly, I believe her. I know that to be the case. There have been no changes to IEPs within the Education department.

That is where it is. So, when we came forward with an amendment — which the opposition actually voted against — continuing to support IEPs, we put that in because that is exactly what is happening. We want to continue using IEPs on this side of the House. No direction has been given and there is no desire to change this as part of the *Education Act*. Yet on the other side of the House, to stir up discord, they keep picking at this and really disparaging my colleague, who has been quite clear and quite consistent in her messaging: No direction has ever been given from Education officials to remove children from individualized education plans.

I know personally from my own family and from my own constituents that it is important that children get the supports that they need. There is no desire — absolutely none — from any of the members of this team on this side of the House to diminish or remove the supports that children have in our education system — none, zero.

We do not want to cut budgets; we do not want to eliminate supports to the children. As a matter of fact, in correspondence from my good colleague, the Minister of Education, students are at the very heart of every decision we make across the education system. I'm going to repeat that, Mr. Speaker: Students are at the heart of every decision we make across the education system. I know where my colleague, the Minister of Education, sits on this. She is absolutely a champion of education.

With each decision, we strive to take actions that support — the members opposite can laugh off-mic. This is no funny matter, Mr. Speaker; this is at the very heart of my constituents — of all of our constituents — how important this. It is no laughing matter, and we do not take it as a laughing matter on this side of the House. It may be a laughing matter for my good colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, but it is not for me or anybody on this side of the House. We take this very seriously, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: I think the Minister of Highways and Public Works has contravened Standing Order 19(i). I should also point out that members over here were laughing at the ridiculousness of his statements, as he well knows.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Obviously, I'm not going to interject myself into debate as to the purpose of the Minister of Highways and Public Works' comments. With respect to Standing Order 19(i), I would characterize the Minister of Highways and Public Works' comments so far as being a dispute among members.

Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I was saying, my colleague has been clear in her correspondence. She has been clear in her comments to me. She has been clear in her comments to all of the agencies we've been talking about today — Autism Yukon, First Nation Education Directorate, Yukon Teachers' Association, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon. She has been clear there, too. There is absolutely no desire on this side of the House to compromise the supports that students in the Yukon education system have access to.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker — and I will put a point on this in a few minutes — we want to enhance the supports our students have, which is why, for the very first time, as my colleague said on the floor of the House earlier during Question Period, we are undertaking a review of the support students have, because we want to make sure that they are as good or better than they are today. That is our goal: to make them better than they are today, to make sure that the students in our system have the supports that they need to be successful in education and to improve education. That is our goal on this side of the House. I know that is the goal of my colleague, the Minister of Education. I absolutely support that goal.

I am going to continue — reading from the letter: "With each decision, we strive to take actions that support students in maximizing their full potential with dignity and purpose and to succeed at school no matter what that looks like for them. This includes actions taken to ensure proper supports are in place for students who have diverse learning needs and those who have been determined to have special education needs and therefore require a specialized education program."

There have been no changes made to supports that students can receive based on their unique learning needs. My colleague has said that to me in correspondence — in writing — and she has said that with every agency she has met with, including this team. It's absolutely correct. Furthermore, there have been no changes to the legislation in the *Education Act* regarding a student's eligibility for an IEP or the definition of an IEP. Let me say this again, Mr. Speaker: There have been no changes to the legislation in the *Education Act* regarding a student's eligibility for an IEP or to the definition of an IEP and there have been no changes to the types of support that are —

Speaker: Order, please.

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Copperbelt South, on a point of order.

Mr. Kent: The member appears to be reading from a letter and he is reading substantially from that letter. As a past practice, I would ask that he would table it so that opposition parties also have a copy of the letter he is reading from.

Speaker: Does the Minister for Highways and Public Works have any issue with tabling the letter?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would be more than happy to table the letter in the House.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: If people wish to be heard, I suppose, on this point of order, the members will stand. Every member will stand if they wish to be heard. Member for Whitehorse Centre, please.

Ms. Hanson: I was just saying off-mic what I will say on mic, which is that it is my understanding that — and as I have been informed previously in this Legislative Assembly — when we cite documents at length — so, more than a sentence, where we indicate a quote — that we are to table that document. That is what I was saying off-mic.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I would just note that I was listening fairly closely to the Member for Copperbelt South's submissions or his contributions to debate. I would also note that he read a lot, but I also was listening carefully and a lot of what he was reading was from the public record. But, of course, the Member for Copperbelt South, being a seasoned and veteran Member of the Legislative Assembly, will know that the same rules would apply to him.

As I was listening carefully, I do believe that he was either advising that it was of the public record or that he would be providing it for Hansard. But I would just note that he was reading a lot as well.

But I take the point that's made by the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and that is that those are the rules that do apply — that if any member is reading extensively from a letter or report, that said letter or said report should be submitted to the Clerks-at-the-Table. That is a basic principle that I agree with.

In any event, the Minister of Highways and Public Works can continue.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact is, Mr. Speaker — as I have been saying — no changes have been made to the law. No changes have been made or were directed to be made by the minister's office or the deputy minister's office to the operations within the Yukon's many, many, many schools.

That is the message — that is really the message that we really have to get out to parents because they need, as my colleague has said again and again — they are entitled to having the correct information. It is something that people — it's vital to their children's well-being and their education. We understand that on this side of the House.

What is being done here, Mr. Speaker, are sort of implications that this side of the House is trying to somehow subvert children's education, and I want to be very clear this afternoon on the floor of the House that nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, we are putting more money to education; we are putting more money to our children through many different

programs, including early childhood education and daycare. We are putting more resources into supports for students, as I said during my response to the budget — \$70 million is being spent to help. I want to make sure that people understand that we are far from subverting the cause of supports for children in education. As a matter of fact, my colleague — and this side of the House — has been very clear, despite all the efforts from the side opposite, that we want to make sure that this review that we are doing in education — the first review in decades and perhaps ever, to my colleague's remarks earlier today — builds on and improves education results for students and gets them the supports that they need to be successful in school. We on this side of the House want children to be successful. We want to make sure that the parents, the families, and the students themselves have the tools they need to be successful on their terms and graduate from the Yukon education system with success. That is what we are committed to on this side of the House. That is what we are going to deliver to the people of the territory because this issue matters. I have spoken to Autism Yukon, I have spoken to my constituents, and I have delivered the same message — nothing is changing. Now we are going to make sure that continues into the future.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We believe that students with diverse needs can be successful at school when they have timely and effective learning supports. Students are at the heart of every decision that we make across the education system, Mr. Speaker.

With each decision, we strive to take action that supports students in maximizing their full potential with dignity and purpose and to succeed at school, no matter what that success looks like for them. This includes ensuring that proper supports are in place for students who have diverse learning needs and those who have been determined to have special education needs and require a special education program.

All learning plans — individualized learning plans, student learning plans, and behavioural support plans — are designed to provide the learning supports that individual students need to be a success in school. No plan limits the support available for students. We have an obligation to provide the supports that are identified in a student's learning plan. We have an obligation to report to families on their child's learning progress and to notify families if there is any change to their child's plan.

I think you will have heard that those are important factors from some of the members opposite. I don't disagree.

You have also heard, Mr. Speaker — and I'm truly speaking now to the families, to the students, and to the individual educators who work in this process — that there have been no changes to the governing legislation — the *Education Act* — regarding a student's eligibility for an individualized education plan or the definition of an IEP and no changes to the types of supports that are available to students and families, because we have no intention of changing those.

Furthermore, no directive has been issued to remove students from their IEP if they already have a learning plan that assists them in that way.

As members are aware, the Department of Education reports on the number of students with IEPs each year in the annual report. The 2019 annual report, I believe, indicates that 534 students are subject to IEPs up to and including that period of time — in the annual report that was issued. It is, of course, a public document — of course, an important piece of information.

Mr. Speaker, the criteria for establishing student learning plans and behavioural support plans — the two other kinds of support plans — were introduced in 2011 and 2012 respectively to more effectively document and implement the adaptations that students need to be successful in meeting the learning standards set out in the prescribed curriculum. Presumably, this is something that the opposition knows well about since they were running the Department of Education in 2011 and 2012 when these learning plans were adopted.

Mr. Speaker, these plans were adopted to more effectively document and implement the adaptations that students need to be successful in meeting the learning standards that are set out in the prescribed curriculum and to provide more options to meet student needs.

While responding to information requests — I will mention the Auditor General's report in more depth in a moment — from the Auditor General of Canada, during the audit of kindergarten to grade 12 education in 2018-19, it came to the Department of Education's attention that some schools were not consistently applying the criteria for determining which type of learning plan was appropriate for individual students. As a result, presentations to school staff were given in the fall of 2019 asking them to review the requirements of the *Education Act* and to clarify the criteria that is used for different learning plans to ensure consistency across Yukon schools.

This information did include guidance around working with families to ensure that their child is on a plan that best outlines the supports that they need to maximize their potential. This is something that schools do all the time and are required to do all the time, and they regularly must work with families to make sure that their children are on the appropriate plan and, in fact, achieving their milestones on that plan. If they are not, it is the school's responsibility to determine how to assist that child to meet their maximum potential.

In some cases, this has meant that school staff have worked with families to shift a student to a student learning plan or a behavioural support plan instead of an IEP, if that student requires adaptations to fully meet the curriculum and all parties agree that this change appropriately meets that particular student's needs.

I will speak in a few moments about the individual plans and what they are designed to achieve — again, something that the opposition members should know about, since they came into being in 2011 and 2012. Let me remind members that students cannot be removed from an IEP without agreement from their parents or guardians, and Yukon schools are required to review student IEPs with parents on an annual basis — again, things you have heard earlier — and again, we agree; that is the requirement.

There is absolutely no interest, no directive, and no plan to reduce learning supports available to students; rather, it's imperative that students are provided with specific supports and services that they need to be successful in school, whatever that success looks like for them.

I will take a moment and this opportunity to provide some information on the IEPs, the student learning plans, and the behavioural learning plans. Unfortunately, I think that some of what was said earlier about those plans and how they work was conflated. So, clearly, it's important to make sure we review those in this case.

An IEP is used when students require a unique curriculum with modified learning outcomes to support their special education needs and to maximize their successful transition into adulthood to the full extent of their abilities. IEPs are typically assigned to students who are determined to have exceptionalities — sometimes known as special education needs — and who therefore require special education programming.

IEPs set out the adaptations or modifications — either/or — that the student needs and how they will be supported, and it outlines the student's individualized learning goals. IEPs also establish how students' learning progress will be tracked and reported to families.

While students with IEPs are generally expected to graduate with an Evergreen diploma, each student is unique and some students with an IEP may still graduate with a Dogwood Diploma. These are called "individualized education plans" because they are.

As I noted previously, the criteria for establishing student learning plans and behavioural support plans were introduced in 2011 and 2012 respectively to more effectively document and implement the adaptations that students need to be successful in meeting their learning standards that are set out in the prescribed curriculum. Mr. Speaker, these plans are typically for students who only need adaptations to their education programs in order to meet the standards of the prescribed curriculum — so that is the goal with respect to those kinds of assistance.

Those students who do not have special education needs, although they do require specific learning supports in order to maximize their potential — they are working on the prescribed curriculum with assistance. These adaptations — the ones set out in student learning plans — typically are learning strategies that support and address barriers to engage in learning. They are designed to level the playing field for a student so that the student can successfully learn the prescribed curriculum.

Behaviour support plans set out the adaptations required for students who demonstrate behaviours that are not expected in the school environment but have not been deemed to be a result of special education needs.

I would like to take the opportunity to clarify some of the issues that have been raised publicly — and perhaps even here today — in respect to graduation and post-secondary education. I certainly have worked with individuals who have contacted us — the families and the organizations that have been mentioned already today — and I will address that again — but certainly,

I have heard comments about the curriculum and the issues of having an IEP and being able to take that into the post-secondary world.

The British Columbia curriculum — and hence our Yukon curriculum upon which it is based — provides for two types of graduation certificates. Some of these have been mentioned today, but again, it's important to clarify.

Dogwood certificates are issued to students who complete the BC/Yukon graduation program requirements, being 80 credits of grade 10 to 12 courses or an adult graduation program of 20 grade 11 and 12 credits completed after the student turns 18. Those are the requirements to achieve a Dogwood certificate.

Mr. Speaker, an Evergreen certificate is issued to students in grades 10 to 12 on an individualized, modified program who do not necessarily meet the standards of the prescribed curriculum and therefore do not meet the requirements of a Dogwood Diploma. It is true that students on modified education programs, which are set out in IEPs, are generally expected to graduate with an Evergreen diploma because they have not met the requirements of the prescribed curriculum necessarily — although, as I've said earlier — and it bears repeating — each student is unique. Some students with an IEP certainly will still be eligible and do in fact graduate with a Dogwood Diploma.

Each Canadian jurisdiction defines the criteria used for determining whether a K to 12 student requires additional learning supports differently. Each uses a variety of plans to document the supports that are in place. Similarly, each post-secondary institution sets its own standards for the documentation that they require in order for students to be eligible for learning supports and adaptations once the student arrives at their learning institution.

Our research indicates that post-secondary institutions require different documentation of needs and supports, depending on where a student chooses to continue their education. Some institutions, universities, colleges, and other organizations use their own internal clinicians to assess students' needs. Some will use a student's K to 12 learning — for example, a student learning plan, a behavioural support plan, or an IEP — for one year and then do their own assessment of a student's needs.

Some consider only a student's transcript and report card comments. Of course, those organizations, those post-secondary institutions, have their own standards and their own assistance and supports for students who require them. They make their own assessment or, as in the examples I have given, make assessments based on what background a student has and figure out how to support them going forward.

Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to working with each student and their family to provide any relevant documentation that may be required by a post-secondary institution. As a practical matter, students who require additional learning supports and who intend to enrol in post-secondary programs should work with their school counsellor and their post-secondary institution to clarify what is required to support their

learning needs going forward — again, recognition and support for students as lifelong learners.

The other matter that I should make reference to and put on the record here is that the Department of Education central administration is not cutting budgets or seeking any reduction in the funding designated to support Yukon students. I hope my colleagues have heard that. I don't hold out much hope, but hope springs eternal, and I hope that they have heard this.

Budgets going back five years show a stable Education budget. Furthermore, since 2016-17, there have been steady increases in education assistants. I said this in relation to a question earlier today — in 2016-17, there were 171 education assistants on staff; in 2020-21, there are 245 education assistants on staff.

I also noted that the 2021 Education budget overall has increased by 7.4 percent and that education support services has increased its budget in the 2021-22 budget by 12.6 percent.

We recognize that there is always room to improve how students are supported, which is why we initiated a comprehensive review of inclusive and special education programming. As you are aware, the Department of Education is undertaking that review, and I won't go through the details with respect to that.

I think that what is incredibly important is to make reference to the fact that, despite the fact that the letter from the four organizations — highly respected in the education world — has been brought forward, my response has not — I should indicate that we are working with them moving forward together, and I am very pleased about that.

We are committed to the recommendations of the Auditor General's report from 2019. I do note that there were similar recommendations in the 2009 report that were not acted on by the opposition — the then government — and were absolutely known to them at the time. They did not take on the review that we have with respect to moving forward. They did not put the interests of special and inclusive education in the forefront. We have accepted all of those recommendations mentioned by the member opposite for Copperbelt South, and I appreciate him setting them out because they are important recommendations that have been determined to take our path forward.

I certainly have comments about the dramatic comments that came from the Member for Whitehorse Centre, but they will need to wait for another day.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the work of the Department of Education. I at no point whatsoever have dismissed the concerns of the individuals who have come forward. We are working with them going forward. I look forward to that work and to a better system.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on Motion No. 417? If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard on debate on Motion No. 417?

Mr. Kent: I thank members in the Legislature on both sides for their comments here this afternoon. I thank the Minister of Education. She did clarify some things that I

brought up during my remarks, but the one thing — and I will point to a comment by the Minister of Highways and Public Works. He said that there appears to be a difference of opinion, and I agree with him. There is the opinion that is shared by the Liberals and the caucus there. They are armed with letters from the Minister of Education that I am sure they received after they received comments and concerns from constituents with respect to the decision that was being made to move students off of IEPs.

That's on one side, and on the other side, there are many parents and there are students whom I have heard from — teachers, the Yukon Teachers' Association, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, Autism Yukon, and the many constituents who have reached out to us on this side of the House.

I have a number of letters that I have received and that my colleagues have received from individuals outlining their concerns with respect to this. When it comes to what we've heard from the Yukon Teachers' Association, I'll refer back to that media article that appeared just before Christmas — and I quote: "This year, the Yukon government moved 138 students off IEPs onto Student Learning Plans or Behavioural Learning Plans, according to the..." — Yukon Teachers' Association. "They also adjusted the definition of IEPs, so students who remain on these plans won't receive a high school diploma."

And then this is an actual quote from the president of the Yukon Teachers' Association in that same article: "I was greatly disturbed by the changing definition of an IEP and a student learning plan ... They haven't changed the *Education Act*, but what they've changed is policy, how they're interpreting and delivering programming..." Again, that's a direct quote from the YTA president on December 22.

The challenge remains that the government believes that they are not moving students off of IEPs, contrary to what I've heard from parents and students on the floors. They believe that they're offering the supports that people require.

While we were in debate here this afternoon, I received an e-mail from a constituent who is trying to get her son moved on to an IEP from an SLP because of the additional supports and the fact that she can get an education assistant. I'll do a casework, obviously, for the minister on this, but she has been met with roadblocks and denials at every turn, and she's extremely frustrated. So, that's a real challenge that we're hearing, not in letters from before Christmas or in January — or whenever the letter that we'll look to have tabled from the Minister of Highways and Public Works that he was reading from earlier today. This is real time. This is something that I received today, and it's a casework that I'll start with the minister, but it doesn't sound like the government is willing to press the pause button, finish the inclusive education review that Dr. Yee is undertaking, and properly consult — not only with the four highly respected organizations, in the minister's words, that reached out via letter to the Premier — but work with school communities and work with parents who are struggling with respect to getting the proper supports for their children that they are looking for.

Again, I heard no explanation as to why such a specific number was referenced by the Yukon Teachers' Association with the 138 students last year who were moved off of IEPs. We were not able to get any current statistics from the minister either with respect to how many are on IEPs in real time. We have the 2019 numbers, of course.

That said, to quote the minister again, "Hope springs eternal". I hope that they will vote in favour of this motion, pause this decision, try to get to the bottom of why students are being moved off of IEPs and why we are hearing from parents, students, teachers, organizations, and others with respect to this decision, and focus in on what the students need and what the individual families need prior to continuing on down this path.

With that, I will close my remarks and I look forward to a vote.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 417 agreed to

Motion No. 426

Clerk: Motion No. 426, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT Standing Order 76 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly be amended by adding the following:

"76(8) The provisions of this Standing Order shall not apply to any bill amending territorial elections or electoral districts in Yukon."

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to this motion — just for those who are listening and reading this, I would just note that Standing Order 76 is commonly referred to as the “guillotine clause”. What it does is provide the ability that, at the end of the Sitting, it gives the Government House Leader the ability to determine which government bills remaining on the Order Paper should be called for a vote, and then those government bills are voted on but not debated further. So, the guillotine clause cuts off debate and brings the matter to a vote.

The proposal contained within the motion that we have brought forward today would amend Standing Order 76 to eliminate the ability, in the future, for the government to guillotine any bill amending territorial elections or electoral districts in the Yukon. That is because of the fundamental importance of those matters — that there should be a full debate, including the opportunity for members of the opposition side to propose amendments to legislation pertaining to elections or electoral districts or for independent members to do the same thing as well.

I just would note that this is about ensuring that government cannot simply, in the future, cut off debate on legislation pertaining to territorial elections or electoral districts and bring that for a vote without further debate.

As a side note, I would again express the view — as I have on behalf of our caucus on many occasions — of the importance of having a proper all-party process for considering changes to elections legislation and that it should not be up to the government of the day, elected with less than a majority of the votes, to push through legislation that can materially affect the next election. As we have discussed on many occasions, the current government — while they hold a majority of seats — a very slim majority of seats now — they were elected with less than 40 percent of the vote — the vote, I believe, was 30 percent and change — yet they hold over half the seats in the Assembly, and for most of this term, they have had a more comfortable majority than they enjoy today, following the resignation from the caucus of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

So, in speaking to this proposal here as well, I would note that we did see this situation last fall where there were amendments brought forward to the *Elections Act* that were somewhat contentious in nature because of the way that they had been developed. Ultimately, that legislation received part of a day of debate, but the government, at the end of the Sitting, invoked the guillotine clause, which meant that there was no opportunity for members who might wish to propose amendments to have any ability to do so. The government, of course, pushed it through with their majority.

What that relates to in that legislation we saw last fall — for context — was the issue of fixed election dates. Of course, we have had some debate at that time and since that time about the fact that the Yukon Liberal Party ran on a commitment to establish fixed election dates. They made the promise to get elected and then watered it down after they were in power and decided that it applies to everyone except them. They have established rules for fixed election dates that apply to others but have declared themselves exempt, which is a case of “Do as I say, not as I do.”

In talking about some of the rationale for bringing it forward — this proposal to amend our Standing Orders to ensure that, in future, elections legislation can’t be guillotined — I want to talk about just a few of the statements that the Premier and other members of the Liberal team made in arguing why there should be fixed election dates.

On November 16, 2020 — and this is Hansard, page 1868 — the Premier said: “These amendments will establish that general elections for the Yukon government will be held on a fixed date.” Further on that page, the Premier noted: “... subsequent elections will be held on the first Monday in November in the fourth calendar year following the last election.”

Again, on that same page, the Premier went on to note: “Establishing a fixed polling date in legislation for the Yukon government election strengthens the overall democratic process and will support the democratic principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability.”

“When preparing for an election period, fixed polling dates for elections will support planning and financial efficiencies as well.”

So, though the argument was made by the Premier and a number of his colleagues about fixed election dates, we saw a different approach taken in the legislation that they actually tabled. As mentioned — and this is the problem that our motion here today seeks to address — there was no opportunity to have full debate on that legislation. The government chose to invoke Standing Order 76 — commonly known as the “guillotine clause” — and then the debate was ended and the government simply used their majority to push it through.

I would again just reference — for the ease of Hansard, I would note that, while I’m quoting from articles from the 2016 territorial election, they will also find reference to that in my remarks on page 1869 from November 16 — and I quote: “I remind the Premier that he and some of his candidates — both in the election and the leadup to it — talked about fixed election dates, but they also talked about collaboration. In fact, one of his colleagues sitting right behind him — the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — speaking on behalf of the Liberal Party — and I’m quoting from a CKRW article from Wednesday, November 2, 2016, that was regarding the Liberal Party at the time — their commitment to fixed election dates. In an article, entitled ‘Yukon Liberals commit to fixed election dates’, the commitment was made by the Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes candidate at the time who said that ‘... this would bring clarity and certainty to when the election would be held, and stop the campaigning leading up to an election call.’”

