



Yukon Legislative Assembly

1st Session

35th Legislature

Index to HANSARD

May 11, 2021 to May 31, 2021

SPECIAL SITTING

NOTE

The 2021 Special Sitting of the First Session of the Thirty-Fifth Legislature occupies one volume

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YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin

DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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 1

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, May 11, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin

DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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, May 11, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

THE FIRST SESSION OF THE 35th LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF YUKON CONVENED IN THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBER AT 1:00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2021

Proclamation

Clerk: “TO THE MEMBERS of the Legislative Assembly of Yukon, and to all others whom this may concern

“GREETINGS

**“A PROCLAMATION
[*Yukon Act (Canada)*]**

“KNOW YE THAT under and by virtue of the power vested in the Commissioner of Yukon under the *Yukon Act* (Canada), the Legislative Assembly of Yukon is summoned to meet for dispatch of business in the Legislative Assembly Chamber, Yukon Government Administration Building, Whitehorse, Yukon, on May 11, 2021 at the hour of one o’clock in the afternoon.

“ALL OF WHICH all persons concerned are required to take notice and to govern themselves accordingly.

“GIVEN UNDER my hand and seal of Yukon, at Whitehorse, Yukon, May 4, 2021.

“Angélique Bernard
“Commissioner of Yukon”

REPORT ON MEMBERS ELECTED

Clerk: Honourable members, the following letter, dated April 20, 2021, was sent by the Chief Electoral Officer of Yukon to the Commissioner of the Yukon, the Hon. Angélique Bernard:

“Dear Commissioner:

“As required by section 308 of the *Elections Act*, I am pleased to advise you that the returns of the writ for the general election of Members to the Yukon Legislative Assembly, held April 12, 2021, have been received.

“The date of the return of the writ was set as April 19, 2021 when the writ was issued on March 12, 2021.

“The returning officers have certified in their return of the writ that the members duly elected for their electoral district by having received the largest number of ballots lawfully cast, and in the case of Vuntut Gwitchin, elected following the drawing of lots, are:

“Copperbelt North, Currie Dixon;
“Copperbelt South, Scott Kent;
“Klondike, Sandy Silver;
“Kluane, Wade Istchenko;
“Lake Laberge, Brad Cathers;
“Mayo-Tatchun, Jeremy Harper;
“Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, John Streicker;

“Mountainview, Jeanie McLean (Dendys);
“Pelly-Nisutlin, Stacey Hassard;
“Porter Creek Centre, Yvonne Clarke;
“Porter Creek North, Geraldine Van Bibber;
“Porter Creek South, Ranj Pillai;
“Riverdale North, Nils Clarke;
“Riverdale South, Tracy McPhee;
“Takhini-Kopper King, Kate White;
“Vuntut Gwitchin, Annie Blake;
“Watson Lake, Patti McLeod;
“Whitehorse Centre, Emily Tredger;
“Whitehorse West, Richard Mostyn.

“In the event the return of the writ date is required in accordance with *Yukon Act* section 11(1), the date of the return of the writ is April 19, 2021. The *Yukon Act* states that ‘no Legislative Assembly shall continue for longer than five years after the date of the return of the writ for a general election, but the Commissioner may dissolve it before then.’

“Sincerely,
“H. Maxwell Harvey
“Chief Electoral Officer”

Commissioner Bernard enters the Chamber announced by her Aide-de-Camp

Clerk: I am commanded by the Commissioner, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to state that she does not see fit to declare the causes of the summoning of the present Assembly of this territory until a Speaker of this Assembly shall have been chosen according to law, but today, at a subsequent hour, she will declare the causes of the calling of this Assembly.

Commissioner Bernard leaves the Chamber accompanied by her Aide-de-Camp

Motion No. 1 — Election of Speaker

Clerk: Honourable members, nominations are invited for the Office of Speaker of this Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move, seconded by the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT Jeremy Harper, Member for Mayo-Tatchun, do take the Chair of this Assembly as Speaker.

Clerk: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier, seconded by the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT Jeremy Harper, Member for Mayo-Tatchun, do take the Chair of this Assembly as Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Clerk: The ayes have it, and Jeremy Harper, Member for Mayo-Tatchun, is, by direction of this Assembly, duly elected as Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Motion No. 1 agreed to

SPEAKER’S ADDRESS TO THE ASSEMBLY

Speaker: I just want to recognize the chiefs in the gallery: Grand Chief Peter Johnston, Chief Roberta Joseph, Acting Chief Morris Morrison, and Deputy Chief Maria Benoit.

First of all, it is an honour and privilege to be elected into this role by my colleagues. I would also like to thank the people of the Mayo-Tatchun riding for giving me the opportunity to be their representative in the Legislative Assembly. I would like to express my thanks to the Assembly for the honour of being the 26th Speaker.

The importance of the Speaker's role is to ensure that the business of the Legislative Assembly is conducted in an independent, fair, and respectful manner. To that end, it is the Speaker's duty to be impartial and to treat all members equally and without favour. This high standard must be met in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the Legislative Assembly, and I commit today to carry on this tradition.

To the honourable members, I ask that you conduct yourselves with passion, honour, and respect for one another.

As well, I will follow my traditions of my Northern Tutchone ancestors, which are sharing, caring, teaching, and respect in everything that I do as the Speaker and as the elected MLA representing the Mayo-Tatchun riding. These are the standards by which I live.

I have lived in the Yukon all my life and I am of Northern Tutchone heritage on my mother's side and Southern Tutchone heritage on my father's side. My ancestors have lived here for generations and generations, and by following their teachings and principles, I hope to improve the lifestyle and quality of life for future generations of Yukoners.

To my wife, Shari Wrixon, and our two dogs, Remie and Duke, thank you for your unconditional support and love through my life's journey. Thank you to my friends and family for your unconditional love and support.

Mr. Clerk, will you please advise the Commissioner, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, that the Assembly is now prepared to hear the Speech from the Throne.

Clerk withdraws to ask Commissioner to return

Speaker: We are now prepared to hear the Speech from the Throne.

Commissioner Bernard enters the Chamber announced by her Aide-de-Camp

SPEAKER'S ADDRESS TO THE COMMISSIONER

Speaker: Madam Commissioner, the Members of the Legislative Assembly have elected me to be their Speaker, and I recognize the importance of the duties now given to me. If, in the performance of those duties, I should at any time make a mistake, the fault is mine and not that of the Assembly, whose servant I am. At this time, so that all members of the Assembly can best carry out their duty to Yukon, to their country, and to the Queen, I would claim for them their undoubted rights and privileges, especially freedom of speech in their debates, access to your person when necessary, and your favourable consideration of their proceedings.

RESPONSE BY THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to declare to you that I believe in the duty of the Assembly and, not doubting that the Assembly's proceedings will be conducted with wisdom, temper, and care, I grant and allow the Assembly's constitutional privileges. I assure you that the Assembly shall have ready access to me and that the Assembly's proceedings, words, and actions will receive from me favourable consideration.

Please be seated.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Commissioner: Honourable members, friends, and fellow Yukoners, we are gathered today on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. It is an honour to address this Assembly whose members represent the great people of the Yukon residing on the traditional territories of 14 distinct First Nations with whom we share this land.

This Assembly has represented the will of Yukoners for over 40 years, ever since the territory achieved responsible government. Many individuals have made important contributions to the governance of our territory during that time. This includes two of my esteemed predecessors, former Yukon Commissioners Art Pearson and Doug Bell. Sadly, both of them passed away recently — Mr. Pearson in December and Mr. Bell in April.

Both were directly involved in one of the most significant transitions in the territory's history. Mr. Pearson was a scientist and environmentalist. He became Commissioner in 1976, at a time when members were advocating for more responsibilities to be placed in the hands of elected officials. Mr. Pearson later went into business and became president of the Chamber of Commerce. He also created the Yukon Lotteries Commission and was involved in the establishment of the Yukon Science Institute.

Mr. Bell served as Whitehorse city councillor before becoming Deputy Commissioner under Mr. Pearson. In 1979, as the territory's Administrator and later as Commissioner, Mr. Bell oversaw the transition to the territory's first wholly elected Cabinet, forever transforming governance in the territory. Mr. Bell was committed to accountable government and later joined the fourth estate as the publisher of the *Yukon News*. A passionate writer who took great joy in serving his community, Mr. Bell was appointed to the Order of Canada and awarded the Order of Yukon in recognition of this life of service.

Yukoners across the territory were also saddened to learn of the recent passing of Darius Elias and Archie Lang. Both were respected members of this Assembly. Mr. Elias faithfully represented the Vuntut Gwitchin people of Old Crow for 10 years. His service to his community and dedication to the land began in his youth and carried on throughout his life. Mr. Elias was a fierce and articulate advocate for the Porcupine caribou herd and travelled extensively to educate the world about its critical habitat and cultural importance to the Gwich'in people.

Mr. Lang represented Porter Creek Centre for nearly a decade, serving as a Cabinet minister in several portfolios. A great champion of the Yukon, Mr. Lang operated several businesses throughout the territory focused on tourism and hospitality. Mr. Lang's encyclopaedic knowledge of the territory's history and deft sense of humour contributed to his legendary storytelling and larger-than-life personality.

All Yukoners have benefitted from the contributions that Mr. Pearson, Mr. Bell, Mr. Lang, and Mr. Elias made to our territory. We offer our sincere condolences to their families and all their friends.

Your government has worked tirelessly to make the territory a better place to live for all Yukoners. It has partnered with other governments to grow the territory's economy while protecting the environment and investing in healthier communities. The territory has enjoyed economic growth every year since 2016, including during the pandemic. Yukon continues to have the lowest unemployment rate in the country.

Your government has built strong relationships with Yukon First Nations to advance reconciliation. The revitalization of the Yukon Forum has allowed leaders from across the territory to collaborate and advance joint priorities for the benefit of all Yukoners. Much can be accomplished when we are paddling in the same direction.

Yukon is the first jurisdiction in Canada with a strategy to respond to the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus individuals. This territory-wide strategy embodies the promise to change this tragic national story from one of grief, desperation, and loss to one of healing, grace, and reconciliation. It is another example of how the Yukon continues to lead the country when it comes to meaningful reconciliation with First Nation people.

Your government has improved health care services, expanded mental health resources, decreased surgical wait times, and made medical travel more flexible and affordable. It has modernized legislation and policies to make the territory more inclusive and welcoming for all Yukoners.

It has increased housing options for Yukoners by investing in affordable community and seniors housing throughout the territory and supporting the private sector and NGOs to build more housing units.

Your government has also worked in collaboration with First Nations and municipalities to develop a territory-wide strategy to tackle climate change and build a strong, resilient, and sustainable future for the territory. Yukon's economy is strong, even in the midst of a pandemic. Reducing the tax burden on businesses and increasing local procurement opportunities has helped Yukon businesses hire more staff and diversify products and services. Creating a five-year capital plan to inform businesses, First Nations, and municipalities about infrastructure projects has increased coordination and improved planning for construction projects.

Developing the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* in collaboration with the tourism sector has set a 10-year vision that takes a whole-of-Yukon approach to sustainable tourism. Working with partners to open the NorthLight Innovation hub — the first in the north — and investing in our entrepreneurs

has positioned the Yukon as a leader in the tech and knowledge sectors while increasing local training and investment opportunities.

An enduring commitment to growing and diversifying the economy while supporting local businesses has built up our economic resiliency. Your government recognizes that there is much more work to do to keep building on what has been accomplished over the last five years.

This is a rare moment in the history of our territory. For the first time in nearly 30 years, Yukoners have elected a minority government to lead them forward. Yukoners have sent a clear message that we need to move forward together for the benefit of our territory. There is much more that unites us than divides us, and the path forward will be found on common ground. Your government is committed to taking a new approach to governance and working collaboratively to make the Yukon a better place to live.

To this end, an innovative agreement has been established between two parties representing the majority of Yukoners to ensure a strong, stable government to guide the Yukon forward over the next two years. It identifies agreed-upon areas where government can take immediate action to benefit Yukoners in a way that is supported by the members of this Assembly. The agreement will advance a range of important legislative and policy initiatives that will make democracy work for people while addressing climate change and protecting the environment. It will create jobs in a sustainable economy, improve the services that people count on, and make life more affordable for Yukoners.

This agreement is founded on the belief that this Assembly works best when all members can put forward good ideas and come together to support those ideas that advance the public good. It embodies the spirit of collaboration and puts the people of the Yukon at the forefront of our politics.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need to put people at the heart of our decision-making. In the past year and a half, more than 150 million people worldwide have contracted this deadly disease, including more than 1.2 million Canadians. The pandemic has tested and continues to test the strength of our health care system and the resiliency of our social fabric.

Every single Yukoner has been impacted by the pandemic. From daycares to schools, workplaces to social events, your lives have been disrupted on an unprecedented scale. Despite many challenges, the Yukon has demonstrated tremendous resolve in the face of this public health emergency. Following the recommendations of our public health officials has allowed us to contain the spread of COVID-19 in our territory and keep our case count low.

Swift and comprehensive government intervention has ensured that individuals and businesses are supported and our communities remain healthy and safe. Your government worked collaboratively with its territorial, provincial, and federal colleagues, advocating strongly for northern, remote, and indigenous communities to receive priority access to vaccines as soon as they became available. As a result of strong leadership, the people of the Yukon had the opportunity to be

immunized from COVID-19 well before the rest of Canada and much of the world. Yukoners stepped up and took their shot, and our territory is leading the country in vaccination rates.

We are in this very fortunate position thanks to our dedicated team of health care professionals, public servants, and community leaders. Most importantly, we are in a fortunate position thanks to the vigilance and community-minded spirit of Yukoners.

While our territory has responded well, the pandemic is not over. Its effects will continue to be felt as we go forward. Your government will continue to provide strong, steady leadership to protect the health and safety of Yukoners and help them maintain their livelihoods.

The support programs put in place by your government have become the gold standard across Canada, and they will continue to be provided for as long as they are needed. This includes the paid sick leave rebate, the Yukon business relief program, the tourism accommodation sector support, and the tourism non-accommodation sector support. Government will ensure that Yukon businesses have the assistance they need when they need it. Your government will keep working closely with Yukon's chief medical officer of health to continually re-evaluate the level of restrictions that are put in place to protect Yukoners from COVID-19. It will work toward reopening our borders safely to ensure that Yukon's tourism and visitor economy can return to normal as soon as possible.

Like other parts of the country, our territory is in the grip of another public health crisis that has been overshadowed by COVID-19, one that is more silent and much more tragic. In the past five years, 40 Yukoners have lost their lives to opioids. Families and communities throughout the territory are grieving from this tragedy. Significant action has been taken over the past several years to combat opioid overdoses and reduce harm to our communities.

Yukon's Mental Wellness and Substance Use hubs have dramatically improved access to withdrawal services, counselling, and inpatient treatments in rural communities. The introduction and expansion of opioid medical treatments at the Referred Care Clinic has helped individuals address substance use problems. The take-home naloxone program and expanded drug checking services have helped to save lives. The opioid crisis in the Yukon would have been much worse without these critical interventions, yet it is clear that more must be done to address the pernicious effects of opioids on our communities.

Your government will continue to build on the success of these initiatives, and it will increase the resources available to those who need support. Yukon's mental health resources will be coordinated to provide mental health services to all Yukoners seven days per week. Immediate action will be taken to develop a safe drug supply program for the territory, along with a supervised consumption site.

These innovative programs have been shown to significantly decrease substance-related deaths across Canada and will help us to reduce the harm caused by these dangerous drugs. The government will work with Yukon First Nation governments and the Government of Canada to fund a rural, on-the-land mental health and substance treatment centre.

These initiatives will support healthy and safe families throughout our territory.

The Yukon continues to grow and reveal its endless possibilities. Our population now exceeds 42,500 people. People from across the country and around the world continue to see the Yukon as a place full of promise and adventure, a place to raise a family, a place to get an advanced education, a place to reconnect with nature and explore the outdoors, a place to embrace rich indigenous cultures and learn from traditional ways of knowing and doing, a place to start a business, a place to enjoy unique and authentic experiences, a place to experience an unparalleled quality of life and pursue your dreams.

To support a strong and prosperous future for the territory, the government will continue to take action to make the lives of Yukoners healthier, happier, and more affordable. Our COVID-19 support programs have allowed Yukon businesses to keep operating during the pandemic and kept the economy moving forward. The Yukon was one of only two jurisdictions in Canada to experience GDP growth in 2020 despite the pandemic.

Your government is committed to carrying our economic momentum forward. This year, we'll see the launch of the Great Yukon Summer campaign. This innovative campaign will create incentives for Yukon tourism operators to offer Yukoners rates for tourism products and services through additional funding opportunities. It will help Yukon businesses build marketing campaigns to maximize the attraction of Yukoners this summer, provide funding for Yukon organizations to hold local events, and support the new Mountain Music Festival together with the MacBride Museum.

Yukon's tourism sector is a vital part of our economy, providing good jobs across the territory and creating economic benefits in our communities. The Great Yukon Summer campaign will encourage Yukoners to explore the territory while supporting our extensive network of tourism operators. It will help the tourism sector rebound stronger than ever, while continued COVID-19 support programs ensure that it will recover faster than any jurisdiction in Canada. When the danger of COVID-19 has passed, the Yukon will be one of the most exciting tourism destinations in the world. The ongoing implementation of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* will ensure that tourism operators can seize the immense opportunities in the post-pandemic world.

Our thriving mining sector is the backbone of the territory's economy. Your government will continue to work with industry partners to ensure that the Yukon has a flourishing mineral resource sector that everyone can support. By continuing to collaborate with major industry partners, we can ensure that they have local purchase programs to work with Yukon businesses wherever possible.

A new mineral exploration fund will support junior mining companies operating in the Yukon to search for the next major deposit. Developing a policy for mining and municipalities that promotes sustainable development will ensure that community values and plans are respected.

The recommendations of the independent mineral development strategy will be carefully analyzed as government works in collaboration with partners to develop successor mining legislation and increase regulatory clarity. Government will also continue to work with all partners on regulatory amendments to the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* to create a more streamlined assessment process.

The coming years will bring enormous opportunities for innovation and expansion in the Yukon. Everyone needs an opportunity to thrive, and your government will continue to support workers and businesses while building capacity in our economy. Yukon's minimum wage will be increased to \$15.20 per hour this year. Government will create workforce development agreements to retrain workers and support the transition to a green economy. A new immigration strategy will be created to support the increased workforce requirements of businesses and industry. An innovation commission will be established to attract new technology start-ups and grow Yukon's digital ecosystem. This will be complemented by an innovation strategy that will continue to expand opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

In partnership with the private sector, a flexible field house complex will be developed for athletics and large public conferences and events. This will support Yukon's bid to host the 60th anniversary of the Canada Winter Games in 2027. Hosting the Canada Winter Games presents an exciting opportunity to share our culture and community with the rest of Canada.

Your government recognizes that the climate crisis needs to be considered at the heart of all its decisions. This is the only way that we can guarantee a safe future for the next generation of Yukoners. There will continue to be a moratorium on fracking in the Yukon. Working together with Yukoners, the City of Whitehorse, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and Yukon University, your government will set aside land to permanently protect McIntyre Creek for present and future generations of Yukoners. This area has tremendous historic, cultural, and academic importance. The creation of McIntyre Creek park will benefit all Yukoners and help slow biodiversity loss in the Yukon by protecting important wildlife areas. Yukon's wetlands strategy will be completed in the coming year to guide the management of activities in wetlands across the territory.

Working together with partners to complete the Dawson land use planning process will be a priority. Government will continue to implement *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*.

The strategy will see reduced greenhouse gas emissions, less reliance on fossil fuels, and significant investments in renewable energy. To meet the urgent need to address the climate crisis, your government will amend its greenhouse gas emissions reduction target to a 45-percent reduction by 2030, compared to 2010 emissions. Plans to reach this more ambitious target will be developed by a newly established Yukon climate leadership council.

The voice of youth is particularly important as we look to tackle climate change. Government actions to address climate change will be informed by Yukon's Youth Panel on Climate Change to ensure that the next generation has a voice in their future. Including the perspectives of our youth will ensure that Yukon's approach to addressing climate change is comprehensive and forward thinking. Your government will take action to ensure that the territory's transition to a green economy creates opportunities across the territory as we move toward a more clean and sustainable future.

The Yukon has one of the greenest energy systems in the country. The government's vision is for the territory to be powered on 97-percent renewable energy, even as our population and economy continue to grow. To advance this vision, government will support the implementation of Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable electricity plan. This will see historic investments in several major energy projects, including the construction of a new pump storage facility at Moon Lake to store extra power not used in the summer so that it can be used in the winter.

In partnership with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation, the Atlin hydro plant will be expanded and connected to Yukon's grid, increasing our hydro capacity. The transmission network in the Southern Lakes region will be expanded and upgraded to connect projects to the grid and allow for future sales opportunities with our neighbours in Skagway.

As Yukon's economy continues to grow in a sustainable and responsible way, it is critical that all Yukoners are supported to live healthy, happy lives. With the implementation of the *Putting People First* report underway, the Yukon is on track to become a health care leader in Canada. Your government will continue to take action to make health and social services more integrated, collaborative, and people-centred to better meet the needs of Yukoners.

A new bilingual health centre in Whitehorse will improve care for the Yukon's francophone population. Un nouveau centre de santé bilingue qui ouvrira ses portes à Whitehorse améliorera les services offerts à la population francophone du territoire.

A new secure medical unit will be constructed at the Whitehorse General Hospital. The way in which health care professionals are regulated will be improved, and coverage will be increased to groups such as psychologists, optometrists, and allied health professionals.

In partnership with First Nations, Yukon University, and the Government of Canada, your government will support Yukoners to pursue careers in health and social service program delivery.

Yukon's aging-in-place strategy will continue to be implemented, increasing supportive housing for seniors and expanding the home first program.

Your government will work in partnership with the federal government to support a Canada-wide universal pharmacare program model. It will also take action to provide dental benefits to uninsured Yukoners.

The cost of birth control and fertility treatments will be subsidized, along with the cost of period products for those in

need. Midwifery will continue to be integrated into Yukon's health care system, working toward a fully funded program later this year.

Your government will continue to provide funding for the new universal early childhood education program introduced last month. This program subsidizes each licensed childcare space by \$700 per month, with additional subsidies for low-income families. This is an historic investment in Yukon families, providing them with more disposable income and making their lives more affordable.

Yukon's strong future requires an effective education system that supports all learners. Your government is committed to improving education opportunities and outcomes for all Yukon students. As the territory's population continues to grow, more classrooms are needed to educate the next generations of Yukoners. A new elementary school will be built in Whistle Bend in the coming years, as well as a new school in Burwash Landing.

Government will continue to work with the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education and all Yukon First Nations to improve Yukon First Nation students' education outcomes. In collaboration with First Nation partners, a Yukon First Nation school board will be created to ensure that Yukon First Nations can meaningfully shape their children's education.

The Yukon is now home to the first university in Canada's north. The government will support Yukon University's new science building and its inclusion of traditional knowledge. It will also work with the university to investigate a varsity sports program.

Every Yukoner should feel safe in their community. Your government will keep working with partners to make all Yukon communities safer. It will enhance our community safety planning program and ensure a consistent approach to funding community safety planning activities across the territory.

Working together with stakeholders and community partners, the sexualized assault response team program will continue to be enhanced and expanded to Yukon communities. Your government will release an LGBTQ2S+ action plan to guide the Yukon's continuing shift toward a more inclusive and welcoming society.

A new program will be established to provide supportive community housing to justice-involved women that is gender responsive, culturally sensitive, and trauma-informed. This reflects the government's commitment to increasing community safety and justice through Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy.

There is an urgent need to increase access to stable and affordable housing for Yukoners across the territory. Your government has taken significant action over the past several years to meet the diverse housing needs of Yukoners. The first-ever Housing First residence in the north was opened in Whitehorse, providing safe, secure, low-barrier housing for the most vulnerable in our capital city. Building on this success, the next Housing First project will be built in Watson Lake. Working in partnership with the private sector and NGOs, the government has supported hundreds of new affordable housing

units as well as major new supportive housing projects to increase options for Yukoners across the housing continuum. The government will work with the private sector on developing the 5th and Rogers land parcel in Whitehorse while ensuring that the project helps increase the amount of available housing, including rentals. Together with the City of Whitehorse and the private sector, it will also look at relocating the grader station in the Marwell area of Whitehorse to allow for future development of housing.

During the previous mandate, your government tripled investment in lot development. This trend will continue, as the government plans to release 1,000 new lots across the Yukon in the coming years. Your government will also explore new models of providing housing that is affordable and accessible to Yukoners. A land parcel grant will support the establishment of a Yukon community land trust to allow for the creation of permanently affordable housing in Whitehorse.

Yukon's future prosperity will be built through strong partnerships with First Nations. Actively upholding and promoting the spirit and intent of the self-government agreements is the foundation of these partnerships. Genuine partnerships based on respect and cooperation will continue to generate benefits and positive outcomes for all Yukoners. Your government will work with partners to implement Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy to help our society heal and move forward together. Engaging the Yukon Forum to advance priorities in critical areas such as health and social services, education, justice, and heritage will allow government to continue to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

Your government will continue to implement *Breaking Trail Together*, an innovative public service plan that will ensure that government is inclusive and representative of the people it serves. Yukon First Nation traditions and practices will also continue to be incorporated into this Assembly so that it better reflects the people it represents.

The interests of Yukoners are best served by a modern government that is responsive to its needs. Your government will keep working to make Yukon services and laws more open, inclusive, accessible, and effective. It will continue to modernize and update Yukon's legislative framework to ensure that it responds to current realities and does not discriminate based on gender identity, marital status, or sexual orientation.

The government will consult with Yukoners about your vision for electoral reform and bring forward recommendations in the coming year. It will introduce laws to make the Yukon a better place to live.

A modernized *Motor Vehicles Act* will improve safety for all road users. A new workplace safety and compensation act will improve Yukon's workplace safety and compensation systems to ensure that workers have the support that they deserve. A new clean energy act will legislate Yukon's greenhouse gas reduction and renewable energy generation targets. Single-use plastics will be banned in the territory. The *Territorial Lands (Yukon) Act* will be updated to help manage the use, maintenance, access, and closure of resource roads. Our *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* will be

enhanced to help target abuse, exploitation, the illegal use of firearms, and criminal organizations in our territory. Changes to the *Child Care Act* will enhance the delivery of the new universal early childhood education program.

As we look to emerge from the challenges of the pandemic, there is much hope and opportunity on the horizon. Your government remains committed to supporting Yukoners to live healthy, happy lives, building on the strong foundation established over the last five years.

The Yukon remains a place full of promise — promise that can be realized through purpose and hard work. The territory's swift, measured, and comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic has set an example for all Canadians. Leading the country in vaccination rates has positioned the Yukon to lead the transition into a post-pandemic world. It is time to move forward together on the path to recovery. The nation's eyes are on the Yukon as we forge our next steps.

Honourable members, Yukoners do not expect you to agree on everything. They do expect you to share a common interest and a common responsibility in working toward a more prosperous future for the people of this territory, their families, and their communities. May this guide your deliberations and may you carry out your responsibilities with respect for each other and compassion and understanding for others.

Thank you, merci, mahsi' cho, günilschish.

Commissioner Bernard leaves the Chamber accompanied by her Aide-de-Camp

Speaker: At this time, I will call the House to order.

I would like to begin this Sitting of the Legislative Assembly by respectfully acknowledging all Yukon First Nations and also that we are meeting on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 1: Introduction and First Reading

Ms. Tredger: I move that Bill No. 1, entitled *Act to Perpetuate a Certain Ancient Right*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre that Bill No. 1, entitled *Act to Perpetuate a Certain Ancient Right*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 1 agreed to

TABLING SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Speaker: I wish to inform the Assembly that I have received a copy of the Speech from the Throne, which I will now table.

CONSIDERATION OF SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT the Speech from the Throne be considered on a day following.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier:
THAT the Speech from the Throne be considered on a day following.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 26(2), that consideration of a motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne will take place on Wednesday, May 12, 2021.

Motion No. 2 — Election of Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole

Speaker: I will now ask if the House is prepared to elect a Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move:
THAT Annie Blake, Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, be elected Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT Annie Blake, Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, be elected Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Motion No. 2 agreed to

Motion No. 3 — Election of Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole

Speaker: I will now ask whether the House is prepared to elect a Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move:
THAT Emily Tredger, Member for Whitehorse Centre, be elected Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT Emily Tredger, Member for Whitehorse Centre, be elected Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Motion No. 3 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled May 11, 2021:

The following sessional paper was tabled May 11, 2021:

35-1-1 Speech from the Throne (Speaker Harper)

Written notice was given of the following motions May 11, 2021:

Motion No. 4

Re: length of 2021 Special Sitting (McPhee)

Motion No. 5

Re: authorization for the Assembly to meet via video conference during the 2021 Special Sitting (McPhee)

Motion No. 6

Re: pairing arrangements for the 2021 Special Sitting (McPhee)

Motion No. 7

Re: Member participation in sittings of the House via teleconference due to COVID-19 during the 2021 Special Sitting (McPhee)

Motion No. 8

Re: Appointments to the Members' Services Board (McPhee)

Motion No. 9

Re: Appointments to the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges (McPhee)

Motion No. 10

Re: Appointments to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments (McPhee)

Motion No. 11

Re: Appointments to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (McPhee)

Motion No. 12

Re: Appointments to the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees (McPhee)

Motion No. 13

Re: operating costs of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter (Cathers)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 2

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, May 12, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin

DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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, May 12, 2021 — 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. Silver: I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome to the Legislative Assembly — no stranger to the Legislative Assembly — Mr. Ted Adel.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?
Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Sexualized Assault Prevention Month

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government, on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, to recognize Sexualized Assault Prevention Month. This month is an opportunity to raise awareness about sexualized assault so that we can work together to end this violence.

First, I must extend my gratitude toward the organizations responding to sexualized assault in Yukon. Throughout the pandemic, these organizations have worked tirelessly to continue to serve and support victims during these challenging times — organizations such as the Yukon Women's Transition Home, Help and Hope for Families, Dawson City Women's Shelter, Les EssentiElles, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Yukon Status of Women Council, Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Association and the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, all of which continue to support and advocate for victims of sexualized violence.

I also want to acknowledge and thank all who are working on addressing this violence behind the scenes and calling out those in power, the co-worker who is standing up to sexist or inappropriate jokes made in their workplace, those who are on the phone, in the car, next to a campfire or at a kitchen table, those who are listening to their family member or friend without blame or judgment as they share their story, those who raise their voices when they believe something is wrong, especially when it is someone in a position of power. I think of the grandparents who are teaching their grandchildren how to be caring, the parents who are having difficult and complex conversations with their children about consent and healthy relationships. I think about those of us who are elected leaders; we must lead by example. If we do not, we are telling everyone,

including our youth, that it is okay to perpetuate these dangerous attitudes. That is not how we create change, Mr. Speaker.

This year's campaign for Sexualized Assault Prevention Month is all about raising empowered and confident kids. Yesterday, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and Les EssentiElles, along with their partners, hosted a barbecue at LePage Park to kick off Sexualized Assault Prevention Month with a family-friendly event. They had face painting, delicious food, live music, and resources for teaching healthy relationships to children and youth, consent boundaries, empathy, and respect.

This year's campaign is to remind us that it is never too early to start talking to kids in our life about consent. We can and should start these conversations about what it looks like and sounds like to ask for consent, but we must also be ready to educate ourselves about sexualized violence.