“He also was quoted as saying that ‘It will allow people to plan better.’

“The now-Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes indicated as well — quote: ‘It will allow Yukoners to plan for when they know when an election is going to be, and how they can vote, and it will allow Elections Yukon to plan, and everybody just to have a heads-up about when these things are going to come, and...’ — and this is the most notable part of the quote — ‘... stop making it a political football about choosing the date.’”

Again, that is in quotes.

What we have seen is — in the absence of that and the government choosing, with the legislation, that they cut off debate last fall to fix an election date — that the current government decided that fixed election dates would only apply to other governments going forward.

I would also note, just as an aside, that I'm bringing this motion forward in the House because the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges — which is set up to discuss matters such as this — has not been making any progress in changing the Standing Orders. The discussions have largely stalled, and so bringing forward this proposal directly into the Assembly seems to be the clearest path forward.

I would note, as well, that just, again, quoting some of what the now Premier said on March 25, 2015, in the lead-up to the election — as quoted in the *Klondike Sun*, the now Premier said — and I quote: "... a Liberal government would spend more time consulting with people to find out what they want and need, rather than spending its time telling people what they were going to get without proper consultation."

Instead of following through on that commitment, the *Elections Act* itself — the elections changes that were brought forward last fall by the government as part of Bill No. 13 did not have public consultation on the details of a proposed election date. There was not an all-party process leading up to developing that date. The government unilaterally decided that a fixed election date shouldn't apply to them, it should only apply to a future government.

This leaves us in the situation as we are today where the government has not been willing to indicate to members when the election is going to be. While, as they might fairly point out, that is not different from some prior governments, the difference is that they promised Yukoners that they were going to change that and, in fact, delivered something that only changes it for the next guy — or, I should say, the next team.

Changing it for the next government is something that, had we had the opportunity last fall to get into Committee of the Whole and debate the details of the legislation, there would have been the opportunity for members to propose that a fixed election date be set sometime in 2021 and to debate what that date should actually be.

That is the central thrust of this motion — to provide that protection in the future to ensure that there will be debate on legislation.

I would again just remind members of some of the comments from people, including the Premier, who in speaking to that legislation that was brought forward last fall, said on November 16 on page 1883 — in responding to the Leader of the Third Party — and I quote: "I will continue to talk about the actual questions that were asked. The Leader of the Third Party did ask a question in the end: Why not this time? Why into perpetuity but not this time?"

"Well, this is a decision that wasn't made lightly..." The Premier then went on to say: "We had a lot of conversations internally..." So, again, what we've seen with this is, in the development of that legislation, the lack of a proper public process with consultation on the details and the lack of the

opportunity for all parties to be involved and discuss the details, and then, when the legislation was finally brought forward in the Legislative Assembly, the government did not allow it to go to the Committee stage when the details could have been debated and an amendment proposed if a member wished to do so. Instead, we saw Standing Order 76 invoked on the final day of the Sitting and the legislation passed.

As the Premier noted in talking about why there should be fixed election dates, again, from page 1883 in Hansard, the Premier said — and I quote: "We believe that all Yukoners are going to benefit from this transparency."

"What changes are going to be made? Well, the proposed changes will set those fixed dates for the territorial elections to the first Monday in November every four years."

So, another thing I would just note — some of the comments made by his colleagues — the Member for Porter Creek Centre, arguing for fixed election dates and transparency, said on page 1878 — and I quote: "... I, along with my Liberal colleagues, made a number of commitments to Yukoners. Establishing fixed election dates was one of those promises. I'm happy to be standing here today speaking to this bill that would see fixed election dates set here in the territory. By taking this step, we will be providing more certainty to Yukoners so that they know when a territorial election will have to take place."

The Member for Porter Creek Centre then went on to say — and I quote: "... with fixed dates, people will know when territorial elections are going to take place and it will allow them to have more pointed conversations."

"By eliminating the guesswork in elections, Yukoners will be able to be more engaged and up to speed about what their elected officials are doing and how much time they have in office..."

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think that I will just wrap up my comments, considering the hour of the day here, and provide the opportunity for other members to speak. Again, this proposal that we have brought forward here today is a change to the Standing Orders, and while it would not change what has occurred in the past, it would ensure that, regardless of who was in government, elections legislation and legislation changing electoral districts would have to go through the full process of debate here in the Legislative Assembly. No one could use the guillotine clause to cut off debate and shorten up the process.

Ultimately, as with any legislation, it would have to pass this Legislative Assembly. I believe this is a good change to the Standing Orders that would improve the oversight and transparency of this Legislative Assembly over the legislation that sets out the process through which voters choose who will occupy the seats in the Legislative Assembly and fundamentally — in recognition of the fact that, typically in an election, the government may have the majority of seats but do not typically have the support of the majority of Yukoners in the preceding election — that this provides more oversight to ensure that all members have the opportunity to fully debate any proposed legislative changes that affect territorial elections or electoral districts in the Yukon in the future and that, in the

future, elections legislation and electoral boundaries legislation cannot be subject to the so-called guillotine clause.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think that the rules of order of this place are so incredibly important to how a legislature conducts itself. I know it's probably a very geeky thing to think about, but every time I've been in an elected role, the first thing that I do is read the rules of order, because they help to establish how we're going to interact, how we're going to present information, and how we're going to, I hope, shape the future of, in this case, the territory.

When I arrived here and up until today — I think of all of us in this Legislature as colleagues. I have done my best, at all times, to conduct myself with integrity, to treat everybody and their perspectives with respect. With that, I do my best to actively listen to everyone's voice. I think that it's an awesome responsibility to represent people. Under that responsibility, everybody has been given this job to be the voice of a group of constituents. I think that it's so incredibly important that those voices are heard here.

All of this about the rules about how we conduct ourselves — the Standing Orders — this will shape the lives of Yukoners. So, I start by acknowledging that the motion that the Member for Lake Laberge has brought forward is important. The subject matter is incredibly important.

So why, even today, are there times then where the work of this Chamber does not feel respectful? I know that some of it will have to do with the heat of the moment and things like that, but I actually try to think fundamentally about why some of that is. Part of it is that there is a job that is given to oppose — that is how we're set up in the Westminster system — to oppose and to criticize. That is a real and very important role, but that notion of criticism will often feel like rebuke. How we respond to that criticism will feel like a rebuke back to the members opposite as well. That is one of the reasons why I think that it sometimes sets up this tension that can exist here.

I also think that the other reason is that we use a partisan system. I personally am very in favour of the partisan system, although I don't believe that partisanship rules over everything. When I compare, for example, our system and the Standing Orders that we have here and what we have in place against, for example, Nunavut or the NWT, which have chosen a non-partisan system — what they miss, in my mind, is the ability for people to elect platforms and elect — so when there's an election, there is this moment when the public gets to choose.

They are voting, of course, for a member to represent them, but in the way that the system is set up, they are also voting on a platform, they are also voting on a leader, and they are voting on a party. There is this way that the people choose the direction in which the territory should head, but it should never be taken to the extreme. That is what I think is the hardest part or what is the downside of partisanship, which is that it can be so divisive. I wish it were not; I wish we were all more respectful. It doesn't need to lack respect, but it does at times.

I am not trying to cast stones. I believe that there is room for improvement from all members of this Legislature from all sides of the House.

One of the things that I've been thinking about lately is — the other day, when I stood up to give my response to the budget that we tabled in second reading, I talked about the four young students who invited me to see their project the other day, and then the next day, we had a class of students here. I think about when we have young people in this Legislature — and I actually think, when that happens, we think a little bit more about how we interact with each other and how we present our ideas. I still always expect that there should be criticism and that there should be the ability to challenge legislation as it's put forward or motions that are put forward, but it can be done in a way that's more respectful. I kind of miss the pages. Here in this Legislature, during COVID — during this time when we have had to say, no, we're not going to have pages — and it's because we're trying to keep everybody safe — I miss them. I think somehow they add to this place, not in bringing water but in hearing us, in witnessing what we're doing and how we work with each other.

What I believe is that we should strive to learn how to — I don't need us to agree. What I hope we do is strive to be able to disagree in a respectful manner.

In this motion, the Member for Lake Laberge is seeking to amend the Standing Orders. The motion talks about Standing Order 76, and he has done a fine job of introducing what the purpose of that is. I'll run back a little bit further in time.

I think it was introduced in the early 2000s, so it has been here for — let's call it two decades now. I think it would be fair to say that this type of clause — you don't wish to use it. The idea should be that we debate all legislation, because it's so important — in particular, budget bills and elections acts and electoral boundaries. These pieces of legislation that shape the lives of Yukoners deserve to be here and to be debated fully, to make it all the way through and to get to third reading by the more traditional process. So why have it at all? Why have a guillotine clause?

The reason is — and it's pretty straightforward — in a small legislature like ours — by small, with the numbers of representatives that we have here covering a vast geography that, with sitting for 60 days a year, you can run out of time to debate things. There are other ways, of course, to deal with this — and this is how other legislatures have dealt with it. One example would be to sit longer.

Now, I think what used to happen in the past was that pressure would mount toward getting to the end and then the Legislature would sit to long hours in order to try to get things passed, because we absolutely need to get budgets through. Like them or not, they're so critically important to the functioning of our territory and we don't want to make it so that we hobble the territory from doing its job, from public servants to serve the people of the Yukon. So, we need a way to make sure that legislation keeps moving and this is the choice that came up 20 years ago.

Now, the first thing I want to note — and I just point this out to point out that I've heard the Member for Lake Laberge talk about the importance of elections legislation and other legislation and I've heard him say that it's important that we get through it. But I also look back to try to see: Was there an

attempt during the 31st Legislature, the 32nd Legislature, the 33rd Legislature when the Member for Lake Laberge was in government — was there an attempt then to pull back some of the rules around this Standing Order? No; I could not find that.

I stand to be corrected. It's tough in the short time — when we learned yesterday that this was the motion coming forward. I have tried to do my best to try to research this and to look to try to see where it has been used in the past and where it hasn't, but I did not find it. So, you would hope that, if it's going to come forward, that it would come forward, not just because you're in opposition, but that it would be because you believe this is the right thing to do and you propose it.

In other legislatures, how do they do it? Well, typically, they move to — there are two things that I want to point out. I think if we're going to try to move to this way where we were to say, "No, we don't want Standing Order 76", or "We want to have it partially there, or partially not there depending on the type of legislation" — well, you would need to put in place some of these other things. The two things are: subcommittees or committees of the Legislature, and time limits.

We have committees of this Legislature, and we could use them more. I think that it is a fine thing to do. In fact, we have a committee of this Legislature that talks about the Standing Orders — the rules and so on. That standing committee, which I will come back to and talk about specifically — the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges is the sort of place where you would expect this type of dialogue, discussion, and idea to be raised and put forward.

Let me talk about that committee for a moment, Mr. Speaker. I looked back to try to see about that committee and what it has done. What I found was that, during this 34th Legislature, the committee has met seven times and has produced two reports. That doesn't sound like a lot to me. I looked back in time to look at the 31st, the 32nd, and the 33rd legislatures, and here's what I found — and I can appreciate that the opposition at that time would have been trying very hard indeed to get that standing committee to do more. What I found was that, during the 33rd Legislature, the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges met once. During the 32nd Legislature, that standing committee met three times. During the 31st Legislature, that standing committee met three times, meaning that, over 14 years, it met seven times, or on average once every two years. It was not what I would call very effective.

Now, coming back to the point that I was trying to make earlier, in other legislatures, they use committees. That would be a good way to get at this.

The other thing that I think we would ultimately need is time limits. Let me start talking about time a bit. The Member for Lake Laberge said that he was concerned because he didn't have an opportunity to raise any amendments. I stand to be corrected again, but I believe that there could have been amendments raised at second reading. It's more typical that they come out during Committee of the Whole, but that doesn't mean that there wasn't an opportunity. I also note, in looking back at our Sitting last fall, which was the longest Sitting I —

well, maybe not the longest Sitting ever, but it was certainly a long Sitting — 45 days is my recollection.

I looked back to try to see — because one of the things that I'm going to talk about today is the motion about the state of emergency. I thought, okay, let me look back at the budget, which is a significant piece of legislation that we have in front of us during every Sitting. I looked back at that piece of legislation and how it was treated here in this Legislature.

I started looking, and I did it just as I was listening to the member opposite give his remarks, so I may have made a few misses, but I looked and I saw that, on October 27, we went into Committee of the Whole, and it was the Member for Lake Laberge who stood to speak and ask the questions of the Premier in general debate.

Then I saw that again, on November 2, it was the Member for Lake Laberge who stood to ask questions in Committee of the Whole general debate. Again on November 3, again on November 4, and again on November 5, it was the Member for Lake Laberge who stood to ask questions in general debate of Committee of the Whole.

When that started to happen during the last session, I went back to look at the previous legislatures — the 33rd Legislature in particular — to try to see how long general debate used to take. What I saw was that it was usually under a day. So, what we had were five days. Do you know what those five days could have been used for, Mr. Speaker? Debate, Committee of the Whole, on the *Elections Act*.

So, then I looked forward, and I saw that, on November 9, November 10, November 16, and November 17, we continued but not now with the Member for Lake Laberge, but with members of the Official Opposition. It was the Official Opposition — I will acknowledge that it was not the Third Party — that took a long time. I don't want to suggest, ever, that there's anything in there that isn't valuable and important, but if you're trying to time manage this Legislature to get to the business of the Legislature, sitting on one thing for a long time is going to take away from the ability to get to other things, even though it was the longest Sitting that any of us know, in memory.

It was on November 17 that we went beyond general debate in Committee of the Whole, and I know that because, that day, it was my department that got up and I was in debate on the budget. So, something feels wrong to me there, and the point that I'm trying to make is that, if we want to get to changing Standing Order 76, as per this motion, we really need some other things as well.

Let me go first, Mr. Speaker, to the two types of acts that the Member for Lake Laberge has presented to us as needing to not use Standing Order 76, to not limit debate, and they are the *Elections Act* and the *Electoral District Boundaries Act*. I looked back on electoral boundaries and how it has been here in the Legislature. On December 12, 2018, it made it all the way through third reading — everybody agreed. On December 1, 2015, it made it through third reading here in this Legislature. So, that would have been the 32nd Legislature and the 33rd Legislature. It did not use Standing Order 76. Then, when we brought it forward as Bill No. 19, as the *Electoral District*

Boundaries Act, on December 19, 2018, that bill failed. It didn't use Standing Order 76. What happened was that we voted against it because the commission had introduced a new riding in the Yukon without engaging the Yukon, and we felt that was wrong. In particular, I wanted to vote against it because my own riding had said to me that they disagreed with it, and the job that I have — the primary job that I have — is to represent those citizens. They asked me to disagree with this, and I want to acknowledge the Member for Lake Laberge —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Sorry, Mr. Speaker; I'm just trying to talk to you.

I actually want to acknowledge the Member for Lake Laberge because he also voted against it. Why did he do so? At least the words that he used that day in the Legislature were that his constituents did not agree with it, and he also chose to represent his constituents. So, it was quite a unique moment in the Legislature because, at second reading, the bill failed, but that it did not use Standing Order 76, I guess, is the main point.

With the *Elections Act*, I looked back in time to try to see times when it has made it through the Legislature — and, again, we have instances when it has had Standing Order 76 utilized and instances where it has not, so it has not been uniform, and sometimes things move through quickly and sometimes they don't. It is not that it is the same every time.

I want to raise another issue about the motion that we had about the state of emergency. I will check to make sure — I believe it was Motion No. 236. It was brought forward by the Member for Copperbelt North. It came forward on October 14, and on that day, the Member for Copperbelt North stood to speak about it. This is not long. It was the first government private members' day. We felt it was incredibly important. We wanted to debate here in this Legislature to hear from all members about whether or not there was a belief that we were in a state of emergency.

During that motion, it was the Member for Lake Laberge who chose to rise to speak to that motion — and speak he did. He spoke for a long time. In total — and I tabled this; I actually ran the numbers on it to try to see how long that motion took to get through this Legislature. It took us three attempts to get to a final vote. Effectively, because there was, I believe — November 11 happened in there and it fell on a Wednesday — effectively, it meant that it took five weeks to happen. This was, I will say — in my read of it — a strategy put forward by the Yukon Party to filibuster and to effectively delay the ability to vote or even to not get to a vote, but we persisted.

One of the reasons we persisted is because we felt it was a fundamental question to decide whether or not we were in a state of emergency.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes seems to be in contravention of Standing Order 19(b) — speaking to matters other than the question under discussion.

He's gone on a very long side trip talking about things that have nothing to do with this motion, which is a proposal to amend the Standing Orders to limit the application of the guillotine clause.

Speaker: The Minister of Community Services, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I kind of anticipated this. I am working to explain that the way in which this — this is an example of — if we are to pass the motion that the member has proposed, then we run the risk of putting our Legislature in jeopardy because someone could choose to filibuster — and this is the direct example that I intend to use to explain that, with respect to the motion as proposed by the Member for Lake Laberge.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge, in his opening comments, did talk about being unable to debate. Obviously, the whole essence of Standing Order 76 is that you have not, one could say, had sufficient time to get to certain legislation.

So, I certainly will give the Minister of Community Services some additional latitude to discuss issues around, I suppose, time allocation and proposals that he may have with respect to that — to perhaps avoid Standing Order 76 generally — but of course, the subject matter of the motion is specifically with respect to excluding bills that would either amend territorial elections or electoral districts.

So, the Minister of Community Services will want to loop back to that topic relatively quickly.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will do my best to loop back.

There are three ways that I think this example speaks to the motion that we have in hand. The first one is that the member opposite talked about his inability to get to Committee of the Whole on the *Elections Act* during the Fall Sitting, but of course, I'm pointing out that one of the reasons that we took up so much time is because there were three days on one motion. That's an amazing amount of time to get to a single motion.

The second thing I want to point out is that, suppose you're trying to amend the *Elections Act* and suppose that members — and it doesn't matter for me who is government and who is not — but suppose that government has brought forward an amendment to the *Elections Act* — presumably they will do so because they feel it's important — or to electoral boundaries, based on a commission's findings. Suppose that, under the way that this motion is proposed to us, but suppose that the members opposite don't like the act as it stands; then they could filibuster it. They could make it so that you don't actually get to a vote, and that doesn't serve the Yukon.

I don't care whether I'm on one side of the House or the other or who we are talking about here, but we do need to make sure that these things get to a decision. In fact, one of the arguments — and this is the third way that I'll point out the motion that took several days — the Member for Lake Laberge — the member opposite — spoke quite lengthily about how this is not a black or white issue — it is not a "yes or no" issue.

While I appreciate that emergencies are complicated and have a lot of intricacies to them, you still need to make a choice about whether or not to declare a state of emergency because you have to decide whether or not you are going to have to put in isolation requirements or border enforcements, et cetera. From my perspective, that's exactly what kept us safe as a territory.

During the five weeks of that debate, what happened here is that we had the biggest spike of cases in the territory. Imagine if we weren't able to put in place the rules that we needed. Well, we can imagine it because we saw what happened with Nunavut at that time and they also had their biggest spike. Because they didn't have some of the same rules that we had, suddenly things just went off the rails for them. So, is it important that we get to decisions? Is this motion important? Yes — you bet it is. This motion is critically important. I don't take away from the purpose that the Member for Lake Laberge is trying raise — that he wants the ability to make sure that there is fulsome debate on these things; I agree with that. What I am worried about is what happens if you don't put in place some other things to make sure that you do have a way to get through that debate. Otherwise, you could end up with a different problem.

Again, it doesn't matter if you're the government or not the government. We don't want to set up rules here that will establish that, if someone just wanted to throw a monkey wrench in the system, they could. I learned that first-hand last fall when I watched the Member for Lake Laberge and his colleagues very adeptly choose to take three days over five weeks to talk about whether or not we had an emergency here.

I just will respond to a few of the comments that the Member for Lake Laberge raised in his opening remarks on this motion. He talked about how the fixed election dates were somehow not for us as a government and that we made it so that it doesn't apply to us. I'm sorry; I disagree with that. From a point in time forward, they are for all elected governments here. They are for this Legislature.

That is what that act changed. It didn't say: "Fixed election dates for the Yukon Party, not for the Yukon Liberal Party." That is not the case. I personally had been hopeful for an election this past fall. I thought that we were getting close to that, and then this thing called "COVID" hit. You know, in that moment, your priorities and your choices start to change on you. You think to yourself that, no, the more important thing is to make sure that people are safe. That is the number one priority.

You don't quite appreciate it until you are thrown into the situation. I don't think any of us — and I don't care which seat we have here, but I don't think any of us understood when we first got here what might happen, and we are all still navigating it. I know that people overuse the term "unprecedented", but the principle of that word, meaning that we have not experienced this, is true.

When we tabled our budget in the spring of 2020 and we had gotten back on track, I thought to myself that this was the moment — this was the chance when we would get to an election that fall. We got there ahead of schedule and I thought we were there, and I think that, since then, we have had to prioritize about making sure that we would prioritize their

safety. I defy anybody who would be elected to not do that. We ultimately promised Yukoners that we would make that change, and we made it. I think that is where that came from. The engagement was the election in 2016. We said that this is what we believe we should do. We made a commitment, and we delivered on that commitment, and at the same time, we have worked to keep Yukoners safe.

So, coming back to the motion as it stands, my suggestion would be that it would go to one of the committees. In particular, I think that the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections, and Privileges is the right place for this. When we have debated — or discussed, let's say — the state of emergency — that it should also be brought to this Legislature to extend — my comments have been the same. They have been that, yes, I think it is important to hear from all elected officials about a long-term emergency, because it does put in place rules that allow government to use authority swiftly, as needed, to keep Yukoners safe, which is what we have done.

I don't think that there's anything wrong with the choices that we have taken, but I think that, if you're going to exert that authority, it is important that we check in about whether everybody agrees. I appreciate that all members of this Legislature decided to say, yes, we were — are — in a state of emergency. We actually voted on it twice. To that point, when they said that we should all say that and that we should build that into the law, the first thing I said was that "Well, sure, but we better make sure that there's a way to put in time limits or rules around that."

That's what's missing in this motion for me. It's too unilateral; it's too one-sided, I guess. I appreciate the principle that is being discussed. I agree with the member opposite that the *Elections Act* and the *Electoral District Boundaries Act* are incredibly important pieces of legislation. I also agree that Standing Order 76 is strong and that it needs to be balanced. I look forward to how we can mature, as a territory, so that we move past.

By the way, one of the things that I will comment on is that there was the suggestion — or I heard a comment off-mic — that we should just extend the number of days that we sit. One of the things that came out last session early on was criticism that we weren't sitting long. What I would just like to point out is that, in the end, we were the fourth highest of all legislatures that sat, with a total of 54 days. We were behind Ontario, Alberta, and Québec. We were ahead of NWT, New Brunswick, British Columbia, PEI, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nunavut, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia. We actually did sit quite long compared to our counterparts. We did put in a lot of time here. We did bring forward questions of importance.