We should continue to check our own biases and misconceptions regarding the behaviour of victims and reflect on how our own mindsets reflect our actions. Are we, as individuals, contributing to the problem or the solution? I also want to recognize that some Yukoners are far more likely to experience sexualized violence, including the LGBTQ2S+ people, those living with disabilities, and indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people.

I was honoured to join with community members to walk along the Millennium Trail where the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre and the Yukon Arts Centre had installed a display of red dresses. There was also a powerful display of dresses right outside the building. These annual events and exhibits are not just a passing reference. They serve as a stark reminder to us that gender-based violence continues to happen every day, right here in our communities, to someone we know.

As elected officials and leaders in our communities, these visible reminders must move us all forward to take action urgently. Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy, which all three parties signed in a ceremony last December, outlined 31 actions under four paths. This whole-of-Yukon plan must guide us for the next 10 to 15 years. If we work together in partnership, aligning our resources with other levels of government and civil society, we can indeed change the story for indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus individuals in Yukon. We must uphold their dignity and justice.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize May as Sexualized Assault Prevention Month.

This month, we recognize and consider all people who have experienced sexualized violence in any form and give them our support. This is an opportunity for each of us to be aware that sexualized assault takes many forms, and it is often cloaked in shame and secrecy for those who have experienced this violence. With an increase of substance abuse, a marked decline in mental health, and lack of access to family and friends — these are few key factors in sexualized violence and assault.

We must continue to address and support those faced with these issues. The presence of COVID and increased restrictions have led to heightened stress and emotions and to higher levels of domestic violence. Over a year since COVID began, we are seeing many who need more supports and assistance.

All sexualized assault is wrong. This is not something that is acceptable anytime, anywhere, by anyone — not income level, not job status, race or gender, or any other factor. It is wrong.

Consent is key. Consent is freely giving permission through words or actions. Without consent, it is assault and can escalate into larger issues within the home or the community. We recognize those survivors of sexualized assault whose strength and inspiration speak louder than violence, and we thank those who work with victims of violence, who help them with tools to overcome and to move forward.

I would like to give special thanks to the incredible organizations that we have here in the Yukon, to the many who dedicate their lives and careers to work with people who have experienced some form of sexualized assault. They listen, they advocate, they counsel, and they help. Thank you to organizations like the Yukon Women's Coalition, Victim Services, the Women's Directorate, Queer Yukon, All Genders Yukon, and all others that work with survivors and toward the prevention of sexualized assault and other types of violence.

If you know someone who wants to share but is not anxious to share in an organized group, be there, listen, and do not blame. We must show trust and believe these victims, or they may be re-traumatized. Assure them that it is not their fault, and perhaps they will see the need for professional help. Everyone deserves a life that has respect, dignity, and safety.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to acknowledge that, during the month of May, we undertake national and local campaigns to prevent sexual assault. Sexualized Assault Prevention Month is designed to engage all folks as allies to prevent sexualized violence in our communities. It is about creating conversations so that together we can change our culture and our communities for the better, and it is helpful if we come at this topic with common understanding. Each year in Canada, it is estimated that there are 600,000 sexualized assaults; 99 percent of sexualized violence is perpetrated by men, while victims are of all genders and in particular are from marginalized populations. In the Yukon, it is important to note that rates are 3.5 times higher than the national average.

Sexualized assault will continue to be an issue of staggering proportions if it is labelled “a women’s issue”; ending sexualized assault is everyone’s issue. Men need to be on the front lines with women and non-binary folks fighting this issue and actively integrating awareness into their everyday lives. This is the thing: In order to make changes, we need to understand that these need to be implemented in all aspects of our lives, from actions to words, because words also matter and how we choose to interact with each other also matters.

Gender scripts are the rules that we learn growing up about how to interact with the opposite sex and each other. These gender scripts and attitudes colour how we see the world and can be so embedded in us that they are hard to see, but they still get lived out every day in ways that harm people. Gender scripts are not an excuse for behaviour that hurts others. We must all do the work of becoming aware of the gender scripts that are guiding us, to question them and to see how they hurt others, and to do the work of changing our perspectives. Let’s stop using dehumanizing or sexist language. Let’s stop making misogynist jokes.

We all have an important role to play when it comes to making our community a better and safer place to live. Sexualized violence is everyone’s issue, and together we can end it, one conversation at a time, so let’s continue to talk about it.

Applause

In recognition of National Nursing Week

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to acknowledge National Nursing Week, which is observed in Canada and the United States during the first full week of May.

This week celebrates the vital role that nurses play in enhancing the long-term well-being and quality of life for all people in all stages of their lives. This year, the Canadian Nurses Association has asked Canadians who use social media to highlight the theme “#WeAnswerTheCall”. This theme was developed by the Canadian Nurses Association to recognize the courage and commitment that nurses across the country have displayed at all times but particularly as they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The past year has been a different one for Yukon nurses, one in which they have witnessed a great deal of change and uncertainty. While we are fortunate in our position and in our hospitals, long-term care homes, and health centres that they have not been faced with overwhelming numbers of COVID-19 patients as they have elsewhere, our nurses have nonetheless played, and continue to play, a vital role in fighting this pandemic.

During these extremely challenging times, they continue to demonstrate leadership as they work to safeguard all of us in our communities. Nurses are the front-line workers and key partners in teaching and reminding us all that evidence-informed best practice is the most effective way to control COVID-19, and they are a crucial part of the team here in Yukon as they work alongside our chief medical officer of health and Yukon Communicable Disease Control to protect our health and well-being.

The work that nurses do is the very foundation of our health care system. They are the providers of front-line care to Yukoners in our home care program, our mental wellness and substance abuse programs, our hospitals, our community health centres, our long-term care homes, and our hospices.

I think that it is safe to say that each and every one of us can recall an encounter with a nurse and are thankful for their care and compassion in a very stressful time. They work

directly in Yukoners' homes and provide people with the care that they need to age well in their own communities with dignity and respect.

Nurses don't just provide people with physical care. They also help people emotionally and socially, particularly in our communities where nurses are the very foundation as primary providers of health and social services. This has been especially true over the past 14 months.

More recently, our nurses have taken the lead in providing COVID-19 vaccines to Yukoners in every community. Thanks to their tireless efforts, Yukon currently has the highest vaccination rate in the country. Because of this work, Yukoners who are fully vaccinated will soon be able to move about more freely and will be able to relax other restrictions.

I want to thank all Yukon nurses, as well as everyone working on our vaccine delivery, on the front lines, and in our communities, for their care and compassion. In particular, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the leadership of a few people through these last 14 months: Sheila Thompson, director of Community Nursing; Jane Boutette, assistant director of Community Nursing; Lori Strudwick, clinical manager at Yukon Communicable Disease Control; Sheryl-Ann Wasson, director of Safety and Clinical Excellence in Continuing Care; and Cathy Stannard, director of Public Health and the COVID Response Unit.

Of course, our thanks go to each and every one of our nurses. I invite all Yukoners to join my colleagues and me this week in showing our appreciation to all nurses in the territory during this National Nursing Week 2021.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to recognize May 10 to 16 as National Nursing Week in Canada. The Canadian Nurses Association has chosen the theme "#WeAnswerTheCall" for 2021 to showcase the many roles that nurses play in a patient's health care journey. We are fortunate to have a great team of nurses across the Yukon working to support the health care needs of all of us.

We have nurses working in our community health care centres, in our hospitals, in private clinics, and as part of the vaccination clinics across the territory. We have nurses supporting medevac flights and providing essential education to children and youth. They work in continuing care facilities, home care, and at work sites.

Nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and licensed practical nurses all have an important role to play and are an important part of the bigger picture of Yukon's health care system. They are committed to lifelong learning and adapting to the fast-changing medical world. As medicines, best practices, policies, and technology change, you can be sure that nurses are continually learning and evolving, and that has been doubly true during this time of the pandemic that we find ourselves in.

Throughout all these changes, hand hygiene remains one of the most important and effective methods for reducing health care-associated infection and cross-infection between patients. In 1860, Florence Nightingale wrote that nurses should wash

their hands frequently throughout the day, demonstrating an early awareness of the effectiveness of this simple procedure, and that advice holds true to this day. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a reminder that effectively applied hand hygiene is a vital intervention that can be used to prevent the spread of disease, and that message has been emphasized by many throughout this pandemic.

Over the last year plus, during the pandemic, nurses and other health care professionals have been carrying an even heavier load than normal and experiencing a more stressful work environment. We want to thank them for all that they are doing in that.

I also recognize that we have Yukoners who came out of retirement to assist with vaccination delivery and — for them and everyone else who has been part of the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign across the territory — we thank them for the excellent work that they have been doing on behalf of all of us. We would like to recognize all of the work that is done by nurses to address the health care needs of our citizens.

I would also like to thank the Yukon Registered Nurses Association for the work that they do and acknowledge the fact that they are committed to their mandate of promoting safe and effective nursing practice on behalf of the public and the patients they serve. We would like to recognize, as well, the past and present members of the board for the work that they do.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Official Opposition, thank you to our nurses across the Yukon for all the work that they are doing here today and the work that they have done to address all of our health care needs throughout the territory.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Yukon nurses during National Nursing Week.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the courage, commitment, and sacrifices that nurses work with. This pandemic has also confirmed the important role that nurses fill as they persevered to meet the challenging and uncertain demands of the past year while redesigning models of care to ensure access to health care. It is another reason that we have all come to trust in these health professionals to provide the very best in expert and professional nursing care.

Nurses are the embodiment of dedication, competence, and compassion. They are often our first point of contact when accessing health services. At one time or another, each of us has been impacted by the work that they do. Nurses, nurse practitioners, certified nursing aides, and licensed practical nurses work in every sector of our community. They champion the cause of public health, shape policy, and are essential in the concept of collaborative care. Nurses are an integral part of our lives. They are with us from birth to death and at every step of the way.

We extend our thanks to nurses in our communities, as they are deeply involved in all aspects of primary health care and health education.

Nurses demonstrate daily their incredible ability to adapt and be creative while remaining responsive to the diverse health care needs of the communities that they serve. Nurses continue to maximize the use of resources that they have at any given time, especially during periods of intense stress. They continue to demonstrate cultural awareness and safety and assure person-centred care in all aspects of their work and continue to shape the delivery of health care services within our territory.

We give thanks to all nurses in the territory. Thank you for your continued devotion to your calling. National Nursing Week brings attention to honouring your work and sheds light on the challenges of your career while celebrating your successes and contributions as you overcome adversity.

Applause

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 Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees*, dated May 12, 2021.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Ms. McLeod: I have for tabling today a document by the Department of Finance, entitled *Economic evaluation of proposed changes to the minimum wage*.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 2: *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McLean: I move that Bill No. 2, 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. 2, 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. 2 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?
Notices of motions.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to initiate upgrades to the two Alaska Highway crosswalks in Watson Lake to include pedestrian-activated flashing lights to address safety and visibility for both pedestrians and motorists.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to disclose the full estimated cost of implementing the 76 recommendations contained in the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize the impacts to rural residents caused by the windstorm of October 26, 2020, including many fallen trees and some destroyed buildings, by waiving its solid-waste tipping fees for brush, clean wood, and demolition material resulting from the storm.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to act on the Health Canada recommendation that individuals over the age of 55 get the SHINGRIX vaccine by covering the cost.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to communicate to the Ross River Dena Council and the community of Ross River clear times on the repairs to the washout on the Robert Campbell Highway and what measures are in place to ensure that emergencies, medical or otherwise, are attended to in a timely manner.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to offer emergency support to the Government of the Northwest Territories to deal with the flooding in the communities of Fort Simpson and Jean Marie River.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MOTION OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY NO. 1

(Standing Order 28)

Implementation of rent control

Mr. Dixon: I rise to request unanimous consent of the House to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity pursuant to Standing Order 28:

THAT the House urges the Yukon government to halt plans to implement rent control on May 15, 2021, as outlined in the Liberal Party's confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democratic Party, in order to:

(1) develop solutions to mitigate the harm that this announcement has caused to attendants and landlords; and

(2) properly consult with affected Yukon landlords and tenants on the details of any rent control proposal prior to implementation.

This is a matter of urgency because, as you may be aware, this policy was first announced on April 28 as part of the Liberal and NDP coalition agreement. In that announcement,

there were no details shared by the government or the NDP beyond the fact that it will come into force on May 15, which is just three days away.

This is why this is urgent and pressing. A policy is coming into force in three days and there have been no details shared on this policy. Further, there has been absolutely zero consultation on this policy by the Liberals or the NDP prior to announcing it and, unfortunately, this is already having negative impacts on landlords and on tenants. As a result of the Liberals and the NDP not engaging on this major policy beforehand, the Yukon Party has launched its own consultation. We have already heard from landlords who have had sales of their properties fall through as a result of this.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It's my understanding that the member opposite is allowed to speak to why that motion might be urgent, pursuant to Standing Order 16, but he has clearly wandered into the substance of the motion and what he wants to say going forward.

It's my understanding that you must first determine whether or not the motion is of such pressing and urgent need and that, if he has any remarks, they must be respectful of that limitation and only address that point.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Standing Order 28 allows him to have brief introductory remarks.

Mr. Dixon: I will keep my remarks brief, as you have indicated.

As I noted, all of this comes into effect in three days. This is why we are raising this as an issue of urgent and pressing necessity. We believe that the government needs to halt this policy and consult before implementing it. We also believe that the government needs to come up with a way to compensate those who have already suffered as a result of this.

With that, I look forward to the unanimous support of the House to support this motion.

Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition, pursuant to Standing Order 28, is required unanimous consent to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity:

THAT the House urges the Yukon government to halt plans to implement rent control on May 15, 2021, as outlined in the Liberal Party's confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democratic Party, in order to:

(1) develop solutions to mitigate the harm that this announcement has caused to attendants and landlords; and

(2) properly consult with affected Yukon landlords and tenants on the details of any rent control proposal prior to implementation.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has not been granted. This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Rent control

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the written agreement between the Liberals and the NDP has become the defining and foundational document of this government. Since it was signed, we have already begun to see the fallout of these Liberal-NDP policies, especially in the rental housing market.

Tenants have been evicted, rents have gone up, landlords are putting units up for sale. One local real estate agent described it as mass confusion and no leadership.

Yesterday, when media asked the Premier about how this would work, he pointed the finger at the Leader of the NDP and said, "That's a good question for the Leader of the NDP."

When the Leader of the NDP was asked about this policy, she pointed the finger and said that she is looking forward to finding out how it's going to work from the government.

So, Mr. Speaker, can someone tell us who is in charge of this policy and how it is going to work?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We will start with the fact that we were asked for unanimous consent. We really didn't get any notice for this motion to begin with, which is in the Standing Orders — but also misinterpreting the full announcement yesterday, as far as the agreement.

There were specific things in the agreement that, of course, should be asked of the NDP, but specifically, we are the government of the day that is going to be pushing forward the pieces of the CASA, of the agreement.

Just to correct the record, the Leader of the Official Opposition is starting with not necessarily giving the full story as far as how the media asked a question yesterday, but my minister responsible will be able to answer questions today and throughout the week on the CAS agreement but also on this specific aspect of it as well.

I just want to clear the record before we start here on the wrong foot, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, of course the Premier's comments are recorded, so we can certainly review those.

The chaos that has unfolded in the rental housing market since the Liberals and the NDP announced their agreement has impacted many Yukoners. We have heard from landlords who are putting their rental units up for sale. We have heard from tenants who have seen eviction notices or dramatic rent increases. We have even heard of sales falling through because of this policy. Meanwhile, we have heard nothing from the government. They had a chance to explain this policy in the throne speech yesterday but chose to ignore the issue altogether. Instead, all we have seen is the Premier and the Leader of the NDP pointing fingers at each other.

So, can the Premier tell us what policy, regulations, or legislation will be changed in order to bring this policy into effect by May 15 — a date, I would note, that is only three days away?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is an honour to rise again in this House for the first time following the last general election.

Mr. Speaker, during that election, the number one question I heard at the door — and I'm sure many of us did — was: "How are you going to address affordable housing in the territory? How are you going to cool the housing market?"

Well, when you have a nation-leading economy, Mr. Speaker, and when you have a phenomenally low unemployment rate, as we do in the Yukon, people are moving here and looking to buy and rent homes.

It is hard to keep up with supply in such a market. We are working hard to meet and exceed the demand to take the edge off the housing market. Community Services developed a record number of lots in our last mandate. We are committed to developing twice as many lots in this mandate to deal with the supply issue. Our allies in this government, the Yukon New Democratic caucus, heard from constituents as well. The New Democrats support and have proposed a rental cap.

The results of the election are clear. The majority of Yukoners have asked our government to work closely with the opposition. Unlike the Yukon Party, the Yukon New Democratic caucus reached out in a spirit of cooperation to establish a government for all Yukoners. We are working with our partners to implement the solutions they have proposed to address affordable housing in the Yukon.

Mr. Dixon: These policies will certainly have an impact on the supply of rental units, as we have seen a number go up for sale. Just a few months ago — in December 2020 — the Leader of the NDP brought forward a motion about rent control. In denouncing that motion, the former Deputy Premier talked about how irresponsible it would be to implement rent control without first consulting those affected. The former Deputy Premier said — and I quote: "Other than the anecdotal information, I think that it is important to reach out to the others on this particular topic and to do that work before it is brought forward."

So, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier take the advice of his former Deputy Premier and actually do the work to consult those affected? Will the government pause the implementation of this ill-conceived policy and launch a proper consultation before moving ahead?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite is asking me about consultation and — ignoring for the moment that we just had an election — I will say that I am reluctant to accept advice on consultation from the Leader of the Official Opposition. We all know his abject failure to consult on the Peel watershed that put us before the Supreme Court. We also know that his abject failure to consult cost us years of time and hundreds of thousands of dollars in court fees, and it broke trust with our First Nation partners throughout the territory.

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I am not going to take advice on consultation from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Question re: Individualized education plans

Mr. Kent: In the agreement signed between the NDP and the Liberals, it states that the recent cancellation of individualized education plans, or IEPs, will be reversed, and of course the Yukon Party supports this action.

While debating this issue on March 10 in the Legislature, the MLA for Whitehorse West stated — and I'll quote: "There have been no changes to IEPs within the Education department." He then went on to say — and I'll quote again: "I have spoken to Autism Yukon, I have spoken to my constituents, and I have delivered the same message — nothing is changing."

So, on the one hand, the Liberals have publicly stated that there were no changes to IEPs. Then on the other hand, they have signed an agreement that says they will reverse the changes they made to the IEPs.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Education clarify this for us? Did the Liberals share wrong information with the House when they claimed there were no changes to IEPs?

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is my honour to rise today in the Legislative Assembly as my first time as the Minister of Education to talk to such an important question from the Official Opposition. Thank you very much for the question.

Supporting students with diverse abilities and special education needs so that they can be successful is our top priority. The Department of Education is working hard with our families. The Department of Education is working very hard to fulfill the recent commitments that we have made under our confidence and supply agreement to ensure that any student who may have been transferred from an independent educational plan in the recent past will be able to be reinstated. We're working directly with those parents and students to ensure that the path is the right path for them. It is through a comprehensive review of inclusive and special education that policies or processes in respect to IEPs may be further examined.

We will always uphold our commitment to ensuring that any further changes in IEPs or other independent plans —

Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kent: During the election, all three parties were asked questions about the Liberal decision to cancel IEPs by the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon. Answers were posted on their Facebook page on March 24. One of the questions was — and I'll quote: "Will you instruct the Department of Education to reverse the ill-conceived directive to remove children who are expected to graduate off of IEPs?"

Part of the Liberal response to this was to blame principals. Their exact quote was: "Some administrators may have changed education plans without the support of students and parents. This must be rectified and addressed immediately." This is a serious allegation to make, so I'm wondering when and how the Liberals became aware of this situation.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'll just continue on, in terms of my previous answer of upholding our commitment to ensuring that any changes to IEPs and other plans be made only after meaningful consultation, of course, also with Yukon First Nations and all of our partners in education.

There is a lot of information on yukon.ca, as well, on individual learning plans and other types of special plans for students. I want to say again that our education system needs to support all students to thrive and unlock their full learning potential. It is vital that we always meet the needs of individual

students in a way that reflects the diversity of learning needs in our schools. We will always continue to improve on how we provide education to support all of our students.

In the past, there have been many plans and reports on these issues, but little was done to actually understand how to meet the needs of Yukon students. We continue to offer a variety of student supports and are also working to identify a more comprehensive and responsive program.

Mr. Kent: Just for the minister, I'll repeat that quote and their answer to LDAY during the election campaign. It said — and I quote: "Some administrators may have changed education plans without the support of students and parents. This must be rectified and addressed immediately."

Hopefully the minister gets a chance during this final response to answer when and how the Liberals became aware of that situation, because it is a very serious allegation to make.

When the minister is able to answer that, can she also tell us how many students were affected by the changes to IEPs that the Liberals claim were made by principals, and if all affected families have been informed that this situation will be reversed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we continue to offer a variety of student supports and are also working to identify a more comprehensive and responsive program to address student needs. We are working in partnership with all of our partners, including Yukon First Nations and other partners throughout our education system, for all students.

We are listening to our students and our school communities to review and use individualized education plans. We will ensure that every student has the support that they need. We are committed to the review of inclusive and special education. We're looking forward to that and the findings from that review. The review will help us also to understand how to best serve Yukon students and to ensure that we are meeting their needs, Mr. Speaker.

Again, supporting students with diverse abilities or special education needs so they can be successful in schools is absolutely our top priority.

Question re: COVID-19 vaccine

Ms. White: Just five months ago, the Moderna vaccine for COVID-19 became available for Yukoners. As a territory, we looked out for each other and Yukoners came out in droves to get vaccinated. Many experts agree that reaching 80 percent vaccination would go a long way to protecting our communities. Over the last few weeks, the rate of vaccination has slowed down considerably. Although we have seen some great solutions from local businesses and community members to encourage people to get their shots, only 66 percent of Yukoners have received both doses of the vaccine. What is this government's plan to make sure that we reach a critical mass of 80-percent vaccination across the territory?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As far as what herd immunity comes to, that will be left up to the chief medical officer of health to determine, for this particular disease, what percentages of vaccinated population — with consultations and conversations with the medical community, not only locally but also nationally and internationally.

But I will respectfully correct the record for the member opposite. Since our announcement of Canadians with verified vaccines being able to not self-isolate, we have actually seen a big increase in the number of people who are getting vaccinated. I think the number that we heard, for the first day after that announcement, was 150 extra people showing up as walk-ins into the clinic. So, we are noticing a change in the vaccination rates already. Dr. Hanley and his team have always had various concerns about how we make sure that we get rid of misleading information, make sure that Yukoners have the most up-to-date information on yukon.ca — and it has always — working through Health and Social Services and also our team in the Executive Council Office and through Community Services as well — to make sure that we had a strategy to have the best supports possible, have vaccines ready and available, and also the information ready as well.

We will continue to do that, but I will say that, in the last week, we have seen an increase in those spike rates.

Ms. White: Just to be clear, that 66 percent of Yukoners having been fully vaccinated was sent out today as part of a press release.

Earlier today, our chief medical officer of health said that he wants everyone who lives, stays, or works in the Yukon to access the vaccine. Many businesses and key industries like mining and tourism rely on seasonal workers, many of whom come from out of the territory. This summer these workers will be in communities across the territory for extended periods of time, interacting with and serving the public in many capacities.

What is the government's plan to protect our communities from COVID-19 and ensure that seasonal workers will have access to the vaccine during their time in the territory, no matter what community they are based in?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Both in my previous role working with Community Services and working with the vaccines, and now with my role with Energy, Mines and Resources as we work with seasonal workers who arrive here in the territory, we actually have a program that — if the workers are here in the territory, we are working to get them vaccinated. That has actually been ongoing for some time now. I can work to get numbers for members opposite, but one of the differences in the statistics that are out there — if you watch really closely, you will see that the statistics that are given daily are for all the doses that are given here in the Yukon, and the statistics that are given weekly are for those eligible Yukoners. So, the difference is that those people who are here as workers in the territory — not people who have travelled here pretending to be workers in the territory, but those who are really legitimately here — we are doing that work because we think it will keep Yukoners and the territory safer.

Ms. White: So, we are glad to hear that Yukon will administer the recently approved Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to all Yukon youth ages 12 and up, including those in communities. For this rollout, the minister spoke about providing one opportunity for youth in the communities to get their shot and medical travel for those who cannot get vaccinated at the temporary vaccine clinics.

Will the travelling Pfizer vaccine clinic for youth visit every community in the Yukon and, if not, which communities are going to be visited?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is the case that a few hours ago, I spoke to the Yukon public and to the Yukon media, alongside Dr. Hanley, regarding the fact that we have obtained Pfizer vaccines to allow all Yukon youth ages 12 to 18 to be vaccinated within the next coming weeks — approximately four weeks, we expect. The plan for how that rollout will proceed is currently underway. We have noted that it may not be possible to visit every community. In the event where that's the case, certainly the goal will be to attend every community, but in some communities — at least in the initial information that I have — they might be visiting two communities in one day, for instance, depending on the geography. Once we have the details of those communities and the dates for those, we will of course share them with the community leaders and with the individuals there so that families and children can be ready to obtain the vaccine. We're looking forward to this important step in the battle against COVID-19.

Question re: Living wage and minimum wage

Ms. McLeod: Normally, the independent Yukon Employment Standards Board conducts the minimum wage review process in a public manner and makes recommendations based on public input and evidence.

Instead of this evidence-based process that provides transparency and certainty, the Liberals and the NDP have created a backroom political process. The Liberal-NDP agreement has mandated a new minimum wage to come into force this year. Yukoners need the Minister of Community Services to clarify the process for minimum wage reviews going forward.

Will the Employment Standards Board be used to conduct public reviews for minimum wage in the future or will businesses have to wait for the results of the next Liberal-NDP backroom negotiation?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am really happy to address this question on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon. As the member opposite has indicated, we have a board that oversees the setting of the minimum wage in the territory. The Government of Yukon has an opportunity to present information to the board as a stakeholder prior to the board making its decision on behalf of Yukoners.

The Yukon Liberal caucus and the Yukon NDP caucus recognize that employees earning minimum wage may face challenges in making ends meet. Through the 2021 confidence and supply agreement, we agreed that this increase to minimum wage will provide additional support to these valuable workers and we will be making a presentation to the board on the government's position on why the minimum wage should be increased to \$15.20 an hour by August 1, 2021.

Ms. McLeod: The previous Minister of Community Services told this House that we need evidence-based reviews of minimum wage increases. He said that he did reviews of minimum wage and felt we measured up quite well compared to the rest of the country.

In January 2020, the Economic Research branch of Yukon's Department of Finance released an economic evaluation of the proposed changes to the minimum wage, which I tabled earlier today. The report concludes that increasing the minimum wage to over \$15 too quickly puts Yukon's labour market in what it calls the "danger area" for job losses. They go on to say that this would negate any higher earning benefits.

Can the minister explain why the government has chosen to ignore the evidence presented by their own officials to put jobs at risk?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm happy to address this question this afternoon. This changes all the time, Mr. Speaker. This isn't a static situation. The situation in the community, in the territory, and in the provinces across the country changes all the time.

As I said, as committed to, Yukon's new minimum wage rate that we're pursuing aligns closely with Alberta's and British Columbia's rates. Since October 1, 2018, Alberta's minimum wage has been \$15. As of June 1, 2021, British Columbia's rate will be \$15.20. Nunavut has the highest rate of \$16, while Saskatchewan is the lowest with \$11.45. Currently, Yukon's minimum wage is the fifth highest in Canada, at \$13.85 per hour. In 2019 and 2020, Yukon's minimum wage increased above and beyond the annual consumer price index increases.

The increase outlined in the confidence agreement further aligns with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition's recent call to implement the 2018 Employment Standards Board's recommendation to see minimum wage over \$15 per hour by 2021. That's the recommendation we're going to be making to the board to meet the commitment that we have made to our allies, the New Democratic caucus.

Ms. McLeod: The previous minister indicated that when the Yukon's minimum wage falls into the lower half nationally, it triggers a review by the Employment Standards Board. This agreement by the Liberals and NDP circumvented this evidence-based process and cuts Yukoners out of the minimum wage review, but we also know that the Premier has declared that the sky is the limit for what he's hoping to see from this coalition agreement with the NDP.

We know that the NDP leader has committed to closing the gap between minimum wage and the living wage, which she said was over \$19 an hour in 2019. We can only expect that any negotiated extension of their agreement will include the NDP's desire to make the minimum wage equal to the living wage. Can the Minister of Community Services explain to Yukoners why the Liberals and the NDP no longer care about receiving public input on minimum wage reviews?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I must disagree with the premise of the question posed by the member opposite; that is not the case.

I will say, though, that the Northwest Territories' minimum wage is actually going to be more than \$15 an hour as of September 1 this year. So, we are seeing this threshold being crossed by virtually every single one of our neighbours to actually meet the needs of citizens in the territory who are struggling to make ends meet. This government has addressed

many, many needs in this territory — of those most in need are parents. We have a new universal childcare policy that is also going to help lift Yukoners out of poverty. It is going to actually put more Yukoners to work and enable them to come back into the labour force. That in itself is going to allow us to have people from the Yukon start to work in the territory, lessening our need to import workers from down south, which should help with the housing issue. We are dealing with the housing stock as well. We are doing an awful lot on this side of the House with our colleagues in the opposition benches to make sure that Yukoners are better looked after and are more affluent than they were before.

Question re: Road maintenance

Mr. Cathers: Spring is upon us and we are hearing from people across the Yukon about roads that are in poor condition. I have questions for the Minister of Highways and Public Works today about road issues that my colleagues and I have heard from our constituents. The first road I would like to ask about is Takhini River Road, which is seriously in need of a major upgrade to the roadbed, road surface, and ditches.

As the minister knows, I have raised this issue with his predecessor many times. This spring, large sections of the road were again under water. The road condition deteriorates every spring after it rains and after heavy traffic. At times, the road condition is bad enough that fire trucks or ambulances may not be able to respond if there was an emergency at a home on this road. Will the minister agree to take action and make Takhini River Road a priority now?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to rise for the first time in the 35th Legislature to respond to the member opposite's question. The Yukon government certainly takes the safety of those using the territory's highways very seriously and the Member for Lake Laberge is quite correct that I have heard him with his able advocacy with respect to Takhini River Road over the course of the last — or at least persistent advocacy with respect to Takhini River Road — over the course of the last four and a half years.

I am in the process of being briefed with respect to many different files at Highways and Public Works and I note that I have received a letter from the member opposite from May 6, 2021, wherein he does indicate the concerns that have been outlined by the member opposite in the House today.

I will undertake to receive a full briefing and I will get back to the member opposite with respect to the specific concerns that he raised. I have certainly acknowledged that the member opposite has indicated that Takhini River Road represents an ongoing challenge for the service in that area. As I said, I will return to the member opposite on that topic.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the minister's commitment to consider my request and to get back to me regarding Takhini River Road.

The next road condition issue that I wanted to raise with the minister is one that occurred yesterday when there was a washout on the highway between Faro and Ross River, which means that this road is now impassable. This is the main road

for groceries and other goods to the community and, like Takhini River Road, it is also required for EMS service as well.

Can the minister please tell me: When will this washout on the highway be fixed and what work is being taken to prevent and mitigate further flooding along this and other highways so that communities do not get cut off from their main roads?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I, in fact, did receive a briefing and some pictures of the site that the member opposite is referencing on the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River, and it's quite a notable gap in the highway now.

I had an opportunity to speak to my staff and my deputy minister at Highways and Public Works and am advised that the site was actioned almost immediately. The Department of Highways and Public Works is optimistic that the road section will be passable, they say, potentially by the end of the day today — but in any event, by tomorrow. I have asked that the notice be posted widely on 511 and on social media, and you will see that the gap is substantial.

I certainly thank the hard-working crew of Highways and Public Works who are tasked with that job around that portion of the Robert Campbell Highway for doing the excellent work that they always do. They have moved quickly, and we are optimistic that this issue will be addressed either later today or by tomorrow.

Mr. Cathers: I do thank the minister for answering that question. That is something that we are not used to from his predecessor when we asked questions in this Assembly. I know that the minister right now is dealing with a large stack of issues that his predecessor did not address in the Highways and Public Works portfolio.

Another one on this list is that, last summer, there was a lot of concern raised by Dawsonites and other Yukoners travelling to and from Dawson about the condition of the north Klondike Highway near Gravel Lake. There has been a large construction project there that has been ongoing for over a year now and has caused damage to vehicles and at times made the road virtually impassable.

Can the minister update us on when this work will be completed?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the Member for Lake Laberge. I must concede that I have not been briefed on that specific file, but I will certainly return to the member opposite in due course. I will receive that information in the next day or so. What I can say, of course — as we heard in the 34th Legislature — is that there is a substantial and ongoing project on the north Klondike Highway — I believe pursuant to the Gateway project — but, in any event, that work will continue during the summer of 2020. The area of concern that the member opposite — the Member for Lake Laberge — has referenced may be part of that construction portion. As stated, I have not been briefed yet on that specific concern that the member has raised, but I will endeavour to return to the member as soon as is practicable.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Motion No. 20 — Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT the following address be presented to the Commissioner of Yukon:

MAY IT PLEASE THE COMMISSIONER: We, the Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, beg leave to offer our humble thanks for the gracious speech which you have addressed to the House.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education:

THAT the following address be presented to the Commissioner of Yukon:

MAY IT PLEASE THE COMMISSIONER: We, the Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, beg leave to offer our humble thanks for the gracious speech which you have addressed to the House.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I acknowledge first that we are gathered today on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. We extend our gratitude to the ancestors of the indigenous people of this land for taking care of this magnificent beauty that we call home. I thank them for welcoming us to live and work here.

Mr. Speaker, I come from the Tahltan Nation on my mother Thelma Norby's side, and I am Norwegian on my father Bern Norby's side. My parents settled here years ago — decades ago, in fact. I come from a matrilineal society, so I follow my mother, which makes me a member of the Wolf clan. My people are matrilineal and come from Telegraph Creek, BC, but I am a born-and-raised Yukoner and I feel that I am part of this land. I believe, of course, that we are the sum of our experiences. I am a proud mother of two amazing sons, Jedrek and Colin. Jedrek is now in his fourth year of university in Victoria, and Colin is a successful Yukon tradesperson building his independent life as an entrepreneur. I believe that our greatest responsibility in life is to raise our children to the best of our ability, and I consider my sons my greatest achievement. They are the reason I strive to do better and to make our community healthier, safer, and more vibrant. I am married to my wonderful husband, Rick McLean. He has held me up and supported me in so many ways over the last year and a half, and I am truly grateful to have him in my life. He has supported me a great deal, especially over the last couple of months.

Thank you so much to Mountainview for putting your faith in me over the last four and a half years and for continuing to put your faith in me for a second term.

It truly is a tremendous honour and one that I do not take lightly. I also want to thank the incredible team of people who supported me through the 2021 election. They believed in me, and I'm grateful to each and every one of them. I'm truly proud

of the campaign that we ran and how we kept it positive and focused on our leadership abilities.

I am going to be repeating some things that I said in my very first reply to the throne speech when last elected. It is always difficult to speak on your own behalf about your strengths and accomplishments. Our culture teaches us to be humble. I think this is especially true for women. There is a group of dynamic young people coming up behind my generation, and I want to acknowledge them. I continue to be determined to model visionary leadership and to work from strengths, a leadership approach that was modelled to me by many folks in my life. My most important role model, though, was my mother, Thelma Norby. She taught me the value of hard work and her never-ending ability to have compassion for people. She taught me that being a leader was about being of service to others and that it was not about power or ego. In fact, it was the exact opposite. She set a fine example for me and her other children.

I'm standing here today because of all the teachers, elders, and leaders in our community of Yukon who have taught me, and they are my role models. One of my most dear role models was my uncle, the late John Edzerza. He was one of my mentors, and I know that he is still with us in some ways. He would be standing right here beside me, encouraging me, if he was still here with us, to do the very best that I can do for Yukon. Today, when I was preparing to speak in this response, I went back and read his Speech from the Throne when he became Minister of Education. It truly grounded me in why I am here.

The most valuable teaching received from these individuals was the importance of building relationships and partnerships as a cornerstone for advancing any initiative. This is my strength, and I have strived to bring my personal and work experience into the Government of Yukon each and every day.

There are so many accomplishments that I'm proud of over the last four and a half years, and as I expressed to Mountainview, these are their accomplishments too, because they are the ones who voted for me to be in this Legislative Assembly to represent them.

The first that I want to talk about is the renewal of the relationship with our indigenous people — our First Nation people of Yukon. Our very first bill was Bill No. 1 to establish Aboriginal Day on June 21. I'm very proud of that accomplishment.

We also held 16 Yukon Forums. We had a number of completions of heritage plans — Lansing Post, Conrad, and the Fort Selkirk renewal. Those two are almost completed. We have had completion, of course, of the MMIWG2S+ strategy — and we brought culture into this Legislative Assembly. I'm so proud of the day that we were able to pay tribute to the late Doris McLean in a cultural way. We also worked hard to restore the beautiful totem pole outside, and we did it in a ceremonial way that embraced our partners. It took us some time, but we did it in a different way that I'm very proud of.

We protected the Peel River Watershed.

In terms of tourism, I'm proud to have the first new tourism strategy in 18 years, the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy — Our Sustainable Tourism. Our Path. Our Future.*

We also established a creative and cultural industry strategy — the first in our history in Yukon. We developed, based on our tourism development strategy, a relief and recovery strategy that helped us through COVID-19. We established a heritage MOU with all self-governing First Nations through the Yukon Forum.

In terms of the Women's Directorate, I'm very proud of the work that we did to establish a sexualized assault response team and to establish and work with the LGBTQ2S+ community to develop an LGBTQ2S+ action plan.

In terms of legislative milestones that we worked on collaboratively, as a one-government approach, I'm very proud of the *Vital Statistics Act* changes that we made, the changes to the *Human Rights Act, Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, the *Equality of Spouses Statute Law Amendment Act (2018)*, *Public Service Labour Relations Act*, and the *Married Women's Property Act* that was repealed, and the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identify Protection Act*. We hosted, as well, a culturally grounded federal-provincial-territorial ministers meeting in Yukon for women and gender equality. It was the first time that — and my colleagues attested to that — the FPT meeting was held in that way.

I'm very proud of the legislation on PTSD and prevention of psychological injury that I helped lead in this Legislative Assembly during the 34th Legislative Assembly and the work that we did on the modernization of the *Yukon Workers' Compensation Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

In terms of COVID-19, our tourism relief and recovery strategy helped us to be grounded and work with our partners and work in a one-Yukon approach to our response to the crisis that we faced in tourism as a result of COVID-19, as well as the cultural supports that we increased for artists so that they can help us tell the story, going forward, and our overall careful management. That is why we are here today, Mr. Speaker. We are here in the state that we're in because of careful management of COVID-19. We did not take for granted for one day that we had Yukoners' lives in our hands and that every decision we made would have an impact on seven generations to come.

In terms of my riding of Mountainview, I'm very proud that I was able to help champion the Alaska Highway redesign and rebuild and advanced the timeline, which is now nearing completion. I'm very proud of that work. We also championed the Kwanlin Dün First Nation community hub project, which is also nearing completion, and worked with my colleagues to ensure that Kwanlin Dün First Nation had a new playground.

I had many meetings and collaborated with the local associations in my riding and built relationships, went on trail walks with the association members to understand the concerns of the area — particularly in the Tank Farm area — championed the formation of a Mountainview safety and wellness committee and am really looking forward to digging into ensuring that this work continues, and opened numerous case

files with my constituents, and we continue to work on them diligently now.

Opening lines of communication, particularly during COVID-19, was a high priority. Prior to COVID-19, we hosted community events such as barbecues, dinners, and meetings. At the beginning of COVID-19, I started the livestream events to ensure that I was staying in touch with my constituents, and I also made sure that we communicated in other ways. I am just wanting to thank Mountainview again for putting their trust and faith in me as their voice in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

The Speech from the Throne is ambitious and inspiring. It is a reflection of what I heard at the doors, as well, during the campaign. Folks in Mountainview were most concerned about inclusion, housing, infrastructure, and recovery in a holistic way from COVID-19. I am looking forward to working, of course, with my colleagues in the NDP caucus. I think that this is a real opportunity for positive change for Yukoners. I am excited for the opportunity to do this work alongside my colleagues. Again, this is the way that I wish to do my work — in a collaborative way — and so I think that this is a real opportunity for all of us.

Before I get into my new portfolios, I would also like to express that moving on from Tourism and Culture and the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board is a bittersweet moment for me in that I am sad to leave these portfolios. I have gained a tremendous amount of knowledge, respect, and care for the people who do this work each and every day. I have built a lot of passion around these files and so it is hard to let them go, but I know that, in taking on the new role in Education, I am stepping into some big shoes. The previous Minister of Education did a fantastic job and really brought forward a modernization of our education system, and I am very pleased, of course, to continue on. I know that she will be here to ensure that I am supported in this role, as I will be doing with my colleagues. I am handing Tourism and Culture over to the Minister of Economic Development. I am here, of course, always to support Yukoners, and I look forward to seeing where my colleagues will take these portfolios next, including the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I am sad, of course, that I am not going to lead the debate on the new legislation; however, I know that my colleague will do a fantastic job, and I am excited to see those changes for Yukoners.

It is going to be a challenge to take on a new portfolio but one that I am very excited about, which is why I went back today and really read over some of what my uncle said when he took on this role, because it has really helped ground me. He said a lot of the same things that I feel in my heart, and I know that this is very much upstream from the work that I've done in my previous career in justice, health and social services, and child welfare, which is very much downstream. So, I look forward to the challenges.

In terms of the Women's Directorate, I'm so pleased to have the opportunity to continue on as the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate. I'm very proud of the work we have achieved over the last four and a half years. There were

some incredibly hard emotional days, but we made some huge strides forward.

When I'm thinking of this — when the Yukon hosted the very first meeting for the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, it was a huge honour but a very painful process to go through as well. I hold my hands up to all those families who had the courage to testify first in that inquiry.

Going forward, my priorities remain the same. I want to ensure that all Yukoners have a voice, resources, and representation. Yukon will continue to be a leader when it comes to our missing and murdered indigenous women and girls response. Again, last December, the Yukon became the first jurisdiction in Canada to release its response to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and we remain the first jurisdiction to have a comprehensive response.

The Yukon strategy, *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy*, outlines 31 items under four main paths to guide our action in response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Strengthening connections and support, community safety and justice, economic independence and education, and community action and accountability are the four paths.

Work is now underway to finalize the implementation plan for this important project, which will detail concrete actions to be taken by partners and stakeholders. Yukon will also continue to lead when it comes to our actions to make Yukon the most inclusive place to live in Canada. We are now finalizing our action plan to ensure that programs and services are LGBTQ2S+ inclusive and responsive, which we are committed to releasing publicly this year.

The action plan is based on engagement with Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ community and will focus on improved inclusivity, both as an employer and as a service provider. While work continues to finalize the action plan, work is already underway, including the most comprehensive gender-affirming care policy in North America, the ban on conversion therapy for minors, as I already mentioned, the delivery of World Professional Association for Transgender Health training for health professionals, improved timely access to supported mental health and wellness services for LGBTQ2S+ Yukon citizens, offering LGBTQ2S+ awareness and inclusion training to all Yukon government employees, and the recent opening of a new gender-neutral washroom in the Whitehorse visitor information centre.

The Yukon pride centre is one of the actions identified in the five-year action plan to provide a safe, welcoming, and supportive gathering place for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. We are working closely with Queer Yukon to make this much-needed centre a reality.

In terms of education, it's such a huge honour to take on this incredibly important role. Our kids are the foundation of everything we do. As I started out by saying, everything that I do has been about my children and all of the children in the

Yukon. It's our duty to make sure that we are setting them up for success.

My vision is that our education system can meet every single child where they are and help them grow and be successful in whatever way they define success. As a mom, I have seen first-hand the struggles many kids face here in Yukon. I have also seen so many kids face incredible challenges and yet emerge as huge success stories. I think that's attributable to a lot of different things and a lot of work that we need to do as a whole in Yukon.

My first external meeting as Minister of Education this week was with the Council of Yukon First Nations leadership yesterday. This was important and symbolic for me, as it's an indication of how I want to begin this relationship. I'm very lucky to be inheriting a file from such a strong minister who made huge strides over the last four and a half years in modernizing the system. I feel like I've inherited a really great department with a very strong team of people.

There will be some really challenging and difficult conversations about how we best serve the needs of our kids over the next couple of years. This is especially true as we begin to work on the review of inclusive and special education, as I talked about today in Question Period. There are so many great opportunities.

Yukon recently became only the second jurisdiction in Canada to implement the universal early learning childcare program, which will live now in the Department of Education, and I am very pleased to take that on. This is something I heard again and again at the doors over the last election. This program will change lives. It will get families — and mothers, in particular — back on their feet. It will empower them. I am so proud of this program. I am so proud to be championing this during this mandate.

I will wrap up my comments now. Once again, I want to thank my constituents for their support for me as their MLA for Mountainview. I am so excited for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of us in this mandate. I think we have a real opportunity here to make lasting change for Yukoners. I thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to be the first to respond to such an inspiring and I know very ambitious Speech from the Throne.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise here today in response to the throne speech. First of all, I would like to thank my constituents in Lake Laberge for re-electing me again as their MLA. I am pleased and honoured to have the opportunity to continue to work with them and for them in that capacity. I am especially thankful for the increase in votes and support since the 2016 election. I would like to, as well, give a very big thank you to everyone who helped with my re-election campaign, especially people who helped me for many days throughout it, and I look forward to continuing to work with all my constituents, as well as other Yukoners, to try to represent their needs well both in this Legislative Assembly and outside it.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to serve as the Official Opposition critic for Finance, Health and Social Services, Agriculture, and Justice, as well as Deputy House Leader. I thank the Leader of the Yukon Party for that opportunity. I would, as well, like to thank all of our caucus and all of our staff for the work that they do day in and day out. I would like to note that, during the 2021 election, we were grateful to have the support across the territory, which elected eight of us as Yukon Party MLAs, and we are also pleased to have won the popular vote in this spring's election.

We recognize that we're continuing in the role of Official Opposition. We do have an important duty to the people who voted for us and indeed to all Yukoners to hold the government to account to bring forward our ideas, our solutions, and what we hear from our constituents and other Yukoners. I look forward to doing my very best to try to fulfill that role and to provide Yukoners with the very best services and advocacy that I can provide here in this Legislative Assembly.

I will be saving most of my remarks for comments in reply to the government's budget. With that, I will wrap up my comments and turn it over to another member.

Ms. Tredger: It's a strange experience to stand here in the Chamber down here on the floor instead of up in the gallery.

The first time I ever came here, I was a high school student. My social studies teacher brought us here to watch Question Period. I remember thinking how quiet it was, how silent it feels in here. It must be all the carpets or maybe it's that beautiful tapestry that eats up the sound, but what feels strange about that silence is that my job — our job — is actually hearing the many, many voices of Yukoners — some that are loud and assertive, some that are just whispers; sometimes they're speaking all together and sometimes they're competing.

I listened to the throne speech and I thought about all those voices and of all the stories I've heard and will hear — the stories that all of us hear every day. I reflected on my own personal stories that led me to be speaking to you here today. I thought about the MLAs whom I've had the great privilege to learn from and the people who worked so hard to elect me. I thought about Whitehorse Centre and the incredible people who make it their home and the big job that lies ahead of me to hear my constituents, seek them out, and to act on their behalf. I thought about all this as I considered the throne speech.

The first story I want to share, of course, is how I came to be living on this land — this land that's the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council — and of how I have the privilege of enjoying land across the Yukon that belongs to each of the Yukon's First Nations.

My relationship to this land is that of a settler. My family came to Canada from Europe several generations ago and we came uninvited. I love the Yukon so dearly, and I also know that my relationship with it is complicated.

I'm standing here today as a member of a colonial government that has a dark history. I'm saying all of this because I believe it's important to acknowledge reality. I know that we are responsible for a heartbreaking amount of harm and

that reconciliation is our responsibility — that reconciliation needs to be part of everything we do.

Since this is my first speech in the House, I want to share with you a little bit about who I am and how it shapes my perspective. My parents brought me to the Yukon when I was just one year old. Our family built a life in Pelly Crossing and my childhood in central Yukon shaped a big part of who I am today. We eventually moved a few kilometres downriver from the Pelly Farm by the mouth of the Pelly River, where we lived in a cabin without electricity or running water. That didn't stop us from much. My mom was so determined that we would have the opportunity for music lessons that she wired an electric keyboard to a car battery and started teaching my sister and me piano — a gift that I am still grateful for as a musician today. I wouldn't trade my upbringing for anything and, if you ever find that I am out of cell range, it is a pretty good bet that you can find me up there on the Pelly River.

Like so many young people, I left the Yukon to go to school and to seek opportunities. I moved a lot, studying and working, but I always say that the best move I ever made was back home to the Yukon.

There is a story I would like to share from that time when I learned about the power of sharing stories. It was the last year of my undergrad and my friends and I realized that we had run out of time to take a gender studies course during our course of studies and so we decided that we had better do it ourselves. So we started what we called a "feminist book club" — which wasn't a very accurate description because we didn't read much. Mostly, we got together every Monday night. We cooked dinner, drank wine, and told story after story about our experiences as women. It was in that sharing of the stories that we realized that our individual experiences were part of a broader pattern. Just to name one — we found out that all of us got talked over in meetings by men. We started to realize that maybe it wasn't that our ideas weren't good or that we were too quiet; the problem was that we live in a deeply sexist society. Those conversations were a catalyst for me. I couldn't stop thinking about those patterns, those invisible forces of oppression that are constantly shaping our lives. Those conversations about gender led to conversations about race and then to conversations about disability, sexuality, and more. Once you see the way these forces act in our society, they can't be unseen.

At the same time as I was learning and thinking about all that, I also started working as a speech therapist with young kids. It was a job that I loved and also a job that drove me to be more political. I found it so rewarding to work with kids as they struggled with speech and language, but all too often I encountered other barriers that these children had. I would phone a family and ask them if they wanted to schedule some speech therapy and on the other end of the phone was a stressed parent saying yes, of course they would like to do speech therapy, but first they needed to figure out where they were going to live this week or how they were going to get food on the table.

There are hundreds of kids whose families struggle with the basics here in the Yukon, for whom every week and every

day is a struggle to get by. As a speech therapist, there wasn't much I could do to help them with those challenges.

Why is it so hard to find housing? Why doesn't a full-time job pay enough to feed people? Why do so many of these challenges disproportionately hit racialized people? We're a wealthy territory; I can see the wealth all around us. We're also a caring territory. The solutions exist. All that's missing is will from the politicians. So I put my name forward for public office.

There have been a thousand new things to navigate in becoming an MLA and also a few to leave behind. A big change for me was stepping down as the president of the Queer Yukon Society. The queer community of the Yukon has meant the world to me. I didn't always believe it would be possible for me to live here. There was a time when I thought I would have to leave the Yukon to be an out queer person. I wasn't sure that there was a place here for me. Of course, there were already queer people here at that time, but as a teenager, I didn't know them. I didn't know that they existed.

So, when I came back to the Yukon as an adult, I was utterly delighted and relieved to find there's a vibrant, warm community of people — people who are deeply committed to making the Yukon safer for everyone, youth who know what they need, and they aren't afraid to come here and tell us what it is and volunteers putting in hundreds of hours behind the scenes. They put those hours in to create new and better programs so that queer and trans folks have access to the services they need.

By far the best thing that has happened to me since I was elected was yesterday. The students from the Rainbow Room came to visit, and their teacher introduced me as the first queer woman elected to the Yukon Legislature, and the students broke out cheering. It reminded me that's a big deal — not so much for me as an individual, but for my community. It matters that we aren't reliant on our allies to carry our messages forward and make decisions on our behalf. It matters that we get to speak and make decisions for ourselves.

So this feels like a victory. It's also only the beginning. Without wanting to assume too much about my colleagues, it's a strange thing to be the only queer voice speaking here today. I'm only one member of a wonderfully diverse and varied community — and a very privileged member, at that. I know that there are so many more members of my community who can't be here yet because of the hundreds of real and significant barriers that are standing in their way — barriers of homophobia and transphobia, discrimination that ranges from personal attacks to subtle aggression to systemic disadvantages. I commit to working to dismantle those barriers so that there's a long line of LGBTQIA2S+ legislators who follow me in through these doors.

I am so proud of our community. I am so honoured to be part of it. I have learned a lot from the queer community — lessons that I intend to put to use in my new role. I have learned about listening for the voices who aren't being heard, about looking around the table to see who's missing. I have learned about being brave and about standing up for what is right even when it's not popular. I learned that speaking out about

something that affects you personally takes an incredible amount of energy and effort, so I know that when someone calls me out, it is a gift and it should be appreciated as one. That is not easy — I know that is not easy — but it is a challenge that I commit to: listening with an open mind and an open heart and knowing that the people who share their stories with me are giving me a gift.

I feel so honoured that the people of Whitehorse Centre chose me to bring their stories forward and to make the changes they need. I absolutely didn't get here alone. I want to thank my amazing volunteers, all the people who knocked on doors, all the people who put up signs, all the people working behind the scenes to make it possible for me to stand here today.

In my life, I have been very lucky to have an inside view on the work of being an MLA. As many of you know, my dad, Jim Tredger, sat right around here somewhere as the MLA for Mayo Tatchun. What I remember the most is how many hours he spent driving, the miles he put on his truck as he tried to be in every spot in his riding at the same time. One spring, I was back from university and I got to join him on one of his trips. We went to a graduation in Carmacks, and unfortunately it was at the same time as a meeting up the Dempster that was about the Peel. There were only a few hours of the meeting left when we finished in Carmacks, but dad was determined that we were going to try to make it, so we drove up the highway. Just as we were on the last stretch of the Dempster, cars started passing us. The meeting was over and everyone was driving home. I was pretty disappointed, and I think dad probably was too, but he said it was worth it to try to be there. That taught me a lot about the work of being an MLA. It is showing up to listen, putting in the miles to be there. That night, we camped at Tatchun Creek with many of the people who had been at the meeting. I played Joni Mitchell on the guitar and listened to the talk about what they were fighting for, and I thought, "Yeah, it was worth it."

There is a lot to learn about being a good MLA, and I am lucky to have amazing models to follow. I want to thank the former Member for Whitehorse Centre, Liz Hanson, for her incredible leadership in the riding.

There are so many things to admire about Liz, but what stood out to me the most was how she took her encyclopedic knowledge of policy and systems and she made them work for people — real people. Their lives and stories were at the heart of everything she did. I know she's enjoying retirement, but I also know that she will be keeping at least one eye on what's happening here.

Whitehorse Centre has been represented by some big and mighty voices. I'm so humbled and grateful for the privilege to be following the footsteps of Margaret Commodore, Todd Hardy, and Liz Hanson. I'm determined to rise to the challenge of representing this community.

When I started knocking on doors not so long ago, I had no idea how many stories I would hear. So many people took time out of their day to talk to me. They told me hard stories — stories of being unable to pay rent, stories of being shuffled between departments as they tried to get medical help, stories about falling between the cracks in our systems.

They also told me stories of hope and connection. They told me of the ways that they wanted to help their neighbours. Some of them said to me: “I’m doing okay, but that’s not enough. I want my neighbours to be doing okay too.” These stories of hope and fear all told me the same thing — Yukoners have higher hopes for their government and for all of us.

A few themes emerged over and over again. The housing crisis is very real in Whitehorse Centre — street homelessness, the invisible couch surfers moving from place to place — young and old alike — struggling to find rental housing. The dream of home ownership is way out of reach for so many.

Those who have rentals face the looming threat of 20-, 30-, and 40-percent rent increases. I know that some of my colleagues think that these are rare exceptions and not the rule, but I’m here to tell you that I stood in people’s doorways as they told me in hushed tones about their rents increasing hundreds of dollars in a single shot. They begged me to do something and begged me not to tell their landlords that they were complaining. This is a very real reality for many renters. That’s why I’m so glad we were able to negotiate a rent cap. The Yukon is woefully behind on this. The majority of Canadians live in jurisdictions with rent controls. It’s time to give this basic protection to our renters, and I’m so proud that we’re making it happen.

Another theme that came up a lot is the issue of mental health and of addictions. The pandemic has taken its toll on many Yukoners and compounded issues that existed before. My constituency of Whitehorse Centre struggles with these issues.

When I told people at the doors about our proposal of a seven-days-a-week walk-in mental health clinic, they said, “Yes, that’s what we need. That will make a difference.” I’m so glad that I get to go back to those people and tell them that the Yukon NDP team was able to secure it for them.

The opioid crisis has taken too many Yukoners’ lives. The death tolls are staggering. The time for dithering is over. Harm reduction is a proven method of saving lives, and we need safe supply and we need supervised consumption. Of all the policy changes that were negotiated into the confidence and supply agreement, this is one that will save lives immediately, and it cannot come into effect soon enough.

Finally, the environment — people in Whitehorse Centre, especially youth, care deeply about the planet. They want the government to take real, concrete, measurable action on climate change. I’m so proud that we’re going to be part of a jurisdiction that is among the leaders on this front.

I also know that there’s much to do. I have spent the last few weeks thinking about what kind of MLA I want to be. I don’t want to be someone who just shows up at election time. To the people of Whitehorse Centre, I commit that my door will always be open. My team and I want to hear from you, and I’ll be hosting regular town hall meetings. I also want to hear from those voices that aren’t well-connected, those voices that we don’t always hear, as elected officials. I commit to being the kind of MLA who asks the tough questions and the questions that no one else thinks to ask. I commit to being held accountable when it’s required.

I commit to holding the people of my riding in mind, the people of the Yukon in mind, as we make decisions in this House, because I know that the government makes better decisions when they put people in the centre. I take the idea of public service very literally and I’m ready to get to work.

I believe that everyone in this House is a reflection of all the stories that we’ve lived and we’ve been told. I bring my own experiences and those that have been shared with me by my constituents, and those experiences will inform my work here. I know that there are gaps. My experiences are not universal. That’s why I’m committed to learning from all my colleagues in this place, as well as from Yukoners in my constituency and beyond.

I know that every MLA here gets e-mails and phone calls every day from people who need help. We’re all here to listen to the stories of all Yukoners and bring them forward, then work together to figure out the best way to move forward. I know that there will be fierce debates inside these walls and that those are necessary. It’s my hope that we can find ways to work in collaboration to deliver concrete results that make life better for Yukoners.

Thank you again to all my constituents for sending me here and for putting their faith in me. I promise I will show up for you, every day.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is a pleasure to rise again in this grand and bright Chamber for the first time after the general election. The Yukon has had responsible government for more than four decades, and while it is sad to have lost the wise counsel and camaraderie of a few of our colleagues, it is heartening to see new faces join the ranks of our politicians in this Chamber — Yukoners willing to assume the responsibility of this hallowed position of leadership and public trust and Yukoners willing to respect this position of trust. To all of the newcomers, welcome. I hope that you find the role as fulfilling and challenging as I do.

The last throne speech was delivered on October 3, 2019. It was interesting to review that document. It painted a picture of a vastly different Yukon and a vastly different Canada. Tourism was soaring. People were gathering without thought or conditions. They were gathering in Faro, Watson Lake, Teslin, Haines Junction, and Carmacks. The arts community was vibrant — singing, dancing, and, well, flourishing. Air North was flying, often full, to BC, Alberta, and Ontario and we were preparing to welcome athletes from around the world to the Arctic Winter Games. We were, in fact, encouraging people to gather and volunteer together.

Well, less than two years later, it is critically important that we remember those days. We must ensure that we don’t lose those memories. They are the seeds of the future; they are the seeds of our future. We must remember what it is like to gather, to sing, to dance, to hug, and to grasp hands. We must remember what it is like to laugh and eat together at a large table. We can’t lose sight of those simple joys. We must reclaim them, and we will. In the Yukon, those seeds are on the cusp of turning to green shoots.

We are leading the continent in our fight against the global pandemic and have, through collective creativity, diligence, thoughtfulness, and sacrifice, lived relatively normal lives while much of the world cycled through the great lockdowns. Yukon put people first. We were disciplined, and once that discipline took root, we adapted to the new world and lived our lives. Our vaccine program — created through hard work, sacrifice, innovation, and seemingly endless refinement — leads much of the world. It is the envy of the country. Yukon did that. We did that.

In Haines Junction, the vaccination rate leads the territory, and that too is remarkable. Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, its chief and council, and Haines Junction's other community leaders did that. They put their community before themselves. They led by example, and they're not the only ones in the territory, but they excelled at the job and they deserve congratulations for their tremendous effort.

I mentioned responsible government. We recently lost two Yukon leaders who helped shepherd responsible government into the territory. I knew both of them — one as an acquaintance, and the other as a friend, mentor, and decades-long colleague. I met former Commissioner Art Pearson as a reporter at the *Yukon News*. I interviewed him a few times on local business issues. I remember him as someone who was gracious and thoughtful.

Doug Bell was my publisher and a columnist at the *Yukon News*. He cherished words, thoughts, and ideas. Doug's rambling column ran every week, and in the 21 years I was there, I can't recall a single week that he missed. Doug's column was a collection of quotes, reminiscences, stories, and events. It was routinely cheerful, kind, humorous, and sentimental, which mirrored the man. My chats with Doug and his wife, Pearl, at our annual Christmas parties were always a highlight, and I enjoyed talking politics, technology, and life with him at his place in Riverdale, usually over dinner.

I still have an old laptop of his that I bought probably 20 years ago. It is a hopeless antique today, but at the time, it was an incredible piece of technology. I know that it has a few of my stories on it, and maybe, if I'm lucky, some digital fragments of his. I'll check it someday soon.

Now, I spoke about his writing, his stories, and how I knew him, but he was also incredibly important to the Yukon and its government. As the Yukon's Commissioner, Doug oversaw the territory's transition to responsible government. He literally brought this Chamber into being. Doug died a few weeks ago. I'll miss his bottomless good humour and cheer.

We just came through the cleansing fire of an election. I spoke to literally hundreds of people I know, and I know that I'm not alone in that. What I didn't know was what to expect as I trudged down streets in 50-kilometre-an-hour winds, blizzards, and snow squalls, navigating ice and, at times, thigh-deep snow to talk to the good folks of Whitehorse West. Do you know what I discovered? I discovered that a year in isolation makes people loquacious. Seen another way, it takes a pandemic to make a politician a welcome sight at the door. In any event, I had a great many candid, rollicking conversations. I learned a lot about housing — sure — but also schools, power,

power rates, parks, the pandemic, and a little film about regenerative agriculture on Netflix called *Kiss the Ground*. I also heard about children in care, mental health, midwifery, the need to foster more Yukon labourers, wildfire mitigation, climate change, nursing, workplace health, First Nation relations and reconciliation, violence, drug abuse, and the need to have a safe injection site.

I've said it often, but Whitehorse West is a compact and concentrated little riding with a lot of heart. Its issues are mostly the territory's issues, plain and simple. I consider myself privileged to have earned their support for a second term, and I commend the other candidates who put their names forward.