Unfortunately, the member opposite believes, through his motion, that the issue was that we needed to get to Committee of the Whole on the *Elections Act*, but when I looked at the information that I had in front of me, it was the Member for Lake Laberge who chose to speak long on many things, and that's where our time ultimately went.

Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on Motion No. 426 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled March 10, 2021:

34-3-75

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Seventh Report - Yukon Public Accounts 2019-20 (March 2021) (Hassard)

The following legislative returns were tabled March 10, 2021:

34-3-96

Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation before Committee of the Whole on November 19, 2020 — employee costs growth (Frost)

34-3-97

Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation before Committee of the Whole on November 19, 2020 — non-unionized hospital employees (Frost)

34-3-98

Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation before Committee of the Whole on November 19, 2020 — pension solvency loan (Frost)

The following documents were filed March 10, 2021:

34-3-59

Yukon Education Review of Inclusive Education - 2020/21, letter re (dated December 3, 2020) from Melanie Bennett, Executive Director, Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, Ted Hupé, President, Yukon Teachers' Association, Karen Macklon, President, Autism Yukon, and Stephanie Hammond, Executive Director, LDAY Centre for Learning, to Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier (Kent)

34-3-60

Individualized education plans, letter re (dated January 14, 2021) from Scott Kent, Member for Copperbelt South, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Education (Kent)

34-3-61

Potential impact of a 60-metre Riparian Buffer on Titled Land by Marsh Lake, letter re (dated March 9, 2021) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Cathers)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 89

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, March 11, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Spring Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Vacant*
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

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Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Pauline Frost	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
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Yukon Liberal Party

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Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre

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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
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New Democratic Party

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Liz Hanson	Whitehorse Centre

Independent

Don Hutton	Mayo-Tatchun
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*On March 8, 2021, Mr. Hutton resigned as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 11, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

In remembrance of Archie Lang

Speaker: I would ask the members and the members in the gallery to remain standing.

It is my sad duty to inform the House that a former member of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, Archie Lang, has passed away. Archie Lang was first elected to the Yukon Legislative Assembly in the general election of November 4, 2002. He was re-elected in the general election of October 10, 2006, and served as the Member for Porter Creek Centre until October 10, 2011.

Mr. Lang was a member of Cabinet from November 30, 2002, to November 4, 2011. He was Minister of Highways and Public Works, Minister of Community Services, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and Minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation and the Yukon Development Corporation.

I would like to extend my sincere condolences on behalf of the House to his family and friends on their loss.

We will now observe a moment of silence in his memory.

Moment of silence observed

In recognition of National Day of Observance for COVID-19

Speaker: I also rise today on behalf of the House to commemorate those who have died due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Canada, we have had over 22,000 deaths, and sadly, those counts are still rising. Globally, there have been over 2.6 million deaths, and an estimated 118 million persons have been infected. Here in Yukon, we have had 72 cases and unfortunately one death. We are fortunate, however, in that we have had no deaths in any of our seniors facilities, which have been tragically impacted in other parts of Canada and the world. We presently have no active cases in the Yukon.

Still, even with our relative success at combatting the spread of this disease over the last year, in Yukon, we have still felt the disruption in our lives. Tourism operators, airlines servicing the north, and many other businesses have been significantly negatively impacted by the disruption caused by the pandemic. Families and individuals have seen mental health issues increase and heightened levels of anxiety, and family violence is the cruel collateral outcome of this disease. This disease has also disrupted our medical system and put difficult burdens on our medical staff. Many front-line workers have had to perform their duties in extremely difficult new circumstances. Our schools have been disrupted, with the end of last year's school being by distance learning and this year with an abbreviated daily schedule for older high school

students in Whitehorse. Many of the after-school activities that students attended have been cancelled or have had to move to an online platform.

COVID-19 has disrupted all of our lives, yet approximately one year after the disease took its first Canadian life, we see hope on the horizon. Vaccines have been rolled out in Yukon by our dedicated health workers and logistics staff from various government departments, and our vaccination numbers are rapidly climbing. As of yesterday, 25,674 doses have been administered to Yukoners, with 16,367 having received the first dose and 9,207 Yukon adults now being fully vaccinated. These numbers are rising rapidly, but if you haven't had your shot or booked it, you should know that there are appointments available next week and beyond for your first shot. If you are hesitant about receiving your immunization, then there are a number of reliable resources such as Health Canada, the Centre for Disease Control, or our own yukon.ca webpages dedicated to informing Yukoners about the COVID-19 Moderna vaccine.

We are extremely fortunate in Yukon to have been designated a priority for vaccination by the federal government. As a result, we will very likely have enough vaccines for all adult Yukoners who want them in the near future.

One year after the pandemic began in this country, this is truly a modern scientific miracle. If we can all continue to work together and encourage as many Yukoners to be vaccinated as possible, then soon our lives can return to some semblance of normal.

Today, we honour all of those who have suffered and have perished as a result of this deadly disease. However, clearly, the best way to honour those who have passed is to receive the vaccine and to stop the ongoing transmission of COVID-19 in its tracks. Thank you.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome today to the Legislative Assembly Nicole Morgan, who is our Deputy Minister of Education but, more importantly today, the life partner of Joe Loutchan. She is joined here by her mother, Denise Morgan, her sister Charlene Morgan, and her nephew Gareth Morgan-Lester. Thank you for being here.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Joe Loutchan

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today with a heavy heart to offer my deepest condolences to the family, friends, and all those who are feeling the profound loss of Joe Loutchan, who passed away last month on February 3. Joe Loutchan was born in Pembina Valley near Morden, in southern Manitoba. His life

on the farm fostered his connection to land and place, which later honed his skills in hunting, trapping, and harvesting from his local surroundings.

Joe grew up listening to music performed by his father on accordion, his uncle on harmonica, and his cousin on the fiddle. At age four, Joe received a handcrafted wood fiddle from his grandfather and then, at age 14, Joe convinced his father to buy him a fiddle from the local second-hand store. This new fiddle solidified his lifelong bond to a life of fiddling.

By 17, Joe had completed an apprenticeship in electric motors. He was paid 95 cents an hour for that work. Musicians at the time were paid around \$20 a night. It didn't take long for Joe to follow his musical dreams. After forming a band, his talent was quickly recognized by other musicians and local communities, and he began his own radio show, playing 30 minutes a week at CKSB St. Boniface.

Joe credits Andy de Jarlis, a Métis Manitoban, for helping him to learn his technique. Joe would watch Andy play and learned to push himself musically, expanding his knowledge and craft. Andy asked Joe to join his group, and they travelled to communities throughout Manitoba to share their music. Joe was lured by the mountains, which brought him to us here in the Yukon in the fall of 1962, where he spent the rest of his life.

He was an integral part of our Yukon community, bringing people together through his love of music and his incredible talent — from church halls around Winnipeg to weekly sessions at the '98 Hotel here in Whitehorse, where he played for over 40 years, to performing at music festivals across the continent. His music is internationally renowned and internationally loved.

He would often play his fiddle without breaks late into the hours of the night. Though he himself would never speak of his talent or his life as anything other than a normal life, many called him a legend, and he truly was. When he wasn't playing music, Joe was out on the land experiencing the great outdoors across the north and as an outfitting guide. He became a member of the Yukon voyageur canoe team that would paddle across Canada.

During the summers leading up to 1967, Joe remembers training by paddling out on Marsh Lake and Tagish, saying — and I quote: “Sometimes we would paddle 100 times a day.” His hunting passion continued throughout his life and he tended to his Southern Lakes trapline for over 50 years.

Joe Loutchan's talents took him to places far and wide — performing in Mexico, Alaska, Texas, Seattle, and at Disneyland's 25th anniversary. He played on the steps of Parliament Hill, for a Governor General at Fort Selkirk, and for the Prime Minister here in Whitehorse, as well as at numerous music festivals and tours where he was truly a great Yukon ambassador.

Joe was selected Yukon fiddle champion so many times that he retired from competition and was made a judge, although I'm not sure who would want to compete with him as a judge.

Joe leaves behind Nicole Morgan, his life partner of 23 years. Joe and Nicole met in 1998 when Nicole set out to buy a fiddle that Joe had placed on consignment at a local music shop.

Nicole met Joe at the '98 Hotel to complete the sale and was immediately smitten with Joe's musical talent and contagious smile. Joe mentored Nicole as she learned to play the fiddle by ear. In the early years, that meant practising three hours a day and, on weekends, five hours a day. Joe modelled the same commitment and dedication because he knew that this is what it takes to develop a skill.

In their life together, Joe and Nicole enjoyed a partnership rarely found in life. They complemented and supported one another in ways that enabled them to each be grounded as individuals in their own life pursuits: Nicole, in her career as an educator and a civil servant, and Joe in his DIY repair shop.

Together, they shared a passion for music and the peace and solitude that comes from being on the land. This also kept them deeply connected to one another. Nicole ran Joe's trapline with him and learned to set traps and harvest furs — although they did reverse traditional roles, since Nicole preferred to haul water and chop wood, leaving the skinning and stretching of furs to Joe.

Their connection to each other was most evident when they played music together. Whether playing twin fiddles, fiddle and mandolin, or playing rhythm guitar for one another, they seemed one and the same — amazing audiences with their unified talents and love of music.

Over the last decade of his life, Joe had become a mentor to Nicole's nephew, Gareth, who had come to love fiddle music through their family gatherings. Gareth and Joe developed a special bond, and they would spend hours together at Marsh Lake sharing fiddle tunes. Joe learned from Gareth too, and true to his character, Joe would research the YouTube links that Gareth shared with him and learn the tunes so that he would be prepared when Gareth next came to visit.

Rendezvous was not the same this year, not only because of its virtual component and adjustments, but also because of Joe's absence — a gap that will never be filled. He was known by all Yukoners as a man with amazing talent, a playful spirit, and incredible passion for all things musical. Yukon has lost a legend, Mr. Speaker. The profound sorrow that is felt by all Yukoners, Canadians, and fans around the world represents the incredible legacy that he has left behind. We will always remember Joe's adventurous stories and his connection to the expression of music.

In closing, I would like to quote from a friend and a fellow musician, Daniel Lapp, who really says it all when he says — quote: “To see the phenomena that was Joe in the '98, a tale told from coast to coast to coast over decades, I am so grateful for witnessing it first-hand more than once, and honoured to take the turn on your stage playing some good old tunes for folks who had been molded in your hands to enjoy and appreciate the music we love. You really did it, Joe. You lived a good life, a dynamic life. You weren't out to prove anything and yet you proved it all.”

Applause

Ms. White: Today I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP, the Yukon Party, and the Member for Mayo-Tatchun to join the chorus of voices that recognize and celebrate Joe Loutchan's

contributions to the rich musical fabric that is the soundtrack of Yukon and beyond and to celebrate such a beautiful love story.

Words will never properly describe the feeling of being lifted up and carried along when Joe hit that musical sweet spot, and for all of those times, we are truly thankful.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have a legislative return in response to questions from the Leader of the Third Party last week, tabling all of my correspondence back and forth with the Employment Standards Board, including my original request for review, their review from 2018, my letter back to them requesting an order, their order from 2019, and their further review and order for 2020.

Ms. Van Bibber: I have for tabling a letter dated March 10, 2021, sent to the area school council regarding updates on learning for grades 10 to 12 students in Whitehorse.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 21: *Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I move that the Bill No. 21, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that Bill No. 21, entitled *Act to Amend the Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act (2021)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 21 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports the \$40 million in funding being delivered through the National Housing Co-Investment Fund as part of a northern carve-out specifically created for the Yukon to address housing affordability and availability.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to consult with the residents of Haines Junction, Mendenhall, Takhini, Champagne, Destruction Bay, Burwash

Landing, and Beaver Creek about physician services for their communities, including the recruitment of resident physicians and the option for hiring alternative health care professionals such as nurse practitioners.

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

THAT this House congratulates former federal Minister of Health and minister responsible for CanNor, Leona Aglukkaq, for winning Women in Mining Canada's 2021 Indigenous Trailblazer Award.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the government should have provided the Yukon Hospital Corporation with funding to cover the cost of the employee pension plan solvency instead of:

(1) requiring the Yukon Hospital Corporation to commit to paying back millions of dollars to the Government of Yukon; and

(2) charging the Yukon Hospital Corporation \$120,899 in interest for the 2019-20 fiscal year and an undisclosed amount in interest for the current fiscal year.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Finance to inform the Legislative Assembly of:

(1) the interest rate that the Yukon Hospital Corporation is being charged on the multi-million-dollar loan that it owes the Government of Yukon for the employee pension solvency loan; and

(2) the total dollar amount that the Yukon Hospital Corporation will have to pay the Government of Yukon for interest charges in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to postpone the calling of the 2021 territorial election until the Auditor General of Canada has presented the mental health services in rural Yukon report to the Public Accounts Committee on Friday, March 19, 2021.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the government to immediately provide for the safety of the patients and staff on the secure medical unit at Whitehorse General Hospital by addressing the six violations of the territory's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* that were identified by Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Northern housing funding

Hon. Ms. Frost: I rise today to speak about the northern housing carve-out specifically designated for the Yukon — a

new funding agreement with Canada to support new affordable community housing here in the territory. Our government recognizes that stable, affordable housing is foundational to the health and well-being of all Yukoners.

The National Housing Co-Investment Fund is a key program under the federal government's national housing strategy to meet the goals of every Canadian having a home that meets their needs and that they can afford. My territorial colleagues and I were successful in negotiating additional funding from the co-investment fund to ensure that the housing needs of northern jurisdictions can be met. The result is a \$40 million northern carve-out to address Yukon's housing priorities over the next five years. \$20 million will be used for Yukon Housing Corporation's community housing priorities. This will lead to an increase in options for accessible community housing to meet the needs of Yukoners who want to age in place.

We will be moving forward this year with a shelter for men in Watson Lake and projects in Dawson City, along with many other exciting projects that are being planned and that are at various stages in our communities. The additional \$20 million of funding will be managed by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to support Yukon First Nation governments, development corporations, organizations, community housing providers, and private sector housing projects.

We welcome this multi-year commitment to help us increase housing options for Yukoners. It is through partnership and joint funding initiatives that we see housing development flourish here in Yukon to meet the growing demand in our territory. Together with our partners, our government has worked hard to increase housing options for all Yukoners. We have invested in programs and projects that have supported the development of upgrades to over 600 homes to date. As we develop new housing projects under the northern housing carve-out fund, we will be keeping the needs of aging Yukoners and our elders in mind as we ensure that housing options support all Yukoners' needs.

We will work with our First Nation partners to ensure that housing is culturally relevant, meeting the needs that have been identified in the Safe at Home plan and the *Putting People First* report. We will continue to work toward a diverse and, of course, an abundance of housing options to support the health and wellness of Yukoners in all of our communities.

Mahsi' cho'.

Ms. McLeod: I must comment that, when the minister first got up to speak regarding this ministerial statement, I thought she had an entirely new document that she was presenting. There was, I think, significant straying from the document that was provided to opposition members.

But in any case, I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement and, of course, thank you to the minister for re-announcing this re-announcement of an announcement that has already been announced several times.

Mr. Speaker, you will remember that the Premier announced this last week in his Budget Address, and then the

minister announced it again this morning. Perhaps this is why this government has become known for being unable to get things done because they focus so much on re-announcing the same thing over and over — sort of like yesterday when the Liberals announced their economic recovery plan and it turned out to be only a bunch of re-announcements and nothing new for businesses. So, no new information, no action — but new housing money is welcome news.

I do have some questions about this funding, and I'm hoping that the minister can provide us with some answers today.

The housing wait-list has skyrocketed under this minister's watch. In 2016, the wait-list for housing was 105. Under the Liberals, that had increased to nearly 400 last October.

So, can this minister tell us how much this funding will reduce that wait-list by? How many new units will this funding create? How much of this money will be earmarked for Whitehorse, and how much will be earmarked for the communities? I look forward to the minister's answers on these questions.

Ms. White: Every Yukoner deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. This isn't a reality for many folks, and it needs to change. I think about the adult man in Pelly Crossing who lives with his family, who told me that, even though governments keep promising housing — what chance does he have to access it as a single man?

I think about Watson Lake, where a condemned apartment complex sits empty, and there are barely enough couches in the community to go around. I think about Mayo, Dawson City, Beaver Creek, and Old Crow, and every single community in Yukon that worries about their friends, their neighbours, and their community members each and every day because they all know that, without a safe place to call home, there is no hope. You only need to look at the property rental pages on Facebook to know that times are tough; rents are high and units are scarce.

So, we were pleased to have read the announcement this morning that money for housing is on its way from the federal government through the National Housing Co-investment Fund — \$40 million in all — and \$20 million spread across five years to support the construction of new units in Yukon. I am hopeful that the creativity will flow and that this \$4 million a year for five years will go much further than what we have seen in recent times — keeping in mind, of course, that the budget announced for the new 48-unit building on Jeckell Street is \$18 million. As the press release stated, the other \$20 million will go toward the new construction of mixed-income, mixed-tenure, and mixed-use affordable housing, supporting indigenous governments, community housing providers, and private sector projects. Who can argue with that, Mr. Speaker?

So, as we sit here, poised on the eve of an election, looking back at what has and has not been accomplished and what needed to get done but didn't, we are happy to look toward the future because we all know that housing brings hope.

Hon. Ms. Frost: In response to the comments, I would venture to say that the citizens of Watson Lake would be very happy to know that there are resources being put into their community. First, let's clarify that the carve-out is unique. It is a unique arrangement in the Yukon, something that we have not seen historically.

We are still getting the historical funds that have been designated and allocated to the Yukon. It will provide 75 percent of funding for each project, with a minimum 25-percent cost match by the Government of Yukon. These are new initiatives, Mr. Speaker — something that we need to celebrate. We need to look at the fact that we are going to bring more units to the Yukon. We anticipate building over 70 units with the \$20 million.

We would like to remind all those sitting here of the stark contrast between what our government is doing and what our predecessors had on the table. In June 2014, the minister at the time — the MLA for Lake Laberge — and the Yukon Party pulled the plug on \$13 million of affordable housing programs. Well, if we look at where we were then and where we are now, there are significant increases in affordable housing units in the Yukon.

With respect to First Nations and indigenous communities, let me take a moment to explain to Yukoners that no resources were ever put into indigenous communities to provide for essential and critical housing. I would like to thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for raising that, because the base funding that was allocated to the indigenous communities through the fiscal transfer agreement — two houses under the base — never had this government or the past government provided services. When we took office, we ensured that we had resources in the budget to support our partners across the Yukon.

What we are doing now in the Yukon is that we are looking at affordability. We were looking at increasing resources to all of the sectors of our society. We are creating partnerships, and we are adding hundreds of units across the housing continuum. With this northern carve-out, we will continue to do that good work.

It is quite astonishing when you think about it — where we were a few years ago to where we are now. There are over 600 units. We will continue to do that good work. I am happy to say to Yukoners that this is not on the eve of an election; this is the hard work of Yukoners and the hard work of our partners. We just announced last week an innovative, creative approach with Northern Vision Development and our partners to ensure that we bring affordable seniors housing into the Yukon. Using the aging-in-place strategy, our housing initiative processes, and, of course, our Safe at Home to end homelessness strategies, we have done the work. We have been given clear direction from Yukoners, and we are fulfilling all of those mandates and all of those obligations.

As you can see, it's simply not good enough for the opposition, but Yukoners are happy; they are excited and ecstatic. I know for a fact that the good citizens of Watson Lake are excited that we are looking at a Housing First initiative in Watson Lake — a Housing First initiative. Never has the

opposition provided resources to that community, let alone to Selkirk First Nation. We provided \$500,000 to Selkirk First Nation to support their initiatives. We will continue to do that good work.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Mental health services

Mr. Hassard: So, yesterday evening, the Minister of Health and Social Services was on CBC's program *As It Happens*, and here's an exact quote from the minister: "We have now a psychologist in every community."

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us if that is in fact true?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm happy to speak about the mental wellness supports in all of our communities.

What we've seen historically — we've seen two mental wellness counsellors — two, Mr. Speaker. Yukoners need to know that we have well over 22 counsellors in all of our communities. Every one of our communities is supported by psychologists — mental wellness counsellors. Of course, we have clinical psychologists who support all of our communities. In addition, we have youth counsellors. We have critical intervention teams that go into our communities. We provide extensive supports that we have not seen historically.

I want to just say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm really happy to talk about the recognition — the Council of the Federation uses our innovation on mental health and substance use in rural Yukon communities and northern communities as a pillar, as something that should be emulated across the country. We are proud of that because of the good work of our partners in our communities. So, yes, we are providing supports to all of our communities, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Hassard: We're just looking for a very simple yes-or-no answer here. As I said yesterday, the Minister of Health and Social Services was on CBC's *As It Happens* — as you know, it is a national news program — and on that program, she said — and I'll quote again: "We have now a psychologist in every community."

Again, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us if that is in fact true?

Hon. Ms. Frost: So, we certainly recognize and appreciate that Yukoners are asking for services. We saw that when we came into office — and the stark reality of the day — we did not have services.

We do now. The clinical psychologist — the mental wellness supports in all of our communities are there. We have significant supports and services in all of our communities. We now have the Referred Care Clinic here in the city providing supports, intensive trauma counselling and supports. We have that same service in all of our communities. We established the mental wellness hubs that support all of our communities. I'm really pleased about that.

Is it working to its optimum? Probably not, but we are getting significant feedback to expand services and supports.

We are a government that established services four years ago. Previous to that, we had nothing.

I can say to Yukoners that this government is here to commit and work to the best of our abilities to provide you with the necessary services that you so require and that you desire. We will endeavour to do more; we will endeavour to ensure that we support and enhance your land-based initiatives, which you've asked us to do. We will continue to do that by providing essential services.

Mr. Hassard: Now, this minister has been caught sharing false information in the past. This election is going to be about who Yukoners can trust to lead Yukon toward recovery. It's very important for us to know if the Minister of Health and Social Services was telling the truth on national radio yesterday. As I stated, she was on CBC's *As It Happens* where she said — and I'll quote again: "We have now a psychologist in every community."

Mr. Speaker, we know that this isn't true. Why does the Minister of Health and Social Services and this Liberal government have such a hard time sharing actual factual information?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to the question and with respect to access to services in the Yukon, we have provided services to Yukoners. We will continue to do that. What we have right now, and what we haven't had historically, is access to psychologists. We haven't had psychologist services in the Yukon historically. We now have those services. We have itinerant supports in our communities. We've expanded the scope of practice to ensure that we meet the complex care needs of Yukoners.

The members opposite may not want to hear that response, but Yukoners want to know. The services are there. The services and supports are there for Yukoners. I'm very pleased to say that we have the mental wellness hubs. We have a social worker in every one of our communities. We have child psychologists in place that we haven't had historically, and we have psychiatric services and supports now that we haven't had.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that where we were coming into office four years ago to where we are now is miles apart. We will continue to work for Yukoners. We will continue to ensure that Yukoners have the services that they desire.