My dad and mom watched my first swearing in as Highways and Public Works minister and Minister of the Public Service Commission in 2016. They were up in the lobby. I served more than four years in both portfolios — the full term. I haven't missed a single day in this Legislature since being elected. I haven't missed a single vote — a record I shared with my colleague, Paolo Gallina.

Dad, however, didn't make it through my first mandate. He died of pancreatic cancer in September 2018. I think about him often these days. In fact, he crept into my thoughts late last night as I was writing this. Dad was, as fate would have it, a federal civil servant who served in transport. He was part of the team that made seatbelts mandatory, and those brake lights centred in the back windows of our cars — he played a hand in those too.

Over my first term, Highways and Public Works and the Public Service Commission accomplished a few interesting things as well. In Highways and Public Works, we tackled procurement, improving local opportunity and forging relationships across the territory in the process. We improved our roads and made them safer. We built bridges and secured pools of capital that will allow us to improve roads and bridges throughout the territory for the next decade. We researched and started crafting a modern *Motor Vehicles Act* that will improve road safety and prevent injuries and death.

We laid asphalt on our airports, commissioned a fifth airport, equipped them with efficient new gear, hired maintenance staff, and built them warm places to work. We created new lots at our airports and laid a new course for the future of aviation. We set clear rules for all to follow in legislation. We built modern buildings, we fixed up old ones, and Highways and Public Works staff worked hard to assess and better manage them all.

We improved heating systems and are pioneering new ones. We are investing in new low-emission vehicles and even government-owned bicycles, and we are cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the process, saving the planet for our children. We improved online services for Yukoners and the Yukon civil service. We improved the rules to protect people's privacy while expanding the amount of information that we provide to our citizens. We fought a pandemic successfully, and our Motor Vehicles branch stayed open throughout the whole thing — the only one in the country to do so.

As I have said to staff, we led, we tried stuff, we succeeded most of the time, and, sure, we bobbled a few things, but that's

okay because we learned something in the process. We even tried to freeze the Yukon River in Dawson a few times and succeeded about half of the time.

The Public Service Commission made the civil service more equitable and respectful. We worked with our union partners to advance issues within the civil service. We negotiated collective agreements that were fair and tackled long-standing problems.

We funded the American Sign Language program to draw those with hearing impairments into the common debate of society. We started recruiting the next generation of civil servants and trained our staff in new skills. For the first time in a quarter of a century, we restructured the department to break down silos and reflect modern human resource delivery. We improved our data collection and standardized it across government. We have instituted a people plan, clarified the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*, and implemented *Breaking Trail Together*, making good on our commitments to our First Nation partners throughout the territory.

All this work that we have done has made the Yukon one of the top 100 places to work in the country — one of the only governments in the country to have such a designation.

Once again, I would like to thank the staff of both departments for the incredible work that they have done and continue to do every day. It was an absolute pleasure to work with them.

Now I am moving into Community Services and the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board — a new assignment in one case and a return to old friends and a familiar location in the other. My first event with Community Services happened just last week in Mary Lake. There was a community barbecue to celebrate residents' considerable efforts in making sure that their community was resilient to wildfire. I really enjoyed the conversations that I had with folks out there, and I learned that I am incapable of outrunning a bear. In fact, I learned that drawing bear spray in the face of a charging animal is extremely difficult. I also learned that I am a poor replacement for an actual bear. In any case, the folks out at Mary Lake staged a great event. I look forward to others like it as I tour the territory over the coming months, introducing myself to community leaders and residents and hearing their concerns, hopes, and dreams for the future.

As the Minister of Highways and Public Works, I was out to every community multiple times and met with many municipal and First Nation leaders while there. Many of their concerns and issues involved transportation infrastructure or building infrastructure, so I believe I have a fair bit of a head start in this portfolio of Community Services. Infrastructure maintenance and development is a major part of the work that Highways and Public Works does, and it is also a major part of what Community Services does. I expect that my experience in procurement over the past few years will serve me well in Community Services as well. Of course, Community Services is also legislatively heavy. Within it resides almost one-third of all the legislation within this government, so I expect to be busy over our mandate.

I'm also very familiar with our new First Nation procurement policy which is mostly now in place, aside from a few of the more complex provisions which are due to be implemented in October. I have every confidence in my colleague to shepherd that process forward.

Protective Services, especially the Emergency Measures Office, are front and centre for most Yukoners these days as we deal with COVID-19. They have done a tremendous job in protecting Yukoners in normal times and in crises like this pandemic. I look forward to working with them.

Before my election in 2016, I was employed at the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I know that corporation and its people, and that knowledge, I believe, will serve me well over the coming years. The organization provides insurance to employers that protects them against potentially ruinous lawsuits. That's what their annual assessments pay for.

More importantly, the organization provides financial and medical support to employees injured on the job or it supports their families in the event of a work-related death. The goal is to prevent all workplace injuries and deaths in the Yukon and to get to zero. Is that attainable? Well, if you don't think so, look around you and ask who you're willing to sacrifice or to injure. I daresay that none of us would be willing to name anybody. So, yes, we're looking to prevent every single injury that we possibly can.

Workplace safety is critically important and not something to allow yourself to become complacent about. The annual Day of Mourning provides a stark reminder about what happens when complacency and carelessness take root in a workplace.

While we most often associate workers' compensation with physical injuries, it is psychological injuries that have been the most recent driver of claims. We must give silent, invisible mental injuries the same attention and care that we give physical injuries, so I intend to focus my attention on mental health in the workplace and what we as a government can do to improve it. Improving mental health is important.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to address the House this afternoon. I was elected, but getting here required the help of literally dozens of people who selflessly donated their time to this cause and who believed in me.

I spoke about the snow, ice, cold, and wind a few minutes ago, but I didn't walk the streets and driveways alone. I was always accompanied by incredible, thoughtful, well-spoken, and supportive friends and family. For their friendship, counsel, and guidance, I am eternally grateful.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, to begin, I would just like to say welcome. When I listened to the throne speech — I always find them to be inspiring, regardless of which party is in government. I think that they are meant to talk about a vision for the future, from where we have just come, and where we are heading. I always find it inspirational.

So, to begin, I wanted to welcome the new members to the Legislature: the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, the Member for Whitehorse Centre — who just gave a wonderful reply to the Speech from the Throne — the Member for Porter Creek

Centre, and to you, Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. I think it is such a big deal to be in this place. I would also like to welcome back the Leader of the Official Opposition to continue his service to Yukoners.

I would like to thank the 56 people who put their names forward to run in the last election. I think the way that the Commissioner spoke about it was to make the territory a better place to live for all Yukoners. I think that everybody who made the effort to make this a better place is worth acknowledging — and of course all of their families. You yourself, Mr. Speaker, spoke about your wife and your dogs, and you said it in a very touching way yesterday. I think that we need to acknowledge all those folks who — for each of us in our communities — worked to help the democratic process to allow Yukoners to select people to represent them to make this a better place.

I believe that the main message that I took out of the election was that it wasn't one party in particular that was given a majority. So, what I automatically think is that means we should work together here in this Legislature to try to come up with better solutions for Yukoners. In fact, I've always thought that. I think that's an important factor.

I will talk about my own riding for a little bit if I can, Mr. Speaker. For those who are new here, I refer to it as "beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes". That is in no way to take away from the beauty of everybody else's riding; I think that they're all wonderful places and I'm sure that we all are willing champions and advocates for our communities.

Just for a second, I would like to take another moment to acknowledge the two other people who put their name forward in my riding: Mr. Eric Schrock and Mr. Erik Pinkerton. I want to thank them because, together, we decided to run a positive and respectful campaign, and I think that's really important. It takes away nothing from their passion about what they were bringing to the table nor, in fact, their criticism of things that I had done or that we as a party had done. I believe it's entirely possible to be both critical and respectful at the same time.

One of the things that I heard in my riding was about — well, I will just list off the few main things that I heard about. Snow was what I heard about the most. I'm sure that a lot of us heard about that; especially the rural MLAs would have heard about snow. In the first interview that I heard from the Member for Porter Creek Centre, she talked about snow. People asked me what I heard about most and it was snow. It turns out that is one of the first issues that I'm first working on: snow. But there were also other issues like aging in place, our landfills, energy — there were many issues. Like others who have spoken here today, it is a privilege to get to go to people's doors, to speak with them, to hear their thoughts and concerns. It is quite something to get that opportunity to hear from Yukoners, and we did. I'm sure that everyone here and all of those people who ran heard many things at the doors.

What I also heard about was COVID-19, so let me start there.

We're so close here. Earlier today, the Leader of the Third Party asked a question about vaccinations and I track those numbers with a fever. As I'm sure members here will tell you, I try to look for trends at all times to try to look for how I can

see things objectively. What I can tell you is that we're just a day or two away from hitting 75-percent first-dose vaccines here in the territory, which is the first that I know of in the country and it might be the first that I know of on the continent. It's quite something.

As the Leader for the Third Party mentioned here today, we're at 66 — or 66 and a bit — percent for second doses, but of course those people who do come to get the first dose typically are coming for the second dose at some point. We can sort of recognize that within several weeks — four weeks or so — that the number of second doses catches up to the number of first doses. So, we are on our way to hitting 75 percent, which is quite something.

I would like to say thank you to Yukoners. First, I would also like to say thank you to Canadians because when COVID hit — when the pandemic hit — one of the things that outgoing Minister Frost did was to go and negotiate for all three of the territories to try to get extra doses of the vaccine here for the north to keep us safe. The argument was basically that we are ultimately small communities and that even our large centres like Whitehorse or Yellowknife — these large places — well, large for us — they are not large when you think of the provinces. What we said was that we wanted to get vaccines prioritized to our communities, especially indigenous and remote communities. What Minister Frost did at the time was to say to our colleagues across the country, "Could you please prioritize the north? It's really quite important."

I want to stand up here in the Legislature and say thank you to Canadians and other jurisdictions that did that for us because they said yes and we got enough vaccines for everybody who wanted to get vaccinated here.

As I said earlier today, we're vaccinating those non-Yukoners who are working here to help protect our communities as well, and what we've just heard just today from the incoming Minister of Health and Social Services is that we have vaccines on their way — the Pfizer vaccine now — for our youth aged 12 to 18 — all those who wish to get vaccinated.

I encourage all of us to encourage young people to get informed about the vaccine, to get that information through yukon.ca, to talk to their family physician and their families, and to learn about the vaccine, because I think the more we are vaccinated here, the better we are off as a territory.

I was part of the group of folks who first heard — it was the Minister of Health and Social Services and myself who first got the briefing from the acting chief medical officer of health to say that the risk had increased regarding the Arctic Winter Games. We had to take the very, very hard decision to cancel the games. We met with the City of Whitehorse — because they were our co-hosts — and we met with the folks from the games, and we took that tough decision.

Back then, you have to understand that the pandemic wasn't an emergency. A state of emergency had not been declared in Canada. These were the first international games that were cancelled anywhere. That was a really hard decision, and we had lots of people who would come and talk to us about why that was the wrong decision, and we explained that, no, we have to take this bold, hard decision in order to keep people

safe, even though we didn't understand at that time that COVID was coming to the Yukon or how it was going to come to Canada.

We took that decision, and here we are more than a year later — but not much more than a year later — and when I look at the situation here in the Yukon, we are so much better off than almost every other province and territory right now. I want to say thank you to Yukoners next, because with us — when you're in a pandemic — once that happens, the choices that we take as individuals affect all of us as a community. I think that Yukoners stepped up to the plate. We all paddled in the same direction by and large. We're still respectful of a range of perspectives — still giving people the option of whether or not to get vaccinated but providing them with the information. I think that we worked together, and we are leading the country in the fight against COVID-19. I think we are in a very lucky place. It doesn't mean that we're not at risk. We can see that vaccines have kept us safer, but that doesn't mean that we're perfectly safe. We can see that the choices that we have taken as a community — some of which we were lucky because of our geography — but, overall, we're just in a really good place around the pandemic, and I just think that the thing to acknowledge is that we should thank all Yukoners for working with us to keep each other safe — just so important.

You know, I think it is really important that we have stayed steady — the leadership that has been shown in this Legislature with us as a government has needed to be steady and we have needed to be in close communication with our communities or other governments and the broad public. I think that sort of strong, stable leadership is what Yukoners deserve and I'm really happy with where we are at.

It doesn't mean that the pandemic hasn't affected people. I'm sure all of us — when we went to the doors, we heard about those concerns — those concerns about mental wellness, concerns about our schools, concerns about masks. There were lots of concerns. Yet, together, I think we understand that we are in a better place.

Let me turn just for a few moments to my own riding, beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I told you that I heard about snow. We were even asked in the debates, "What are you hearing most at the doors?" I said, "Snow" and everyone laughed because we were all choked at how much snow there was. But it turns out that there is a challenge with snow in my own riding, and that is that there is twice the amount of snow in the Southern Lakes, which has to come down through the Yukon River here in Whitehorse. What that does is it increases the risk of flooding in the summer. Typically, the Southern Lakes hit their high water somewhere around August — so somewhere around June and July, if we have too much water, then we get flooding.

So, we're working now to try to — Yukon Energy has worked to open the gates a couple months earlier to try to get more water through the system, it has worked to drop the lake level at Schwatka down by just under a metre, and it's working to keep the boat lock open — all of this to try to get more water through the system now in case we have a wet year.

You may recall — and I'm sure many people here do — that, in 2007, we had an extremely wet summer in the Southern Lakes area, and we ended up with flooding. It was like a metre over the previous high water that we had in recent records, and that metre was quite the flood. That's one of the main issues that I'm working on right away.

Other issues that I heard at the door — and sort of bookending — I heard lots of people with young families who were really happy about universal childcare, although my communities tend to be a little greyer — a little more north of 60 — and in my communities, what was most important was the aging-in-place plan that is coming. What I heard from folks was we need to get past this COVID thing to get on to getting aging in place working.

The Premier and I had a really productive meeting with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation during the election. We heard lots of strong concerns and issues to work on, and I'll be working to address those directly.

Finally, we talked a lot about energy. This is by no means an exhaustive list, Mr. Speaker, but it turns out that a lot of the ways in which we wish to address the renewable energy strategy are down through the Southern Lakes in some of those communities. That was great to hear from people, how important they thought it was that we work on renewable energy.

I would also like to acknowledge that all three parties stood up and said that they believed in the Yukon energy strategy — the 10-year renewable energy strategy — and *Our Clean Future*. Not to say that there aren't criticisms and that there isn't more work to be done, but what I generally heard was that it was moving in the right direction. So, that is good news.

Let me turn just for a minute to talk about portfolios. I would just like to say that, for the past four and a half years, it has been my absolute privilege to get to work with the Department of Community Services, the Yukon Liquor Corporation — also responsible for lotteries and cannabis — même la Direction des services en français, the French Language Services Directorate.

One of the things I will say is that I have been so impressed with the public service and the folks I got to work with — whether that was from the front-line cleaning staff up to the deputy minister — it was an incredible privilege to get to work with these teams. I just want to stand up here in the Legislature and say how impressed I was with the work that those teams did.

I know that being in the public service sometimes is challenging, because there are times when the public is uncertain about what the public service is doing or can even be critical. I think that criticism should fall to us as ministers and that the praise should go to the public servants themselves.

I want to say here, as I respond to the Speech from the Throne, that it has been my privilege to get to work with those departments, and I am so looking forward to the work that I have been tasked with. In particular, I have three new files. For example, I have already spoken about energy. That is one of my files to deal with. I am also working with the Public Service Commission, which I am honoured to be able to do. I am

looking forward to working with the Yukon Teachers' Association and the Yukon Employees' Union. That is very important work for how this government becomes employer of choice, but also how we serve the Yukon, how we make this a better place.

Finally, I would just like to take a minute to talk about Energy, Mines and Resources. It is, of course, a large and important portfolio. There are many aspects of it that are important. Agriculture — again, all three parties have talked about the importance of agriculture. I had a good conversation this morning with First Nation leadership about agriculture — where there is conflict around agriculture and where it is important to move forward together.

Forestry — again, when we think about forestry, I think beyond it just being an industry. I think of it also because of my role with forest fires and how climate change is changing the risk that we see — there is an importance that we marry climate change and mitigation, which means how we get out of harm's way and make an opportunity out of that. That, for me, is how we work to reduce our fuel loads and our fire risks around our communities and, at the same time, work to take the energy that we harvest there and use it to displace fossil fuels.

Of course, we've heard a couple times today in the Legislature the importance of land use planning. I look forward to working on this file with communities — currently with Dawson — with the Premier, not only as the MLA but also as the Premier, when it comes to the importance of land use planning for the territory. I think that land, as we know, is a critical issue.

Finally, let me talk about mining. The Yukon government is committed to the long-term responsible management of the Yukon's mineral resources and a healthy mining industry that adheres to high environmental and social standards. I had the opportunity to meet with the Yukon Chamber of Mines, and I will continue meeting with industry groups. I think that it's very important to have those conversations.

What I said to the Chamber of Mines is that I believe mining is critical. It's not simply that it's critical to our economy — I think it is — but what I also know is that, as we move to a sustainable green energy economy, I know that we will need the materials from mines to be part of that transition. But it's also critical that mining be done in a way that respects our governance, our communities, and our environment. What I will say is that, in my first meeting with the Chamber of Mines — which was echoed loudly from the industry, which I'm very happy with — they understand the environmental, social, and governance issues and I think they are ready and willing partners.

What they would say to me is that the industry has changed in recent decades and we have much work in front of us — whether that's through the mineral development strategy or successor legislation and land use planning — I think that these are all terribly important issues that I've now been asked to work on in a collaborative fashion here the territory or in this Legislature. I'm looking forward to that collaborative work.

I think that Yukoners sent a clear message that we will all need to work together for the benefit of the territory and that's

what I am committing — that is what I think we are committing to do. I think that we are going to need steady leadership to put us on the path to recovery. I think that the Speech from the Throne, which was highlighting the direction that we have proposed under the budget that will be tabled shortly — but, as I have heard from the Premier, it is very similar to the previous budget — that is where we will put people first, that is where we will make the Yukon a better place, and that is where we will put all of us on a path to recovery.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to just close with referencing a couple of comments that you made in the Legislature just ahead of the Speech from the Throne, which I think were reflected in the Commissioner's Speech from the Throne. You asked that we conduct ourselves with passion, honour, and respect. I have always believed this — that there is a way to bring together a diverse range of views and that it could be done in a respectful fashion. In fact, I think that a diverse range of views strengthens the decisions that we take here as a territory, and I believe that is a way to make a better Yukon.

I also believe that it has to be done in a respectful fashion. We have to find ways to disagree so that when those passionate views come forward, they are done in such a way that we don't disrespect each other. Then I think that the way you framed it right afterward, Mr. Speaker — you were talking about your Northern Tutchone traditions, and you talked about sharing, caring, teaching, and respect in everything that you do. I thank you for that; I will take that to heart. I think that, as the Speaker of the Legislature, I think that it is a good model for all of us to adopt.

It is my privilege to be back in this Legislature, to be here with colleagues to work to make the Yukon a better place, and to have the awesome responsibility to represent the beautiful riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, and I am looking forward to working with everyone here in the Legislature.

Ms. Blake: I am honoured to be sharing this space and speaking with you on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwächän Council.

I would like to express my heartfelt thank you to my community of Old Crow, my friends, my family, and my extended network who gave support and encouragement. I hold my hands up to you as you helped to keep me grounded and mindful as this path was unfolding in front of me. I hold much respect for my community, as all conversations exchanged are meaningful. I only hope to continue to learn and build on these relationships moving forward.

I would like to acknowledge our past MLA, Darius Elias. When I decided to put my name forward for the election in early February, Darius indicated in one of our conversations that there is great power within our nation when our young people step up to take on political roles, which is a true testament to the resilience and strength that lies within our nation, our community, and our families. I have thought about Darius and his leadership throughout this path that brought me here, as he deeply believed in the abilities of us as youth and young adults. I can only imagine his big bear hug and contagious smile as I stand here today to address this Assembly.

I extend my heartfelt thank you to my husband and children for being my rock. Your support and love have kept me grounded and motivated while inspiring me to always stay true to who I am.

A heartfelt thank you to my past coworkers and mentors who have been an important and influential part of my journey. Every individual I have had the privilege to work with has given me meaningful teachings and lessons that have helped me to better understand who I am, what I value, and what my strengths and weaknesses are.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge our past elders and leaders within the Gwich'in Nation for your teachings to deal with things in a good way, to work in a good way, and to hold ourselves in a good way — that we are strong, resilient, and capable. It's an honour and privilege to stand here today to represent Vuntut Gwitchin.

I recognize the confidence and supply agreement that was put in place to support our territory. These commitments bring us closer to improving health and wellness for all Yukoners while strengthening the foundation of our path forward in our territory.

When I made the decision to join the Yukon NDP, I wanted to ensure that we were doing everything out of respect for our people. I commit myself to the responsibilities of this role because I believe in the opportunities to do better and to do more for all Yukoners, even when it means doing things differently.

I am so proud that we will be the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement the public dental program, to help our vulnerable Yukoners in a meaningful way with a safe supply program, and to make sure that the minimum wage pays people fairly.

I feel privileged to stand here today as an indigenous woman to be a part of this path unfolding for Yukon. I commit to being a voice that represents all Yukoners and my home community in a respectful and meaningful manner. I hold my hands up to my past leaders for breaking the trail for us as indigenous people to hold space in government to advance self-determination and autonomy within our indigenous communities so that we can be active participants in all levels of government, ensuring a future that is solid and secure for our communities, our families, our children, our culture, our language, and who we are as Yukon First Nations in this territory and this country.

As children in Old Crow, we learn directly from our elders about our leaders travelling to Ottawa with the document *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. Standing here in this Legislative Assembly with all of you, I am moved by the power and influence of this document, as I'm reminded that, when our leaders signed *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, those children whom our leaders fought for included my generation, our children today, and the many children who are yet to come.

Being Vuntut means that we are taught as children the importance of respect, to learn about our history so that we can understand who we are, where we have come from, how we fit into the world while we envision where we are going. Our

leaders wanted to ensure a secure future for all people of this territory and this country. The tireless work that was done by our past elders and leaders continues to unfold and influence our territory and Canada while empowering the authority of our Yukon First Nations to continue to build upon the implementation of our self-government agreements in a meaningful way.

I stand here as a leader today for our children tomorrow. We have an inherent responsibility to work collectively for our children and families to ensure that we are enhancing outcomes and opportunities for all citizens in our community and all of the Yukon. As indigenous people, we come from forward-thinking people. All decisions that have been made in the past had us, the generations of today, in mind. That is the foundation that I uphold as we continue to work collectively with the same respect for the generations yet to come.

As children in Old Crow, it was instilled in us that we are the next generation of leaders. That teaching is now passed on to the many children of our community today. When new babies are born into our community, a new leader is born. Our elders and leaders of yesterday committed their lives to ensure that our future is built on respect, unity, opportunity, and prosperity while securing our autonomy as indigenous people as we adapted our lives and ways of being to the changing world around us.

Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow holds us as leaders of today accountable to all people of our territory and Canada with the decisions laid out ahead of us. It is our duty to serve in the best interests of all people, as that is the legacy that we have inherited from our leaders of the past. This is the teaching that has been instilled in me as a child growing up in Vuntut Gwitchin territory.

Today, I am grateful to my teachers of yesterday as their influence in my life has shaped my resilience, which allows me to stand here today as a new leader in this capacity. In the spring of 2006, I was a young mom determined to pursue social work. I wanted to pursue a higher level of education so that I could contribute to capacity building within our territory and within my home community. I also believe that all those times that our past leaders and elders told us as children to get our education naturally motivated me to take this big step of applying to post-secondary as a young adult. As a young child in Old Crow, my mother tasked me with visiting community members to help with housework. When there were no chores to do, I sat and listened to stories of long ago, or observed as women did their beadwork, or helped with cutting and prepping of caribou meat. This traditional way of teaching me to be a helper in the community fuelled my desire to pursue a career in the helping field.

During my childhood, we were fortunate to have our elders at the time actively present in our school, talking with us about our history with residential schools and how life was for them growing up on the land as nomadic people. We listened to stories of trapping, hunting, working with dog teams, and packing water. These stories of connections to our natural environment taught us that we are deeply connected to our traditional territory, as the stories of where we come from are

embedded all across our lands. We listen to legends and creation stories about our lands and animals to better understand who we are as Gwich'in people.

Our leaders at the time regularly informed us of the injustices that our people faced while expressing concerns for our community and our future. Our school ensured our presence in community meetings where we listened to our leadership and our community engage in conversation about our relationship with the Crown, the need for self-government, the importance of protection of the Porcupine caribou herd, the concerns for our lands and waters, and protecting sacred sites within our traditional territory.

We listened to our people talk about the importance of addressing education, employment and training needs in the community, housing, incarceration of our young people, mental health and addiction support in the community, support for children and families, and life skills training. As young as we were at the time, this element of our education helped to prepare us for adulthood and our responsibilities that we would one day carry in our community as the future leaders.

Education has helped me to better understand the systems and structures of society and injustices that we face as indigenous people. I naturally incorporated both westernized and indigenous ways of helping by applying traditional teachings in my course work, which helped to expand my thinking and level of understanding.

I have grown to be more grateful for the traditional teachings I had as a child as they honed my ability to listen and to observe while being respectful when holding space for people and not being afraid to stand up and speak up for our community. My passion lies in working and advancing First Nation issues and initiatives such as mental health, child and family services and supports, housing, gaps of programs and services delivery, advocating for greater resources for our children, families, and elders, and ensuring that our most vulnerable citizens have access to the support that they need.

I am also passionate about challenging policies and legislation that have had a direct impact on the lives of Yukon First Nations and all people who call Yukon home.

Standing here today, I recognize the privilege I have to be in this role which allows me to contribute to the decision-making processes that will unfold in this space. I hold in my heart the people whom I represent and our traditional teachings and values as Vuntut Gwitchin.

I hold my hands up to our past and present leaders of Vuntut Gwitchin who have held this space before me. My past leaders taught us, as a people, that every action we take influences the future. We are taught that we are strong and resilient. Our elders indicated to us that hard times are coming and that it is important to go back to the land.

When we talk about who we are as First Nation people, we go back to our animals; we go back to our waters; we go back to our culture; we go back to our language.

Today I better understand why our leaders ensured that we developed that deep connection to our lands, animals, water, culture, and language. I better understand why they encouraged us as children to pursue our education. I better understand why

our leaders of yesterday encouraged us to learn more about who we are and why it was so important to learn about the outside world outside of our communities. It was to ensure that we are grounded in who we are, that we have meaningful connections to our community and our lands, that we are capable of taking up space and to be strong and to be respectful, as I am but one person, yet I represent my community, my nation, and my family.

My career has helped me to better understand that our First Nation governments must have a seat at every table so that the realities and voices of our people are present. There is much work that has been done, yet we need to be open to doing things differently so that we contribute to the enhancement of lives for all Yukoners. We need to work transparently with our First Nation governments, as they are important partners. We need to continue to build on the relationships that are being established so we can instill hope for our people and model what strong leadership looks like.

To my community of Old Crow, I am here to represent you. I am ready and committed to do the work. I am here to bring forward your voices to help our community move forward. We have much work to be done. That work cannot be done by one person. We need to be united and work together. We have always been taught by our elders that it takes the community to raise a child. It takes a community to make things happen, and it takes a community to make sound decisions.

I want to ensure that you walk this journey with me. I am committed to holding your voices at the forefront of the work that unfolds. I want to remain transparent with you all and I'm open to you holding me accountable in this role.

It is my duty to represent our community. To our youth: I want you to know that I'm also here to represent you. I want to hear from you. Don't ever be afraid to reach out to share your voice and your views, as you are our leaders of tomorrow. Mahsi' cho.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you to the new Members of the Legislative Assembly: the Member for Whitehorse Centre and the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, and to you, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — thank you for your comments. They are very insightful and heartfelt. I was listening closely to both the Member for Whitehorse Centre and the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin about their personal journeys and how they have ultimately arrived at this Assembly. I welcome all three of you and, of course, the Leader of the Official Opposition returning to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to the Speech from the Throne. Firstly, I would like to express my ongoing and abundant gratitude for having been able to live my life and raise my family for the last three decades in the vibrant and dynamic neighbourhood of Riverdale, which is situated on the traditional territories of the Ta'an Kwächän Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

Where would I be without my family? Thank you so much to Janet, Max, Angus — Max and Angus are my sons — and my extended family for supporting me. I would not be standing

here right now if it wasn't for you. You have my unwavering and unreserved love and affection.

To my Riverdale North constituents: I cannot thank you enough for this great honour. Being re-elected as your MLA is humbling and inspiring. Your insight, patience, goodwill, and candour at the door in the most recent election campaign was very much appreciated.

At the same time, I would be remiss if I didn't thank my dedicated election team, who kept their good humour, dedication, warm jackets, hopefully relatively warm boots, and smiles on their faces during the course of what was a challenging and, as we've heard from various members already, perhaps unexpectedly snowy and inclement March and April in the Yukon.

I remain steadfast in my commitment to my constituents and will be responsive to any concerns that they have as I represent the issues of all of my constituents. Riverdale North is my home, you are my friends and neighbours, and, first and foremost, I work for you.

Briefly, I will continue to engage with all of the Riverdale school councils, as we now have six schools in Riverdale, and I'm excited to report that the dynamic and active community that we have in both Riverdale North and Riverdale South has seen the addition of a new soccer field and athletic complex at F.H. Collins and a commitment to improve the biathlon facility on Grey Mountain Road. Our government has committed to the planning and, ultimately, the construction of a new Polarettes facility, which may well not be in Riverdale, but, in any event, I did attend that wonderful organization many times and was astounded by the breadth of their programming and the number of members they had. When the executive of the Polarettes said that they had 1,100 or 1,200 members, my jaw dropped — in a good way. They have programs from dawn until past dusk, and it's certainly an amazing active-living story for the entire territory — certainly for all of Whitehorse. I wish the Polarettes all the best going forward in that planning phase.

In addition, the new skateboard park will be opened in Riverdale within the next few months, and that looks like an amazing new facility. I know that the prior facility had probably outlived its useful life, but nevertheless, I heard from my constituents and I heard from stakeholders that it was an incredibly important piece of leisure infrastructure. With the new facility opening soon, that will continue to be a focal point of outdoor activity and socializing for a certain group of Yukoners. That is incredibly exciting for our community as well.

In addition, the French first language high school was completed within the last year — the Mercier school — and I have attended there on a number of occasions and can advise that the school community there is excited by that facility, and I look forward to working with that community as well.

All sort of being the theme that Riverdale — in my door-knocking over the course of the last four and a half years — is a young — and a community that is becoming younger, in my experience, with younger families. They are embracing a lot of these new facilities. I'm also heartened by the embrace of active living and active transportation, as these parents, with their

young children, are coming in and out of beautiful — because Riverdale is beautiful, as well.

As I look around me, I am proud to be part of this team of distinguished colleagues in this government. I have seen this group work tirelessly over the past four years in order to pass and implement full and progressive legislation and to provide necessary and valuable support measures for all Yukoners in these unprecedented and difficult times.

As we look at other jurisdictions in Canada, North America, and across the globe, it is clear that Yukon continues to manage this global pandemic in an exemplary manner. The care and adherence to the public health measures that Yukoners have displayed is why we are in our current and enviable position.

Thanks to the efforts of all, Yukon is turning the corner on the pandemic, and brighter days are ahead. It is indeed our shot, and let's continue to take it.

In the 34th Legislative Assembly, I was the Speaker of this House. It was a great honour to serve as the Speaker of the Legislature. In addition to my official duties as Speaker, I particularly enjoyed the educational outreach component of my role. Over the past four and a half years, I had the privilege of engaging with hundreds of Yukon youth, from many elementary and high schools as well as with students in various community schools, on the inner workings of their Yukon democracy through class visits to this Chamber and the Legislative Assembly's Mace tour. I can advise all members that elementary school students ask interesting and diverse questions. There were a few.

I won't name the school, but I was in a community school and the current Clerk and I were there. They asked us a few questions. The easier ones were: "What is your favourite colour?" and "What is your favourite animal?" But the doozy was — we were in the robes for the Assembly, and they asked: "Why are you both dressed like nuns?" I said that it is a multi-layered question. There were others as well.

What I would say about young Yukoners is that they are — and I think it's important. I think that it is important for all MLAs — for us to breathe life into the Assembly and to educate our young Yukoners as to what we do — that it's not a parallel track of members from the 19 ridings doing some sort of mystical work that has no impact on our young people. I think that I did a reasonable job in conveying that, and I think that it is an important job for all of us because, obviously, the work that is conducted in this Assembly impacts all Yukoners.

I think that if we want to engage young people going forward, it's incumbent upon us to continue to provide that educative function — a plug for democracy for young people.

As well, it was a highlight to relaunch the well-attended Yukon Youth Parliament program which had been in abeyance for about seven or eight years. That occurred in 2019. We had planned to run it again in the spring of 2020. It was fully subscribed, but, of course, COVID-19 occurred and the plans could not proceed. I would thank all the returning MLAs who provided their support, enthusiasm, and assistance in that project.

As Speaker, I did not partake in the voting on any motions, save for one vote on an amendment to a motion on a private member's motion in the 34th Legislature. I estimate that I presided over approximately 4,000 questions from the members of this Assembly, along with hundreds of hours of often lively, dynamic, and sometimes heated debate — principled and heated debate. I did not voice my views on the items at hand as, in fact, in the almost 700-year Westminster tradition of the role of the Speaker, members specifically do not wish to learn or have any interest whatsoever in the opinions of its senior presiding officer.

It is relatively rare in Yukon political history for a former Speaker to transition to ministerial portfolios; however, it is a challenge and an honour which I embrace.

I wish the incoming Speaker all the best and I would encourage our Speaker and Deputy Speaker to embrace the experience and all of its possibilities.

In our new government, I have been entrusted to serve the Yukon and its residents as the Minister of Highways and Public Works and the Minister of Environment. Prior to my election as the MLA for Riverdale North, I had almost 25 years of experience in representing thousands of Yukoners in various areas of law in both private practice — briefly — and at the Yukon Legal Services Society, also known as Legal Aid. In my legal practice, I also served as the executive director of that organization for 16 years. In my capacity as a staff lawyer and administrator, I had the honour of travelling to all Yukon communities.

Advancing social justice, promoting a green agenda, and strongly supporting the rule of law and procedural fairness in a thriving and healthy community are all important values that have guided me throughout my professional life.

I am grateful to be able to draw from these experiences and values and continue to work hard and conscientiously every day for the benefit of all Yukoners.

As other members have indicated previously this afternoon, Yukoners have clearly spoken. Yukoners want their legislators to work collectively together in order to move our territory forward in a positive direction. We have been directed to make best efforts to cooperate for the greater good of this incredible territory. That is what energizes me in the morning and sometimes keeps me up late at night. I take this commitment seriously. I know that my fellow ministers and my caucus share this sentiment with me.

The Yukon Liberal government of this 35th Legislature is supported by a confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democrats. This agreement contains several objectives, which fall almost exclusively under my two new portfolios. With a baseline number set at the 2010 greenhouse gas emissions of the Yukon, our Liberal government has increased our target to achieve a 45-percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions for our territory from that baseline by 2030. This government will establish the Yukon climate leadership council which will guide us toward this ambitious yet attainable goal.

A significant majority of Yukoners, including many young and youthful citizens I spoke to in my constituency during the

most recent campaign, expect this objective to be met. We hear you loud and clear. We will move forward with a renewed sense of purpose to implement the recommendations of *Our Clean Future* where, among many initiatives that are proposed, we will enact the clean energy act and its accompanying regulations during this mandate. Specifically, as well — as you have heard in the throne speech — we will ban single-use plastics by the end of this year.

As I become familiar with the departments I have been asked to lead, I am extremely impressed with the work accomplished by my distinguished predecessors, the now-Minister of Community Services and Minister responsible for the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board in his former capacity as Minister of Highways and Public Works — that's a mouthful — and Pauline Frost, with the Department of Environment. True leadership leaves behind a strong legacy.

From my early days and preliminary meetings at both Highways and Public Works and Environment, the dedicated and passionate work of the many talented and hard-working individuals in both of these departments is evident to me. The work achieved in the last four-plus years is a solid testament to these observations.

Only last week, in one of my first acts of office, I signed the finalizing documents to commence the construction of the Dempster fibre line project. This project will ensure that Yukoners do not experience lengthy Internet outages — which may have happened this afternoon — or indeed — fingers crossed — any outages, thereby increasing our territory's competitive advantage, enabling skilled remote workers to choose Yukon as their home. We will have shovels in the ground shortly for the commencement of this construction season.

The Dempster fibre line is a formidable and challenging project that will include many creek crossings and other water bodies, as it follows the rugged Dempster Highway north to Inuvik. I was advised that one of the most significant engineering challenges culminates in a more than one kilometre long proposed underground drilling path for the fibre under the mighty Mackenzie River. Stay tuned for updates on this project. This is only one of the numerous significant initiatives of the Highways and Public Works department led by Deputy Minister McConnell and his dynamic and motivated management team, as well as the hundreds of employees who I look forward to meeting in the weeks and months to come. I can assure the House that they have kept me busy in my first week.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the investments in infrastructure that will be made in the next few years will significantly improve the lives of Yukoners. Whether it is a significant and challenging project like replacing the Nisutlin Bay bridge in the community of Teslin, the construction of schools in Whistle Bend and Burwash Landing, multiple additional infrastructure upgrades, the long overdue rewrite of the *Motor Vehicles Act*, many green economy investments, information technology investments, or the planned construction of the Old Crow health and wellness centre, these are indeed exciting times for our territory and for all Yukoners.

While I have spoken about the climate change goals as reflected through the confidence and supply agreements, there are many additional innovative projects that will be pursued by our government and which are the responsibility of the Department of Environment. The privilege of living in this awesome, wild land comes with the responsibility for the territory's responsible stewardship. As I take on the role of Minister of Environment, we will continue developing and managing our natural resources responsibly and sustainably through our agreements and initiatives through our various partners.

We will continue to improve the Yukon government campgrounds as we work to identify new potential sites to meet the increased demand for camping opportunities in our beautiful wilderness. As well, we will develop and implement animal protection legislation as well as a Yukon wetlands policy. Work will also continue on remediating contaminated sites across the Yukon, continuing to engage on responsible ongoing management of Yukon wildlife and the many other initiatives led by the Department of Environment.

The Department of Environment will continue to work closely with our partners to collect and analyze data that supports decision-making based on strong, current science and long-established traditional knowledge. In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Deputy Minister of Environment, Mr. John Bailey, who has done an admirable job, and to welcome newly appointed Deputy Minister Manon Moreau, who I greatly look forward to working with in her new role.

The past 14 months have represented a unique and substantial challenge for our territory. Yukoners have rallied to support each other and to keep each other safe. Emerging from these unprecedented times will require both our government and all of us to look out for both the physical and mental health of all citizens of our dynamic and diverse community.

I remain very optimistic, however, for our territory's future, and I am excited to roll up my sleeves in my second mandate.

Ms. White: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure to see you in that Chair. There are a lot of firsts, I think, right now in this Assembly — in this, the 35th. Of course, I came here to the Assembly the first time in 2011, during the 33rd, with some — actually, to be honest, there are not that many faces from back then. Of course, there are the members of the Yukon Party who were here in 2011 and the Premier was also here in 2011. I think that there are so many things to be able to talk about today and so many things to be grateful for and to say thank you for.

First, I just want to thank my family. I've been asked a lot of times over the years how I could make sure my ego wouldn't get too big to get into a door and I said, well, they would have to meet my family to understand that truly, because the amount of ribbing that I get on Sunday from them is enough to make sure that my ego is never going to be a problem. I want to thank my friends who make sure that I stay true to myself and am able to be the person who I am.

In the last campaign, I think there were three of us in the Chamber who can understand the real privilege of being in a leadership position during a territorial campaign. I say that because, in those positions, you have an opportunity not just to be in your riding, but you have an opportunity to be across the territory, to be in every community, and to be learning from people around you.

I really want to make sure that I thank Yukoners because there has been a real privilege of being in this Chamber since 2011 and a real privilege in this last territorial election campaign to be there in a leadership position, to be meeting and learning from folks. It's those stories that we always bring forward here and it's those experiences that help shape how I view the world. It was a real pleasure today to hear from both yourself, Deputy Speaker, in your maiden speech, and of course my colleague for Whitehorse Centre. I believe that the stories that we share are important, that the stories that all members here share are important, and that we all come forward with those views.

I think that there is a real difference in this throne speech from previous ones where we're looking more forward. There were a couple of things that were mentioned that I'm really proud about and that come from the relationship between the Yukon Liberals and the Yukon NDP caucus through the confidence and supply agreement. But there are some things that weren't there that I'm also really pleased about.

In 2011, I had been elected just after working in corrections. In my first speech in December of that year, I said that, in the correctional facility, when women got close to being released you could see the anxiety increase, because when women were released from corrections, there was no safe place for them to go. They didn't qualify for existing programs and they often went back into the same situations that they were in. I asked then, to a Yukon Party government, when we were going to build a place for women. So, although it has been 10 years, it was mentioned in the throne speech — and for that I'm grateful. To know that women leaving the justice system will have a safe place to transition back into community where they will have that ability to get their feet under them and proceed forward — I think that's really important.

Also, in that first speech I gave in 2011, I talked about the importance of McIntyre Creek and I talked about the special place that it is and how I was hopeful that it would be protected. That was included in the throne speech, and I'm thankful for that.

I think that there is a real opportunity here as we go forward in the next number of years, and that's a real opportunity for us to work together.

I hope the Member for Watson Lake tables a motion again talking about a street light outside of Two Mile because I know how dark that section is and how important that is for safety. I hope that the Yukon Party brings forward a motion about making the SHINGRIX vaccine available for free to Yukoners 55-plus as they did in their election campaign, because this is an opportunity for us to work together to get those things to happen. This is the first time that we don't have a majority government, which means that we are able to work together to

the benefit of all Yukon for things that we think are important. I think that's a real privilege and a real opportunity. So, I hope that we will see members from all sides bring forward ideas that they think are important so that we can have conversations about them to move them forward.

During the election campaign, there were a lot of things that we heard and things that I am looking forward to hearing solutions for. There is not a single community in the territory that hasn't said that housing isn't important. Housing is important. We know that housing is a desperately needed in Old Crow for the Vuntut Gwitchin. I know that housing was mentioned when I visited Pelly Crossing, when I visited Mayo, when I visited Carmacks, when I visited Beaver Creek, Haines Junction, and any of the other communities — Watson Lake, Teslin — any community — Ross River, Faro — maybe not Faro; Faro might be the one place that doesn't actually need housing in the same way, but housing is required across the territory. So, it's going to be up to us in the Chamber to figure out how we make that happen. In some communities, it's about making lots available, but in some situations, it is actually about building. It's about making sure that we address the concerns of those communities and make that housing available.

It was really incredible to see the housing that is being built in the Takhini River subdivision with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations from the rapid initiative housing fund through the federal government. In a span of five months, they were putting up six buildings, including multi-family and multi-unit. So, there is a real opportunity.

When we talk about the creation of the Yukon climate leadership council, which will be really important in getting us to the increased greenhouse gas reduction target of 45 percent — we should look at the representation that we want on that council.

Just recently, I was at a meeting with the Yukon Chamber of Mines, and they said that they would like to participate, that they have ideas about the work that they can do and how they would like to be involved in that. They also talked about how they wanted to be involved in the implementation of the Yukon mineral development strategy and how they could be a real benefit to that.

I have had lots of conversations about agriculture and concerns around elk and the ability of farmers to produce. When we talk about food production in the north, we talk about it in terms of northern food security, and we talk about it in terms of climate change and our ability to make sure that we're doing the work that we think we need to do here in order to move forward, but there's that real concern with that elk herd that was introduced. I think that there's a real opportunity in the makeup of this Chamber to come up with solutions to tackle those concerns.

In the throne speech, there were things like the field house complex in Whitehorse, but there are questions like: Who will cover the operation and maintenance cost of that new recreation facility? Then, of course, when we talk about recreation facilities, I say things like: "What about other communities outside of Whitehorse?" Particularly I think about Old Crow, which I never realized until just recently — I always thought

that it was a covered area that was used by the co-op to store building supplies. It's a large tent area, and the reason why I highlight it is because the wind in Old Crow can be phenomenal and it tears through that fabric and that fabric flaps in the wind. I was just thinking about it when I was there. I didn't realize that this was the old rink area, but it's not used as a rink anymore because the wind just howls through that space. One of the things that we heard from folks in Old Crow was the pride of hockey and the real desire of that to be something that the community focuses on and how that, through hockey, there was that opportunity for wellness and for healing. Then my colleague mentioned that it's great to have an outdoor rink, but if you don't have a warm place to get dressed, it's going to be really challenging when it's colder. Although you can play when it's cold, it's really hard to get your stuff on in that space.

Then I looked at the community of Ross River, and when their rink collapsed, there was a warming hut built. So, although it's an outdoor ice rink, there's still a warm spot to get ready, so maybe there are options there and ways that we can look at it.

We think about what's going on at Carmacks and the rink that's underway but hasn't been completed, and then, of course, I think about your communities, Mr. Speaker, and I heard about the importance of the swimming pools, and I heard about the importance about maybe making sure that there was available recreation in the wintertime.

Then we can look toward the community of Watson Lake to see what that recreation facility could look like, and it is fantastic. We heard from the community of Watson Lake about the pride of hosting experiential learning or education weekends and how, when people were able to visit Watson Lake from rural communities, they were blown away by things like the Northern Lights Centre and that recreation complex. I think that there are real opportunities right now for us to figure out how we can address some of those shortcomings in communities.

There was a question in Question Period today about minimum wage. I guess I am going to put it back. This is what I have been saying all along. I challenge those who say that you can live off \$13.85 an hour. I want to know how a person can pay rent, how they can get groceries, and how they can pay bills without having to access the social supports of a social safety net. I am really proud that, as part of that confidence and supply agreement, we are increasing the minimum wage to \$15.20 an hour, because, come September 1, when NWT goes up, we would be standing alone. We would be on our own, looking both south toward BC, Alberta, and then, of course, next door to the Northwest Territories.

I think it is an important thing to note that it's not just small businesses in the Yukon that don't pay higher than minimum wage. Small businesses in Yukon do. They value their employees. They understand those hardships, so they take care. It's just about bringing everybody else up along.

I am really proud that, in the throne speech, there was the commitment to the seven-days-a-week mental health clinic and what that will mean for people. Today I had the privilege of doing an interview with the *Hill Times*, and it was about access

to mental health services in the north. The truth of the matter is that we know there are shortcomings. We do. We know that it has gotten better, but it is not there yet. We can talk about ending stigma all we want, but when the services aren't available, what does that mean? So, right now, I can look toward detox, for example, and only eight beds are available out of the 14 because of COVID. What does that mean when someone is ready to take that journey, to take that first step, and they try to access that service and it is not available? That is really hard. They might not be ready again for a long time, but they are ready right then. So how do we do better?

I was pleased to see that there is the commitment. All parties committed to making sure that we build on-the-land healing and we all recognized how important that was — that connection, that separation from an institution — to making it more holistic. I am pleased to know that the federal government is going to support that. I think that is really important.

Since 2016, knowing that we've lost 40 members of our communities to opioid overdoses and to drug addiction, it is a tragedy. To hear in the throne speech that we're committed to safe supply and supervised consumption is something that I'm really proud of. We have heard that — the Yukon NDP has been talking about that for a long time, and that was part of the confidence and supply agreement. I'm pleased to know that we can work together for that.

This morning, I was at CHON-FM, and Doug Tremblay — hello to him. I know that the Leader of the Yukon Party and the Premier both go on a regular basis. He said that, for him, when he looked at the election, there were so many commonalities, and he hoped that we could work together on those commonalities, knowing that some of the differences would be harder to get to, but he was hopeful that we could get there.

I really believe that we can, because this is the first time in 30 years that we don't have a majority government. This is the first time in my time in the Assembly that I won't be debating motions other than government motions about saying that a prescribed amount of money in the budget will be used for the thing that is listed in the budget. I am really excited about that. I am really excited. I don't even know how many back-bench Wednesdays I did where we had to debate something like that.

So I'm looking forward to changing that conversation. I'm looking forward to knowing issues that are important to my colleagues, as we bring them forward. The Member for Watson Lake wasn't here before, but I hope that she brings forward a motion about the lights outside of Two Mile. I think that this is an opportunity for the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin to also bring forward those issues that have been dear to him and bring them up for conversation.

I think that there's a real opportunity for us to work in a different way, and for that reason, I am really looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to having conversations about agriculture and what that means. I'm looking forward to having conversations about energy, about mining, and about resource development. I'm looking forward to having conversations about the draft mineral strategy — I guess it's not a draft anymore, so the mineral strategy. I'm looking forward to having conversations about what the government believes

when they talked about subsidies for birth control or for fertility treatments or period products, because those are things that were really highlighted as being important.

One thing I didn't realize when we included it in the Yukon NDP platform — when we talked about access for fertility treatment, I didn't realize how close to home that hit. I remember being told by someone that it was the first time they felt like they were being seen because of those hardships. It is important to recognize that families look different and that if there is that commitment and that willingness to be a family, and it is just not possible, then I am happy to know that this government is talking about those supports. I think that's important.

I also think that it is really important that when we talk about — so, for example, my colleague — there is going to be a new health centre in the community of Old Crow, and that is really important. But what is also really important is making sure that we have training opportunities for people in that community to become those health care workers and those support workers.

When I think about visiting any rural community in the territory which is represented here by us — knowing that support for home care was challenging, which is why we talked about that training opportunity based on the Nuka model. We think that is important and so we're happy that was included in the confidence and supply agreement because we think that there is a real opportunity.

We also think that it is important that when we talk about training and communities, we are talking about identifying people in communities who will do the job that those communities need. Again, I look at the community of Old Crow — knowing that what we really need to be doing there is encouraging and identifying people in that community to do the important jobs like being the water truck driver and the sewage truck driver — making sure that we have built in redundancy in that community, so someone can be sick — because that is a community that is 100-percent based on water delivery and sewage pickup. The fact that right now that rests pretty squarely on one or two sets of shoulders is hard.

Knowing that when we talk about training opportunities — knowing that there is not a single community in the territory where there are not people who would fill those jobs, who would do those jobs, but they haven't had that opportunity for that training — so, when we look at building these government projects in communities — trying to figure out a way that we make sure that people in those communities have those opportunities to be trained as carpenters, electricians, and plumbers — knowing that if it is going to take two years for a project to be built, that could be the two years before your apprenticeship and that is critical, if we talk about building that capacity and that redundancy in those communities.

So, I think that there is a real opportunity as we move forward to work together. I think that there are going to be times where we will agree and there are definitely going to be times when we will disagree, but sometimes it is within those disagreements that we learn a different perspective and we can

learn things from each other, and I think that is a real opportunity.

So, I look forward to those conversations in this Chamber and I look forward to the conversations as we go together knowing that we won't always agree but we're always going to be coming at it for what we believe is the best interests of our friends and our neighbours. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is my honour and privilege to address this Legislative Assembly. I'm looking forward to working with all of the honourable members of this Chamber to make the lives of Yukoners better. It is truly a privilege to have the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

I have been sent here, Mr. Speaker, by the people of Riverdale South to represent them. I'm grateful and honoured that the people of Riverdale South placed their trust and faith in me to represent them once again. Riverdale South is truly an amazing, maybe beautiful, and rather unique place to call home. It is an established and yet diverse neighbourhood. It has single-family and multi-family dwellings. It has community clubs, young families, seniors housing, schools, businesses — large and small — wilderness, lakes, and world-class hiking, biking, and walking trails.

Recreation — summer and winter — is on our doorsteps, but so is downtown Whitehorse and all that it has to offer. It has been my true honour to serve as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the past four and a half years and return now with a new mandate, new responsibilities, and a vibrant team of leaders.

I'm so honoured to have worked with the MLAs on this side of the House — and all MLAs, but particularly I know our team better. We are diverse in skill and opinion, but I can attest that there is no group of people who has been more dedicated to Yukoners in these roles.

Government must understand their responsibility to serve the public, understand their authority to act, abide by the rules, and foster innovative, progressive problem-solving among a talented public service.

Government must be fair, efficient, and accountable. We must strive for professionalism and excellence. Never before has this been more evident than during the world pandemic. Our senior management and all members of the public service have been called upon to work in places and at tasks that they may have never considered — never been asked to achieve before. They have risen to every challenge; they have worked above and beyond.

In making preparation for this presentation, I read several — as some of my colleagues have mentioned — other replies to throne speeches, and curiously, almost without exception, every person who spoke — no matter the party — spoke of wanting to do things differently, encouraging a more professional decorum in this House, and committed to behaving in an appropriately respectful way. Many of those speakers are in this room today, and I urge them to remember and honour those commitments.

Sound decisions are based on solid, knowable evidence — evidence that provides the basis for decision-making and is

communicated in support of a decision, fosters greater transparency, accountability, and understanding. Even if you ultimately don't agree with the decision, the opportunity to understand it is critical.

Communicating how decisions are made and what facts are taken into account is the responsibility of government. This is my view and belief in how government should operate. This is the government that Yukoners deserve.

They also deserve to hear strong female voices. Yukoners have sent eight women to this Legislative Assembly to represent them. Women bring a unique perspective and need a greater voice in politics. The team of Liberal candidates in the election held last month was an incredibly diverse group of talented Yukoners and included eight amazing women. While those women were not all re-elected, they remain leaders in our community and will serve Yukoners in many different ways.

I am proud to share the opportunity to be in this Legislative Assembly with the eight women who were elected and will represent their neighbourhoods and their constituents so well.

Mr. Speaker, in my previous profession as a lawyer, and in my current profession, your reputation is everything. It precedes you, people judge you by it, and they react to you based on it. It just happens to be true. Earning the trust of my peers, superiors, clients, and the public has always guided my work. My career has been dedicated to fairness, equality, collaboration, and respect for all people. My work has often focused on finding real solutions, improving government processes, and instigating change.

I will continue to do this as an elected member of this Legislative Assembly, representing Riverdale South and as Minister of Justice, the Auditor General, and the Minister of Health and Social Services. This is a true privilege. I trust that my skills and attitude will serve me well in these roles.

I echo the comments of my colleague, the Minister of Education, about how bittersweet taking on new roles and leaving others behind has been. It is also a tremendous honour to take on new responsibilities and have the opportunity to forge new relationships. I hope that you find that to be true for you as well.

As I move on from the Education portfolio, I want to thank Nicole Morgan and her senior management team who worked tirelessly for Yukon students. Together we realized the Yukon University, settled the 11-year lawsuit with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon and built a new secondary school, made a plan to modernize learning spaces — starting with Whistle Bend school and portables at Golden Horn, Robert Service School, Selkirk and Hidden Valley — and perhaps most importantly, we began a true evaluation and independent review of inclusive and special education — a task that has never been done before.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to all that and the everyday work and services and issues and challenges of running Yukon schools, we asked the Department of Education and all those who work in Yukon schools to manage through a world pandemic. If that wasn't enough, we moved early learning childcare to Education while launching a universal childcare subsidy program on the way in. We have often asked more than

was humanly possible from every single education staff person, teacher, and administrator. Without question, they met those challenges. To them all I say thank you, albeit inadequate. I know that they are dedicated to their work and will continue to serve Yukoners as we go forward.

In this mandate, I have the honour to serve Yukoners as Auditor General, Minister of Justice, and Minister of Health and Social Services. It is the honour of my legal career to serve as Auditor General and Minister of Justice for this government and for Yukoners.

I'm immensely proud of the evolution and the work of the Department of Justice over the past mandate. We conducted an independent review of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and implemented the recommendations. We initiated an RCMP historical cases unit, increased funding to Legal Aid and to the Human Rights Commission, implemented the Gladue report writing program, supported development of community safety plans, introduced a new mandate for administration of justice agreements that support and respect the vision of First Nations, and the sexualized assault response team — an issue that I have worked on since I was 18 years old. As my colleague from Riverdale North says, that was not yesterday.

I want to take the opportunity to thank Minister Frost and Minister McLean for working so hard with me to achieve the SART services for Yukoners — the sexualized assault response team. It's an issue that I will continue to work on and focus on because it has just been too long that our community, our society, our courts, and our justice system have not responded in the way that's most appropriate to victims of sexual assault. It cannot go on any longer.

The Department of Justice — and many departments across government, but all focused eventually in Justice with respect to drafting and completion — helped me bring 43 pieces of legislation to this Legislative Assembly and 20 budget bills over the last mandate. I want to thank all members of the 34th Legislature for their thorough attention and review of those new laws. They have all been brought here for the benefit of Yukoners. It was an amazing amount of work and an excellent start to the modernization of Yukon laws.

Lastly, I would touch base for a moment on my role as the Minister of Health and Social Services. Our government has been laser-focused and dedicated to transforming Yukon's health care approach and how we can improve how people can access health care services in their communities. There is simply not enough time to list the improvements made under the leadership of Minister Frost. I will do my very best to honour her achievements by striving for high-quality health care for all, increased community wellness, and supports to address substance use and serve our most vulnerable people here in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, our caucus has met with literally thousands of people during our first mandate and brings a renewed commitment to transparency in government operations and finances, a legislature that incorporates First Nation values and culture and a caucus that is respectful, accountable, and responsive to Yukoners.

I believe that for every problem there is a solution when you tackle it with an open mind, hard work, and integrity. I look forward to us all working for Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, as I close my remarks, I want to thank my family and friends who have supported me during the past mandate, through that spring election and all the weather and challenges that it brought, including a pandemic, and on into these next challenges. I simply would not be here without them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is an honour to rise today and to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I'm absolutely thrilled to continue in my role as the MLA for Klondike as well. It's truly the honour of my life to serve my constituents and to represent my home, Dawson City, as well.

My re-election campaign would not have been possible without a lot of hard work from a lot of very dedicated Yukoners. I'm endlessly grateful for their continued support — this being my third campaign as the MLA for Klondike.

I do want to start with thanking members of the Yukon Liberal Party executive for their tireless work, whether it's during election campaigns or during the regular season — either. Each of those members made additional and impressive contributions, not only to our team and to the campaign but to our platform and therefore the lives of Yukoners through programs that went from platform to mandate.

I want to thank the executive which includes George Filipovic, Linda Casson, Noah Curtis, Janine Workman, Mike Pemberton, Kim Stavert, Clarence Timmons, Vice-President Carly Carruthers, and President Emily Farrell. The executive is also supported by past President Devin Bailey and former party leader, Arthur Mitchell. I'm very grateful to both of them for their contributions and guidance as well.

Our campaign would not have been possible without the many efforts of a lot of people in our particular riding associations. I'm very humbled by the support that our teams gave us. Each candidate was supported by a team of dedicated volunteers. We were so fortunate to have so many new faces join us to support the efforts to keep us going. From door-knockers to campaign managers to those in charge of snacks, our candidates each brought incredible people on board from their campaigns, from a diverse number of backgrounds, which is really the hallmark of the Yukon Liberal Party.

My campaign and every campaign was supported out of the core team from Whitehorse through our election readiness. We had our campaign chair, Moira Lassen; we had the campaign administrator, Carly Carruthers; the communications chair, Sunny Patch; we had Jason Cunning, Kathleen Smith, Renée Francoeur, Michael Curtis, and Dario Paola. The contribution of this core team can't be overstated. I want to thank them all. We all know the drill. Every single person in the Legislative Assembly knows all of the hard work done, from producing the materials to assisting the candidates, the work that they did with the candidates, guiding the volunteers, keeping up with the quick pace of the election period — endless work, tireless work. I don't think these folks slept.

My team in Dawson generously donated their priceless skills and their dedication, their endless hours as well, and I'm forever grateful to the crew of volunteers who worked very hard, every day, to make my re-election possible. I am especially privileged to know and to work with my core team in Dawson City, which included — there are too many people to name, but I'll name the core folks who were there every day: Sacha Marceau, Viki Paulins, Jody Beaumont, Cara MacAdam, and also our campaign manager, the tireless work of a very dedicated public servant who believes in democracy like no one else, Kyla McArthur.

I am also very grateful to all the candidates from all the parties. It is very hard to put your name forth for an election. It is a huge commitment, as everybody in this room can tell as well, and one that comes with great responsibility. To all teams, to all political parties, and to all their candidates, thank you very much for your tireless efforts — and to the families as well. There is a lot of onus and responsibility at home, that is for sure. I remember talking to the Leader of the Official Opposition about how his partner is now a single mom at home because of all the work that he has to do on the campaign trail.

With our candidates, they definitely worked very hard to reach all corners of the Yukon, and I was glad to participate in that work and to connect with Yukoners as well. What a privilege it is to be able to campaign not only in your own riding but in other ridings as well. Many thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me into your community and to meet with some fantastic elders in your community. What an honour it is to talk to people like Danny Joe and others. Thank you for that opportunity.

All the communities that I got to visit — it is just an honour and a privilege. To hear the concerns from every riding is extremely important, and I appreciate the opportunity to connect with Yukoners from all different walks of life right across our beautiful territory. We have heard recognition of great accomplishments, appreciation for the progress that our government has made over the last four and a half years, and we also heard that there is a lot more work to be done.

Mr. Speaker, the new government has a new Cabinet. Several ministers are in different roles. We had an opportunity to do things differently, and we have an opportunity to do things better. There is a new member of Cabinet — no stranger to this House — and there are members of the former Cabinet who are no longer here as well. We welcome the contributions from the Member for Riverdale North, and we miss the voice of Pauline Frost at the Cabinet table as well. I want to thank Pauline for her work on behalf of the residents of Vuntut Gwitchin and of all Yukoners. She can be very proud of what she has accomplished over the past four and a half years. That is for sure.

I also want to thank former members — MLAs Ted Adel and Paolo Gallina — for their work as Members of the 34th Legislative Assembly. I know that they served their constituents well. To Mr. Adel, I wish him very well in his retirement. He will be spending an awful lot of time out in Tagish country. Hopefully he will be offering some rides on his

boat to some of his ex--colleagues, and I hope that the fish are biting for him.

To Mr. Gallina, I know that he will remain an active member of our community and I look forward to his continued contributions to the Yukon as well.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you on your election as the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun. I know that you have a strong connection to all of the communities in your riding and you will serve them very well — the work that you've done with sports, recreation, and youth, not to mention your work with First Nation governments as well. We have an amazing representative for all three communities in you in Mayo-Tatchun. Thank you for that.

I would also like to thank Janet Moodie from the bottom of my heart for her guidance, wisdom, and patience all through the course of the last mandate. As you know, she is retiring this week as my chief of staff, and there is nobody more deserving of a long, restful retirement after a truly exemplary career in the Yukon. Talking to her just the other day, she had the opportunity to work in so many different departments — every department that starts with "E" by the way — and then to have the opportunity to then come over and work as principal secretary and chief of staff as well. I don't know of too many Canadians who have had an opportunity like that. Really, the work that she has done for Yukon and public services is truly remarkable.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very honoured to serve as Minister responsible for the Executive Council Office and the Minister of Finance as well.