Question re: Consultation with school communities

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, we are glad to know that the Liberal government has decided that Whitehorse-area high schools will be returning to full-time in-person learning for grades 10 to 12; however, we are concerned that, once again, this is a decision that has been rushed out and announced without a plan and without proper communication with those most affected. We have heard from the Yukon Teachers' Association that teachers found out on the day the announcement was made. It was the same for the affected school councils.

Mr. Speaker, can the Liberals explain why they have made this last-minute decision without any consultation?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, it is quite simple. When the recommendations come out from the chief medical officer of health, we get those recommendations out to the public as soon as possible. This has happened throughout every single phase of recovery through our path forward. It will continue as long as we are in charge of this government because this is the most important thing we can do: get the information out for people; communicate with the stakeholders as soon as possible; and not play games with the actual chief medical officer of health's recommendations. That is his responsibility. We update Yukoners every week. I am not going to ask him to delay his recommendations. I am going to make sure that we get those recommendations out as soon as possible so that people can make plans as quickly as possible and so that we are ready for the inevitability of opening up. That's good news for Yukoners, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to use that model of following the recommendations and getting those recommendations out as soon as possible, working with the stakeholders as we work toward the dates that have been declared. Again, the announcement was "within a month". Within a month, the chief medical officer of health has said that we can open up. We are now working with the stakeholders — the Education lead, the minister and her team are working with the stakeholders — to make sure that this happens within the time frame of that recommendation.

Mr. Kent: Not working with stakeholders and not consulting has become an unfortunate pattern for this Liberal government and this minister. They forgot to engage affected stakeholders about the school reopening plans in August to go with their current model. They forgot to engage those same stakeholders in November when they made the decision to extend the current model for the entire year. Now they have made an announcement yet again without a plan and without communicating at all with those most affected.

Will teachers and administrators be asked to stay at work over the spring break to plan the transition? Why was this announcement made without first making a plan?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am happy to be able to rise today to talk to Yukoners about these turns of events. The chief medical officer of health, as the Premier has noted, is reconsidering the guidance that has been provided to schools. I think it should be clearly enunciated and set out for Yukoners that, of course, the Department of Education has been working all along with the three affected high schools, with those school councils, and with the chief medical officer of health. We're trying to be prepared so that, in the event that this occurred, we would be ready.

The information came to us late Tuesday that the chief medical officer of health was considering the change to this guideline that would permit the spacing necessary to put grades 10 to 12 back into the three high schools. We have been working on that eventuality over time. Department officials have been working with the principals to consider, if this were to happen, what would occur. I spoke myself to two of the three chairs of the school councils on Wednesday morning immediately when we knew that this was in fact going to come

in Dr. Hanley's recommendations on that day. The officials have been speaking with the department as well as the principals, and the work was well-underway so that, if and when this occurred, we could be ready.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, not even a week ago, last Friday, the *A Path Forward* document was released and it had additional requirements for students to go back into grades 10 to 12. A few short days later, those requirements were changed.

Again, what I asked the minister in the previous question was: Will teachers and administrators be asked to stay at work over spring break to plan the transition? I'm hoping she can answer that as well as another question with respect to the current model that the Liberals have chosen for this school year, which was that grade 8s from F.H. Collins are at Wood Street Centre, which of course lacks many of the normal amenities of a high school.

Can the minister tell us if those students will now be returning to F.H. Collins as part of this broader announcement to return grades 10 to 12 to full time?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education officials will be and have been working with the office of the chief medical officer of health as well as the school administrators and school councils of the three affected Whitehorse secondary schools as well as the Yukon Teachers' Association. May I say that the phone calls that we made to them as soon as this information came us was very well-received — I dare say more well-received than it has been by the opposition.

I can certainly indicate that the additional staff that have been supporting those three high schools will remain in place. I can indicate that the teachers will not be required to work over the March break, which begins after tomorrow's classes, and in fact, the logistics that we are discussing with the teachers and with the school councils are taking that into account, which is why we are talking about April, as well as some timetables that need to be changed and updated, as well as some spacing situations — all of which will be done in partnership in the next few weeks so that the logistics can be worked out to the benefit of our Yukon students.

Question re: Wildlife and habitat protection

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how many times I have asked about species at risk legislation in Question Period or in budget debate or spoken to it in motion debates going back to 2011, but here we are again.

In 2016, the Yukon Conservation Society and CPAWS asked all political parties how they would address the lack of a territory-wide conservation strategy to protect our wildlife. The first thing the Liberal Party said in their response was — and I quote: "One way we will protect wildlife is to enact a Yukon Species at Risk Act." So, it has been more than four years and still no species at risk legislation.

Why did the Premier break this promise?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that the Department of Environment has been working on the vision to look at species at risk legislation here in the Yukon. We are governed by the federal legislation and we will continue to

work toward resolving that. We have committed to that and we will continue toward that end.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it almost sounds like a country song: It has been four long years, and here we are.

Let me read the question asked by the Yukon Conservation Society and CPAWS — and I quote: "The Yukon lacks an active territory wide conservation strategy for protecting wildlife and important natural areas. How would your party address this gap?" In the same response to that same question, the Liberal Party said — and I quote: "... the land use planning process can and will be used to protect important natural areas of the territory." Yet when the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation asked for a staking moratorium while the land use planning process was ongoing, the Premier refused to act.

Why did the Premier break this promise?

Hon. Mr. Silver: No promise broken. We continue to work with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as we work through — as the commission does their good work. We have had lots of great meetings, our technicians have met, and we have met politically, as well.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we've made commitments that go far beyond what the Yukon Party had made in the land use planning process when it comes to how we can work together, government-to-government, for land use planning.

We also made a commitment — because the federal money for land use planning has been tapped out, and we have many land use plans to go. We need to go hand-in-hand with First Nations — not only just the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, but all First Nations as they contemplate land use planning — together to Ottawa to talk about —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: Obviously, the NDP doesn't want to hear the answer, because they talk off-mic as we try to talk.

We will go hand in hand, like we have been doing, with the Yukon First Nations at Yukon Days when we talk to the federal ministers to get the resources in place. We will continue to work with First Nation governments at the Yukon Forum to discuss land use planning.

The member opposite might think that somehow that promise has not been kept when, really, we've ramped up our communications, we've ramped up our obligations, and we've also ramped up our commitments to land use planning.

Ms. White: I was here between 2011 and 2016, and I don't think I would brag about being better than the Yukon Party at land use planning, but that's what we just heard from the government.

So, here's another question that the parties were asked — if they would commit to developing a wetlands strategy. Again, this is something that has been brought up in this Assembly on more than one occasion. It has also been raised as a concern by First Nation governments and by Yukoners wanting to protect and preserve our natural resources. The Liberal Party response was — and I quote: "We intend to develop a policy for managing Yukon wetlands, including support for wetland inventory and monitoring..."

Can the government tell us why none of these promises have been fulfilled in more than four years, or can Yukoners

just expect the same answers to similar questions during the next election campaign?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, establishing a wetlands policy that reflects Yukoners' perspectives and ensures the benefits for all the territory — for the wetlands sustainability for all of us — is a priority of our government. This policy will also help us make decisions with respect to the importance of wetlands and the benefits that they provide while also ensuring a diverse and growing economy.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the NDP speak off-mic because they don't want hear these answers. If they hear the answers, well, then I guess they can — well, anyway, I won't even go with that.

Through individual and internal conversations, feedback and roundtable partnerships, we have anticipated very important insight and we have reflected on efforts. There has been a lot of work on this, Mr. Speaker.

Like the results of the Water Board's hearing on wetlands, we've identified a number of areas in the current draft that require additional work, but the work has been done. We are relying on this expertise and the experts of the roundtable members and the feedback that we receive, and we are working to bring a draft policy to public engagement as soon as we are able to.

Together, we can build a strong, consistent, and united approach to wetlands stewardship that reflects the values and interests of Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, we are working with our partners on this. We are establishing a wetlands policy that has never been established before.

Question re: Alcohol-related harm

Mr. Hutton: Today, Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with two pandemics: COVID-19, and alcohol and substance abuse. This government continues to ignore one of them. I am a firefighter, and any firefighter can tell you that, if you have multiple fires out there, you have to fight more than one at a time. If you don't, you will find yourself with two raging fires — not one. In 2016, our chief medical officer, Dr. Hanley, said — and I quote: "We see a thousand visits to the emergency departments of Yukon directly related to alcohol use..." He called for more resources and policy changes.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has followed the advice of Dr. Hanley to deal with COVID-19. Why has the Premier ignored him when it comes to alcohol- and drug-related damage to our population?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The situation in Yukon that we find ourselves in didn't start overnight; it has been here a long time. We heard this quite clearly from our communities. That it is not the sole responsibility of this government is what we have also heard. We know that the shouldering of the responsibilities of wellness in Yukon and of ensuring our communities are well and taken care of falls on holistic solutions. The holistic solutions with respect to mental wellness and the whole care of individuals come from our communities. We are working with our communities.

Two years ago, we established land-based wellness strategies and supports in the budget to support our communities. The communities have established their own wellness plans. We are there to support and augment that, and we will continue to do that. It came out in the *Putting People First* report. To suggest that we're not doing anything is absolutely not true. We are doing a lot, and the communities are doing a lot. We have heard really clearly from one of the communities in the member's riding where they are doing a lot themselves, with the support of our partners, by hosting land-based camps for men, land-based camps for women, and working with children. We are there beside them, supporting them, every step of the way.

Mr. Hutton: The World Health Organization said in April that rules to protect health and reduce harm caused by alcohol, like restricting access, should be upheld and reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic, but this past June, the government cut alcohol prices, going against public health advice.

There are a million ways to support our small businesses to get through this pandemic, but, Mr. Speaker, this was not the right way. Making it easier for struggling people to get alcohol was not the right thing to do. More than just ignoring this issue, government has poured gas on this fire.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that reducing the price of alcohol in the middle of a pandemic goes against public health advice and was not the right way to support the restaurant and bar industry?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, what I would like to say is that I have worked very closely with the chief medical officer of health. I have worked with him on COVID. I have worked with him on liquor. Actually, he was involved and on the advisory committee as we reviewed the act and rewrote the act and passed it here in this Legislature. Currently, he is assisting in working on the regulations, which are there to reduce the harms of alcohol.

In fact, that was the whole point of that act. We built in, throughout it, social responsibility. In fact, I did ask the member opposite — and I thank him for his contributions to that work.

At the same time, I also talked to the chief medical officer of health about what we should do around reducing the prices. Now, we didn't reduce the prices of alcohol, Mr. Speaker. What we did was that we supported those businesses to keep them going. I talked to them directly. I talked to those businesses, and I said: "If you reduce prices on alcohol, I will drop this right away." They understood that this was to support them as businesses through a pandemic — plain and simple.

Now, I appreciate how hard this is as an issue, and we are working on a bunch of fronts to try to protect Yukoners. But this is not — we're comparing different things here, and I will stand up again and debate it.

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, I'm here because the people in my communities — that I represent — are struggling. Communities are trying to get support. YG is not there for them.

Yesterday, George Skookum, a village councillor in Carmacks, spoke on CBC Radio. He said — and I quote: “It’s easy to buy alcohol, but it’s harder to get into treatment.” You can go to a local bar or liquor store, but when you want to go for treatment, there’s a long lineup.

Right now, many First Nation governments are forced to send people to Victoria at great cost to get the help they need. This is unacceptable. Mr. Speaker, I add my voice to Councillor Skookum’s and ask the Premier to act now to deal with alcohol and substance abuse.

When will the Premier commit to the financial and human resources required to take care of our people?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This pandemic has been tough on all Yukoners. It has been tough on our communities, for sure.

One of the things that was hard for us was that we used to travel all the time to our communities, and I did travel to the community that the member opposite is talking about. It is his community. I invited him to come to that meeting when I spoke with the council there, but he didn’t make it.

I talked with the council that we are talking about, and what I will say is that we discussed how to get those supports to those communities. The Minister of Health and Social Services, out of the review that has taken place — about some of the tragedies in Carmacks. We talked about how we are increasing those supports to those communities. That was a direct conversation that I had with him. It doesn’t mean that there aren’t challenges that we continue to face, but we did go — we are in conversation with Carmacks, with Pelly, with Mayo, with Keno. In those conversations, we are working directly to make sure that those supports are coming to those communities to support them during this hard time and beyond.

Question re: Fixed election dates

Mr. Cathers: In 2016, the Liberals committed to a fixed election date. The Premier said that fixed election dates — and I quote: “... strengthen our democracy by being open, fair, and transparent about when the next election will be held.” So, I will give the Premier another opportunity today to live up to his words and tell Yukoners the answer to this simple question: When will the next election be held?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I guess the member opposite decided not to bring any new questions to the Legislative Assembly this semester. It is no secret that this is the last year of our mandate. We have tabled a budget that builds on the work that we have done over the past four years and reflects our vision about the future of the territory. The budget includes funding for new universal childcare programs that will make life more affordable for Yukon families. We are transforming the health care system and making substantial investments in renewable energy and infrastructure to make a more resilient future for the territory.

Mr. Speaker, I probably won’t be the first Premier in the Legislature to announce an election date in the Legislative Assembly. There is a process for that, but it is no secret that this is an election year and I will continue to talk about the budget in the Legislative Assembly. That is what we should be doing.

Mr. Cathers: I keep asking the question because the Premier keeps dodging it, and it is a very simple one. The Premier and his colleagues watered down what they promised in the 2016 election and instead brought in rules that apply to everyone except them.

When explaining why the Liberals thought fixed election dates were so important, the Liberal MLA for Porter Creek Centre said — quote: “By eliminating the guesswork at elections, Yukoners will be able to be more engaged and up to speed.”

Will the Premier eliminate the guesswork in elections so that Yukoners can be “more engaged and up to speed” by telling us: When will the next election be?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite is right. We did do the effort to put in the legislation so that, moving forward, there will be fixed election dates — something that the Yukon Party could have done and didn’t do, but we did.

We’ve talked about this in the Legislative Assembly. I’ve answered this question many times, so I won’t take up too much time and answer it again. We did put that legislation in. The members opposite could have and didn’t. The members opposite never announced an election inside of the Legislative Assembly even though they’re asking me to do that.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy is pretty rich.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I’m just reminding the Premier of what he and his colleagues committed to around fixed election dates. Instead, what they actually delivered was rules that apply to everyone except them.

Just a few months ago, the Minister of Community Services told the Legislative Assembly that Yukoners deserved to know when the next election will be held. He said — and I quote: “... one of the things that we’re trying to do with this is to provide clarity and certainty that will allow Yukoners to plan.”

So, will the Premier provide that clarity and certainty his colleague spoke of in allowing Yukoners to plan by answering the simple question and telling them when will the next election be held?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, again, we did change the legislation, which is great news — so, moving forward, set election dates. We’ve also put set dates for the session as well — something that the members opposite refused to do. We’re very proud of that accomplishment. Again, the Yukon Party had options year after year to do that and didn’t, and now they’re basically saying that what we did was just not enough — it was a little bit too — just not enough — whereas they didn’t do anything in that capacity.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I agree. We’ve answered the question as far as why we did it for the next — moving on from here into the 35th Legislative Assembly. It’s no secret that we are in the last year of our mandate. We’ll follow the current rules and we will follow those procedures as they are laid out. We have tabled a budget that builds on our work, as mentioned, over the past four years.

We’re very proud of the work that this government has done over the last four years. We’ve built ourselves to a place where we’re getting out four times the amount of capital assets

than the Yukon Party did in their big bang-up election year budget. They had \$150 million of projects that they actually accomplished. We just tabled a budget for \$434 million of capital assets. I could go on about all of the benefits of the budget, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of the work that we are doing here in the Legislative Assembly and we would like to continue to be the government into the 35th Legislative Assembly as well.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 207: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Second Reading — adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 207, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will return to just where I left off the other day. I was indicating that I know that it is hard for us to remember, particularly up here in our little left-hand corner of Canada, where we have been relatively safe and where we have pulled together to keep each other safe and healthy.

Mr. Speaker, not that long ago, the world shut down. Schools sent children home. Air travel and cruise ships stopped. People stopped moving around the world for business and pleasure, businesses closed, concerts were cancelled, sports — professional and local — all ended, and we couldn't get our hair cut or our teeth cleaned. Health care services were seriously restricted. The world as we knew it stopped. We have been living with so much uncertainty and anxiety now for more than a year. All anyone wants is certainty and peace. Yukoners have risen to the challenge together with patience and kindness.

At the best of times, a budget creates conditions that allow individuals to thrive as the economy grows. In times of uncertainty like these, a well-crafted budget can provide the stability needed to steer through the turbulence while charting a course toward calmer times. I think that it's important that Yukoners know how we work to develop the most important document produced by government. We work as a team for months and months, not from a distance, but in a real way. We ask ourselves: What are the priorities of Yukoners? What have they told us in e-mails or on the phone, on the doorsteps, through public engagement, or through our partnerships working with Yukon First Nation governments, municipalities, community groups, and Yukoners?

Governments must understand their responsibility to the people of this territory, and this one does. Some may think that this sounds naïve, but I don't believe it is. I have seen it work. I have seen the Yukon Liberal government do it for the past four and a half years.

One time, several years ago, I was accused in this House of making a decision to benefit one community over another — one community represented by a Liberal MLA over one

represented by an opposition MLA. That was truly shocking to me and reprehensible. It truly says more about the character of the person accusing me than anything else.

We have been elected — all been elected — to work for and represent the people of the Yukon and to make decisions for the whole of the territory to benefit all of our communities. To do otherwise is abdicating our responsibilities as elected members of the Legislative Assembly.

My colleague described it earlier this week as sometimes a difficult place to be. I know she refers to the personal attacks, not opposition criticism, but reducing such criticism to questions of personal integrity. I know this team of people. I spend nearly every day with them, and I know that in every situation we ask ourselves: What is in the best interests of Yukoners? This budget reflects that attitude and approach. It ensures that priorities that exist in every corner of this great territory are addressed. All communities matter. I'm so proud that our government has not only advanced that as a key priority but has worked extensively with each and every community to meet them, to listen to their priorities, and to respond.

This budget shows many of those responses: investments in arenas, medical professionals, schools, mining roads, bridges, housing, residential lots, new legislation, tourism, infrastructure, small businesses, climate change, procurement, fire halls, community centres, health centres, biomass, and community safety — just to name a few.

It's not just about building things; it's about growing vibrant, sustainable communities and supporting Yukoners everywhere. Yukoners are extremely intelligent, innovative, and hard-working. In 2016, when we asked them to put their trust in our team to make their lives better, they agreed and sent us here to work for them. I know that part of their trust in us resulted in our commitment to work collaboratively with Yukon First Nation governments and communities, to respect the intent and scope of modern treaties, and to build prosperity and certainty for our future by building meaningful partnerships with Yukon First Nations for the benefit of us all.

Despite talking about doing so, these relationships with Yukon First Nations were just not working — not a priority for a previous government. We have worked hard on these relationships to build trust, to build a foundation for our work going forward. It is not perfect. Like all complex relationships, there are bumps in the road, but we are on the road and committed to going forward together.

I am so proud of the work that the Department of Justice has been doing and it is my honour to be its minister and Attorney General. Last year, the department developed priorities to guide its work on behalf of Yukoners. They are reconciliation with Yukon First Nations. Firstly, Department of Justice representatives each committed to embracing the spirit of the *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, entitled *Honouring the Truth, Reconciliation for the Future* by conducting themselves in a manner that embodies the purpose of reconciliation with our First Nation members in Yukon — unprecedented work.

The second priority for the department is working as a team within the branches and within the department as a whole,

and their work is focused on maintaining the best interests of the department and their approach to their work.

The third priority is identifying and meeting our clients' needs. Department of Justice personnel have a wide variety of responsibilities and an equally diverse clientele, internal and external to government, and we are committed to ensuring that they know that we work for them — the clients — and that we treat them with empathy, inclusion, integrity, respect, and professionalism.

The fourth priority for the department is initiative and innovation. Management is committed to encouraging Department of Justice staff at all levels to think innovatively and to take the initiative to improve the work that we do and the services that we provide to allow for positive change and creativity in the workplace. Management will encourage the Department of Justice personnel to reconsider their approach to the services that the department provides and adapt to the changing environment.

There is a commitment to improved communication — committed to the way that we communicate internally to one another and externally to the public in order to better perform as a Department of Justice team, share information and ideas with each other, dispel negative myths about the department, and ensure that the general public has an appreciation for the excellent work that is done. Leadership, Mr. Speaker, could not even have contemplated such progress and goals for the department without the foundational work done by our government to better serve the people of the Yukon.

Over the past four years, this work has seen the department collaborate with Yukon First Nation governments, with the RCMP, with courts, independent agencies, and all of our communities on a variety of initiatives. During our work together, we have concentrated on three key elements to build a foundation for our justice system moving forward. They are building a foundation of trust with Yukon First Nation governments, modernizing legislation, and prioritizing restorative justice and access to justice services.

Firstly, on building the foundation with Yukon First Nations, a number of initiatives have been followed, and these are only a few.

The Government of Yukon recently approved a new approach to justice-related negotiations with Yukon First Nation governments. It is based on the recognition and respect for the First Nations' jurisdictions, governance, and legal principles. It provides new opportunities for collaboration and partnership, and it promotes incremental and capacity-building initiatives.

Our government is committed to enabling Yukon First Nation governments to fully exercise their authority and jurisdiction for the administration of justice. We hope that our new approach encourages First Nation governments that are not already doing so to consider negotiating an administration of justice agreement with the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada. These initiatives and this mandate are supported by the 2021-22 budget.

We are augmenting and extending the First Nation policing program. We are working with First Nation governments to

initiate and implement community protocols under the *Safer Communities and Neighborhoods Act*. We have initiated and are supporting the RCMP's historical cases unit, which investigates historical homicides, historical suspicious deaths, missing person investigations, and cases of unidentified human remains, for which funding continues in this year's budget.

We have committed and declared support for the territory-wide strategy to implement the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' calls to action. Financial support for this incredibly important work is in the 2021-22 budget.

Our department continues to introduce new and amended statutes to respond to the public interest and to codify best practices and procedures. Since the spring of 2017, we have done policy work, drafted, introduced, and debated 43 pieces of legislation. In addition, we have introduced and debated 20 budget bills. These 43 pieces of legislation aren't housekeeping bills; they are substantive work.

Having worked with several pieces of outdated legislation myself over the years, I am very proud of our new *Coroners Act*, *Missing Persons Act*, *ATIPP act*, *Societies Act*, condo act amendments, and various pieces of equality legislation. There were a number of pieces brought in just last fall that will change the face of activity for Yukoners — the land titles act, the new *Wills Act*, and the new enduring powers of attorney act, just to name a few.

The last commitment from the department that I should mention here today is our government's commitment to restorative justice and access to justice. Our government also recently approved the creation of an integrated restorative justice unit, supported by this budget, to improve the government's restorative justice service delivery. This new unit will also increase engagement with First Nation governments and better support community-designed and community-led restorative justice initiatives.