One of the most important aspects of the Executive Council Office is our work with Yukon First Nations through our Aboriginal Relations department — really a whole-of-government collaborative approach spearheaded through the Executive Council Office. Our government believes in the value of genuine dialogue. We've seen it work, and we're very committed to continuing to govern in partnership with Yukon First Nations, generating benefits and positive outcomes for all Yukoners.

In 2016, relationships with Yukon First Nations were strained, to say the least. The Yukon Liberal government made a commitment to do better and to work in collaboration with First Nation governments. We delivered on this commitment and believe that it needs to continue because there are so many opportunities on the horizon when we all work together.

It was great to hear from the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin speaking about *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*. We have amazing leadership that we can look to in the past. That document has really saved us through the Yukon Forum many times. When we had elders from the Yukon Forum tell us that we have no choice to go back, that we need to work together — that's an extremely important message coming from our past leaders and some of our elders who are still around, but also some who have passed. It really is the glue that binds. We do not have a choice; we have to work together.

Our first legislative work as a new government was, in the 34th Assembly, to establish a National Indigenous Peoples Day as a statutory holiday in the Yukon. First Nations, as you know,

Mr. Speaker, are the heart and soul of Yukon communities, and this day is the chance to recognize their diversity, the diversity of accomplishments, and ongoing contributions to the vibrant cultural and historic fabric of the Yukon. We have made respectful relationships a priority by re-energizing the Yukon Forum, and we have met the chiefs consistently since being elected.

We have had significant success through the work of the Yukon Forum. Some of the memories, as we look and reflect on the work that we did in the 34th Legislative Assembly and the work that we have done through the working groups of the Yukon Forum — we have created a more united and strategic approach to engagement with the federal government when it comes to governance here in Yukon. We signed an agreement to clarify how resource royalties will be shared under chapter 23 of the final agreements. We signed a memorandum of understanding on heritage management which marked the Yukon as the only jurisdiction in Canada that has co-owned, co-managed historical sites with self-governing First Nations. Most recently we finalized and began implementing the very progressive Yukon First Nation procurement policy.

Mr. Speaker, strong partnerships have seen the Yukon become the first jurisdiction in Canada to create a comprehensive murdered and missing indigenous girls and two-spirited people strategy, entitled *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice*. The strategy outlines 31 action items that will guide our response — not just the territorial government but our collective response to the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. It was created in partnership with MMIWG2S+ survivors, families, indigenous women's organizations, First Nation governments, municipalities and other stakeholders, including the Government of Canada and the RCMP.

We also signed the *Final Recommended Peel Watershed Land Use Plan* and increased First Nation involvement in Yukon school governance through funding the Yukon Native Language Centre, the First Nations Education Commission and the Chiefs Committee on Education as well.

We have built a strong foundation, Mr. Speaker, and we need to keep on moving forward. Looking forward, our government is making commitments to implement Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy with our partners. We will implement our representative public service plan, *Breaking Trail Together*, an inclusive public service plan that is built around barrier-free recruitment, culturally safe and responsive work environments, and training opportunities as well.

We will continue to incorporate Yukon First Nation traditions and practices into the Yukon Legislative Assembly. We have only just begun there, Mr. Speaker. Supporting the establishment of a Yukon First Nation school board — we will continue to support that — the amazing work that has been done with the previous minister and is now being passed on to the capable hands of the new minister.

We will continue to fulfill our commitment to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. We will also continue to work actively to uphold, to support, and to promote the spirit and intent of the self-governing agreements

and to work together to identify and to resolve roadblocks. These are hard conversations, but we are so lucky and fortunate to have built a rapport with leadership in the First Nation governments across the Yukon. Sustaining and further developing these vital relationships with Yukon First Nations is the only way to an even more productive future for everybody in the territory, and we must build that future together.

While different departments will take the lead on many of these items, the Executive Council Office, of which I have the privilege of being minister, will play a coordinated role in all of them. Our government has made it a priority to foster positive, respectful relations with First Nation governments because these relationships are absolutely essential to all Yukoners. Working together doesn't mean that we are always going to agree. It means that we will continue to show up, and we will continue to put in the sweat equity together and we will work on these issues.

Our government will also continue to work with the Government of Canada, with municipal governments, and with the provinces and territories right across the country. We are looking forward to working with our neighbours in Alaska as well, continuing down that road, and hoping for better days as the pandemic starts to hopefully have a bent curve.

With regard to the Department of Finance, we are very proud of our record of financial management. The Financial Advisory Panel, in my first year as Premier, outlined the situation that we inherited from the previous government, and I am proud to say that we have set a more stable course for our financial future. We have solidified the leadership at the top of the department, and I am confident that we are on the right fiscal track.

COVID-19 has been a challenge from a fiscal point of view, but our good work with the Government of Canada has ensured that we have weathered a financial storm better than most. On the economic side, we are one of only two jurisdictions to see positive economic growth in 2020.

Mr. Speaker, we are leading the country in the fight against COVID-19. Our government has kept Yukoners safe throughout the pandemic and will continue to do that good work. Our vaccination rates are very impressive. Our economic programs to support businesses and individuals have been very successful. They lead Canada, and we are able to give the lift to businesses during relief, and now, as we turn toward recovery and see some lifting of restrictions, we will continue to be there for the private sector.

It was interesting to hear from Dr. Theresa Tam over the weekend, Canada's chief public health officer, referring to Yukon as — and I quote: "... a model that we're all looking towards for success..."

Our government is proud of this success and very grateful to the public servants who worked very hard through the pandemic and to Yukoners for doing their part for keeping the territory safe.

Our government is ready to keep the good work going and tackle what is ahead of us and we are working to improve the lives of all Yukoners. We have committed to working with all MLAs in the Legislative Assembly. We provide strong, stable

leadership that Yukoners deserve by working together. Yukoners have sent a clear message that we need to all work together for the benefit of the territory and that's what we are committed to doing.

We need steady leadership to get us onto the path of recovery. This year's budget sets the path to recovery and makes life more affordable for Yukoners, and I look forward to debating it later on this week. We also look forward to continuing to work with the NDP.

Both of our teams appreciate the need for a stable government to guide the Yukon right now. They have signed an agreement with us that achieves that stability, and we absolutely look forward to collaborating on areas that we can agree on and vigorously debating on those ones that we can't. There's plenty of room for a positive contribution and for more partnership working together, and I hope to see that from both opposition parties.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to support the Speech from the Throne that is before us, and I'll keep my comments to that for now.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the privilege and honour to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Dixon: I'll be very brief in speaking to this. I know that time is winding down and that there is interest in bringing this to a vote. I'm very much interested in that as well.

First of all, let me say that I'm very pleased to be back here in the Legislature. It has been some time — about five years or so — since I was able to stand in the Legislature and speak, so I'm pleased to be back on the floor of the Legislature and doing this work that I enjoy so much.

I won't speak too much about some of the riding-specific or family-specific things that I know many members address in these types of speeches, because I know that we're very cognizant of the time and the fact that we need to deal quickly with this material to accommodate what we feel is a very short Sitting for this amount of volume before us.

Tomorrow we'll see a budget tabled, and we'll have an opportunity to make responses to that budget, and at that time, my colleagues and I will have the opportunity to respond and discuss — in some cases, our first speeches before the Legislature — but we'll also address the type of riding-specific and personal matters that sometimes come up at those points.

The throne speech is obviously one that has been defined largely by the confidence and supply agreement between the Liberal caucus and the NDP caucus. So, obviously that is much of what I think we'll be debating and discussing over the coming days — whether it's the content of the agreement itself, the policy matters therein, or some of the governance structures and new ways of decisions being made that will be undertaken by this government.

One thing that I did want to note — I know that there has been a lot of discussion about one particular word, and it is the word "coalition". I know that it's something we have mentioned a few times. I know that both the Liberals and the NDP have been unwilling to sort of characterize their agreement as a coalition. On our side, we have been explicitly

referring to the agreement as a coalition. I think that it's something I wouldn't mind explaining.

Of course, as some members — and some members have bristled at the characterization of this as a coalition, but I think it merits some discussion.

I think that the reason they're uncomfortable with the term is that in Canadian politics over the last several years the term has become somewhat associated with illegitimacy. That's largely a function of what happened in 2008 with the proposed coalition back then and the subsequent prorogation crisis, but I think it's worth noting that there's absolutely nothing illegitimate about a coalition and that coalitions are quite common in parliamentary democracies around the world. In systems that use proportional representation, they're very much the norm.

Our use of the term "coalition" is not meant in any way to convey any sense of illegitimacy. Rather it's just my view of the correct assessment, based on the weight of the evidence of the agreement, and my assessment of what the nature of this agreement is. Because I view the current arrangement fitting the criteria of a coalition, that's why I use the term.

One of the ways that I've arrived at this determination is by looking at precedents. Obviously, those range on a spectrum from minority governments — we've typically seen these at the federal level. We have one right now in Ottawa where Prime Minister Harper holds a minority in Ottawa —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Dixon: Trudeau; sorry. Prime Minister Harper held one too. Prime Minister Harper and Prime Minister Trudeau have held minorities over the past decade or so, I should say.

Then we've seen more integrated caucuses — something like the Horgan-Weaver agreement in 2017. That's an agreement, of course, that will be very familiar to members of this Legislature because it, in many ways, informed the creation of the 2021 agreement between the Yukon Liberals and the Yukon NDP not only in its structure but, in some cases, it's almost identical and so it's quite clear that it was used as the basis upon which to build the agreement that we have here.

Then, of course, you see more fully blended governments. In Canada, those have been few but, looking back over history, you have the 1985 Peterson-Rae government, you have the 1999 Romanow government in Saskatchewan, and then, of course, at the federal level — we haven't seen one in a very, very long time, although we have seen one in the United Kingdom relatively recently with the Cameron-Clegg agreement of 2010. In that Cameron-Clegg agreement, I think that there is an actual agreement that we can review and determine some of the similarities.

So, when I look at those, I note a few important features. First of all, we have a written formal agreement between two parties that outlines how they will cooperate to allow the formation of a government in a situation where neither has a majority of seats — a hung parliament or a hung legislature — which is the situation that we find ourselves in today. That's not the case in any recent minority situations, but it's certainly more integrated than typical minority governments. We wouldn't see that, for instance, in Ottawa. There's no written

agreement for a minority government. There wasn't with Prime Minister Harper or with Prime Minister Trudeau over the past several decades.

The second — we note that the agreement sets out a fairly deep level of consultation on major policies and files. It outlines shared priorities and commits governments to act on a number of different key policy areas. This is clearly what happened with the Horgan-Weaver agreement back in 2017. I don't quite think that the Horgan-Weaver CASA quite meets the threshold for what I would characterize as a coalition but, as we've seen, this agreement between the Yukon Liberals and the Yukon NDP goes quite a bit further than that. The agreement goes further in a few very important ways.

In section 3 of their agreement — of the current CASA — we see a commitment to joint policy implementation whereby a minister and an NDP MLA will jointly make decisions, give direction to public service, and interact with the public service on a regular basis. We've also seen it tied specifically to two specific policy areas, but those policy areas are extremely broad ones. The *Putting People First* report, for instance, is comprehensive in nature and applies across the entire department — and then, of course, the energy file as well. In any event, it requires that they allow members of both parties to work directly with the civil service.

Another feature of this is, of course, the legislative coordination. There's the structure of the standing committees. That's normally the realm of all Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, but instead, in this case, we have seen the two parties come together and unilaterally make decisions on behalf of the Legislature. Things like the length of the Sitting or the structure of committees — those are normally things that are determined by the Legislative Assembly in its whole, so that's obviously a departure from that and a new level of integration between the parties that we haven't typically seen.

Finally, of course, there's the fact that the resourcing — the NDP will receive additional staff and resources from the Government of Yukon provided directly to the NDP caucus. That's quite unusual and impressive — as far as I am aware — for government resources to be funnelled directly to an opposition party. That's obviously a new level of integration and one far beyond what we've seen in other jurisdictions.

Then there's the creation of a secretariat, a specific government department or subset of a department, tasked with managing this agreement. So, when I look at the weight of that evidence, when I look at the balance of those criteria, I find that this agreement can be placed far beyond the Horgan-Weaver agreement and close to, but probably not as far as, the Cameron-Clegg coalition. So, ultimately, I believe that the most accurate characterization of this agreement is a coalition, and that's why I've used the term.

I just thought that would be useful to explain why I've used the term. I know that some have bristled at the term and have been uncomfortable with it, so I thought I would describe it. It's not an indication of illegitimacy or anything like that; it's simply something that I feel could be an accurate characterization of the agreement.

As has been noted, the throne speech focuses heavily on some of the policy material in the CASA — whether it's things that were campaigned on by one party or another or not — but ultimately, I think what's important is that there are things in the throne speech that we can certainly support. There are things that I have said publicly; there are things that even appeared in the Yukon Party's platform that exist in this agreement. So, it's not that we oppose this in its entirety. There are gems of positive policy in this.

One example that has been cited a few times has been the on-the-land substance abuse and treatment program or facility. That is something that appeared in all three political parties' campaigns and platforms, and that's something we're excited to see. The throne speech included a commitment to streamline YESA. There were a number of things in that throne speech that were fairly positive.

That being said, there were obviously a number of areas where we disagree. I don't want to rehash the debates and differing policy positions that we took throughout the election. Obviously, there is a difference of opinion on the government's proposed early learning and childcare program. Our view on that is that the program they have put forward isn't exactly universal and in fact leaves behind a number of Yukon families and children. The alternative that we offered was well-debated during the election, so I don't think that we need to re-hash it now.

Things like rent control and things like the minimum wage — these are issues where we disagree with the government and with some of the material in there. On the matter of rent control, we obviously proposed a motion earlier today to debate it in an urgent or pressing way through a motion under the Standing Orders which would allow that. There will be more opportunity as this session progresses for further debate on those types of issues.

On the minimum wage, obviously we asked a question today, and I know that has piqued the interest of some members and their responses. I should note that our issue with that particular policy area isn't the minimum wage itself or what the actual rate is — much of it is related to the process and the fact that the business community in this territory has become accustomed to a process by which the Employment Standards Board makes recommendations about the setting of the minimum wage. In this particular case, that process has been thrown out and replaced with the political direction coming from the confidence and supply agreement.

I don't need to — like I said, I don't want to go through issue by issue and lay out the differences of opinion. We will have the Legislature for that, we will have debate for that, and we will have Question Period for that.

I will be the last speaker from the Yukon Party on this. We do look forward to bringing it to a vote and moving on to matters of importance such as the budget. As I have noted, part of the reason for our expeditious approach to this throne speech is that we feel that the Sitting that we are currently in is going to be fairly short — and indeed too short. That means that it is incumbent on us as the Official Opposition to manage our time very carefully, and so to allow for more fulsome debate and

scrutiny of the budget, we want to expedite our response to the throne speech.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move on. I will close by, as well, welcoming the Chair and thanking my colleagues for the opportunity to be here. It is a pleasure to be back in a new role in the Legislature but a role here in the Legislature nonetheless, and I am excited about the opportunity. We will have much more to say about my riding, my family, and all the opportunities before us with regard to collaboration when we have a chance to reply to the budget speech tomorrow, I understand.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to bringing this particular issue to a vote.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, as well as my congratulations for your new role here in the Legislative Assembly. Thank you for addressing us yesterday and the fantastic words that you shared with us. What an absolute pleasure it is to have an opportunity to return here to the Legislative Assembly for the 35th session. Of course, again, what an honour to be here on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and to be here representing the good people of Porter Creek South.

Like all of us in the Assembly, we have the opportunity to do this work because of the support of our family members, friends, and acquaintances, and those who rally around us and support us to take this on. Although this job, this task, and this responsibility do come with lots of challenges and with sacrifices, those around us make the biggest sacrifices. So, I would first like to thank my wife and my two sons, Taylor and Calum — my wife, Delilah — for the opportunity to continue to do this work. We had discussions about working in a public role like this many, many years ago — back in 2009 — when I was looking to make the decision to run for Whitehorse City Council, at that time, knowing that this would lead to sacrifices for all. That has been the case over the last number of years, and I again want to thank them for their support through this election this spring.

Also, when I think back to preparing to do this work — again, I'm lucky enough to have parents whom I can still speak with and reach out to. I know that a lot of my colleagues have lost folks over this last mandate, and my heart goes out to them and the words that they shared today — but again, to my mother, Johnena, and my stepdad, Jeff, as well my dad, Dr. NG Pillai, and his wife, Bernice. I use wisdom that has been passed on from my grandmother and grandfather, Mary and Lauchie MacLellan, in every Sitting.

I think about the lessons I was taught by them — hardworking individuals who grew up on the land as farmers — my grandfather as a miner, and then going back to farming in his retirement. They were people who were very, very close to the land and I have learned so much from their respect for the place they called home. Those lessons were so important in the last Sitting, especially when taking on different responsibilities, such as mining or forestry or agriculture and the lessons they taught me.

I also would like to thank Father Stanley MacDonald who is still a spiritual advisor, I'll say. He is the priest that baptized me, married me and still, to this day, works at St. Xavier University, and I reach out to him still for advice. Over the period of this past campaign, he was kind enough on a couple of occasions to speak with me and give me the opportunity for us to pray.

As I move on, I want to thank the individuals who worked around my campaign. There are a number of folks from Porter Creek South, and I just cannot thank them enough for the support — walking, knocking on doors, prepping, doing all the absolute work that one has to do — early mornings, late nights. When I think about those folks, I just cannot say enough. Kim Stavert, my advisor here in my work, but she also ran my campaign — what an incredible individual who gives so much to Yukoners in her work and is such an absolutely talented individual. I was lucky enough to have her guidance — along with a number of other individuals who gave so much. Really, that is why I have the opportunity to come back here. It's because of them.

A long-time politician, who was a conservative MLA and later a mayor, taught me a lesson a long time ago, and it was quite simple. He said, "Don't ever forget, if you're elected, that the seat that you sit in does not belong to you — it belongs to the individuals from that riding. It's their seat; you just get an opportunity to sit there while they let you."

Again, I say to the people of Porter Creek South: Thank you so much for the opportunity to serve you. I do not take that lightly, and I know that I have an obligation to represent all folks in the riding, no matter what their political views are. I cherish the opportunity to work on behalf of all folks there.

When I think back on the last number of years and the work with Porter Creek South, I also have to put out a big thank you to the Porter Creek Community Association. The association has done an absolutely tremendous job. They have just elected a new executive. This week, they have their annual general meeting. As I have said before, it's primarily a group of amazing folks in the community — primarily moms in the neighbourhood — and just talented individuals who work tirelessly on behalf of everybody in the community.

Working with them to upgrade the Pine Street park is something that has really improved people's quality of life, and the children in the community — we see lots of smiles on their faces, as they continue to use that space, as well as the traffic crossing — that was key. It was something that was — for probably over a decade, folks wanted to see those changes in their community — and this morning, just driving down 12th Avenue, coming into work and seeing little ones having that opportunity to take their bikes to school now that there's a safe way for them to cross. It definitely brings a smile to my face, when I see those lights finished and children in grades 1 and 2 — young individuals who have the opportunity now to, in a healthy manner, travel to school, and their parents feeling very comfortable that they can do that in a safe manner.

It's very important — as my colleagues have done — to thank other individuals before we conclude today — and I'll have an opportunity to share a bit more — but I'll start with just

thank the folks at Energy, Mines and Resources. What an amazing group of people I had the opportunity to work with across the entire department — two deputy ministers, Mr. Stephen Mills, and then Mr. Paul Moore —

Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on motion re Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled May 12, 2021:

35-1-2

Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (May 12, 2021) (Speaker Harper)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 3

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, May 13, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin

DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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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, May 13, 2021 — 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: Today we have a tribute to the French community, and we have several guests here today. I would just like us to all welcome them here, please. We have: from l'Association franco-yukonnaise, Mme. Lorraine Taillefer, vice-présidente; we have M. Francis Lefebvre, directeur des communications et des relations communautaires; we have from the Direction des services en français, the French Language Services Directorate, we have M. André Bourcier, directeur; Nancy Power, gestionnaire de communications et de politiques; et Antoine Goulet, agent de communication.

I think that I also see Mr. Andrew Carne from ATAC Resources — if we could just please say “Welcome”.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Allan Nixon from the Kudz Ze Kayah team in BMC is here as well.

I would also like to welcome two individuals who are here today for a tribute I will be doing. Donna Hogan and Angie Joseph-Rear are here for the tribute that we will be doing to Joella Hogan today.

Applause

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Francophonie Day

Hon. Mr. Streicker: M. le Président, ce samedi 15 mai marquera la 15e journée de la francophonie yukonnaise.

Depuis 2007, cette journée invite les Yukonnaises et les Yukonnais à célébrer la contribution des francophones au développement de notre grand territoire au cours des deux derniers siècles.

Nous avons beaucoup à célébrer en cette 15^e Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise. La communauté francophone du Yukon est en pleine croissance et se démarque par sa vitalité. Cette vitalité se ressent et se vit tous les jours grâce au dévouement de tous ceux et celles qui, comme nous, travaillent à offrir des services, des programmes et des activités en français. Je tiens à remercier tous ceux et celles qui font vivre et rayonner la francophonie au territoire et à la grandeur du Canada.

Je profite de l'occasion pour féliciter deux Yukonnais qui figurent au palmarès 2020 des dix personnalités les plus

influentes de la francophonie canadienne de Francopresse. L'une de ces personnes est Jean-Sébastien Blais, président de la Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. Jean-Sébastien a notamment contribué à la création du nouveau Centre scolaire secondaire communautaire Paul-Émile Mercier. L'autre personnalité francophone influente nommée au palmarès est le médecin-hygiéniste en chef du Yukon, le Dr. Brendan Hanley. Le Dr. Hanley a été reconnu pour son bilinguisme ainsi que son engagement à communiquer en français des enjeux reliés à la santé.

J'aimerais aussi féliciter les récipiendaires des deux prix annuels remis par l'Association franco-yukonnaise. Félicitations à Sophie Molgat, gagnante du prix Bénévole de l'année 2021, ainsi qu'à Diane Corbin, gagnante du prix Engagement exceptionnel 2020. Le gagnant ou la gagnante du prix Engagement exceptionnel 2021 sera annoncé à l'occasion des festivités organisées par l'Association franco-yukonnaise pour la Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise.

Ces festivités se dérouleront en ligne ce samedi sous le thème « fête à la plage ». Il fait froid! Voilà une belle occasion de nous baigner dans la culture francophone!

Je salue tous les organismes, les citoyens et citoyennes, les artistes, les entrepreneurs et les bénévoles francophones qui contribuent à bâtir un Yukon prospère où il fait bon vivre. Bonne journée de la francophonie yukonnaise!

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Yukon Francophonie Day, which takes place on Saturday, May 15.

On this day, we celebrate Yukon's French language and culture. We will pay tribute to all francophones across the Yukon for the amazing contributions they make toward our territory.

The francophone community presence is strong in our territory, as is the language. For over 30 years, since the adoption of the *Languages Act* in 1988, the Government of Yukon has made gainful strides in delivering programs and services in French and actively offering bilingual service across departments.

Throughout the private sector, we have seen a rise in French services, as well, due in large part to the advocacy and assistance of the francophone community and organizations such as l'Association franco-yukonnaise. L'Association franco-yukonnaise has made great strides in promoting the French language and culture throughout the Yukon and providing services to the francophone community. Francophones are a huge part of the social fabric that makes up the Yukon.

As critic for the French Language Services Directorate, I will have the opportunity to see how programs and services are growing and changing within the public sector. I would like to thank l'Association franco-yukonnaise and the French Language Services Directorate, as well as those organizations who work to promote culture and provide service in French. Thank you to the francophone community for all your contributions to the Yukon.

Ms. White: Merci M. le Président, ça me fait plaisir de prendre la parole au nom du NPD du Yukon pour souligner le 15^e anniversaire de la Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise qui aura lieu ce samedi.

Cette journée vise à souligner l'histoire et la vitalité de la communauté francophone du Yukon. Plusieurs activités auront lieu en personne au Centre scolaire secondaire communautaire et aussi en ligne. Une chasse au trésor, des ateliers d'arts et la lecture de contes par notre commissaire, Angélique Bernard, et un spectacle en soirée ne sont que quelques exemples.

Toutes les activités sont gratuites et ouvertes au grand public. C'est une occasion pour les francophones de se rassembler et pour l'ensemble des Yukonnais de découvrir une communauté qui fait partie du Yukon depuis près de 200 ans.

Un grand merci à l'AFY qui coordonne l'organisation de cette journée année après année et un grand merci à Marjolène Gauthier pour son travail. Merci Monsieur.

In recognition of Joella Hogan and The Yukon Soaps Company

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal Party to pay tribute to Joella Hogan and The Yukon Soaps Company.

Before I begin, I want to recognize our guests who are with us today — thank you very much for coming. Mr. Speaker, there's nothing better than seeing a Yukon business succeed. Joella Hogan, the owner of Yukon Soaps, has been a fantastic example of entrepreneurial success in Yukon.

Last week, she was selected to receive a \$250,000 grant from the Grand Challenges Canada's Indigenous Innovation Initiative. Joella was one of 10 recipients in Canada chosen to advance indigenous gender equality across health, economic, and social dimensions through transformative innovation and systemic change. This funding will support Joella's new mentorship program that will teach indigenous girls, two-spirits plus people, and women to develop plant-based micro-businesses.

Joella is well deserving of this funding and well positioned to launch her mentorship program. Retailers across the territory already sell the Mayo-based entrepreneur's products, and her traditional plant-based soaps are gaining in popularity. Even as the pandemic caused serious challenges, Yukoners stepped up to support local businesses like Yukon Soaps. At the same time, Joella responded by increasing focus toward online marketing. With a new website and new marketing approach, she saw a 50-percent sales increase from US-based customers.

It is more important now than ever to celebrate and support homegrown businesses like Yukon Soaps and to celebrate programs that diversify our economy while supporting Yukoners who are under-represented in our business community.

Please join me again in congratulating Joella. Hi to Joella, who is listening in with us today, and thank you for all that you do in your community — not only her entrepreneurial work but also looking at housing needs in her community, coming up with solutions for that while working with Yukon Housing

Corporation, as well as her work in mentoring folks to succeed in business — again, wishing her success in delivering this mentorship program.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to a beautiful Northern Tutchone woman, Joella Hogan, and her business. Joella is a member of the Na-Cho Nyák Dun First Nation and lives in Mayo, Yukon. I hear that she is listening today.

She is a manager of the heritage and culture department of NND where her passion for all things traditional in history has been good for her and her community. But was that enough? No. She had free time that needed filling, despite an active lifestyle. In 2012, Joella decided to buy an established soap company named the Essential Soap Bar.

After several years, she decided to change the name. The Yukon Soap Company was born, and it became truly hers. Joella began to research, along with elders, and, of course, her biggest supporter — her mom, Donna Hogan — using and gathering all-natural local ingredients around her to add to her soaps. She uses wild rose petals, juniper berries, and many other plants. Then, to integrate her First Nation heritage, she uses local beadwork to imprint on her products, making them truly unique and authentic and Yukon. Whether it is bar soap, shampoo bars, or essential oil blends, you know that the product is natural and of high quality.

For close to 20 years, Joella and her company have produced many products and generally sold them at local craft fairs, markets, and local stores, but with the world of COVID, a new way to market was found — the online market — and she is now distributing around the world. As her company grew and she became better known, Joella has presented at many events as guest speaker and shared her stories of success and challenges.

Recently, the Indigenous Innovation Initiative had 238 eligible applications for various awards. The inaugural gender-equality initiative and Grand Challenges Canada awarded \$2.5 million to 10 projects. We are so proud of our Yukon winner, Joella Hogan and The Yukon Soaps Company, as a personal care brand leader, awarded \$250,000 for a project called "Learning Our People's Way". She will continue to involve youth and elders and keep land, people, and culture connected through her work. This is so exciting.

Joella, we wish you continued success, and I know that your passion for passing on culture and sharing this wisdom with others will always be with you. Congratulations.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Joella Hogan, The Yukon Soaps Company, the Indigenous Innovation Initiative, and the community of Na-Cho Nyák Dun. At the 2015 Indigenous Summit, the Hon. Murray Sinclair said these words: "Innovation isn't always about creating new things. Innovation sometimes involves looking back to our old ways and bringing them forward to this new situation."

These words ring true for the work happening in Northern Tutchone territory by The Yukon Soaps Company. Joella is an incredible storyteller with deep roots within the heritage department of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation and is a strong advocate for entrepreneurs. Joella has strong ties to her family, is grounded in her culture and heritage, and is a business leader in her community.

When Joella returned to live in her traditional territory of Mayo, she envisioned reconnecting with her community, elders, land, and language. The traditional knowledge of plants, language, and culture of the Northern Tutchone people can be found in every product that is made by The Yukon Soaps Company. It is by building on these successes that Joella applied for the Indigenous Innovation Initiative grant.

The Yukon Soaps Company will be creating a space for people to develop skills, share in revenue generation, and expand on their sacred connection to plants and relationships with one another through a regenerative economic development program. These local micro businesses will be based on plant knowledge and cultural teachings.

The investment in Joella's community goes deeper. Everyone knows that communities are facing housing shortages, but not everyone figures out a way to both expand their business and build housing at the same time. The Yukon Soaps Company will have a new factory, and Mayo will have three new housing units, one of which will be universally accessible.

Congratulations to Joella Hogan and The Yukon Soaps Company.

Speaker: Are there any 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. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22 — Introduction and First Reading*

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 201, 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. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 201 agreed to

Bill No. 200: *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21 — Introduction and First Reading*

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 200, 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. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 200 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced? Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Dixon: I rise to give notice of the following motion: THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to halt plans to implement rent control on May 15, 2021, as outlined in the Liberal Party's confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democratic Party, in order to:

- (1) develop solutions to mitigate the harm that this announcement has caused to tenants and landlords; and
- (2) properly consult with affected landlords and tenants on the details of any rent control proposal prior to implementation.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately rebuild and repair the relationship with the Yukon Fish and Game Association by:

- (1) restoring core funding to the Yukon Fish and Game Association; and
- (2) ensuring that no future funding agreements contain gag orders as proposed by the previous Liberal government.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to strongly condemn the rocket attacks by Hamas against Israeli citizens and to be clear in all of its public statements that this attack by Hamas on innocent people is an act of terrorism.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce a regulatory framework for psychology in the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to take action to improve access to health care by developing a wait-time reduction strategy.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to invite the Office of the Auditor General of Canada to present the report on mental health services in rural communities to the Speaker of the House as soon as possible.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

**MOTION OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY
NO. 2**
(Standing Order 28)
Implementation of rent control

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise to request the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity pursuant to Standing Order 28:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to halt plans to implement rent control on May 15, 2021, as outlined in the Liberal Party's confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democratic Party, in order to:

(1) develop solutions to mitigate the harm this announcement has caused to tenants and landlords; and

(2) properly consult with affected Yukon landlords and tenants on the details of any rent control proposal prior to implementation.

This is a matter of urgency. It is certainly urgent and pressing. It's even more urgent and pressing than yesterday. We are now less than 36 hours from the policy coming into force. This policy was announced by the Liberal-NDP coalition agreement several weeks ago, but there has been a complete absence of communication since then. It is clear that the government does not have a plan for this policy.

This lack of planning, lack of consultation, and lack of communication has caused immense hardship throughout the communities. Housing is an important issue throughout the Yukon, and the negative impacts that this policy has had on the housing market have made this even more pressing and urgent.

I urge my colleagues to grant unanimous consent today to bring this important issue forward and this motion forward for debate.

Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition, pursuant to Standing Order 28, is requesting unanimous consent to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has not been granted.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Rent control

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked a very simple question about the Liberals' plan to impose rent control in the Yukon. The minister was unable to answer. Outside of the Legislature, he told the media that he is still trying to figure it out himself. He said — and I quote: "... we're going to explore and we're still working with our partners in the New Democratic caucus on what that looks like." Earlier this week, the NDP leader pointed the finger and told the media that she is still waiting for the government to figure out how it is going to work.

So, I want to give the coalition another chance to explain their policy. Can anyone tell Yukoners what policy or regulation is going to be used to bring this policy into force?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin Question Period this afternoon by correcting the Leader of the Official Opposition. He again referred to us as a "coalition". The Yukon Party should know that we are not a coalition. The Yukon Party has intimate knowledge about coalitions. He knows this. It was a Yukon Party government in 1992 that formed a coalition when an independent member from Carcross actually joined the Cabinet as a health minister.

Here on this side of the bench, we have a Yukon minority government that has a confidence and supply agreement with the New Democrat opposition on the other side of the House. I just want to make sure that people understand that the Leader of the Official Opposition is incorrect. We have a confidence and supply agreement, not a coalition.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, that explanation will be cold comfort to those Yukoners who have been kicked out of their homes.

We are less than 36 hours from this policy coming into force. The government has done no consultation, they have no communication plan, and they have no implementation plan. This absence of leadership has done real harm to Yukon's housing market. Eviction notices have been issued; rental units are going up for sale; landlords are throwing up their hands and throwing in the towel. Yesterday, the minister told us that this was all intended to cool the housing market and increase the supply of rentals.

Unfortunately, the opposite has happened, Mr. Speaker. Will this government admit that they got this one wrong and halt this ill-conceived policy?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, had the Leader of the Official Opposition been listening to the radio this morning, he would have heard answers to many of his questions. There is a communications policy, Mr. Speaker.

The bottom line is that we have an agreement with our colleagues across the aisle in the New Democratic caucus. We have reached a confidence and supply agreement with our colleagues. That agreement was posted publicly about a month ago. It lays out the terms of the deal that we struck with our colleagues. The bottom line is that part of that deal includes a rent cap.

The member opposite, as I said yesterday, knows full well that, during the last election, the Liberal Party campaigned and will deliver on an increase in the supply of lots. We are going to build 5th and Rogers. We have a number of housing initiatives that we are championing. We have, in the aftermath of the election — Yukoners were very clear. They wanted us to work together. We reached out to the Yukon Party. We reached out to the NDP, and it was the NDP that said, "Yes, we are going to provide a stable government for Yukoners in the face of our recovery efforts out of COVID, in the face of the pandemic." We appreciate that offer of support. So, we struck the agreement. One of the things that the New Democratic caucus wanted us to fulfill was a rent cap. That was something that was very important to them, and we are going to live by the terms of the agreement. The agreement is on our website and is very clear to anybody who wants to read it.

Mr. Dixon: The question was very simple. It was: What policy or regulations are actually going to change to enact this policy? It is clear from the minister's explanation on the radio this morning and his performance here today that he simply doesn't know. That is very concerning, Mr. Speaker.

I hope that it goes without saying that the Yukon Party opposes this policy, but what is more concerning than the policy itself is the terrible way that it has been handled and communicated. This policy is coming into effect in less than 36 hours, and there has been no public communication about it. Even calls to the residential tenancies office have revealed that they are just as surprised and unaware as everyone else. The minister doesn't know how this is going to work. The Leader of the NDP doesn't know how this is going to work. It has already created chaos in the market and damaged the already fragile housing situation in this community.

Will the Premier step in, show some leadership, and put this policy on hold so that proper consultation can occur and an actual plan can be developed and Yukoners aren't faced with such terrible public policy?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The policy is very clear. It has been on our website for a month. As of May 15, rents will be capped at one percent. Now, if the member had read the legislation, it means that landlords would have had to put in an increase to rental properties three months in advance of this rent cap coming into effect. So, if you didn't get it in before February 15, you would not be able to have a rental increase. So, the rental increase goes in on May 15, it will be capped at one percent, and it will be in existence — it is geared to inflation. It will be reviewed on an annual basis, and it is in effect for 20 months. I mean, that is as clear as it gets, Mr. Speaker.

I have spoken to landlords. I understand their concerns. We have spoken with our colleagues across the aisle and have met with landlords on this issue. The policy is the policy, Mr. Speaker. It comes into effect on Saturday — one percent this year geared to inflation and in effect for 20 months.

Question re: Whistle Bend school

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals called a snap election, it had negative impacts on major construction projects. One major project that has been negatively impacted is the Whistle Bend school. This project was originally tendered in March. However, due to the unnecessary election, the contract has been delayed four times. Construction was originally supposed to be completed in September 2023.

Can the minister tell us what the new completion date for the school is as a result of all these delays?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. I have been briefed on this matter briefly in my seven or eight days on the job, and I certainly look forward to attending the Whistle Bend site to determine how progress is going with respect to that school. However, my understanding is that this project is not delayed. I can certainly return to the Member for Porter Creek Centre with additional information as required.

Building a new school for the community of Whistle Bend is a high priority for our government. We have worked with the Department of Education and the Whistle Bend project advisory committee throughout the project to ensure that a schematic design that incorporates important community elements has been adopted.

A tender for this design/build project was issued on March 9. Construction of the school was scheduled to begin in late 2021 — this year — with an occupancy of the school planned for 2023. The information that I have, early in my ministry with the Department of Highways and Public Works with respect to this project, is that it is still on time with respect to the planning and ultimately getting shovels in the ground.

Ms. Clarke: Throughout the election, one of the main concerns that I heard from residents of Whistle Bend was related to traffic. Traffic in the community of Whistle Bend and on Mountainview Drive is already very problematic in the mornings. The addition of a new school with a capacity of up to 425 students will add more strain to these roads. What will the government do to ensure that the addition of a new school will not make traffic and road safety worse in this community?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you to the Member for Porter Creek Centre for the follow-up question. The Member for Porter Creek Centre will well know that matters pertaining to traffic are generally under the control, review, and legislative authority of the City of Whitehorse. However, I would anticipate that there may be some work between my department, or perhaps other government departments, in order to determine and plan for additional possible accesses to Whistle Bend over the course of the next number of years.

As we know, Whistle Bend is a quickly growing and thriving community, the quickest growing community in the Yukon right now.

Is the Member for Porter Creek Centre suggesting that we abandon plans for the school? I think not. Her riding will ultimately have thousands of additional constituents with young families who will certainly want to have a local, modern school built to 2021 standards — so, more to come.

Ms. Clarke: Can the minister tell us how much is budgeted for the construction of Whistle Bend school?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Member for Porter Creek Centre will well know that the definite number of the budget — the cost estimate will only be revealed after the tender closes in order to ensure a competitive bidding process. However, with respect to the ongoing process of the design, the planning, and the ultimate implementation of the construction of the Whistle Bend school, the Member for Porter Creek Centre will see in this year's budget that \$10.5 million has been budgeted to begin the construction of the school.

As she correctly indicated, this school is designed to be a tier 2 school that can accommodate up to 425 students, which will make her, we hope — will make her constituents happy because their children can remain in this new thriving and exciting and dynamic community that is Whistle Bend.

Question re: Mine closure security

Ms. White: Yukoners are all too familiar with the stories of mining sites being abandoned. From the Faro mine to Mount Nansen and now the Wolverine mine, Canadians and Yukoners have had to pick up the tab for mine remediation all too often. We all agree that abandoned mine sites and costly remediation are bad both for Yukoners and for Canadians and for the mining industry, and yet, with all of this evidence, we find ourselves teetering on the edge of repeating history yet again.

We just learned that, in 2019, a financial security assessment for the Brewery Creek mine was calculated for \$12 million, but as of today, the Yukon government website reports that it collected only \$1 million as a security deposit.

Mr. Speaker, what occurred between 2019 and now for a mining corporation to get such a good deal from this government for their security deposit?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm happy to get back to the member opposite about Brewery Creek and to bring back specific information about the security that was collected against that mine. I will seek to get more information for the member opposite.

Ms. White: I look forward to that answer, but I would like to remind the minister that the last time this government changed their logo, it cost Yukon taxpayers half a million dollars, but somehow, they think that a \$1-million security deposit is enough to cover the cost of mine remediation.

History has shown that remediating or even maintaining an abandoned mine site is not cheap, and some of the sites that we have been burdened with are messes that Yukoners and Canadians will be paying for, for decades to come.

So, Mr. Speaker, can this government explain why it has requested just \$1 million as a security deposit instead of the initial \$12 million that was assessed?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I am not sure that I agree with the member opposite about what the assessment was by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Let me go back and get that information.

I understand, as well, that there is a court case, which is an HR matter, which I won't speak to here, of course.

What I will ask the department to do is to give me what the department assessed as an appropriate amount to have for this mine remediation — to hold as a deposit. I will report back to this House. If there was something where it was less than \$1 million, I will make sure to report that. If \$1 million was the amount, I will explain why that assessment came to that amount.

Ms. White: This question has nothing to do with the issue of human resources or lawsuits with the Yukon government. This does have to do with Yukoners and the cost of remediation.

In 2019, we asked this government about the Wolverine mine and its outstanding security payments. In defence of the poor maintenance and cost of that mine site, the then-Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources blamed the Yukon Party. The minister then reassured Yukoners that this government would — and I quote: "... take the necessary means to protect Yukoners and the Yukon environment..." — and find the right

ability to calculate security funds so that we don't see Yukoners on the hook.

But now, this government is rolling the dice with Yukoners and the environment by giving a licence for the Brewery Creek mine for an \$11-million discount on their security deposit.

Mr. Speaker, what calculation of security funds did this government use to bring a \$12-million price tag down to just \$1 million?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, as I just responded just a moment ago, I don't agree with the member opposite's assessment of where she is getting the number for \$11 million. That is not what I believe the department has said, so I will check with the department to find what they assessed as an appropriate amount to retain, and I will report it back here to the member opposite, or I will make a legislative return, but I will make it public so that everyone can see what the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources did to assess a fair amount to hold as remediation for this project.

Let me get that information rather than listen to speculation on what it might be or might not be. I would be happy to get the actual number for the members of this Legislature and to even ask the department to explain to me how it was calculated and why they came up with that number — and that it has been collected appropriately.

Question re: Dempster fibre project

Mr. Cathers: Yesterday, the telecommunications network of the Yukon was crippled due to the cutting of a fibre line, again. This shut down Internet, 911, and had impacts on our communities. To prevent these types of incidents from happening, the previous Yukon Party government brought forward a proposal to install a redundant fibre optic line along the Dempster Highway.

This project was ready to go in 2016, but when the Liberals came in, they delayed it and they mismanaged it, and five years later, there are still no shovels in the ground. If it wasn't for Liberal mismanagement, yesterday's telecommunications outage would have been mitigated.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us how many more years Yukoners will have to wait until the Dempster fibre optic line is actually completed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it's important that we set the record straight. The one thing that stood out in the question that was posed by the member opposite was that, in 2016, this was ready to go. First of all, there was not a proper budget put in place for it. There was an engineering report that was completed. That engineering report identified that the price of the actual project had almost quadrupled, compared to what it actually had to be put out at.

So, there were commitments made that the project would be built. Again, under this government, we went out and negotiated with the federal government in order to leverage the funds that were required. The Yukon has a small contribution from our financial framework into this project. The majority of the money has come from the federal government, and Highways and Public Works has taken a cautious approach to this because, in other jurisdictions such as the Northwest

Territories, a fibre line of the same magnitude of a project doubled, from \$100 million to \$200 million.

So, taking the time to ensure — yes, there were disruptions yesterday, and there have been in the past, but I know that this capital project is being shepherded in the appropriate way, and the proper stakeholders are at the table as this is about to be built.

Mr. Cathers: Unfortunately, this project under the Liberals has been mired in unnecessary delays. I know that the new Minister of Highways and Public Works has a lot of messes left by the previous minister that he needs to clean up. The Dempster fibre project has been mismanaged and delayed by the Liberals for years.

In 2016, the Liberal platform even promised to accelerate “... the completion of the fibre optic redundancy project.” In 2018, the Premier said — and I quote: “... you can be guaranteed that the route has been picked and the work will be done this summer.” That was in 2018.

Despite the promise by the Liberals to accelerate the project, and despite the guarantee by the Premier that the work would be done three years ago, the YESAB application was only submitted in August 2020 and says that construction won’t be completed until 2025 — seven years after the Premier said that it would be done.

Can the minister tell us why the Liberals have delayed the project by so many years?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I’m excited to speak about this project. We are building an 800-kilometre fibre optic line along the Dempster Highway from Dawson, Yukon to Inuvik, Northwest Territories. The Dempster fibre line will connect to the existing Mackenzie Valley fibre link in Inuvik. The project will benefit communities in Yukon and NWT by providing a backup telecommunications line in the event of a service disruption, such as the disruption that occurred yesterday. Construction of the fibre line will begin this year and, I am told, will be complete in 2024. The construction of the contract has been issued to ROHL Global Networks for \$67 million.

Initial clearing and brushing work along the highway was completed this winter by Takhini Valley Contracting, a Yukon business. Environmental and wildlife monitoring training for First Nation citizens was completed this winter, which I understand also involved First Nation citizens receiving accreditation in various areas of the Dempster fibre line project construction.

Regulatory requirements for the project have been approved by the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. We are incredibly excited about this project. Shovels will be in the ground within the next month or so.

Mr. Cathers: In 2016, the Liberals promised to accelerate the Dempster fibre project. In 2017, they hit the pause button and slowed the project down. In 2018, the Premier promised that the project would be done in summer of that year. Then, in the summer of 2018, the government released a fact sheet saying that construction would only start in 2019. Later that year, they said that the work would begin in fall 2019, but

in fall 2019, documents sent to the Mackenzie Valley review board changed the construction date yet again — this time to spring 2020 — and said that it would be completed in two years. Now, the YESAB application from the government says that construction will not be completed until 2025.

It is clear that the Liberals missed every single deadline that they committed to and are running seven years behind when the Premier promised Yukoners that the project would be done. As a result, the Yukon is still vulnerable to massive telecommunications outages.

Will the government take action to speed up the project, or are we going to experience four more years of communications outages?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would just like to reiterate the comments from my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, that there were issues in 2016 from the previous Yukon Party government, and obviously there were massive potential cost overruns and they did not get it done.

I’ve had some opportunity to speak to the Department of Highways and Public Works with respect to this very exciting project. Also, per the comments of the Minister of Economic Development, I was advised that the project from Inuvik to Fort Simpson was what is called a “brownfield project” — that the Northwest Territories government was running their line there through some of the most remote territory in the world, really. In consequence of that, the budget for that project, as stated, was almost double — was well in excess of \$200 million. So, the planning for our side, up the Dempster Highway, has been exhaustive, effective, and inclusive, involving engagement with three Yukon First Nations and five indigenous groups in the Northwest Territories.

We’re doing this properly, and this project will not have the budget issues —

Speaker: Order.

Question re: Individualized education plans

Mr. Kent: The NDP-Liberal agreement states that the changes to individualized education plans, or IEPs, will be reversed. The timeline for getting this done is 30 days from the signing of the agreement, which we all know happened late last month.

Can the minister confirm that she is on target to reverse the changes and tell us what the actual date is when that will be accomplished?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. As I stated yesterday, we provide all students with educational programs that meet their learning needs so that they can reach their maximum potential.

IEPs are, and will continue to be, legislated support for students in need of special education programs, Mr. Speaker. We’ve been clear that, in the fall of 2019, the school branch staff made presentations to school administrators and school staff that clarified the processes in place for determining which type of learning plan is appropriate for students requiring additional learning support.

In some cases, this meant that school staff worked with parents to shift a student from an IEP to a student learning plan

or behavioural support plan. Just getting to the question — we're working diligently to ensure that all students are placed on the appropriate learning plan that is best suited for them.

Mr. Kent: The NDP-Liberal agreement specifically referenced IEPs, but the minister just said that students will be placed on the appropriate learning plan suited to them. Yet, that agreement talks about those changes being reversed. Hopefully she gets to clarify that when she's on her feet again.

A *Yukon News* article from December 23, 2020, states — and I quote: "This year, the Yukon government moved 138 students off IEPs onto Student Learning Plans or Behavioural Learning Plans, according to the YTA." Can the minister confirm if that number is correct? What is the total number of students who need to be moved back on to IEPs since these changes started in 2019?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In some cases, school staff worked with parents to shift a student from an individualized learning plan to a student learning plan — an SLP — or a behaviour support plan — which is a BSP in the abbreviation. We are now working to implement our recent commitment to provide any student who was shifted from an IEP, an SLP, or a BSP after the fall of 2019 with the option to shift back to an IEP. Yes, we are working with the New Democratic Party. This is absolutely part of our agreement with them. It was also in our platform commitment to continue working with students and staff to ensure that students have the right learning plan for them.

I'm eager to get working with the NDP, because I think that, as I stated yesterday in my reply to the Speech from the Throne, I am excited about this partnership that we have, and I'm eager to work with all of our partners around this very important matter, which is the education of our children.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, it's quite concerning that the minister doesn't know how many students need to be moved back on to the IEPs, who were moved off of those in the first place. There are only two weeks left away from the agreement or the deadline that's spelled out in the agreement between the New Democrats and the Liberals.

Perhaps I'll try to ask this question regarding resources: Can the minister tell us what impact moving these children back to IEPs would have on the budget for the Department of Education? How many additional educational assistants will need to be hired to support these students?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, we are working for the betterment of education for all of our children in Yukon. We are providing all of our students with educational programs that meet their learning needs so that they can reach their maximum potential. In terms of the budget, I do not believe that there would be an impact on the budget at this time. If that is indeed the case as we move forward, I will be sure to inform the House. I'm looking forward to budget debate later in this session. I'm sure that we'll be digging deeper into the financial matters pertaining to the entire Department of Education.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

CONSIDERATION OF SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 26(2), that continued consideration of a motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne will take place on Monday, May 17, 2021.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22 — Second Reading*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 201, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am pleased to present our new government's first 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 a budget focused on improving the lives of Yukoners.

I will keep my remarks relatively brief, as the budget that I am tabling today is largely consistent with the one that I tabled in this Assembly during the previous session on March 4. This year's budget includes estimated spending of \$1.791 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 \$1.36 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 \$6.6 million that is the result of economic and social supports, as well as health services for Yukoners in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Notable changes to the budget tabled on March 4 include a \$5.8-million increase in operation and maintenance spending, an \$11.9-million increase in operation and maintenance recoveries, and a \$6.1-million decrease in the deficit and also a \$5.8-million decrease in net financial debt.

Along with this budget, I am pleased to 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.

I am also pleased to present a revised fiscal outlook in addition to the economic outlook that was presented in March. These outlooks show that our economy is poised to experience robust growth in the coming years. Responsible governance combined with swift and comprehensive relief measures allowed our territory to weather the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic better than most other jurisdictions.

Despite unprecedented challenges, the Yukon is one of the only jurisdictions in Canada to experience GDP growth in 2020, with growth projected to continue, averaging 4.7 percent per year out to 2025. This budget builds on the strong foundation developed during the previous mandate and continues us on the path toward a brighter future for the Yukon.

With the territory's finances now on a stable 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. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected Yukon families, businesses, governments, and organizations on a scale that has never been seen before.

In times of crises, it is essential that government provides strong leadership to protect the health and safety of citizens and help them maintain their livelihoods. Thanks to strong collaboration with our federal, provincial, and territorial partners, our territory is leading the country in vaccine uptake and beginning to lift public health restrictions.

Our government will prioritize economic support to protect Yukon businesses and mitigate the impacts on local employees, employers, and organizations. Yukon's COVID-19 support programs are recognized as the best and most generous in the country. As of March 2021, we have provided more than \$10.4 million to over 655 businesses across the territory through our paid sick leave and business relief programs. We have allocated more than \$11 million this year for these programs and will continue to provide supports for as long as they are needed.

Last year, government allocated more than \$107 million to manage the pandemic, support Yukoners, and provide relief to protect our economy. Our proactive and comprehensive response helped to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our territory while keeping Yukoners safe, healthy, and employed. We have allocated nearly \$50 million in this year's budget to continue supports for Yukoners.

We would not be on the path to emerging from the pandemic if it were not for the people who call our territory home. Yukoners have made immense sacrifices over the past 15 months to keep our communities 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 our territory, keeping our case count low, and allowed us to lead the country and much of the world in immunizations. The coronavirus has tested the mettle of all Yukoners, and they have responded with the characteristic compassion, 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 will help Yukoners by making life more affordable while investing in a healthier, more vibrant and sustainable future for all Yukon communities.

With funding in this year's budget, we will continue to implement the *Putting People First* report's recommendations to enhance health and social service delivery throughout the

territory. 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.

To support Yukon families and make their lives more affordable, we are investing more than \$25 million toward learning initiatives. This includes \$15 million to support a new, universal childcare program for the Yukon that is putting more disposable income into the hands of families and saving them, on average, \$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 expand to full-time early kindergarten programming in all rural Yukon communities.

We are 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. 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.

Nearly \$7 million is included in this year's budget to improve the way that we serve and communicate with the public in French. This is 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 provide another option for those seeking health care.

We are proud to continue our work to advance inclusion in our territory. This year, we are providing \$125,000 to Queer Yukon to continue the important work to ensure that 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 service provider.

The Yukon is the first jurisdiction in Canada to develop a strategy in response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. Changing the story to upholding dignity and justice, Yukon's MMIW2S+ strategy outlines a territory-wide approach to addressing violence against indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people.

To help build capacity in implementing this important strategy, we are providing \$300,000 to Yukon's indigenous women's organizations to continue to demonstrate leadership and advocacy while providing virtual support to survivors and to family members. An additional \$600,000 is allocated for the indigenous women's equity 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.

We are continuing 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 1Health, a modern, integrated health information system that will enhance Yukoners' experience in the health care system and improve health outcomes across the territory.

We have also budgeted \$1 million to develop a supervised consumption site and to secure a safe supply of opioids to fight the opioid crisis that continues to impact our communities.

More than \$1.4 million will make medical travel easier and more affordable for Yukoners. This year the medical travel subsidy was doubled to \$150 per day for multi-day travel, and the eligible destinations were expanded to allow more flexibility for patients.

Nearly \$2 million is in this year's budget to improve front-line health care and health systems supports, including three additional community health nurses and two new nurse practitioners in Yukon communities.

We have included \$500,000 to begin developing a program to provide dental benefits to uninsured Yukoners.

This budget also includes nearly \$87 million for continuing care, home care, respite care, palliative care, and community day programs for seniors and elders across our territory.

Mr. Speaker, 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 want action, and our government is listening.

This year's budget includes more than \$50 million for the implementation of *Our Clean Future* to address our changing climate in a comprehensive and sustainable way that supports our green economy; \$16 million will support community-based renewable energy projects across the territory; \$14.4 million will make government buildings more energy efficient and switch them toward renewable sources of heating, like biomass, which will also help grow our local biomass energy industry; \$1.2 million is dedicated to making First Nation housing more energy efficient; \$6.1 million for energy rebates will help Yukon families and businesses adapt renewable sources of heating and make their homes and buildings more energy efficient. These rebates will also support local contractors and tradespeople in Yukon's green economy. More than \$100,000 will support Yukon's first-ever youth panel on climate change. This panel provides space for Yukon youth from across the territory to share their perspectives and to 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.

This year's budget includes substantial investments toward renewable energy projects identified in Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable electricity 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; a further \$10 million is included to advance the Atlin hydro expansion project, in partnership with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation.

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.

At the same time as we invest in a clean, renewable future, we continue to strengthen and diversify our economy for the benefit of all Yukoners. This budget includes more than \$835,000 for the innovation and entrepreneurial 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 access. This project will stimulate further growth of Yukon's knowledge sector and digital economy while also contributing to community resiliency.

The newly formed economic development fund will provide nearly \$2 million to advance strategic industries and support regional economic development. There is \$3 million for community development program projects that provide economic benefits and opportunities in Yukon communities. Guided by the Cultivating Our Future agriculture policy, we will also increase Yukon's local food security and support a thriving and prosperous agricultural sector.

As part of our enduring 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 for a new school. 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 thrive in their community.

We are also working closely with the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education to establish a Yukon First Nation school board, which will ensure that Yukon First Nations can meaningfully shape their children's education.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that stable, affordable housing is foundational to the health and well-being of all Yukoners. 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 the 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 in Whitehorse. This project will provide additional support and affordable housing for those most in need in Whitehorse. We recognize that vulnerable populations need increased access to housing in our rural communities. Building on the success of the Yukon's first-ever Housing First residence in Whitehorse, we are including \$1.5 million toward a new 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.

More than \$1.4 million is allocated in rent 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. We recently secured another \$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 Yukoners.

We have also budgeted another \$3.6 million for the housing initiative 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 further support the development of rental housing.

Making land available for development is another important way of meeting the growing needs for housing throughout the Yukon. 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. 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 Nations’ Marshall Creek expansion project is underway and will provide for more than 30 new lots for Champagne and Aishihik First Nations 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 the Yukon to develop lots will increase housing options while providing additional economic and employment opportunities in our rural communities.

The 2021-22 budget builds on the strong foundation of our previous mandate and continues us on the path forward for a brighter future for the Yukon. We continue to move the Yukon toward a more people-centred approach to wellness, improving access to mental health supports throughout the territory and implementing the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report, which help Yukoners thrive. These bold changes will move Yukon toward a more holistic and person-centred approach and system and position Yukon as a national leader in the delivery of health and social care.

We continue to make investments to build healthier, more vibrant and sustainable communities for Yukon families to live in. Expanding home care and implementing the aging-in-place strategy will help seniors and elders live safe, independent, and comfortable lives surrounded by strong and supportive communities.

The new universal affordable childcare program will support Yukon families while putting more money back in their pockets. Increased investments in land development and housing projects will expand housing options across the territory. Continuing to invest in community and recreational

infrastructure in all communities will support healthy active living.

Under our leadership, the Yukon has earned a reputation across the country as a leader in reconciliation, and it has benefited all Yukoners. Our government will continue to foster strong government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations on the basis of respect, cooperation, and partnership.

We will continue to create good jobs in a diverse, growing, and sustainable economy. Our territory has had the lowest unemployment rate in Canada in addition to continuous GDP growth for the past five years.

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 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.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have brought into clear focus what is important and what is at stake as we look toward the future.

By listening to Yukoners and delivering on our commitments that we made to them, our government will continue 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, Mr. Speaker. Merci, mahsi’ cho, günilschish.

Mr. Cathers: I’m pleased to lead off the responses for our side as the Official Opposition Finance critic.

First of all, today I would like to begin by thanking my constituents in Lake Laberge for re-electing me again as their MLA. I’m honoured and pleased to have the opportunity to continue to work with them and for them in that role after winning my fifth election. I’m especially thankful for the large increase in support since the 2016 election and for them electing me with the most votes of any candidate in the Yukon.

I would like to, as well, once again give a very big thank you to everyone who helped with my re-election campaign, especially people who helped me for many days throughout that campaign.

I look forward to working with all my constituents, as well as other Yukoners, to try to represent their needs, interests, and priorities well — both in this Legislative Assembly and outside of it. I am pleased, here today, to have the opportunity to continue serving as the Official Opposition critic for Finance — now in my fifth year in that role. I am also happy to be the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, Agriculture, and Justice, as well as the Deputy House Leader, and I would like to thank the Leader of the Yukon Party for that opportunity. I would like to, as well, thank all of our caucus and all of our staff for the work that they do, day in and day out.

During the 2021 election, we were grateful to have widespread support across the territory, which elected eight of us as Yukon Party MLAs. We were also pleased to have won the popular vote in this election, even though it left us tied for seats with the Liberals.

I want to thank all of the volunteers who helped us to make that happen — campaign contributors and the candidates. Those of us who are candidates do not do it alone. It depends on the work of many people, and I want to acknowledge and thank all of them for their help to me and my fellow candidates across the territory.

Due to the Liberal-NDP coalition — which in our view is a coalition in all but name — we are, of course, continuing the role of the Official Opposition. But with that role continues an important duty to the Yukoners who voted for us, and indeed to all Yukoners, to do our part to hold the government to account, to do our part to bring forward our ideas and our solutions and the issues and priorities that we hear from our constituents and from other Yukoners. I will do my very best to fulfill that role and to provide Yukoners with the very best work that I can provide here, both in this Legislative Assembly and outside of it.

As the Leader of the Official Opposition acknowledged, both in and outside this House, we recognize that the deal between the Liberals and the NDP is legitimate, but in our view, it is a coalition in all but name. It also brings with it a number of concerns, including the fact that it has been uncosted, and most notably, the rent cap commitment that neither leader of the coalition can provide any clear details on is coming into effect in less than 36 hours and has already caused chaos for both tenants and landlords, including causing people to be given notice of rent increases and people who have received eviction notices as a result of this deal between the NDP and the Liberals.

In looking through the budget as well, we see that there are allocations in the budget for the safe supply of drugs and for dental, but we understand that those allocations are not in fact based on a budget. They are allocations, not an estimate.

We also see nowhere in this new, modified budget introduced by the Premier — we do not see the costs for a number of the things committed to in the deal with the NDP. The costs for a new secretariat to support it, as committed to in the agreement, are not identified in the budget. The costs of other commitments are not costed, and the additional staff that they are providing to the NDP caucus is also not outlined or costed anywhere in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, we are also concerned that the two parties have cut a side deal for a short Sitting. I would point out that the eleven days that have been announced would be one of the shortest Spring Sittings in Yukon history. Democracy depends on public transparency and proper scrutiny by the Legislative Assembly. There is no good reason for government to hide from this oversight. The Spring Sitting deals with the budget for the territory, and it's notable that — if you look back over the last number of decades since responsible government began here in this territory — the three shortest Sittings in the spring all appear to have been under Liberal governments. In 2000, the

Legislative Assembly sat for eight days under an NDP government, which called an election and lost. The Liberals took office and sat for 23 days. Though 23 days is a short Sitting for the spring, it is more than double the 11-day Sitting that the Liberals, with their NDP allies, have announced for this year. So, the two parties have effectively agreed to slash debate in the Legislative Assembly and Question Periods by two-thirds from what is a normal minimum for a Spring Sitting. Spring Sittings are typically 30 to 40 days, but unfortunately, under their backroom deal, they have reached an agreement to silence the Official Opposition, the party that actually won the popular vote in the territorial election, and deprive us of the ability to ask questions on behalf of Yukoners who voted for us and on behalf of other Yukoners throughout the territory. There is just no good reason for that.

The three shortest Spring Sittings that we found through our research in Yukon history all appear to be Liberal governments' — the nine-day Sitting by this Liberal government last spring, 11 days this year that they have announced, and 23 days under the previous Liberal government in 2000. But if you look at the current Liberal government, under the current Premier, they have the two shortest Sittings, and the two combined are still less time than the third shortest Sitting of 23 days in the spring.

I know that the members have tried to compare this to Fall Sittings after an election, but as they are aware, the budget is typically the longest Sitting here in the Yukon, and for good reason. In fall, those short Sittings after an election — it's really comparing apples and oranges.

We have also seen a situation where the government has casually used special warrants to bypass this Legislative Assembly. There is a better way. Both the two months of spending that they approved by way of special warrants in March and the special warrant covering the month of June — in both cases, those appropriations could have been debated in this Legislative Assembly and democratically voted on by all members. That is the way it should have been done.