The restorative justice unit will bring existing youth justice and adult justice practitioners together to offer seamless program delivery across the territory. Initiatives to expand services to Yukoners include the sexualized assault response team, the independent legal advice program, project links, and victim services, as well as other services and supports within the territory.

I will speak now to some of the initiatives at the Department of Education. The Department of Education has one focus and one focus only: What is in the best interests of our students? Over the past year, we faced an unprecedented set of challenges due to COVID-19. In order to quickly respond, we prioritized and worked together to adapt operations and to adjust resources to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff while maintaining continuity of learning. As we look toward pandemic recovery, we are focusing efforts to ensure that our education system at all levels provides positive outcomes for students and advances Yukon's social, economic, and community goals.

Yukoners expect us to plan, to think ahead, to do our jobs, even when they are really hard — even when they're affected by a world pandemic. They don't expect us to throw up our hands and to refuse to plan schools just because it's difficult or

just because some people will disagree on the next steps. Mr. Speaker, planning schools is tough work because you can't please all Yukoners all the time. But just because it's tough doesn't mean you avoid it.

Our government and the Department of Education have taken up the challenge of addressing our future school needs. We are building Whistle Bend elementary. The budget has \$10.5 million to begin construction of the first elementary school in Whitehorse in over 25 years. We are building on relationships with the Kluane First Nation and responding to their request made now for more than a generation to build a school with them in their community. We ended an 11-year court battle and built a French first language secondary school. We are working with the community of Ross River to address long-overdue stress of a new school. A total of \$8.7 million is budgeted for new learning spaces and modular classrooms, including \$4 million to add new learning spaces to the Robert Service School in Dawson City.

We have included more than \$2.6 million to improve online and digital learning technologies that will support modernized learning and teaching in all of our schools and a further \$1.9 million for supports to ensure that our students are successful in their learning during and after a pandemic. Our government believes that all children should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning opportunities. To support Yukon families and make their lives more affordable, we are investing more than \$25 million toward early learning initiatives.

Now, I know that there is criticism of this, although it's hard to understand. This is supporting Yukon families. I appreciate that it's criticized on the basis of it being some sort of an election promise. This is not a promise going forward, Mr. Speaker; this is work that's happening now.

It includes \$15 million to support a new universal childcare program for the Yukon and to put more disposable income in the hands of families, saving them up to \$700 per month, per child. This will support Yukon families and, in particular, will help women who have been hit hard by the pandemic.

We will also work with rural Yukon communities to expand full-time kindergarten programming, individually with each community, to support these initiatives and ensure stronger coordination and collaboration across our early learning services. In order to do that, as well, we are moving the Child Care Services unit to the Department of Education. There is a bill before this House to assist with that.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment — I'm not sure how much time I have left, but I would like to speak for a second about volunteerism in the territory, particularly because it has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic but also because it is truly the foundation of this community in many, many ways — and I mean the whole territory.

When I think about the last time that we were here, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I think about the Arctic Winter Games. The Arctic Winter Games is truly the epitome of our Yukon volunteer spirit. It's probably really all of our community that is involved in one way or the other in the Arctic. Volunteers who have committed and trained and

always welcome our visitors with such heartfelt hospitality were not able to do so last year. Volunteers, generally, are the backbone of any Yukon sport, cultural, or social event.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank each and every one of Yukon's great volunteers. Their efforts do not go unnoticed. Many of our organizations rely on them, run because of them, and are supported on a daily basis. We know that this has been hard during the pandemic because individuals have been curtailed in some of their activities, but we're hoping that they can do them and continue them, and we are thanking them for that effort and for adjusting.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment also to thank the people of Riverdale South. The honour is mine to have been sent here by them to represent them, to bring forward their concerns, and to help resolve issues that are of interest to them and those that are of interest to all Yukoners. I appreciate that those are the individual Yukoners who have taken the time to express their votes and to participate in our democratic process for the purpose of having a representative here in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

I also appreciate that we all come here with a party stripe but are in fact representing all of the individuals in our neighbourhoods, in our ridings, and in our communities. Those who cast their vote for us — or, maybe more importantly, those who didn't cast their vote for us — because it is an opportunity to come here and to do our job on behalf of all Yukoners. That is such an incredible opportunity and honour.

Over the past four years, I've participated in many community outreach events. Some of you may recall the wildly successful pizza parties hosted in Riverdale North and Riverdale South that happened. These were excellent opportunities to hear from Yukoners.

I also worked to set up along the Millennium Trail during the Terry Fox Run and to provide snacks and water during this COVID year to those participating in the important event, and we had a lot of great conversations.

For the past year, Mr. Speaker, I have focused on the seniors in my riding. When COVID became a reality, I put together some COVID safety packs for seniors in Riverdale South. With a local young artist from Riverdale South, I created a beautiful art card and attached locally baked cookies supporting a local bakery and hand-delivered these to all Riverdale South residents around the Christmas holidays. This card included a personal message to stay safe and how they could connect with services if anyone needed support during that unusual time.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take just a moment to thank my family and friends for their endless support and understanding. As anyone who has done this job, even for a short period of time, knows, being a member of the government of this House takes a toll on relationships. It is wrong that the demands on your time mean that your family and your friends regularly take a back seat and that they don't have you in the everyday moments of their lives as much as they or you might like. This commitment is one that they make as well when we decide to go down this road.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Yukoners. Their resilience, patience, and kindness during this pandemic has kept us all safe. I know that we've all heard comments across the territory and perhaps even nationally or internationally: "What's going on up there in the Yukon? How is there no COVID? How are there still some restrictions?" The truth of the matter is that we are safe here because Yukoners have abided by those restrictions, have taken them seriously, understand what it means that their actions affect some of their neighbours — all of their neighbours in this situation. As a result, the indication has been a positive one. We have to keep going.

I have the opportunity today, so I will take it, to thank the incredible people who work on this team. Coming into this Legislative Assembly on a daily basis and working for and with our partners on a daily basis throughout the year is just an amazing experience. We have brought forward the opportunity — promises to Yukon, promises to Yukoners — about bringing prosperity, growth, and kindness to every corner of this territory, and every one of these people is committed to that and has done it every day for the last four and a half years. I appreciate so much being a member of this team, and I am honoured to do so.

Lastly, I will take the opportunity to thank Yukoners. They have put their confidence in us. They have abided by the "safe six" plus one. They have taken the time and energy to support their fellow Yukoners, their neighbours, their friends, and their families. They have reached out. There have been just amazing examples — and we all know them — of community support and of Yukoners reaching out to one another to help in times of stress. This has been a time of stress.

Thank you to Yukoners for your confidence in us, for abiding by the rules and regulations — the "safe six" plus one — in relation to COVID. Thank you for your kindness to one another. Thank you for your patience with one another. We have presented a budget here that will take Yukon forward and continue the commitments that we have made on behalf of Yukoners for Yukoners and the commitments that we have been asked to take forward from Yukoners.

Mr. Hutton: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak in reply to this budget. I want to start off by thanking all of the people in my communities. It has been the absolute honour of my life to be trusted by the people of Mayo-Tatchun, to be their voice in this Legislative Assembly.

I would be very surprised if I can get through my reply to this speech without breaking into tears a couple times. It's lost on my colleagues that I have been attending over 30 funerals since 2016. In no less than 10 of them, I was given the honour of being a pallbearer.

I was extremely disappointed when I listened to *As It Happens* last night to hear the Minister of Health and Social Services deliberately attempt to sow division in my communities, to try to accuse me of favouring Mayo over Pelly and Carmacks. Fortunately, the host of the show saw through it, cut her off, and said that is not what Mr. Hutton said.

I would encourage all members of this Legislative Assembly to listen to Mr. Hutton's *As it Happens* interview, followed the next day by the clarification interview from the Minister of Health and Social Services — it clarified much more about the Minister of Health and Social Services than it did about the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun.

It's really disappointing to hear, in this House today, one of my colleagues who can remember one visit to my community where I was unable to attend. My colleagues, who all live in Whitehorse, have the luxury of going home to their loved ones every evening, year-round.

In the last four years, I spent two years sleeping by myself in Whitehorse, not with the woman I married 33 years ago, who has been my support and partner for the past 35 years. So, when I get home after the legislative Sitting, I like to spend time, not just in all three of my big communities, but in the two little ones, Keno and Stewart Crossing. Then I love to spend time with my family, because I only get half the time every year to do it that all my colleagues get. So, it's really disappointing to hear that, because I missed one meeting in Mayo, somehow I've failed as the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun.

The failure lies on behalf of my colleagues who have been absolutely tone deaf since 2016 to the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun's issues.

I tried unsuccessfully — I can't even count the times — to get a meeting — a famous one-government approach meeting where I sit down with all my colleagues, and every minister said — in the pure context of one of your communities — that this is what my department can do to help, this is what my department can do to help, and this is what my — I got no meeting. Guess what, Mr. Speaker. My communities didn't get any help.

The Minister of Health and Social Services thinks that mental wellness hubs are some kind of magic magnet that draws these poor, damaged, broken people off the streets of Mayo, Carmacks, and Pelly. I suggested on *As It Happens* that the wellness hubs were a good idea, but for the people in Mayo — these damaged drug addicts and alcoholics who can't afford a vehicle and don't have friends who have vehicles are expected to walk 150 miles to Carmacks to get help. No, they have a choice. They can walk 150 miles to Dawson to get help.

The mental wellness hub is in Dawson City, where they have a brand new, fully operational hospital — fully staffed. In four years, not once did I ever hear the Premier say that there is a huge problem with alcohol, that there is a huge problem with drugs, or that we have a mental illness problem in Dawson. I never heard it, but I can tell you that I spoke those words on behalf of all three of my communities not once but probably 50 times. The mental wellness hub that is in Dawson should have been in Mayo. That is just unacceptable.

I wish this budget was broken down riding by riding, because it would really tell you a different story about where the government's priorities lay. Rural Yukon has had a lot of messages of support from people in my riding and from every community in my riding. I guess perhaps the Premier and Minister of Health and Social Services didn't realize that this is my home. My friends and family live there. I am the same Don

Hutton today who knocked on their door and asked for their vote. My colleagues cannot say the same. They are different people, Mr. Speaker.

Support — amazingly enough — believe it or not, I'm fairly naïve politically. When I got the phone call from *As It Happens* saying that they wanted to talk to me, I thought I was talking to the folks here in Whitehorse. The next thing I know, I'm speaking to an audience of 200,000 Canadians across this country. But they reached out to me, Mr. Speaker; I didn't reach out to them. I got support letters from across this country. I got e-mails. I got Facebook posts. I have one here somewhere, Mr. Speaker. Indulge me, please.

If it's too long, I'll table it when I'm done, but it's really quite brief: "I am a 61 year old piano tuner on Vancouver Island. I just heard your interview on CBC 'As It Happens'. I want to thank you for standing up for your principles. It is important, useful and helpful for a functioning democracy for people across the country to see examples of politicians like yourself. There are too many examples of well meaning individuals to get elected to office, only to become spineless yes-men in short order. Parliamentarians such as yourself are needed to wake up and shake up their dozing colleagues, and more importantly, to remind voters that there are still ethics and morals in the halls where we are represented. I sincerely hope that your constituents somehow find the help that they need from your Legislative Assembly. Godspeed to you, sir! Jurgen Goering, Nanaimo BC".

If I was still sitting on the other side of the House, I would be encouraged to dig out 30 or 40 more of those and read them and then wear my jacket out patting myself on the back, but that's not what I'm here for, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not here to draw attention to myself. I'm here to draw attention to this government's cold-hearted attitude toward the rural ridings that I represent.

The Minister of Health and Social Services, who has spent probably five days in the last four years in my community, to have the audacity to somehow suggest that I care more about Mayo than I do Pelly or Carmacks — pathetic, truly pathetic.

I know that I made the right decision to sit as an Independent MLA because I was sent here by the people of Mayo-Tatchun to be their voice in this House. For four and a half years, my voice was taken away from me. The opportunities to get involved in policy were absolutely few and far between. My good colleague, the Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation, is the one minister who allowed me to get involved in actual policy decisions. He actually made the effort, when I was at home in Mayo, to phone me when they had a meeting in Whitehorse so that I could participate. That little bit of effort was all it took to get my involvement in policy.

Now, when they decided that they wanted to have me drive from Mayo to Whitehorse to discuss the *Condominium Act*, I suggested that it might not be the most appropriate use of my time because we don't have any condos in Mayo, Pelly, Carmacks, or Stewart. Funny thing about Stewart — 10 years later — six years after my learned colleague, Mr. Tredger, tried to get one street light for Stewart Crossing — Stewart was lucky. They voted in a Liberal MLA to get something done for

them. There is still no street light in Stewart Crossing — one street light. There are 30 in a government compound. There is not one on this driveway — from a private person's driveway — that attaches to the north Klondike Highway, just before the bridge at Stewart. No less than five pets have been run over there, but my good colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, sent his team out there to do some studies. Lo and behold, there is not enough traffic there to warrant a street light — one street light, Mr. Speaker. I may start a fundraising campaign when I retire — a GoFundMe campaign — to see if we can't get a street light for Stewart Crossing.

I have not asked my government for a lot, but I have asked them to pay attention to my communities. They have been ignored for far too long. I really wish that we could have had a half a day for me to have a conversation with my colleagues about the problems that are faced. In four and a half years, my issues were never important enough to sit down and have a meeting with me. It doesn't make me feel really valuable, Mr. Speaker.

I am not totally surprised. The final question for the Minister of Health and Social Services in her *As It Happens* interview was a fairly simple one. It only needed a yes-or-no answer. The Minister of Health and Social Services was asked, "Are you disappointed to lose the Member for Mayo-Tatchun?" With about this length of a pause, then there was some kind of spin about how wonderful it is to work with her other colleagues. The host let that go on for 15 seconds or so, and then she said that all she wanted was a yes-or-no answer, so she tried again: "Are you disappointed that you lost the Member for Mayo-Tatchun?" It was quite telling that, once again, the Minister of Health and Social Services was lost for an answer. She's not sure if she's disappointed or not that I no longer sit on that side of the House.

The Minister of Health and Social Services actually called *As It Happens* to provide that clarification. I didn't call them; they called me. If you listen to that interview, Mr. Speaker, you would think that this was not a high-level senior member of the Cabinet with four years of experience who answered this question with a communications team of 25 people to support it.

I did my interview in my lovely new office, over the phone, surrounded by myself. I encourage all members of this Legislative Assembly — I encourage everyone in Mayo-Tatchun, every Yukoner — to download that free app from CBC — CBC Listen. Listen to those podcasts, because it's so much more informative about why Mr. Hutton left the Liberal Party.

I'm going to be 65 years old in June, Mr. Speaker. Every day of those 65 years has been spent in this beautiful, wonderful Yukon, except for the two years that I had to go out to Prince George for college because, back in the day, we just didn't have the programs here. Yesterday, I heard my learned friend from Porter Creek Centre talk about the wonderful résumés of the dream team — the university degrees, the letters behind their names, the lawyers. I missed the reference to firefighters. Firefighters apparently have no place in this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest honours of my life was to serve the Yukon Wildland Fire Management program for 34 years. I protected people's homes, property, values, and cabins in the wilderness. Over that 34 years, one structure was lost when I was incident commander. It was a trapline cabin that belonged to a fellow named George Nicloux out at Mayo Lake. I had taken him in the chopper out with me to do the initial reconnaissance and look at it. I said, "Here's what we're going to do, George. Your cabin is right beside a creek. We'll get the equipment in here. We'll set up sprinklers. We're going to cut a line around here. We'll set up some pumps." Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, by the time we got back to Mayo, that cabin was gone.

When we got back out to the site with our equipment, the fire was half a mile farther away down the valley. Mr. Nicloux's base camp was gone. It's really difficult to put a value — the way we, with our Eurocentric view of the world, put values on things. A trapline cabin in an isolated location where you have to haul things in during the winter and stuff and you've worked out of there for 25 years — it has a really special meaning to you.

One of my many frustrations over the years, working with the fire program, was that, when we changed our zonation system, we didn't bother to incorporate First Nation values into it. There is no recognition that a hot spring is a sacred place that deserves protection. Because I lived in Mayo my whole life, I understand the value of sacred sites to First Nation people in my riding. When a fire threatened the hot springs at Ddhaw Ghro, it wasn't a high enough value at risk for the Yukon government's Wildland Fire Management program to protect. But, Mr. Speaker, if we would have let the fire go up hot springs creek and destroy that, I could have never lived with myself. I took some action and prevented that fire from going up that creek into that hot spring. The Ddhaw Ghro agreement that everyone was so happy to sign — Ddhaw Ghro, without my action and the action of my crews that day, would have been a charred mess.

The people of Pelly understand that. They know who protected Ddhaw Ghro. They know who fought for Ddhaw Ghro. They do know it was this government that signed the paper, but the many people who worked for 20 years — people like Pat Van Bibber — and put their heart and soul into it — and people like Bob Hayes, the elders in Pelly, and Lizzie Hall — I didn't hear all those names get trumpeted when the agreement was signed.

Very similar with the Peel, Mr. Speaker — our government had the privilege of signing that document.

Hundreds and thousands of Yukoners fought for years for that. They stood in demonstrations and stood in support and solidarity with each other. Elders spent the last seven years of their lives providing input to the consultation plan, and sadly, some of them didn't survive to see that plan get signed. It's not for the government to take credit for anything other than putting the ink on the paper. The real battle was fought for many years before that. My good colleagues from the NDP were a huge part of it. I saw them outside of this Legislative Assembly in support of the Peel. I saw them in Mayo many times. Unfortunately,

they couldn't be there the day that agreement was signed. It would have been a much more complete celebration had the two members of the NDP caucus been there.

It was an absolutely heartwarming, wonderful celebration. The water ceremony left no person untouched. I have never been more proud of my community — the young people in my community — the youth who fought for the Peel. Geri-Lee Buyck and some of the elders from my community, Jimmy Johnny — the face of the Peel — but the Liberal government protected the Peel, not all of those people.

I have heard my colleagues on the other side of the House stand up and say, if once, probably a dozen times: "I never thought we were going to be governing during a pandemic." Well, contrary to popular opinion, Mr. Speaker, when I came to this House in 2016, we were in the middle of a pandemic. Ignoring it for three years makes it no less of a pandemic.

In 2017, I shared information with my colleagues that the World Health Organization had reported 3.3 million deaths globally annually from alcohol-attributable deaths — across the globe, 3.3 million people. This pandemic was going on for at least a decade before we arrived in office. When COVID-19 came along and they called it a "pandemic" and there were photo opportunities galore, this now was a pandemic that we could get our hands on.

My analogy about fighting fire — we chose to fight the COVID-19 fire, but the one that was here first, three years previous — we sat there and watched it get bigger and bigger and bigger. As I said in Question Period this afternoon, rather than helping the situation, we actually made it worse. When you take a 12-percent discount and you add a 13-percent discount to it and it comes to a 25-percent discount, I don't understand how that's not a reduction in cost. Anytime you make booze cheaper, anytime you make it more accessible, consumption goes up. That evidence has been there for 100 years. I'm shocked that my colleagues could recognize one pandemic and not the other, especially when somebody was trying to bring it up, if not on a weekly basis, certainly on a semi- or biweekly basis.

I pleaded — I begged — with my colleagues: "Get me some help for my communities." I don't know how many times I came to Monday morning meetings and my colleagues — "Hi, Don. How are you? How was your weekend?" I would say, Mr. Speaker: "It certainly would have been a lot better if I didn't have to go to a funeral this weekend." "It certainly would have been a lot better if somebody — a young woman — hadn't have gotten her throat slashed in Mayo that weekend." "It certainly would have been a lot better if I didn't have to come back and say, 'Well, now Chief Mervyn has lost his son.'" "It certainly would have been a lot better if I didn't have to come back and say, 'Now another one of my friends that I went to school with from grade 1 to 11 has had her son shot, murdered in front of his wife.'"

There were four murders in four years in three small communities, Mr. Speaker — 500 people in each community. If you want to do the stats the way they do stats on deaths per 100,000 — you can do the math, or perhaps my learned colleague, the Minister of Community Services, could

enlighten us. Four murders for 1,500 people. If that was extrapolated out to how many murders in 100,000, I can only tell you this: My communities of Mayo, Pelly, Carmacks, and Keno — are all grieving. They asked me on *As It Happens*: “What are you hearing from your constituents?” I said, “Sadness and grief and a sense of hopelessness. They don’t think there is a way out of this. The government of Yukon doesn’t care. People in my community are dying and I can’t get a one-day meeting to discuss an all-government approach to help my communities.” How little my voice means to my colleagues, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you one thing: When this election ever gets called, I will return home to my people the same man that I came. I cannot say that for some of my colleagues. Power has been described as an aphrodisiac, as a drug. Perhaps people can get drunk with power. There is an old adage that “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

When the Premier makes a decision to have a small Cabinet with seven people in it, he is guaranteed the tie-breaking vote every single time there is a tie among that Cabinet. That power disappears when you put an eighth person in there. Small Cabinets are much better to ensure that control is there. It benefits Yukoners, Mr. Speaker. Openness, transparency, accountability, inclusiveness — that was the word that got me. I said, boy, I have been waiting my whole life for a government that is going to be open, accountable, transparent, and inclusive. I have never been a big fan of party politics, Mr. Speaker.

One of the broken promises that I hoped was going to be kept was electoral reform. This ridiculous first-past-the-post system does not serve Yukoners well. Forty percent of the vote gets you 11 seats and 39 percent gets you six. That is toilet paper math, Mr. Speaker, where 12 rolls equal 72. Yukoners deserve better. The MLAs in our rural ridings have to have a voice. It has to mean something. My Facebook page got lit up with my constituents saying that the rural communities have been ignored forever. That’s not a surprise to me. I haven’t been here forever, but I am as old as the hospital in Mayo — 64. I know that for a fact, because my brother was born in the old hospital in 1955. I was born in the brand new one a year later.

When my family doctor, Majid Bakri, left, they backfilled his position. The spin on it created a new nurse practitioner position for Mayo. They backfilled the vacant doctor’s position for Mayo. That’s not a creation process; that’s a staffing action. They created nothing for Mayo. They created a nurse practitioner program in the territory and they substituted a nurse practitioner in Mayo for the doctor that was there. That would have been a much more honest, open, accountable, and transparent way to say it.

The mental wellness hubs that I’ve heard mentioned, I think, 3,845 times in the last four years are this — they are the answer to every question. It doesn’t matter what your question is — mental wellness hubs are the answer. They are buildings, Mr. Speaker, and sometimes, without staff in them, they are empty buildings. Even when the staff are in there, if they are not cross-culturally trained and cross-culturally aware, you

wind up with situations like Cynthia Blackjack in Carmacks, who went to white people for help and wound up dying.

A young man, 18 years old, murdered in Pelly Crossing within months after his graduation — a handsome, intelligent, beautiful young man with a sparkle in his eyes and his whole life ahead of him. A drunken fool with a two-by-four took his life away — my friend. I could stand here and start listing off the top of my head the friends I have lost to alcohol and drugs, not just in Mayo — Pelly and Carmacks.

In 2016, I lost my nephew — another handsome, intelligent, hard-working young man. We’re never going to see him again. He was my son’s best friend, my son’s cousin. He’s gone because of alcohol and drugs. I think I told my colleagues his story in 2016. I think that it was the first time I asked for help. I’m tired of asking for help, Mr. Speaker. They say that when an elder dies, the knowledge that is lost is equivalent to a library burning down. How many libraries’ worth of knowledge have we lost in my communities over the last four years?

The elders and people who went to Yukon University before there was ever a university here — their university was the land and the water that surrounds them. I had the extreme good fortune when I was a young man to be adopted — not formally, not in the white man’s way, but just taken under the wing of one of the best people I ever met in my life. He had a grade 8 education, Mr. Speaker, much like my father — two of the men I admired most in my life, two of the most intelligent men I have ever met in my life, two men I knew that I could trust. No university degrees.

If I only have two minutes left, they have to go toward my people in Mayo-Tatchun. To everybody in Mayo-Tatchun, my sincerest apology. If I have failed you, I am deeply and truly sorry. I have worked very hard. I spent countless hours away from my family in Mayo. I may have missed one meeting in Mayo. I know that my constituents are not going to judge me on that, Mr. Speaker. I owe my wholehearted thanks to the people of Mayo-Tatchun. They put their trust in me. They gave me the honour of doing this job. I feel like I have tried to serve them with honesty and purpose. I have tried to get help for their communities. The fact that I couldn’t get help for their communities is not my failure alone. Much as I share in the accomplishments of my colleagues, they have to share this burden with me. We all failed my communities.

To the people of Mayo-Tatchun, know this: I am going to retire. I am never going to stop fighting for the people of Mayo-Tatchun. I served you at the end of this term for 42 years, and I am proud to have done that.

Ms. Hanson: Well, it is pretty hard to follow on those heartfelt words. Very rarely, Mr. Speaker, do we have words that demonstrate that one of the key attributes of anybody seeking to serve the public should be humility. I thank the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for that. I thank the Member for Mayo-Tatchun for his words, and I thank the member from across for pointing out that I should speak up.

As I listened to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, it brought back many memories. One of the ones that came to mind just really quickly was that, just before the Spring Sitting started, I

had a phone call on my cell early one morning. I didn't recognize the number and normally I won't answer it, but I did. On the other end of the line was this voice, and I said, "Oh my god, it's Jimmy Johnny." He said, "How do you know my voice?" I said, "Jimmy Johnny, everybody knows your voice." He just called because — he said, "I just thought I should call you." He wanted to chat, and we talked about our shared love of the wilderness. We talked about the Peel, of course, because, as the Member for Mayo-Tatchun said, Jimmy was the face of the Peel, but he is also the face and the voice of elders across this territory. He expressed his concerns at that time, that morning, about what he saw was happening in the Mayo region with work being done that was ignoring the commitments that governments had made to regional land use planning. He said, "You know, they talk about this Beaver River plan — it's a plan to build a road to mines, and that is not what we agreed to. You know that, Liz." I said, "I know." So, we do need these reminders.

The other thing that Jimmy and I talked about was the time when my colleague, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and I joined a rather fun expedition into the Peel and into the Wind River area that had its own stories — some of which will never get told — but the morning that we were leaving, suddenly Jimmy Johnny showed up and he had picked wild strawberries for us. It was just such a nice gesture and a thoughtful gesture.

So, whether it was outside of this Legislative Assembly or in gatherings with the elders or at inter-tribal watershed gatherings, you always knew that there were people like Jimmy Johnny and so many others. As I reflected about what to say as I rise today to speak to — this is my 11th budget response since I was elected in December 2010. I thought, well, I'll just go back and see what I was talking about in February 2011, my first opportunity to stand as a Member of the Legislative Assembly representing Whitehorse Centre, to talk about the budget then — so 10 years ago.

So much, as I read through what I said then — it's like history has a way of repeating itself. There are times when you would hope that successive governments wouldn't just assume that nothing ever happened before them or that those who seek political office would have a sense of some of the history of this territory so that they don't repeat some of what's happened in the past.

I was, I am, and I remain proud to have been able to be elected in a riding like Whitehorse Centre — a riding that has a legacy of dedicated New Democratic representation.

I look back, and whether it was Joyce Hayden — Joyce, who, along with a group of women, had been co-founder of the Yukon Women's Mini-Bus Society, which became the Whitehorse transit system, and who actually objected to having this cooperative approach becoming part of the city because she thought there would be a loss of service and the actual engagement with the community — or the former Justice Roger Kimmerly or the first aboriginal woman in Canada to be named a Minister of Justice, Margaret Comodore. She wasn't just a great sportswoman — she isn't just a great sportswoman, because she still is and she's actively engaged in Yukon still. To my predecessor, friend, and respected colleague, Todd

Hardy, who I succeeded as both Leader of the NDP at the time and then as member of this Legislative Assembly — those are big shoulders to stand on and shoes to fill. Each one of those MLAs was bound by a commitment to common principles — principles that I've attempted, over the course of my career as a public servant but as a politician as well, to find ways to deal with — and try to strive toward issues of equality, democracy, community — community above all — sustainability and cooperation — and they're really strained.

I heard the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes yesterday talk about wanting to work collegially and being disappointed at how that doesn't work. I'll talk a little bit more about my experience of that over the last 11 years. I had seen — and one of the things that inspired me before I got involved as the MLA — where in fact, despite the fact that, as much I love to malign, rightly so, for the most part, the Yukon Party — my colleagues to the right — there were opportunities and there were times when that party was willing to engage constructively with the opposition and actually work with them. I know that they are astounded, but it happened. Whether they were issues like getting a concurrence to deal with issues — when I said this to a grade 5 class recently, they were astounded that anybody thought this was an issue. I said that it used to be that you could smoke anywhere; you could smoke anywhere you wanted to.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. Hanson: Doctor's office — smoked.

But then, at some point, we realized what damage it was doing to us and our health. To have the cooperation from an NDP motion to establish a smoke-free places act — that was cooperation. It wasn't because the government said, "No, we can't agree with that because it's coming from the NDP." It was that it was a good idea and that the time was now, so let's work together.

I heard the Minister of Justice talking today about expanding the scope of the SCANA — the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*. I have questions about the fact that there has been no consultation on that. There has been absolutely no consultation on the expansion of the scope of it, but SCANA came out of the specific circumstances of drug dealing happening on Wheeler Street, in the Whitehorse Centre riding. The Leader of the NDP at the time, Todd Hardy, worked with the Yukon Party when he was in opposition to say that we need to do something. They agreed. That legislation is still in place 15 years later. Mind you, neither the Yukon Party or the Liberal governments have seen fit to review it. It is way past time for a review, but it came out of the cooperative efforts. The successive Yukon Party government and this current Liberal government have been unwilling to accept the fact that good ideas that we hear repeatedly can come from everywhere and anywhere. They just won't be listened to, heard, or acted on. That is the unfortunate thing.

There's irony here for my colleague, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and leader of the party now. There was actually cooperation between the government and the opposition NDP for a landlord and tenant act review. When my colleague has laboured hard over the last number of years to

address significant omissions that create an unequal playing field for people who live in mobile home parks with respect to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, the wall is there.

Reflecting back to what I was saying then, it's like trying to express — and I will again, as I have over and over again — the fact that it's incredibly humbling to be the representative of the riding of Whitehorse Centre because it's so diverse. If you look at it from the South Access to Two Mile Hill and to Marwell and to the fact that it is home to several levels of government, whether it's the Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council office, the City of Whitehorse, or this Legislative Assembly — all of these are within my riding — it's not my riding, but it's the riding I have the privilege of serving and living in.

I think that one of the things we also see in this riding of Whitehorse Centre is that many, if not most, non-governmental and service organization headquarters are in Whitehorse Centre — hard-pressed to find many of them that have their offices outside. But it's really the people in this riding who make it so unique because it is an amalgam of all that is Yukon. I am honoured to represent First Nation people, francophones, long-time residents, recent immigrants, a mosque that wasn't here when I was elected first — it's really a number of communities within a community, and that's become even more so as we've seen the development of condo communities, so aptly represented by Jim Robb's recent painting. I am now a proud owner of one of the prints, which is from the condos — Whiskey Flats to the condos. I can remember Whiskey Flats — I mean, I remember when it was there.

One of the things that I reflected on 10 years ago that has struck me when I reflect on where we're at today — it's a different government, but in so many ways, it's the same government. I'll come to that in a minute.

I came to this calling, I guess you could say, seeking to be elected to represent the people who live in this area of Whitehorse, of Yukon. But I didn't come to it new to the notion of what government was about, because I came to it after a long career as a public servant for provincial, municipal, and federal governments. I said this at the time, and I'll say it again —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Acting Speaker (Mr. Adel): Quorum — it was the COVID regulations that we agreed we would —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. Hanson: I said then and I will say it again: that I only make note of this because of the frequency with which the previous Premier and this Premier and his Cabinet colleagues bring the public service into their comments when questioned about the budget or about issues to do with their portfolios. To be quite frank, it's wrong. As Premier, as ministers, the members opposite are accountable and responsible for their department. They are the accountability and the responsibility; the buck stops with them.

Every time I — and I have heard the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission not understand this, and I think you have to start by recognizing that public servants are not in the public sphere, and they should not be dragged into this Assembly as a means of deflecting attention from the fact that political direction comes from the Premier and Cabinet.

The decisions are not made by the public service. The public service must not only be seen to be separate from the political, but it must be allowed to operate at arm's length if it is to be expected to offer quality, objective policy advice — even at times telling the Premier or minister that an idea may be good politics but poor public policy. The public service has to have the freedom to speak truth to power. Unfortunately, it has become clear that, in this government that said that they would do things differently, there is that fear of speaking truth to power within the public service, and that dismays me after 11 years in politics. I didn't expect that this would continue to endure.

I find this a little ironic — the words that I was saying in my first response to a budget, I could be writing them today. I said then that people are quick to recognize the vast amounts of money — insert “Yukon Liberals” — has had to spend. They are glad, and I am glad, that they have done some good things with it. However, money cannot buy respect. Respect is an important element to the relationship between those who are elected to serve the public and those they serve.

When a government tells its citizens that it wants to hear their views and then ignores them, they may find forgiveness, but if it happens once, that's when they'll get forgiveness. But when — as has been the case with this government, sadly — it has been a repeat from the past, it becomes the way of doing business, people notice it and they don't like it. That is unfortunately what we're hearing — what we just heard so passionately spoken from the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

You know, at the time, in February 2011 when I was responding to my first budget as the elected member of this Legislature, the issue then was the fact that the Yukon Party had just gone through a process where over 900 people had invested their time and energy to participate in not one but two health care reviews to address the serious issues surrounding sustainability of health care in the Yukon. There was a choice then to move to an acute care model rather than more cost-effective and coordinated care. Unfortunately, then I look at what I see and hear — because, in 2008-09, as a citizen temporarily free and retired after 30 years in the public service, I had been quite encouraged by the engagement and the thoughts that were put forward in those health care reviews.

Similarly, when the panel was put together to look at — okay, fine; it didn't get done 10 years ago; we're going to do it again. When the *Putting People First* report came forward, my colleague and I met, as did other parties and other citizens, with the members of that panel. I have to tell you that we were rough on them, because we were critical and cynical. We thought, “Oh right. We're going to have this again. We've been through this before. We have heard all this before.” But then we were astounded and incredibly appreciative of the vision that was put forward in that *Putting People First* panel report. But unfortunately, what's missing is an express commitment. There's nothing in the Budget Address for this fiscal or from the Minister of Health and Social Services that speaks to the fundamental transformative change that *Putting People First* speaks to.

Part of the reason that the government latched on to doing this health care review was to address some of the questions and issues that have been raised in the Financial Advisory Panel's recommendations. The concern, as we heard in this Legislative Assembly and when we met panel members, was that if the government chooses to take, of those 76 recommendations, a pick here and a pick there, you will be doing exactly the same thing. So, 10 years from now, we will be saying that we are on the fiscal cliff and that we can't sustain health care. Transformative change that the *Putting People First* panel is recommending cannot be nitpicked.

What we have not seen is the infrastructure changes. What we have not seen is the bold commitment to the machinery of government change that was recommended and is fundamental to making this new system work. What we are seeing are little pieces here — privatization of seniors' health care. God knows what other privatization aspects are being put forward. That was not the essence of *Putting People First*. Yukon citizens will not take long to grasp those governments — whether it's the Liberal government or any other government that tries to ignore it after saying, "We support *Putting People First*". It's not just saying it once or that we support part of it but that we embrace it. Unfortunately, that embrace is not reflected in any of the Budget Address or in any of the responses from the Premier — the Finance minister — or the Minister of Health and Social Services. People notice that and people noticed that with the previous government and the choices it made to pick up selective — they got shot down there on a number of things that they tried to do there in terms of privatization, such as diagnostics and others — but we won't go into that.

One of the things that I heard the Minister of Justice — I remember thinking about this — because I hadn't been involved in party politics as a public servant, so when I became involved in politics, I had to do some thinking and talking to people to find out what, in fact, previous NDP governments had done. I had been involved with representatives of NDP governments, Liberals, and Conservatives in the life of my public service but not the politicians. So, I was aware of some of the things in the mandates that they were given as we're negotiating self-government and land claims agreements. I knew there was a big difference between the Conservatives' approach and the NDP's approach. We wouldn't have had land claims and self-government, quite frankly, in the Yukon. We wouldn't have successful agreements unless Tony Penikett and Piers McDonald had agreed. When Tony Penikett is agreeing and willing to take a risk that no other government in Canada would do, which was to engage in full recognition of self-government — I can tell you, caucus members in Ottawa said, "Do they really know what they're getting into? Do they really understand the implications of this — the constitutional and legal framework?" The NDP thought they did — and they did — and they were willing to do that. They were prepared for transformative change. Of course, then there was a hiatus of 20 years between when we signed those agreements and when anything started to happen.

But the minister talked about the fact that they've been so busy doing all this legislation, and I think, "Whoa, that's

interesting." Fundamental pieces of legislation that are the foundation for this territory were established by the New Democratic Party, whether it's the *Health Act*, the *Education Act* that this current government's trying to tinker with by trying to change without changing the act around things like individualized education plans, the *Environment Act* that the previous government tried to tinker with but couldn't because it's actually reflected in terms of the council, the economy, and environment that are reflected in the final agreements so they couldn't change it as much as they would like to, the *Human Rights Act* that was fought tooth and nail in this legislation by the opposition parties when the NDP came in and said that this was the right thing to do at the time, and programs that the NDP established like the mining incentive program or the small business incentive program. They've been renamed now by subsequent governments, but the programs themselves haven't changed — the community development funding.

Foundational institutions like the Ayamdigut Campus of Yukon College — now Yukon University — the Yukon Arts Centre, the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program are all foundations of good government. Those are important. That was all without once having a government deficit. We're not there now. We weren't there under the previous Yukon Party government, but the NDP did that. I would ask you to go back and look at how much money came to the government in those days compared to — like, do it in a current dollar value, and you would see a substantially less amount of transfers from the federal system to here.

I just find, you know, the parallels and it's like — oh, jeez, after 10 years, some of the same issues keep resurfacing over and over again and I am wondering why that is.

One of the things that I had great hopes for was when the first budget was tabled by this government and the government said, "We are going to measure progress in this territory differently because we recognize that the GDP is only one measure, and it is just about basically expenditures." Great, so you can spend a whack of money. We're really good at that and we have seen that being spent like crazy over the last little while. What the government did is they said, "We are actually going to start looking at how well we are spending it and what impact it has on our citizens. We're going to measure those indices of well-being." So, I was looking forward — this is the last budget for this government — I was looking forward to seeing where those indices of well-being were. The front piece of the budget is: GDP is wham; it's big like this. And I'm going, that's it? That's all there is? That is a sad commentary on a neo-Liberal approach to spending without knowing.

So, we are still at the situation where our dependency on our ability to generate own-source revenues has not gone up since I first gave my response to the Budget Address in 2011-12. I love reflecting on the numbers then, but at that time, I believe that the budget was about \$745 million. It is now close to \$2 billion. At that time, I said that, despite a billion plus — because we added everything in — the largest ever was in 2011-12. Now we are at 2021-22 and everybody is going "the largest ever". We are still pretty much at the same level of dependence on the federal government. It used to be that the

previous government would justify that because of the notion that somehow quoting section 36 of the Constitution of Canada justified us assuming that, forever and a day, we have the right to expect that Canada is just going to pump money in here. But what he forgot, and what this Premier and this Finance minister seems to forget, is that section 36(2) actually says that the expectation is that Yukoners should expect reasonably comparable levels of services for reasonably comparable levels of taxation.

Somehow both this minister and that Minister of Finance confused tax effort with budgeting. It's a part of it, but so is effective planning and management of our fiscal resources.

I said at the time that it's time for the Yukon Party — insert "Yukon Liberal government party" — to get a grip, because one of the things about history — I said in 2011-12 — is that history has a tendency to repeat itself. The last time that a federal government — notably a federal Liberal government — was facing a serious deficit, it made arbitrary cuts, not just to indigenous program funding, health care funding, or transfers to provinces; it made an arbitrary cut of five percent of the gross federal transfer — the TFFA, the territorial formula finance agreement — to the territorial governments. Just like interest going forward — that five percent has a cumulative impact, and it did. People will say: "Well, you can't do that. The government would never do that because that's not fair." I think that I've said this before in this Legislature, that the senior official responsible — when asked by the CBC, "How can you do that? That's not fair" — said, "Who said 'fair'? We have cuts to make, and Yukon gets the same cut."

In 2011-12, I was asking the question: What are we doing to build resiliency in our economy? We looked with hope in 2017 when the Yukon government was given detailed suggestions from an independent panel — a small-c conservative panel, I would say — a fiscally conservative panel — looking at ways for Yukon government to start acting like a government, not as a protectorate of Ottawa.

You know, I said then, in 2011 — we only had eight years of being in a situation where we had responsibility, an authority of a province over land and resources — that Yukoners could rightly expect to see a real and lasting return on the access granted to the resource extraction industries, and the Financial Advisory Panel had some brilliant insights into this and really encouraged the Yukon government to take seriously what it should be doing as a province-like entity. It's like this government, as the previous government, has been immobilized and fearful of upsetting the status quo.

I said at that time that the Yukon Party — and I can slash in "Yukon Liberal government" — has put a lot of its political capital into the success of the mining industry. There was work done at that time with federal assistance to modernize the Yukon Geological Survey and to market the territory. That's all good. We know and the world knows that we have valuable resources, but now is the time — this is 10 years ago when I said this in the Legislative Assembly — to set the ground rules for the future, not by dictate, but by thoughtful and open discussion.

In 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021, we, as citizens, expect our government to ensure that the benefits of our non-renewable resources flow to the Yukon public, not just to shareholders outside of this territory. We need to decide what those benefits should be. Those should have been the subject of debate and discussion in this Legislative Assembly over the last four and a half years. We need political leadership that is prepared to lead the discussion in a respectful way to avoid the fearmongering that is often attached to any suggestion that the status quo regarding mining is open for question.

It is uncanny and a little disheartening that, after 10 years as a representative in this Legislative Assembly and two successive governments that promised things differently, the same issues keep coming forward. I wasn't alone 10 years ago in saying that we need to assert that we are *maîtres chez nous* and we need to decide on how we modernize the mining regime to ensure that the return on our non-renewable resources is significant and lasting and to determine what portion of any future resource rent is socked away for a rainy day for future generations and not used for day-to-day operations.

It is a surprise to some people that one of my early heroes as a political person — maybe it's just because I grew up in Alberta and there weren't very many socialists of the day — was Peter Lougheed, the Conservative Premier of Alberta, who had the strong view that our non-renewable resources are just that — they're non-renewable. I agree with him that we need to ensure that there is an enduring financial legacy. One of the things that he established was a heritage fund — subsequently pilloried and robbed by his successors, so it has nothing in it.

Look at how Norway modelled its heritage fund. They don't call it a "heritage fund", but its approach to ensuring that the non-renewable resource sector created lasting benefits for that country — which not only can have the measure of GDP for growth of success but can also point to the indices of well-being, which we abandoned in this territory.

There are so many things in that Budget Address that are reflected in what the Yukon advisory panel put forward. It's uncanny to me and sad that, 10 years later, despite the fact that they didn't have to take the suggestions — either government didn't have to take the suggestions — of a lowly opposition member, they paid lots of money to have expert advice provide exactly the same suggestions, and nothing has changed. That part is disheartening.

What is also disheartening is that, in February 2011, I noted that the lack of housing is at a critical stage in this territory. I could be saying this today; I am saying it today. This is exactly the same situation. The Premier boasts daily, I said, of the low unemployment rate and the influx of people into Yukon. The downside, I said, for this — for individuals and for employers alike — is that there is no housing available.

Have we heard this before? Ten years later — in my riding, the many small and medium local employers who face the daily challenge of finding qualified people wanting to move to Yukon. I heard another one today — people coming to work for our municipal government only to turn down the job offer because there is no housing available — seriously. Part of the issue — again, this is what I said at the outset here. It's like this

notion that governments get elected and they assume that nothing has happened before, and it's tabula rasa and they have to start from scratch, and they never look backward and say, "What has been done and how can we build on it?" They don't take action until it is too late, and then they desperately try to play catch-up, and there we are.

I just want to comment on a couple of things. My colleague from Takhini-Kopper King has commented ably over the last number of years and raised significant issues with respect to climate change and the need to take real action there. One of the things that strikes me is that I saw no mention, in terms of climate change, in the Highways and Public Works budget with respect to the progressive thaw slump that we see on the Alaska Highway. We know that, basically, there are published documents that show that the current rate of erosion on that highway is going to remove 50 metres' width of that highway by 2024. Ironically, that is the year that Yukon hosts the International Conference on Permafrost. Wouldn't it be lovely to have that conference here and to have a gap where the Alaska Highway used to exist west of Whitehorse?

I have many things to question and to raise, and we have raised concerns about this government's move to off-load various programs that we saw in terms of the expression of interest that would see, without any consultation, the change of management at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter to a non-governmental agency without having dealt with the real and serious issues identified in the community safety plan there. The Minister of Economic Development and other ministers have met with Canadian business representatives and they have done nothing. So, there is that — the notion that government can off-load the programming for people at a transition facility at the jail and do nothing.

Acting Speaker's statement

Acting Speaker: Order, please.

I would just take a moment right now to clarify that Standing Order 3(2) has not been suspended, and should attention be drawn to a lack of quorum, which is 10 members, when the Speaker is in the Chair, it would be required for me to ring the bells for quorum.

Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 207?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am happy to rise in the Legislative Assembly to speak to the 2021-22 budget. The journey to this year's budget, of course, has been different from years past as we manage the finances of the territory through a pandemic, balancing the health and wellness of Yukoners with the ability to maintain their livelihood. It has been a year that has challenged our resiliency, one that has pushed our boundaries, one that has required us to adapt quickly to changing priorities, and one that has inspired creativity to meet the needs of Yukoners.

This budget continues to fulfill the vision and priorities that our Yukon Liberal government promised to Yukoners when we were elected in 2016. At the same time, it is a budget that shows our government's ability to adapt to the changing circumstances that we find ourselves in.

It has been just over a year since the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games here in Yukon — the first major impact that would be felt as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our government acted swiftly, recognizing the need to support the business community and establish the first of over 40 programs only nine days after the cancellation of the games was announced. The temporary support for event funding programs provided \$1.8 million in compensation to 43 businesses for 31 cancelled events.

Within the same month, the Yukon Liberal government established the Business Advisory Council, consisting of representatives across multiple sectors to provide advice and expertise and to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on the local economy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Business Advisory Council. It was a group of very diverse, wide-ranging individuals from many different business backgrounds, political ideologies, and levels of experience who came together with the best of intentions for the Yukon. I want to thank those individuals for putting in their time at the table to give the advice that they did. Folks would have to be aware that, as they provided advice, ideas, and concepts to get through the challenges that we had, they were also, in many cases, balancing that with the challenges that they had running their own businesses and companies they were involved with. I think that Yukoners need to provide some great gratitude for the work that those individuals did at that time.

I think that it showed the best in the ability for the private sector and the public sector to come together. After each meeting, there was a letter drawn up that defined the different strategies that the private sector felt could be deployed to help the business community at that time. In each case, the Department of Economic Development, working with Tourism and Culture and other departments, would review that. Then we would meet to look at options and opportunities to build out programs very quickly. I think that it showed the best of having that collaboration and the best of many unsung heroes. I think that when individuals take on the work of being policy analysts inside the Yukon government — extremely, extremely important work — you have to be very talented to undertake that work.

But understanding that people sacrificed a tremendous amount from their own personal lives when they were under lots of pressure — they were under pressure to understand how the COVID situation was going to affect them, and they were under pressure in their own personal lives trying to balance, in some cases, how to ensure that their children had the right supports or their spouse had the right supports and even how they could ensure that they could work under all these different pressures. At the same time, we asked more than we have ever asked — I think that my colleagues across the way could agree that maybe more than what has been asked of individuals over successive governments. They rose to that occasion.

The result of that was programs that were extremely effective, programs that helped us to support our business leaders and our business community, understanding the amount of effort and sacrifice that each and every one of those individuals put into building their businesses, whether their

businesses were in Whitehorse or in the communities. They came together to ensure that this ecosystem could be in the best possible situation that it could be under the massive pressures.

This budget represents an ability for us to extend those programs. As we have identified, there has been just under \$50 million — \$44.8 million — across all of our programs, whether it was the Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program, the business relief program, or the sick leave program. These will continue until September. My hope would be that they will not be required until September. Based on the trends that we're seeing and what is being forecasted — and we signalled that yesterday — we hope that, over the next 60 days, many of our affected businesses will have an opportunity to begin to prepare for what we hope will be an opening quite soon, as Yukoners get out and get vaccinated and as we see other jurisdictions have success as well in their ability to control the spread of COVID.

Within the responsibility that I have, I have the absolute pleasure of working with both Economic Development and Energy, Mines and Resources. I do want to take this opportunity to thank the 53 or so folks at Economic Development again. The work that we provided yesterday — I know that there was a bit of criticism today concerning the road ahead that was launched yesterday. I don't believe that it is accurate to say that it was just an announcement of some expenditures that have happened. I know how much effort individuals put into that work over the last number of months. We waited for the latest economic outlook and then pulled that data into the report that we had. Of course, you really have to look at that document to see its effectiveness. You have to again parallel that with the budget from last week. In turn, what you have is an extremely comprehensive pathway — a blueprint forward — that looks at a number of areas of spending and pulls together a truly holistic approach to dealing with the economy.

If I had sat here yesterday and put out a report that had absolutely no actions, I guess, but a bunch of new program spending, maybe that would catch folks' eyes, but really, it was a common-sense approach and a creative approach with a vision to look at how to shore up areas of our economy, how to expand areas of our economy, and how to diversify the economy of the Yukon. I think that the folks at Economic Development should be very proud of the work over the last number of years.

It hasn't only been job numbers; it has been retail sales, wholesale sales, the value of assets. I think that, as of today, this morning, I saw data that showed the Yukon now not at third- but at second-best median income in the country. I think what we've seen is a strong economy — and areas of the economy that haven't been as robust starting to grow. I see that in the knowledge-based part of our economy as we see start-ups coming and starting to grow. I think that this is going to be an extremely important area for the future of Yukon when we look at individuals seeking a quality of life here in the Yukon that they can find here, but also enjoying the values that Yukoners hold true to their hearts and also understanding that there's so much talent here that can be pulled together to help these companies grow.

Also, Energy, Mines and Resources — there has been so much undertaken. This budget again will focus on the implementation of a tremendous amount of work in each and every branch. It has been an absolute pleasure to be able to have that role. It meant a tremendous amount to be able to work with folks either in agriculture or in the mining sector over the last number of years, as well as forestry. Growing up, you're in a position where you get hauled out to do a few things with your grandfather, whether it's piling some pulpwood or helping him to put his hay in or hearing stories about his mining history in Kirkland Lake, Noranda, Val d'Or, or other places — never understanding that you might have an opportunity later to work and try to help those different industries and meet the amazing individuals who make that work their life's work.

Again, Energy, Mines and Resources folks have been so kind. I've loved the ability to sit and have dialogue with senior members and others within the department. I have to say that I did hear a bit of dialogue in some of the earlier speeches about folks having a fear to speak up.

I think one of the biggest pleasures was creating an atmosphere in those meetings where, in the role I was in, to push to be challenged and for individuals to tell you that you are probably wrong and should be thinking in a different way. They were always kind and polite when they said that — but just trying to create that type of atmosphere where folks felt safe. They gave you the best possible advice. You could get into really challenging debates. I think back on a lot of those exchanges, and they really mean a lot to me to be able to have those types of relationships, whether they were talking about agriculture, forestry, abandoned mines — you name it — land planning — so many different things that they do.

One of our assistant deputy ministers retired just before Christmas — Mr. John Fox. I'm sure he's spending some great time with his grandchildren. I do just want to say to John, thank you. Last spring, getting the exploration industry and the mining industry folks ready to do exploration and getting them into the field — he played a critical, critical role. That's now in the hands of Assistant Deputy Minister Stephen Mead.

I spent many an evening on the phone with the private sector on the mining side and my deputy minister, Paul Moore, in each and every case, trying to ensure that we had folks out in the field and to understand how important it was to them in their projects, but also how important it was to the economy of the Yukon.

We also, of course, have touched upon that. There are lots of supports again this year for work through the Yukon Mining Alliance supporting grassroots exploration and putting money into the ability to build new roads and improved roads to increase opportunities in the resource sector.

I think the budget does a great service when we think about the climate change plan. I also have that opportunity to work with Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation. This budget has very significant dollars in place. First of all, we have continued to support a number of programs — renewable energy programs — across the territories. The group at Yukon Development Corporation have worked hand in hand with them. In each and every case, our approach has

been about supporting self-determination of these communities, whether they be a municipality or a First Nation government, and to be there to support them as they move forward on their dreams and projects in the renewable field.

I think that we have accomplished significant work together — whether it was ATCO, the Yukon Energy Corporation, the Yukon Development Corporation, and the Energy branch at Energy, Mines and Resources — coming together to look at an absolute suite of things. That, of course, is looking at our retrofit programs and at the work that we did on the independent power producers policy. Now we have that ability for all of these projects to come to life and a way to provide them with revenue and for them to provide us with that much-needed clean energy.

I think that this budget reflects a tremendous amount of hard policy work, and now that the work that we're doing to build out these new projects that are important in every community and are part of the overall plan of Yukon Energy — again, the work around the new project in Atlin. It is a very significant project. I appreciate the vision from the Yukon Energy Corporation and their ability to get to the table with the Taku River Tlingit and to unveil a project. This is probably the first time in a decade that we've seen something of this magnitude. I think that it is exciting. Many Yukoners have always felt a deep connection to the community of Atlin. The economic impacts from activities that happen in that community tend to be felt here in the Yukon. As we have seen, the supply chain for many projects there go through Whitehorse and provide us with that great benefit. I think that Yukoners have been wanting to see something of this magnitude, and I'm happy to see the great work by Yukon Energy.

I would like to thank the folks at Yukon Energy. They put a lot of work into an integrated resource plan up until 2016. We asked a lot from them — to take a look and to recalibrate the direction that they were going in and in a very short period of time. We asked that because we needed to have the integrity between the climate change plan and the 10-year electrical plan. We knew that they had to be in sync. If you didn't have the strategy around the corporation and how we were going to produce our future energy needs, we wouldn't have been accountable to Yukoners.

So, again, a lot of work — there is a group of extremely talented individuals there, and Yukoners should sleep well knowing that they are in the positions that they are in and making sure that we are safe and warm — and we can do the things that Yukoners want to do and live the great quality of life that we live.

I do want to take an opportunity, on just a few items, to correct the record. One of the items that has come up in the Assembly is Shallow Bay planning. I want to thank the folks who have undertaken that work. There has been a tremendous amount of criticism. Most of it has come directly from the Member for Lake Laberge. Of course, this local area planning is happening in his riding, but I think that, in some ways, it has been some of the worst politics that I have seen. There are five people from that community — they are all constituents of the Member for Lake Laberge. Three of those individuals were

appointed by the Yukon government; two individuals and a backup were appointed by the First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Those individuals were tasked with coming up with planning around the Shallow Bay area. This is a long, long outstanding item. I think that one of the bigger subdivision requests and applications were put in place back in 2014. I don't speak to this today to fuel any more discord than has been created, but it has been upsetting. What I have watched is a division that has been created through Facebook platforms by the sharing of misinformation, and it really didn't need to happen. There are five people in that community who came together and put some recommendations together. It wasn't the Yukon government that put those recommendations forward, but they supported the individuals to put these ideas together. Those folks had almost 20 different meetings where they came together, and they put that out to the public. I know that there are items within those recommendations that lots of individuals within that community are very uncomfortable with. I know that there are items within those recommendations that citizens of the First Nation are uncomfortable with, but that's what happens when you bring recommendations forward. People have an opportunity to comment on that, and then you mull that over. The group mulls it over, the committee mulls it over, and then, of course, they would bring that back with some final recommendations. Even at that point, you have the obligation for the government to look at those recommendations, and if they decide to accept some or all, there's then another period of consultation that has to happen.

What in turn has happened is that the Member for Lake Laberge has bought a Facebook ad — a posted ad — and what I've had in turn is letters really focusing on the fact that some draft recommendations are going to negatively affect people. I can tell you that — it doesn't matter what corner of the Yukon at this point — where there's some water and some planning left to be done, there are individuals who are being told that their land is going to be taken away or there are going to be negative effects too because of some draft recommendations that take up less than 50 square kilometres in the Yukon.

The hypocrisy of this is that, if you go back and look at the previous local area plans over the last five or 10 years and you look at the items that have been put in place, in many cases, they have been much more drastic than what is being contemplated even in these draft recommendations. I don't think that — it's probably not the best use of time to get into all the minutiae of that. I just think that it's upsetting when I have individuals reaching out to me because their parents are so upset because they've been told that they're going to lose the property that they've lived on for years and years, which is absolutely, categorically false. It's just upsetting. There's money again in this budget to continue to do the good work on that.

I just have to touch on it; it has led to a tremendous amount of discord. I truly don't believe that it was necessary. I think that, in this particular case, the Member for Lake Laberge, having been in the role that I'm in now previously, could easily explain to individuals that these are recommendations and there's another process. The decision has been made not to

provide that information from his previous experience but, in turn, to fire individuals up.

It has caused discord that will be felt long, long after he and I are in this Chamber. Again, for any individuals who are in that area, please reach out to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and to planning if you have any questions about that. Try not to get your information concerning the planning in that neighbourhood from Facebook posts from the Member for Lake Laberge.

The other comments that I would just like to touch on around land planning concern the Dawson land planning process. It was stated here in the budget reply that the process has stalled. There was a former chair who had stepped down, which is causing a tipping point here within the Yukon. It was going to be the same movie, different actors, as was played before. Truly, I have to challenge that. We have continued to do the work that we are tasked to do on the Dawson land use plan. The individual who stepped down has been replaced with a new individual. We have talked to both the First Nation and individuals in the community. There was full support for that appointment. That is the commitment that we made to try to ensure that there was a collaborative effort on the commission.

We have received good feedback from the commission as we have gone through, and that work continues. We are waiting for some significant pieces to be completed as well. I know that the planner who was working there has made a decision to move on, so the land planning council will have to work on replacing that individual. That work has been underway, but we have respectively engaged in that process. I think that anytime you get into regional land planning, things are not always going to be completely aligned. You are going to have a difference, and I think that this is important. It's important to have respect at the table, but it's also important to debate and make sure that many different perspectives are represented in those discussions. Again, this budget supports that.

The planning department has undertaken local area planning, such as Shallow Bay and Fish Lake, and it goes on and on. Of course, there is the Beaver River planning, which was touched on. There is important work that continues on the Beaver River planning process. It goes without saying that we have had almost every self-governing First Nation that has not gone through a regional plan reach out to us and requested us to undertake that work. It is a tremendous amount of work. It takes a tremendous amount of resources, and we continue to work on the Dawson plan and continue to communicate with other communities that have interest in planning — or starting the planning that had previously been underway.

Again, just quickly touching on some of our new energy projects — the Premier spoke to this last week. We have invested \$10 million in our ability to start to build out infrastructure for the new Atlin expansion, but also \$4.5 million for our grid-scale battery. I just want to touch on that because it is a very significant project. It will be the largest battery put in place in northern Canada and one of the largest in the country. What it truly does — when you use different sources of renewable energy, the ability for them to provide energy can be intermittent, depending on if it is solar, of course, or if the

wind is blowing or not blowing. Having a battery of this magnitude is going to be very significant. It is going to give us the ability to maximize the use of those other pieces of infrastructure flowing in.

I believe that when you look at the total picture — the energy portfolio and the work that we have done with the independent power projects and the grid-scale battery, the largest project in the last 10 years, and the upgrades to the existing work and our announcement just the other day around geothermal — all of those items, when you bring them together — then, again, projects in Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Whitehorse, Carcross, Teslin, Pelly Crossing, Dawson, Old Crow, and Mayo, I think it shows that there has been a tremendous amount of work completed and a tremendous amount of work underway.

I want to thank my colleagues, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health and Social Services, for bringing the universal childcare program forward and for bringing it to reality in the Yukon. The one comment that I heard at the door in 2016 and over the last number of years is the challenge that individuals have when it comes to paying for their childcare. Many of us here can think back — probably most of us now in the Legislative Assembly don't have that bill anymore, but it can be significant when you have \$1,500, \$1,600, or \$1,800 that you have to come up with every month.

If you're a single parent or if you're in a position where the caregivers or the parents are both employed or working — to see this really significant work come to light is, I think, one of the most significant economic strategies and programs that we would see. It's not about just ensuring that those parents have the right services, but when we see our growth in our economy — and still the fact that we are moving to have the right housing continuum in place, the fact that we are in a position now to see Yukoners who live here already being able to now take part in the economy is something that's pretty spectacular. There is only one other province where we've seen a program of this type.

If any of us sat down with any of our constituents who have young children who are in daycare — understanding that those parents, after April, can be in a position to have \$1,400 potentially in their hands, depending on what they're paying, is something that is very significant. For many, that will get them to a place to buy a home.

In other cases now, we're going to see individuals who have been at home who want to be part of the workforce. Now, if, instead of paying \$1,800, they're paying a few hundred, that's going to be a life-changer. We believe that this is actually, moving forward, going to be very significant for the overall economy of the Yukon and is going to give a lot of flexibility. I hope that, for many, as they talk to their constituents about some of the greater programs in this budget, it certainly is. I thank my colleagues for bringing that to light.

This budget puts significant dollars toward both our Gateway program and the Dempster fibre program, both programs that my good friends in opposition love to challenge us on. First, the Gateway program — I want to thank the folks at strategic in Energy, Mines and Resources. They have done

an absolutely incredible job over the last number of years reprofiling funds, understanding that priorities change over time, looking at some of the original priorities of that program, and now having an opportunity to put some of those funds into areas where there is more activity. I think that there is still a commitment to elements of the early program, but it has been a lot of work and a lot of conversations and understanding. I am happy to see the Department of Highways and Public Works undertake what they have and put us in a position to finish up those negotiations — there are still one or two pending — and then our ability to start that work.

Again, with the Department of Highways and Public Works and the fibre program, I want to thank those individuals. What we have learned over the last number of years — we looked at a similar line that is being built in the Northwest Territories. What we saw were tremendous cost overruns. I know that the intentions of the project managers in the Department of Highways and Public Works were to ensure that it was the best use of taxpayers' money, that we reduce the risk as much as possible before starting this work. Now we have seen the clearing and now we are going out to the buildout. It is not just significant for the Yukon, but as we have shared in the Assembly, it will be important to all of northern Canada as it will be a backbone to our communications. Of course, it will give us the certainty that we need to continue to build and expand on the digital economy that we are now seeing beginning to flourish here in the Yukon.

Before I finish up, I want to thank the individuals in Porter Creek South who I have the opportunity to represent. I have learned some great lessons from those community leaders over the last couple of years.

Over the last number of months, we have reflected on some of the things that we've been able to work together on — whether it's the Porter Creek Community Association — led solely by a group of very strong-willed mothers who have only the best intentions for their community and the quality of life for their children. It has been an absolute pleasure to be able to work with them to improve their community and the community that we all get to call home. Whether it is looking back on my notes from 2016 where folks said we needed to see a safer community, folks wanted to see safer streets, folks wanted to see improved recreational infrastructure for their children — and the lesson quickly learned is that not one group, one organization, municipal government, or territorial government is going to get that done. That's why for decades many of those priorities were not getting accomplished. What happens when you work with a community, organizers, leaders, municipal government, territorial government, and people coming together — you can make those changes and improvements. That has been such a fulfilling journey to be working with those individuals and learning from them and just to watch the strength and tenacity and power of those mothers coming together each and every month to ensure that their community continues to improve. I want to thank those folks. Again, I know that the Member for Porter Creek North just touched on it, and I agree that there are individuals who are there at those school council meetings — whether it be at the

elementary level or at the high school level — again, giving their time. We've been in meetings together and watched their passion — tough subjects — and truly, again, I want to thank those individuals who put their name forward to do that important work.

Lastly, I just want to just thank my wife and kids for their support over this last year and before — again, having the opportunity to do this work. As every single person in this Assembly knows, I think that all folks come here and want to do the best they can — every one of us. I think that we have differences of opinion and differences on how to get that particular finish line on items, but I know that people do. I appreciate having that opportunity to be here with folks working on those things.

Again, you quickly learn that, at the end of the day, the folks who are closest to you are the ones who are going to be there to support you, talk to you, and put up with your challenges. This last year — especially in the early part of COVID, as for many, the days were spent under a tremendous amount of pressure — lots of conversations every day, every night, pretty much every waking hour — trying to make sure we could understand what the challenges were and what could be done. I want to thank my family for supporting me through that.

I want to thank you folks in the Assembly and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the 2021-22 main estimates here today. I'm going to focus on a few different areas, starting with concerns that I've heard in my riding of Copperbelt South and then move on of course to my critic roles. I'll group Energy, Mines and Resources in with the Yukon Development Corporation and the energy side of things there and then of course speak to Education.

Before I get into that, I would like to once again thank the constituents of Copperbelt South for the trust they placed in me in 2016 to be their representative here in the Legislative Assembly. It's truly an honour for me to be here on their behalf and ask questions on their behalf and ask questions on behalf of all Yukoners when it comes to the issues that are important to them.

I know I've said this before, but very few individuals have had the opportunity to serve in this Legislative Assembly as MLAs over the years. For everyone in here, I think that no matter what side of the floor you're on, a thank you is warranted, because as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources just said, there is an awful lot of sacrifices made by MLAs in here and, more importantly, sacrifices made by our families. So, as he did at the end of his remarks, I will at the start of my remarks thank my family for their support over the past — not only this past four and a half years here on the opposition side, but the other terms that I have served on the government benches. It has been incredible. Of course, I will give a shout-out and a special thank you to my wife, Amanda, and my young son, Eli, for everything that they have done for me and for keeping life entertaining as we have moved through

the past four and a half years toward the end of this current mandate.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how many opportunities I will get to speak before an election is called. Obviously, we will play that by ear and that is up to the government side and the Premier, but just in case, I would like to recognize a couple of the individuals who have been here for the past while who are leaving. First of all, the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun. I know that he has decided to move on and spend more time in his community and spend more time with his family. I thank him for his service to Yukoners. He has done an admirable job and I wish him well going forward. We have always shared a couple laughs as I walk in the building sometimes, so I certainly appreciate that, and I wish you well, sir, wherever your life goes next. So, good luck with all that and enjoy your time with your family.

Also, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, who is not seeking re-election — she and I have been in here together since 2011. We have had some interesting discussions on the floor of the House. We haven't always agreed on things, but I certainly respect the way she represents her constituents and the job that she does on their behalf. Very few people come into the Legislative Assembly as prepared as the Member for Whitehorse Centre. I thank her for her service to Yukoners over the past number of years and for her time and dedication in this Legislative Assembly.

Then, to everybody else, all other members, of course, on both sides of the House — an election coming brings change to these Chambers. Coming out of 2016, I believe, 11 of the 19 members who were here are no longer here through retirement or not retaining their seats, so this place will be a different place after the next election. When it comes to debate and working with one another, we've had agreements and disagreements over the past number of years, but I do respect everyone, no matter what party they decide to put their name forward with for running in elections. Those who were successful, I appreciated working with them over the past number of years.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to just touch on a few of the concerns that have emerged from individuals who live in my riding of Copperbelt South over the past while. Hopefully, we will get a chance to dig into this budget in greater detail when departments are called and we get into Committee of the Whole with ministers and support staff.

Highway safety is certainly something for my riding that comes up time and time again. People are looking to see what type of improvements are scheduled. I know the five-year documents that the government has brought forward do outline significant expenditures for the Whitehorse corridor of the Alaska Highway. We'll be interested in getting some answers on what's next. Obviously, the work that's being done this year, I believe, is near Porter Creek, from Rabbit's Foot Canyon through to Crestview. It has hit a few bumps in the road, obviously, with the lack of consultation that we've heard about and that my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, has raised with the minister. Hopefully, the Department of Highways and Public Works and the minister were listening to

the concerns of the MLA and the residents in that area and will take the time to get that right.

That said, highway safety issues in my area — many people are choosing to cycle to work or use e-bikes and that type of thing. There is much more traffic on the shoulder of the highway than there used to be and bigger and bigger vehicles travelling in the vehicle lanes. One of the things that has been asked for by a number of people out in my area is a multi-use trail so that people can safely come into town and stay off of the shoulder of the highway so that the vehicles that are there — any accidents — are certainly avoided.

When it comes to safety — not so much last year with how wet it was here, but fire safety continues to be a concern in the riding. Obviously, there's a lot of firesmart work going on, but we will continue to push the government on making sure that the fuel load is as low as possible and that people will have the opportunity to live safely in their homes and be as firesmart themselves as they possibly can.

Just a segue from that into the Wolf Creek campground — I usually send a letter every year to the Minister of Environment asking for supervision and other things around the Wolf Creek campground. It's a beautiful spot but certainly right in the heart of residential areas, so some of the fire issues and some of the other behaviour that would be classified as reckless — obviously, that is a small minority of the individuals who use that campground, but it concerns the residents of Pineridge, Spruce Hill, Wolf Creek, Cowley, Mary Lake, and other subdivisions in that area where people make their homes. They are looking for some supervisors to be stationed at that campground. Again, I will send my annual letter to the Minister of Environment shortly, just asking for her to consider that as well.

Mr. Speaker, my riding has a number of contractors who live there — small contractors right up to some of the larger and more established contractors who have been active in the Yukon for quite a while. Just before Christmas and since then, I have heard an awful lot of concerns from those contractors with respect to the government's First Nation procurement plan and the lack of consultation that took place with industry prior to that plan being announced. That is something that I'm sure the minister has heard from a number of people about.

The Member for Kluane and I were grabbing a sandwich at lunch today, and we heard from one of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources' constituents, so this is something that we're hearing about from people not only in our ridings, but in other ridings across the territory. They really feel that there was an unfortunate lack of consultation and, had that consultation taken place, we would be in a much better position right now when it comes to the First Nation procurement policy and how that affects their bottom line and how that affects their business.

I will continue to stand up for them on the issues that are of concern for them. There are other issues with respect to procurement that they continue to raise. I will continue to raise them. I know my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, will raise them as well in his critic role of Highways and Public Works.

When it comes to the tourism industry, obviously, the last year has been devastating for many tourism operators. The COVID-19 pandemic has all but wiped out any tourism traffic that comes to or through the territory. My riding has a couple of RV parks in it. There's a new motorcycle RV park that was just built last year. They all have questions. There are a number of B&Bs and other operators who rely heavily on the tourism industry for their livelihood. They're quite concerned. I think that what they're looking for is some certainty with respect to what this season will look like.

We referenced in the past the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon's most recent letter to the government asking them for that certainty or whether they should tell their members to cut their losses and look for different careers, essentially — to paraphrase that letter. But that's a troubling sign for an industry that has been, for a long time, a long-standing pillar of the private sector here. I think that ensuring that they have the most accurate information to base their business decisions off of is important. It will be something that I'm sure will emerge during the election campaign as the different parties seeking to form government put forward their ideas.

One of the other things — and I know we've talked about it before, but it's also the event cancellations that have taken place over the past year — the many festivals. Larger festivals and events have been cancelled, and it has had significant impacts. But a number of the smaller events as well — small golf tournaments, weddings, and get-togethers have also been cancelled, and that has an effect on the supply-side industry as well that relies on those types of events to take place. I know that there was a temporary fund put in place to support revenue loss and to support individuals who were having difficulty because of those event cancellations.

We asked about it in the Fall Sitting, and I think the Minister of Economic Development at the time just said that, if people were having challenges, to just phone him, but I think what people are looking for is an application process and an idea of what events would be covered as we move into this summer season and what looks like still restricted numbers on larger gatherings, according to the *A Path Forward* document that was introduced last Friday.

Another thing that has come up continuously at the doors for Copperbelt South — and in talking to my colleagues, I'm sure it's the same — is the cost of living in the territory. Over the past four years, the government has brought back, triumphantly, the federal carbon tax, which has added to the cost at the pumps. It has added to the cost of heating fuel, and the cost of freight goes up, so the cost of everything goes up when it comes to introducing that tax. Those costs have to be borne by consumers and individual Yukoners.

Power rates have been increased as well. I think that we're going through the second rate application for this government. That's before the Yukon Utilities Board right now. People certainly notice it on their power bills every month — that these rate increases are taking effect.

Then there is the myriad of fee increases that have taken place over the past number of years. It seems like a long time

ago, but there was the tire tax and the TV and computer tax that the Minister of Community Services introduced. Now we're seeing camping fees increase next year by this Liberal government. There are so many different fees. For individuals — maybe not so much in my riding, but living in the Whitehorse periphery — the dump fees, the landfill fees that have gone up recently as well, all add to the bottom line and are making families have to make tough decisions when it comes to their family finances when sitting around their kitchen table and making the choices that everybody has to make on what can and cannot be done.

I'm going to just move into Energy, Mines and Resources and talk a little bit about some of the issues that I'll raise with the minister if we have a chance to get into his department sometime during this Spring Sitting.

First and foremost, the issue that I want to flag is the ATAC Resources decision that was made on the heels of the Geoscience Forum in 2020, where the permits for the all-season tote road were denied by the Liberal government, causing the CEO of ATAC Resources, in a news release at the time, to actually question whether or not the Yukon was actually open for business. So, of course, that process goes back a number of years to perhaps the start of the Liberal mandate in 2016-17. They went through the YESAA process and received a favourable recommendation for that road to proceed. The government worked on the decision document for a year, and then, in the following March, they came out and said: "We have a new way of doing business. You just have to go through this two-year land use planning process for the Beaver River, and then, once that is done, perhaps there will be an opportunity for you to build the road at that time." So, last March would have been the two-year anniversary; we are coming up on three years since that was done.

Unfortunately, we learned last week that ATAC Resources is now — and I have to say that they are a stalwart of the exploration industry here. They have been active in that area. The parent company — everyone knows, of course, Archer Cathro and their over 50 years of responsible exploration here in the territory. So, for ATAC Resources to say last week that they are leaving the territory and going to Nevada is a huge blow to not only what this season will look like as far as exploration goes, but to the overall investment climate. Then, when it comes to the Beaver River land use plan, there is still no end in sight.

I was on yukon.ca earlier this week, looking at some of the documents there — March 2021 is still on their timeline to have a final draft plan ready for that, but it was back in October or November, I think, that this document was put on the website. Then, the most recent document is a "what we heard" from some fall meetings. It doesn't look to me like we are any closer to getting that land use plan done, and perhaps now that ATAC has moved out of the Yukon, unfortunately, there is less urgency for the government to move on that, but it is certainly something that I want to dig into with the minister on, if we get the chance during this Spring Sitting.

One of the things that we hear from the mining industry and the individuals who are active in it is with respect to the

permitting side. Almost four years ago, the Premier made a promise to the mining industry that he would develop a collaborative framework to deal with timelines and reassessments. Here we are four years later, and there has been little to no action on that commitment that the Premier made to the mining industry. He will be answering, I am sure, for that when he or his colleagues are knocking on doors of people who are active in the industry and took him at his word four years ago that he would develop that collaborative framework when it comes to timelines and reassessments. How disappointed those individuals are. I get e-mails — even this afternoon — from mining companies that are disappointed with the Liberal performance when it comes to that industry and what is happening.

Another issue that has been in place throughout almost all of the Liberal mandate is the southeast Yukon staking ban. When they came into office, obviously, the staking ban was in place in the Ross River area, but added to that is the Liard First Nation area. Again, we have asked questions about it, but there has been very little progress when it comes to getting those staking bans lifted in those areas and getting more activity when it comes to those areas.

Mr. Speaker, I will be interested as well — obviously, the Yukon mineral development draft strategy came out, I think, on the day after Boxing Day — between Christmas and New Year's Day, they put that out — and there were some consultations with individuals. I have seen a number of submissions on that. I understand that a final recommended strategy will be due sometime in the next couple of months, so we will be anxious to see what that looks like and get a sense for where the government intends to go on that again, if we're still in here and not at the doorsteps for an election.

One of the other things too — and I know that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources talked about it in his remarks — is the Gateway project. We all remember the Premier, the Prime Minister, and our Member of Parliament at the overlook of Miles Canyon proudly announcing it. It has obviously gone through a number of changes since then. We asked in the fall, with all of these changes and the moving parts, about the private sector commitment of just over \$100 million. That's something that we'll be interested to see — where that private sector money is coming from — because I don't recall seeing it in any of the announcements that have been made. Whether it's on the Campbell Highway or the Nahanni Range Road or the Silver Trail or the Carmacks bypass — any of these projects like that — I don't see the private sector component. It will be interesting to get a sense from either the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources or the Minister of Highways and Public Works on where that money is.

I just quickly want to talk about forestry for a second. I have a small mill operator who lives in my riding and he's struggling to get access to timber. He's not a fuel-wood individual. He does linear lumber for a couple of local businesses here in town and he's struggling to find access to lumber. I know that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and I have both been engaged with him on this and his struggles continue. I think that getting some sort of certainty

around the Whitehorse and the Southern Lakes forestry plan will be important. I know there was one First Nation that hadn't signed when I raised this issue in the fall, so I hope to get a chance to follow up with the minister on that at some point.

The other forestry issue is with respect to the southeast Yukon and the forestry planning down there. I know that my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake — her constituents speak often to us about the lack of forestry opportunities down there and what it was like in that town when there was a significant forestry industry going on. I think that's something that's extremely important and is hopefully a focus of the next government, no matter the political stripe, to take a look at that because we have the issues down there. We have fuel-wood contracts with campgrounds in Dawson City and the fuel wood is coming from British Columbia or northern British Columbia just down Highway 37. So, there are some real challenges with how we're managing our fuel wood and how we're managing any smaller scale — there's no large-scale forestry operations here — but even in some of the smaller mills that are looking for some fibre for feed.

I'm just going to touch briefly on a couple of energy issues — sort of EMR-related but also Yukon Development Corporation. The minister did a ministerial statement earlier this week with respect to the Atlin hydro. I'm hoping that — obviously, we asked some questions, but that format often doesn't allow for an exchange. So, if he's in here with his officials, I would like to dig a little bit on some of the details on the costing around that, on improvements to the ATCO-owned powerline from Jakes Corner to Whitehorse and how much that's going to cost. I talked to some individuals in my riding recently about the power output and what was eight megawatts — is that peak power in the summer when the creeks are full? Is there a seasonal difference? I would be interested to learn about that as well from the minister and his officials when we get a chance to talk a little bit more about Atlin hydro.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move on to Education and take the time to thank the officials from Education who provided us with a briefing yesterday morning on the budget and what's in there. In my critic experience over the past number of years, Education is always top of the class as far as getting us as much information as possible and doing a great job of explaining that to us. Again, I would like to thank those officials and, I guess, for tomorrow morning, the EMR officials who will be briefing us on their budget as well.

A few questions I'm hoping to get into with the minister this Sitting are with respect to capital planning. At the start of this mandate, perhaps the fall of 2017, the minister said that she was working on a 10-year capital plan for school replacement and refurbishment. Since that time, we've seen nothing in that regard. There has been no long-term vision document. The five-year documents have bounced around. The very first one I saw had Christ the King Elementary and Holy Family School in it. That's long gone. Kluane Lake School seems to have \$500,000 in the first year of their plan every year that they bring the plan forward for planning —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Kent: Oh, it was \$50,000? My colleague from Klwane reminded me it was only \$50,000 for the first while. We'll see exactly what gets spent with that.

I don't think that it is any secret that our side of the House is very sceptical of these five-year documents that the government changes, because like the *A Path Forward* document that came forward last Friday, these things are subject to rapid change when it comes to hitting the floor of the House or comparing year over year. So, again, we will be looking for some information with respect to a longer-term capital plan — like a 10-year plan — as was promised by the minister in 2017, over three years ago.

Obviously, the return to school issue — last year at this time, it was spring break. Students were going away with their families and the pandemic was just beginning to emerge here in the Yukon and what the ramifications of it would be. I am sure that very few of them realized that they wouldn't be coming back to school at all last year, so it was a real challenge for parents, but everybody did a stellar job of trying to make the best of it and to make the best of what happened after spring break last year.

Now we fast-forward to this year, and we are heading into another spring break, and after the Whitehorse high school grades 10, 11, and 12 students have been half-time, in-person since the start of the school year in August and an announcement was made which was contrary to the *A Path Forward* document — again, that isn't even a week old. But that said, the announcement was made, but again, there was a lack of engagement and consultation. My phone has been — I have been getting texts from teachers here this afternoon who are worried about their own health. One of the things they brought up to me, which I think is important, is why weren't teachers moved to the front of the line with other essential workers at the start of this and then perhaps some of them would feel a little bit more comfortable? Many of them are obviously in the Whitehorse area and have had the one vaccine but haven't had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated. We will ask the minister some of those questions and around the lack of consultation on the plan. We will go back to the lack of consultation in August and the lack of consultation in November, as I raised earlier in Question Period today.

I just want to briefly touch on the Selkirk Elementary School parking lot, which is part of this budget. There have been an awful lot of concerns raised through social media and e-mails to me, my colleagues, and others with respect to that project going through YESAA. I know that my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King asked some questions about this yesterday at the briefing. Again, it comes back to the consultation side of things and the lack of engagement that this government does with individuals on projects like that — projects like the Porter Creek highway work and other projects throughout the territory. Again, these are capital projects, and I look forward to talking to the minister about them at some point in the next number of weeks.

One of the things that came out of the briefing that we had yesterday — I wanted to flag it in my second reading speech because it will warrant some additional questions for the

minister when we get into her department. By my calculation from the document that they gave us that talked about an increase of FTEs, it looks to me like there is a 53-FTE increase in Education. The department has promised us that they will come back to us with the organization chart so that we can see that. So, five additional FTEs in human resources was one of the flags that was raised. There are 16 FTEs in schools and student services and 13.5 FTEs in policy and partnership. It's 13.5 but 14 with a decrease, so it's a 14-FTE increase for universal childcare and early learning.

Department officials said that some of those — about half — are coming over from Health and Social Services, but we will want to get a sense of what the other half are assigned to. There is no FTE change for First Nation initiatives. COVID-19 response — there is an increase of 17 FTEs. We are kind of curious if those are temporary employees. It's custodial staff and teachers. Are they temporary, or will they come on permanently beyond the current pandemic? That's a question that I will look to getting into with the minister.

Then there's an increase of two FTEs, I think, on the capital side of things here as well — an increase of two FTEs in schools and student services. But yes, it is capital. It's to hire two-year terms for school-based IT. These numbers — obviously, what I see on the page here is one thing, but we'll look forward to digging in a little bit deeper with the minister and getting a sense for how many of these are permanent FTEs, how many are temporary, and which ones are internal transfers of the department or from other departments and which are new hires.

Just before I wrap up my remarks, the other thing that I wanted to touch on briefly was the Yukon University. There's a small capital allotment for them of — it looks like \$500,000 for some signage, I think, or something like that — a \$100,000 increase for Yukon University transition signage. It's up to \$500,000 in here, so I'm assuming that they've bumped that up by \$400,000.

But when you look at their O&M, their larger contribution is only reflective of the increase for the wage increase — the collective bargaining increase. The other areas that are for the Yukon University, like the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, the Northern Institute of Social Justice — areas like that which are funded — and the LPN program — they've been frozen for a number of years. I'm curious about why that is, so I look forward to getting into those discussions with the minister. Obviously, there was a lot of fanfare when Yukon College transitioned into Yukon University. We weren't able to get together and celebrate that as best as we could last year due to the pandemic, but there doesn't seem to be any further attention being paid by the government to the university when it comes to providing additional funding to them. I'll be quite interested to see it.

From an O&M point of view, for instance, the O&M change for Yukon University is an increase of 1.5 percent. I mean, when you look at other aspects in the department, they've certainly gone up substantially more than what is being contributed to Yukon University.

I would have hoped for more from the government when they bring forward their spending priorities — that Yukon University would have perhaps been a little bit higher on where they want to be as far as supporting that institution and resourcing it properly so that they can expand their programming. I'll dig into that more with the minister when we get to that.

I'm going to wrap up my remarks. I thank you, and I thank the Clerk staff and the folks in Hansard and security who keep us in line here. It will be interesting, as we don't know when the election will be called, but I guess it has to be this year. At some point this year, we'll have that opportunity to go to the polls and put our ideas to Yukoners and then return to these chambers at some point. Some of us will come back and some won't, but again, we'll return to these chambers to talk about Yukon's business once again.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would like to thank all of my colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly for their budget response, second reading speeches, comments, and criticisms. I want to start, as well, with my closing remarks here today by thanking my constituents for voting me into this position.

As the MLA for Klondike, 2016, it has been my absolute privilege to serve them for the last 4.5 years. Thank you very much. I'm very proud to have the work that our government has accomplished in that time. I want to also thank my colleagues who have worked tirelessly over the last several months putting this, our fifth budget, together.

I also want to thank the staff at the Department of Finance for their work and the staff at the Department of Highways and Public Works on the capital side of the equation and also the five-year capital plan as well.

Mr. Speaker, the 2021-22 budget shows a government that is committed to investing in the health and well-being of Yukoners in response to COVID-19 and beyond that, while supporting families and Yukon's green economy as well. The budget also demonstrates this government's commitment to making strategic investments in Yukon's infrastructure to make Yukoners' lives more affordable.

The 2021-22 main estimates forecast a deficit of \$12.7 million. This is a result of our government's continued economic and public health responses to support Yukoners through the global COVID-19 pandemic.

This budget shows our government leveraging every dollar that we can to deliver on key commitments made throughout our mandate, investing in our territory's future, and supporting Yukoners in order to quickly rebound once the global pandemic ends.

The previous government wanted to leave those infrastructure dollars on the table and not spend them. They have also been clear that this would have been their approach going forward. Our government believes in maximizing the value of these dollars to build strong, resilient communities in our territory.

Over the past four budgets, we have laid a strong fiscal and economic foundation, allowing for us to mitigate some of the effects of COVID-19 in our territory and set ourselves up for

continued economic and social success moving forward. Forecasted O&M expenditures total \$1.35 billion, with recoveries offsetting this amount by \$100.4 million.

O&M spending also includes \$15 million for a universal childcare program. This is the largest single investment in childcare in the territory's history. It is very disappointing to see opposition parties set to vote against this investment. We will be sure to let parents know who is in favour of this spending.

There is also more than \$50 million for initiatives to support the *Our Clean Future* strategy and over \$70 million for social supports, mental wellness, and substance use programs. It was very disappointing to hear the Member for Mayo-Tatchun minimizing this work done across the territory with respect to addictions and substance use. His criticisms of the work being done, and led by First Nation governments in his communities as well, has not been well-received by leaders whom I have spoken to. They feel very disrespected.

Mr. Speaker, the O&M spending is also driven by \$48.9 million for public health and economic responses to COVID-19. This includes \$15 million set aside to account for changing circumstances amid the ongoing pandemic.

Capital expenditures, representing a record \$434.3 million, with recoveries offsetting this amount by \$159.4 million. Revenues, including the recoveries of expenditures, total \$1.37 billion; \$1.18 billion is transferred from Canada, which has increased by six percent over the previous 2020-21 main estimates.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to expand on the five-year capital plan. The plan for 2021-22 builds on the government's commitment to communicate our capital spending intentions to Yukoners, municipalities, the private sector, and First Nation governments and provides greater certainty as we promote a strategic approach to forecasting.

Mr. Speaker, over the last four years, we have laid a strong fiscal and economic foundation. Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Yukon was on target to be in a surplus position for 2020-21 and beyond. The deficit, as I noted, was a result of additional economic and social supports due to COVID; however, revenue growth and assumptions of a decrease in required COVID-19 supports are forecasted to help Yukoners return to a surplus in 2022-23.

Our economy looks good moving forward: rising income; strong customer spending; housing market activity has remained robust; overall construction activity for 2021 is to be supported by residential investments and government investments; and mining sector performance remains a key driver on the medium term GDP outlook.

We do know that tourism was hit hard in 2020. Widespread border restrictions, reductions in the number and frequency of flights, and the requirements for visitors to quarantine definitely made travel to the territory impossible for most. The current outlook assumes that tourism activity for 2021 will improve marginally from 2020, with growth in visitation supported by the lifting and loosening of COVID-19 restrictions, as well as pent-up demand. Stronger gains are

expected in the future and we will continue to be there for the tourism industry and for the business industry as well.

Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the budget that we tabled last Thursday and I urge all members to support the financial plan that we have laid out. The future is bright, Mr. Speaker. We are already leading the country in vaccination rates, and we are only one of two jurisdictions in Canada that will see positive growth of our GDP in 2020.

The 2021-22 budget builds on the strong foundation that we have developed over the last four years and continues us on the path forward to a brighter future in Yukon. Since taking office, we have been listening to Yukoners and taking action on matters and issues that matter to them. Yukoners asked for a more people-centred approach to wellness. Our government dramatically expanded access to mental health supports throughout the territory and we are implementing the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report to help Yukoners thrive.

Yukoners asked for investments to build healthier, more vibrant and sustainable communities for our children and families to live in. We've increased supports and funding for childcare operators for the first time in a decade and also introduced universal affordable childcare to support Yukon families and put more money back into their pockets.

We've made historic investments in land development and supported over 600 new homes to increase housing options across the territory. We've also made significant investments in community and recreational infrastructure in all communities to help support healthy, active living.

Yukoners asked for an end of the divisive practices in the past that led to increased legal battles with Yukon First Nations. Our government revitalized the Yukon Forum and built strong government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations on the basis of respect, cooperation, and partnerships. We have changed the character of the territory by establishing a National Indigenous Peoples Day as a statutory holiday, finalized the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*, and are working with partners across the territory to develop a Yukon-wide strategy in response to a final report to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Under our leadership, the Yukon has earned a reputation across the country as a leader in reconciliation. This has benefited every single Yukoner.

Yukoners asked for good jobs and a diverse growing economy. Our territory has the lowest unemployment rate in the country in addition to continuous GDP growth throughout our mandate. We have developed an ambitious 10-year strategy in partnering with municipal and First Nation governments to tackle climate change while building a resilient economy powered by renewable energy. We have made historic investments to modernize infrastructure and transportation networks to stimulate economic growth throughout the territory while reducing the tax burden on businesses to help Yukon companies and entrepreneurs thrive as our economy continues to grow.

Mr. Speaker, the past 12 months have brought us into a clear focus of what's important and what's at stake as we look

forward to the future. By listening to Yukoners and delivering on the commitments that we have made for them, our government has embarked on a path toward a stronger future for all Yukoners.

This budget and its investments position the territory to move confidently and steadily toward an even brighter future for everyone.

Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. Let's keep it going.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Hanson: Disagree.

Mr. Hutton: Disagree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 207 agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Seeing the time today, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled March 11, 2021:

34-3-99

Response to oral question from Ms. White re: minimum wage (Streicker)