The Premier, prior to taking office, used some of the strongest language that anyone here in the territory has ever used, criticizing the use of special warrants — in the case of one special warrant, one much smaller than the ones that have been issued this year — and he referred to the use of a special warrant as showing disrespect for the Legislative Assembly and democracy itself. Yet the Premier has twice broken the record for using a special warrant — in terms of record size, I should say.

This year, with the special warrant spending in March and the recent special warrant, this Liberal government has spent over half a billion dollars without first seeking approval in the Legislative Assembly, and that is a dramatic departure from what they told Yukoners they would do.

We will hold the government to account on that. We will also bring forward constructive solutions and advocate for the issues that we've heard from Yukoners.

As members will recall, one of the things that we centred on in our election platform in the area of health care was to take action to support the needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

We have, in many Sittings — in fact, every year since spring 2017 — criticized the government for their record for chronic underfunding of the Hospital Corporation. We will continue to advocate for priorities including enhancing supports for our Yukon hospitals, taking action to reduce wait times for essential health procedures, and implementing a wait-time reduction strategy. As noted by the Leader of the Official Opposition in the election campaign, quality health care is timely health care, and we will push the government to take action to reduce wait times and ensure that Yukoners get the care they need, when they need it.

We will also push the government to do as we had committed to doing — providing the Yukon Hospital Corporation with stable and predictable funding that it needs to deliver quality care, including an annual increase to the funding. We will also push them to begin the construction of a secure medical unit at Whitehorse General Hospital and improve the surgical services area at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Since we are short of time, I will not talk for as long as I typically would in speaking to the budget. I do want to briefly touch on some things from my critic areas as well as issues that are important to my constituents in Lake Laberge.

First of all, I'm going to begin with an issue that came up multiple times on the doorstep — that being the fact that the government, by changing the rules for medical travel in the territory, actually cut the in-territory medical travel support for Yukoners travelling to Whitehorse. That is something I heard, especially from seniors living in the Braeburn area who were upset at the fact that they have to travel into Whitehorse multiple times for specialist and other appointments because of the inability of the system to allow them to book all those appointments on one day.

For some of them, it means travelling in multiple times in the week between visiting the lab for testing and seeing a specialist, and all of those costs for a senior on a fixed income are coming out of pocket. So, the Liberal government cut that support last year. I will be pushing them to reinstate that support for my constituents and other Yukoners who have been affected by that. I would remind the government that, for all their commitments to aging in place, part of aging in place includes — for Yukoners who are living in rural Yukon outside of communities, if they lose access to financial support to allow them to get the health care services they need, it doesn't help them age in place and it increases the chance that they end up in the hospital or in our continuing care facilities at an earlier date.

Another area that the government has taken action to cut is, of course, rural garbage dumps. That, for people in the Braeburn area, as well as within the ridings of some of my colleagues and in the Mayo-Tatchun area and Keno — for seniors who are depending on being able to age in place in their communities — to suddenly lose access to garbage service can be a very serious problem for them and can be in a situation where government is not only undermining businesses that are trying to operate in those areas but making it difficult for citizens who are on a fixed income, including and especially

our senior citizens. I will be pushing government to reconsider that.

As we're in the pandemic and have seen an excellent job done across the territory in terms of the vaccine rollout, I want to take a moment to thank everyone who has made it happen and note that, although the politicians may try to claim the credit, the heavy lifting of this is being done by ordinary Yukoners, health care professionals, managers, administrative professionals, people in the IT area, and other public servants. For any I have missed, I thank you, as well, for the work that you have done. We recognize, as well, that there are some Yukoners who had retired and who chose to re-enter public service to help with the vaccine rollout. The Yukon has done very well, especially in comparison to most of the country, in terms of the vaccine rollout — the number of people who have been vaccinated. I want to, on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, thank everyone involved for their commitment to our territory and to the people of the Yukon.

I want to move on to a couple of other areas within my critic roles as well as those important to my constituents. The Premier mentioned in the budget speech their commitments to agriculture. I would remind the government that there are many Yukoners who are upset by the new rules that the government has imposed on agricultural land. It has negatively affected the current value of some people's property and left people who were counting on the ability to retire and subdivide their property to be in a situation where, suddenly, the government has changed the rules dramatically and requires them to jump over a higher bar to be able to do what they thought they would be allowed to do. It's similar to what the government has done in the area of the rental cap that they announced, without recognizing the fact that an investment in your home or your land or in a rental building may be an important part of someone's retirement plan and very likely their largest investments that they counted on, through consultation often with their financial planners, to be able to depend on income from that in the future.

This Liberal government has callously, and without consultation in both cases, just changed the rules. It is affecting the lives of Yukoners negatively and is profoundly unfair to the people who have been negatively affected by it.

In the area of the agriculture rules, I would note — in particular, I'm referring to rules they brought in, effective April 1 of this year. It's something that I heard repeatedly from constituents about on the doorstep, and I know that my colleagues, including the Member for Copperbelt South and the Member for Kluane, have heard about that from their constituents who are also concerned about it.

In the area of the agriculture policy itself, I heard on the doorstep from Yukoners who were concerned about the details of it that, while there is some good stuff within it, the government did not see fit to do public consultation on the details of the policy. There was very early stage consultation on concepts, and then the government sat on that and did work behind the scenes for years and then came out with the policy, not only a year later than they promised, but skipping consultation with people who were affected by it. That was not

the right way to handle it. The solution, of course, is to take the policy back out and actually consult with people on it.

I have also heard from Yukoners who are farming on rural residential land, large rural residential lots, and are concerned that government has completely skipped over in the policy any recognition of them.

We have heard, as well, from farmers and market gardeners who are not operating on a large scale. They feel that the policy is more geared to larger scale operations, which are very important, I would add, but it has not acknowledged their issues.

There are also things that I have heard from a number of the larger operations within my own riding — people who are concerned that there are regulatory, legislative problems that are causing them difficulty and need action quickly. That deals with matters including addressing the needs of egg farmers and dairy farmers as well as addressing the issues that are causing problems for meat processing. I would urge the government to make taking action on those a priority. I would be happy to work with them — if indeed they see fit to do so — to help them, along with the Yukoners affected by this, and to find solutions to these problems.

As the new Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is likely aware, there are issues that, under his predecessor's watch, were very upsetting to people in my riding, including the government's approach to Shallow Bay zoning, which, through their actions, including the proposal that actually would impose a riparian buffer on titled property, was very concerning to people whose homes are affected by those proposals. In the case of the proposal that they went out to consultation on, it would impose just under a 200-foot — 60-metre — no-development buffer after the fact on titled property. It would, as proposed, affect people's homes. It would also prevent them from rebuilding those homes if they burned down. For any one of us, or for any constituent of anyone in this Assembly, if you were looking at zoning, if passed in the form that government presented it, that would prevent you from replacing your house if it burned down, you would be profoundly upset. That proposal should never have been made. It is an unacceptable proposal, and as government has wrapped up their consultation on this, I would strongly urge them to do a rewrite on this and ensure that they are not doing anything that takes away any significant rights from my constituents in the Shallow Bay area. I would remind them, in fact, that the past practice — for decades in this territory — is that, when zoning processes occur, if some people are being given the ability to subdivide, no one has lost any rights of any significance. That should be a guiding principle for zoning processes — not to take away from ordinary Yukoners affected by the proposal.

As well, as the minister will be aware, the government's plans to develop Stevens Quarry did not go over very well. I am pleased that they did reverse those plans on April 1 and made a commitment to Yukoners that they would not develop Stevens Quarry in the next four years. We had committed that we would not develop Stevens Quarry. Members will recall that in 2013, when I was Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources,

the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources listened to the concerns of farmers, other business operators, and surrounding residents about the negative impact that this project would have on farmers, business operators, and residents and rejected the YESAB application to develop Stevens Quarry. I am pleased that the Liberal government retreated on their plans to develop it. We do have a copy of the letter that they sent out to Yukoners making that commitment, and the minister can be assured that we will hold their feet to the fire — I will hold their feet to the fire — if they try to backtrack on their commitment made in April.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, as well, just briefly touch on the fact that we are concerned, as I noted in speaking to the budget on March 8, 2021, about the growth in spending. I noted the fact then and I want to reiterate here today that, when the Liberals took office, they had money in the bank left to them by the previous government, had net financial assets, and had taken it from the point on where — on the point of taking office, they had around \$100 million in net financial assets and, in four and a half years, took the territory from a positive net financial asset position to an anticipated net debt this year that, as of March, was estimated to be \$81.5 million and \$330.5 million in net debt projected for 2023-24.

It's important to note that, during the time that the Liberal government has been in office, the territory's revenues have actually grown at a healthy rate every year due largely to annual increases in the territorial funding formula and other funding transfers, yet despite that, they have spent money even faster than it was coming in every single year.

Now, we acknowledge that during a pandemic, some additional spending is necessary, but it's important to note that this problem didn't start in 2020.

During the Liberals' time in office, revenues grew significantly every year, but almost every single year they have been in office, they spent money faster than it 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.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also note that, in the revised budget that we were provided with today, those numbers have remained largely unchanged from the spring and show a situation where revenue this year is growing by a little over five percent, but spending is growing at an even higher rate, at over eight percent this year. That is problematic.

I would also like to briefly touch on a few other issues — I mentioned hospital funding earlier, but I do want to reiterate the point that I mentioned in the spring, that the chronic neglect of funding for the Hospital Corporation throughout the Liberal government's mandate included the fact that the fiscal year that ended in March 2020 left the Hospital Corporation, according to their own year-end report, with a \$3.9-million hole in their funding that fiscal year.

It wasn't until we were literally in a pandemic that the Liberal government started providing our hospitals with adequate funding. They can be confident that we will continue

to bring pressure to bear if they do not provide proper funding for the hospitals going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to — if I can find my notes here again — note that a few other issues I would like to just briefly touch on for my riding, before wrapping up, in the interest of time — there are a number of areas in agriculture that require action. I will be outlining some of them in greater detail later, but I just want to emphasize the point that, according to the Premier and the budget speech, one would think that everything is rosy in the area of agriculture. In fact, from people who work in the agriculture sector and own farms, they remind the Liberals that they lost votes in this election. People were profoundly unhappy with the lack of action by government in a number of areas and the actual negative action toward farmland owners, through the agriculture rules, as well as the government's proposed wetlands policy, which would apply on titled agriculture property and, as I mentioned earlier, the Shallow Bay proposal, which would impact on titled land.

I want to, as I noted yesterday in the House — I would urge the government again to recognize the need to invest in a major upgrade to Takhini River Road. That is an ongoing problem that is not just an inconvenience to my constituents but is potentially a serious safety issue, if a fire truck or ambulance needs to travel down this road after one of the many times where it deteriorates in the spring or after rain.

I would also like to mention the issue of the intersection of the Mayo Road and the Alaska Highway, or for those who prefer to use the term “north Klondike Highway” — commonly known in my riding as “the Mayo Road”. I do appreciate the work that was done last year and most of my constituents do. There are a number of issues that have been raised with me frequently, both during the election and since, and those include the fact that the lines that were painted didn't last very long. They would like government to move quickly to paint the lines to clearly delineate those turning lanes, because a number of people have reported to me close calls and concerning situations involving traffic coming in from the Alaska Highway as traffic comes off the Mayo Road and people not knowing what lane to be in. They would like the lines to be repainted and signage that better informs people of the turning lanes to help, particularly in the winter when those lanes may be covered with snow. People would like the temporary stop sign in the middle of the Mayo Road to be removed and a larger stop sign to be added on the right-hand side.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the ongoing issue of the lack of cell service continues to be a priority for people in my riding in the Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, and Fox Lake areas, as well as Ibex Valley, where they have actually seen a deterioration in their cell service since it was originally installed. I know that is an area at issue, as well, for a number of my colleagues, and we have, as the Liberal government will recall, on multiple occasions, brought forward proposals urging the government to work with the private sector to expand cellphone service to areas where it isn't served.

In the area of agriculture, as well, I also want to specifically note the ongoing elk problem which is in need of action. I know that the minister and the Premier will have heard that directly

as well from the Yukon Agricultural Association, and I would urge them to take that concern seriously.

I also want to note another issue that I have heard from many constituents during the election campaign that relates to garbage service and recycling. As the new Minister of Community Services will recall, yesterday I again urged the government to recognize that, after the windstorm in October of 2020, there are a number of Yukoners in my riding who have brush, and in some cases buildings, that they need to dispose of that were damaged during the windstorm. The government's tipping fees remain a problem. People would like to see the government waive them — actually, most people would like to see the tipping fees gone at the Deep Creek dump, but at the very least, see government waive them for the brush, trees, and other waste created by that windstorm.

I should just point out to government that if they choose not to do that, people are likely going to choose the cheaper option available to them of burning that debris in their own yards, or elsewhere, and there will be an increased fire risk as a result of that. So, it doesn't make sense to nickel and dime Yukoners over tipping fees and create an increased risk of a wildfire this spring or summer. That is exactly what would happen if government doesn't waive those tipping fees.

The ongoing issue caused last summer, where commercial garbage service ended within the Hot Springs Road and Mayo Road area, and within Ibex Valley, continues to be a problem, especially for businesses, especially for those in the farming sector and those who have renters. That is again something where the action that government took did not go far enough. I would again urge them to take the additional step of working with the city to create predictability around tipping fees.

Last but not least, in the area of garbage, I heard from a number of constituents about lack of availability of options for recycling.

I think I will bring up the other issues that I was going to at a later date here during debate, since time is quite short, and with that, I will wrap up my remarks and look forward to hearing continued debate on the budget.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise today to speak to this budget. It also gives us elected members of the Legislative Assembly the privilege to use this time for appreciation.

First, thank you to my amazing family for always supporting my actions and helping me, not only during this last campaign but throughout the years. I could not have done this without their care and love.

To all who have helped me through the election process — my campaign manager, my official agent, my sign crew who went over and above due to the snow mounds and constantly having to move signs to avoid the snowplows, to all who walked with me door-knocking and kept notes on the issues — thank you. To all who kept us organized and up to date with data and to the main campaign office crew with all the separate ridings to watch over and to ensure that they all had adequate assistance, thanks to them.

I extend a special thanks to the returning officers of Porter Creek North who helped all candidates with questions and directions as we worked the mine field of an election that was fair and democratic. Well done.

Most important, to my constituents of Porter Creek North who voted for me, who welcomed me, who gave me food for thought, and for taking signs and supporting me. Many thanked me for helping them with various issues during the past session. I'm honoured to be re-elected and here for them again.

Throughout the election period, many issues were brought forward that affect them and other Yukoners. To hear about a recent loss of someone and then coping with the legalese in the aftermath — the issue: red tape. To hear about the cost of maintaining a home when a partner is lost and they are unable to live on one pension for daily expenses, let alone upkeep of the property — the issue: aging in place and elders. To hear of government employees who feel marginalized by the system that is in place that they are not really heard, and if they are heard, fear of retribution — the issue: workplace problems. To hear of taxes and charges climbing without an end in sight, how to manage what we have, let alone add every wish list item for every interest group. Who will eventually pay? The issue: finances.

These are a few of the things that were asked, and we need to ask them here. More importantly, we need answers. The word "collaboration" rolls off the tongue easily, but it is a little more difficult when action is needed. Now that the summer season is upon us, and it looks like another slow summer for many tourism-minded areas and businesses, I commend those operators who are thinking outside of the box, and kudos for the innovative ways to encourage uptake and getting Yukoners to explore our own territory.

I also want to remember to thank our office staff who every day continue to support and help us as we go through our machinations of government. I reiterate, as we have been given very limited time, that I'm going to wrap up my comments and let others speak. I hope my critic departments are called so I will be able to ask questions about the budget during that time.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to rise in the Yukon Legislative Assembly to respond to the 2021-22 revised territorial budget. It is a privilege to not only serve as the MLA for Porter Creek Centre but to be elected as the first Filipina MLA in Yukon's history.

[Member spoke in Tagalog. Text unavailable]

I certainly hope I am not the last. I want to begin by thanking my family for their support. I don't think I would have been here if not for them. My husband, Peter Morawsky, you are my rock and my solid, consistent supporter; I thank you for your love.

My daughter, Sabrina Clarke, was my campaign manager. She was doing this job while taking her final exams at McGill University in Montréal. She's taking bioresource engineering, and besides the chaos of running an election campaign for her mom, she still managed to pull a 4.0 GPA — so proud and grateful for her help.

My daughter, Rachel, based in Lethbridge, worked as my volunteer coordinator while working and attending school. Thank you so much for your help. They grounded me. Peter, Rachel, Sabrina and Shawn, you are the wind beneath my wings.

To all my constituents in the Porter Creek Centre riding, it is my privilege and honour to be your MLA. Thank you for believing in me and placing your trust in me. It was an absolute pleasure to meet so many of you during my campaign and I want to keep the conversations going. I am fully committed to working my hardest to represent roughly 2,600 of you, regardless of which party you voted for.

On day one, I began the process of ensuring that the concerns you expressed during my months of canvassing are addressed. Please remember that my door is always open. My phone is just a dial away. I will carefully read any e-mails you have taken the time to write and send my way.

Thank you to Paolo Gallina and Shonagh McCrindle for being upstanding candidates to run alongside. Their passion and commitment are inspiring. And getting a call from Paolo after the election results were announced reinforced my feelings of what a beautiful community we live in. Congratulations to both for such strong campaigns.

I would like to thank my team of dedicated volunteers. They worked so hard on the ground, putting up and taking down campaign signs, helping me door-knock every day for over a month. They oh so helped to keep my spirits up. Romy Gayangos and his family members, Allan Hernaiz, Blake Buckle, Cindy Densmore, Joy Allen, Marivic and Jun de Guzman, Myrna Cuenza, Michelle and Ryan Kolla, Kim Dolhan, George Privett, Carolyn Thompson, Madison Blusson, Candace Lane, Dagmar and Ramesh Ferris, Danny Gaje, David Mindanao, Diore Ulgasan, Evelyn Davey, Grace Estrella, Helen O'Connor, Jocelyn Siosan, Junel Martos, Joanna Martos, Leandro Cuenza, Madelyn Bertos, Marita Ordone, Mark Davey, Mayla Gaje, Nesty, Rory Wadham, Sophie Elasoff, and Jason Wilneff. If I missed anyone, I apologize. However, if you worked on my campaign, you already know how deeply grateful I am for your help.

Like many of you, during the election campaign, I tried to visit as many constituents as possible. I navigated the snow and ice to gather the concerns of Whistle Bend and Porter Creek residents. While the weather wasn't ideal, I thoroughly enjoyed connecting with people to hear their concerns. To those people I connected with and listened to, I thank you for choosing me to be your MLA. It is something I do not take lightly. While I have many previous volunteer experiences in a great community, this is now my focus — being the MLA for Porter Creek Centre.

While I am a first-time MLA, I feel a deep obligation to bring those concerns of Porter Creek Centre to the floor of the Legislative Assembly and that is what I plan on doing. I heard many issues about a community that is growing at a pace rarely seen in Yukon. You may call them growing pains, but to me it is more than that. It is about setting up one of the fastest growing areas of the territory to not only survive but thrive into the future.

The community of Whistle Bend is located just east of Porter Creek. In the absence of amenities in the neighbourhood, many of the roughly 2,000 residents commute to other areas of Whitehorse for work and school, to attend medical appointments, get groceries, or take part in their favourite recreational activity. They do this either by vehicle or even bicycle. There are two main routes for this to happen: the Alaska Highway and Mountainview Drive. If you regularly drive either route in the morning, you will find a heavy amount of traffic, especially on Mountainview Drive, as traffic can get backed up from the Superstore intersection on Quartz Road all the way down Copper Road, where it extends to the Range Road intersection. This is a distance of a few kilometres.

Traffic is one of many issues I heard at the door during the campaign. I'm disappointed that no solutions to this issue were included in this budget. I understand there was a proposal to widen the Alaska Highway in the Porter Creek and Crestview area. However, I have been told that, thanks to a lack of consultation from the previous Liberal government, this much-needed project has been delayed.

Speaking of traffic, parking is another I heard at the door. I know this is an issue that needs to be addressed as we move forward with the continued growth of Whistle Bend.

I mentioned earlier about the lack of amenities in Whistle Bend. This was another issue that I heard from constituents during the campaign. I want to tell my constituents right now from the floor of the Legislative Assembly that I will work with the city and proper stakeholders to make even the most basic of amenities — such as a coffee shop, small grocery store, or even a commercial-type business — a reality. I will continue to update you on that progress. As we all know, small businesses are what make a community thrive.

Another thing I will be watching closely is the development of the Whistle Bend school. I have heard from many residents about the lack of detail when it comes to a safe area to pick up and drop off students. I have already heard about the speed of vehicles on the two streets that the new school will border. I'm hoping these issues will be addressed because this school will be so important to the many young families who call Whistle Bend home. We need to do this project right, not only for those families but also for the community as a whole.

While I have talked about Whistle Bend, I have met so many great people in Porter Creek — residents on streets such Tamarack Drive, Wann Road, and Cedar Crescent. You shared many of the same concerns as those in Whistle Bend, including concerns with early learning in childcare and the fact that the plan just put in place on April 1 isn't truly universal. I have said throughout the campaign, my focus is to bring the concerns of the residents of Porter Creek Centre to the floor of the Legislative Assembly, and I am deeply humbled to have that opportunity.

Mr. Kent: I will take this opportunity to welcome you to the Legislative Assembly and to your new role as the Speaker of the Assembly.

I'm going to be brief. Prior to the election call, we did have the opportunity to respond to this budget, and I spoke at length

about issues in Education and EMR and other concerns, so I won't go back into those this time, recognizing the shortness of this special Sitting that we're now engaged in and that we have a substantial amount of budget to get through.

Like many others in the Legislature today, I also want to thank the constituents of my riding of Copperbelt South for returning me here for a second term as their representative and for a fourth term overall elected to the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Also, like others, I would like to thank so many people who had a hand in getting me back here, starting with my family — my wife, Amanda, and my young son, Eli. Amanda also served as my campaign manager, as she has in the past couple of elections. Her work and her organization are the biggest reasons that I'm able to be back here and to serve Yukoners again in this capacity.

I would like to thank all my family, friends, and volunteers — my mom and my brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews, friends, and folks I went to high school with here in the Yukon back in the 80s, as well as some younger volunteers who just came on board this year. Everybody really chipped in and helped out — a tremendous effort by all. Of course, Linda Benoit, who acted as my official agent in this election, did a great job in tracking all the things that the official agent needs to do.

As I worked my way through the riding during this campaign, a number of issues emerged that were riding-specific, and I will certainly be dealing with many of them as we conclude this short session but also as we move into the fall and subsequent sessions. Highway safety is something that continues to be a concern for many people in the riding of Copperbelt South, so we look forward to asking questions of the new Minister of Highways and Public Works around plans for the Whitehorse corridor, specifically of the Alaska Highway when it comes to those riding issues. The need for a multi-use trail was also identified by many residents — young families pushing strollers around the neighbourhoods, wanting to move between subdivisions, to people who cycle or e-bike into work on a daily basis. Everyone is looking for ways to make that safer for them. As I mentioned, the establishment of a multi-use trail came up at a number of doors.

Housing, of course, is an issue in almost every riding throughout the territory and in mine as well. The lack of affordable housing, especially for young Yukoners — established families, but their children who are either returning from university and looking to buy their first home or are looking to enter the housing market at some point are having difficulty.

Education and childcare are two issues that came up. I'm happy to be the Education critic again for the start of this mandate, and I look forward to working with the new minister and asking questions of her as we get into Committee of the Whole in that department.

Procurement — there are many contractors who live in my riding, and there continue to be a lot of concerns around procurement issues. Having responsibility as critic for

Highways and Public Works, I look forward to digging into that more with the minister responsible when we get a chance.

Then issues with the pandemic and the recovery from that on the economic side and protecting people's health and well-being — issues that came up at many doors throughout the campaign, so I look forward to working with colleagues in the Legislature on recovery efforts for the tourism industry and other businesses as we emerge from the pandemic and work together to make sure that the Yukon is well-positioned as we emerge from it.

Many of the questions that I will have, once we get into Committee debate, for the departments that I am responsible for — some will revolve around the new NDP-Liberal agreement that has been signed. Obviously, the IEP issue is extremely important. It is one that came up before the election was called and during the campaign — at many doors in the territory it came up — and then, of course, we have talked about it here in Question Period during the first couple of days of this new Sitting. We will look to dig in a little bit deeper with the Minister of Education on that when the time comes.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I gave a fairly lengthy speech earlier in March before the election was called, and I am pleased to be back here as the MLA for Copperbelt South so that we can continue that work as legislators.

Just before I close my remarks, I would like to congratulate all of the new members who have come to the Legislature this time around and thank those who ran but weren't successful coming out of the last one. It was a pleasure to work with those individuals, and I look forward to working with all members of the House as we move forward to make a better Yukon. I look forward to serving in the roles that have been given to me by the Leader of the Official Opposition, the critic roles that he has given to me and, of course, working on behalf of all constituents of Copperbelt South.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the second reading of Bill No. 201. Like the Member for Copperbelt South, I will be relatively brief on this Budget Address, as the budget that has been tabled is very similar to the budget that was tabled in early March 2020. There were fulsome and comprehensive speeches and debate presented — by my recollection — by all members in the 34th Assembly. In any event, I have some comments.

The capital budget for Bill No. 201 is \$434 million. This is a 17-percent increase over the capital budget last year and a 48-percent increase over the last Yukon Party capital budget in 2016. Needless to say, this is great news for all of our economy, particularly contractors involved in construction, roadwork, engineering, architecture, and, of course, many other Yukoners. Much of this allocated work would not have been possible without the positive and respectful government-to-government relationships that this Liberal government has built with First Nations since coming to power in 2016.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on this because it is really a significant accomplishment that makes possible a large portion of the investments in this tabled budget. I'm confident that this capital budget will go a long way in

addressing an infrastructure deficit that we are still catching up to.

Transportation infrastructure, in particular, is not something that should be left in a state of disrepair. This is particularly true for our remote communities that depend on transportation infrastructure for their lifelines to Whitehorse and beyond. Among others, a good example from this capital budget is a significant investment in the Carmacks bypass road thanks to agreements that were signed with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation.

As well, the Resource Gateway projects are well underway. I look forward to touring these projects and others with my colleagues this summer. Thanks to our productive and fruitful relationships with First Nation governments, we have been able to unlock over \$430 million worth of work through this project with the Government of Canada which otherwise would not have happened. 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 the community of Teslin but for the entire Yukon. Further, our \$157-million north Klondike Highway project is continuing this year after the work last summer that saw 13.5 kilometres of road reconstructed between Pelly Crossing and Dawson. Thanks to the Government of Canada for providing approximately \$118 million of funding for that purpose.

Construction tenders for this season's work will be released soon, and I'm sure that our local road construction companies will be on the lookout for those tenders. We have also invested and are moving forward with the Old Crow health and wellness centre and housing templex in this budget, with almost \$20 million that has been dedicated to this project. \$2.5 million will be dedicated to the construction of the Old Crow winter road for the upcoming winter of 2021-22 in order to facilitate this project, and when these winter roads are built, they facilitate the transportation of additional goods into the community and also goods that come from the community on roughly a five-year cycle. I'm sure the community of Old Crow looks forward to that winter road being constructed going forward. This long-overdue investment will drastically increase the services provided to the community of Old Crow.

In aviation capital spending, we have allocated \$16.5 million this year. This continues the trend of an increased budget for aviation led by this government. This year, we have invested \$2.7 million in the Mayo airport, which was recently upgraded from an aerodrome thanks to work over the past few years. This current investment is for a lighting upgrade which will allow for scheduled and non-scheduled aircraft operations at night.

This is something that the community of Mayo, Air North, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and mining companies in the area have been asking for and something that we will now deliver.

For the Whitehorse airport — the Erik Nielsen International Airport — we have throughout our mandate invested in many areas, including a new airport bridge for passengers to transfer from the building to an aircraft and vice versa. New airport runway maintenance vehicles — which

were badly needed — have been budgeted for, as I'm advised the current vehicles were constantly breaking down. I'm advised by my predecessor that this brought employees no end of anxiety and grief at the time.

We are also currently in the final stages of replacing the baggage system, which is long overdue. Next up at the Whitehorse airport is the replacement of the maintenance facility, which is over 60 years old and is also located within the Alaska Highway right-of-way, which we are currently working to upgrade. We have design work budgeted for this year, and a review of the project schedule and timing is currently underway. That overall project has a budget of \$10.5 million and a projected completion date of 2023.

We are also looking at a major runway project at the Whitehorse airport, which I hope to have further news on in the near future.

I have already spoken today about the Dempster fibre line project, which I am very proud of, and the dedicated team, whom I have had the opportunity to speak to already on this project. This project will kick into high gear this year, with \$20 million budgeted for that purpose in this fiscal year, providing a redundant Internet fibre loop for the north. It is, of course, very valuable for our business competitiveness and also for the ongoing safety of all Yukoners and all residents north of 60.

Staying on the topic of technology and IT, we budgeted a little over \$1 million per year to change the Yukon government phone system to voice-over IP, or VoIP for short. Commencing this year, the project is expected to be completed by 2023 and will start saving the government an estimated \$1 million per year, Mr. Speaker.

Moving on to Education, I want to highlight the work that will begin this year on a new elementary school in Whistle Bend. We have budgeted \$35.5 million for the project; however, the true cost will be confirmed after the tender closes. The construction is scheduled to begin later this year and occupancy is planned for the winter of 2023.

Following construction of the new French school, Le Centre scolaire secondaire communautaire Paul-Émile Mercier, I have every confidence in the department and the private sector to deliver another fantastic school to the vibrant, dynamic, and rapidly growing community of Whistle Bend and the surrounding areas.

As indicated in the budget speech, we also have a new school site identified in Burwash Landing and funding has been allocated to support the planning and construction in this budget.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, we have made and continue to make education a top priority for this Yukon Liberal government.

On the regulatory and legislative front, our *Public Airports Act* regulations will come into force and effect soon and we have continued to allocate resources in this budget for the ongoing rewrite of the *Motor Vehicles Act*, which has been a long time coming and is a substantial project.

The second portfolio I hold is the Department of Environment. I am proud of the work achieved by my

predecessor, Pauline Frost, on land protection and the environment — Yukon's ecosystems and watersheds that carve the landscape of this beautiful territory, our home to unique biodiversity and iconic species. The Department of Environment budget before you allows us to develop and manage our natural resources responsibly and sustainably through our agreements and initiatives.

Through this budget, we continue to invest in implementing our parks strategy and improving infrastructure at Yukon government campgrounds to make our wilderness more accessible to the public. We know that — for many reasons — our Yukon parks and campgrounds were extremely popular last year and, of course, we anticipate that they will be once again this year.

This year's budget includes more than \$50 million to implement the *Our Clean Future* strategy and the 131 actions that guide us on a path to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, meet increasing energy demands, help us adapt to the impacts of climate change, and build a green economy in Yukon.

Of course, none of the ongoing work for future projects would have been possible without the significant and valuable efforts of our public servants who continue to see this agenda through. So, on behalf of my caucus colleagues and myself, I would provide a heartfelt thank you.

We see you and appreciate all that you do, day in and day out. As public servants, you should stand proud of these notable achievements. This budget demonstrates our ongoing and substantial commitments to improve the lives of Yukoners through increased programs and services but also through major capital investments — achievements and investments that benefit and belong to all Yukoners.

Yukoners have sent a clear message that we need to work together for the benefit of the territory. That is what we are committed to doing. We need steady leadership to get us on the path to recovery. This year's budget sets us on a path to recovery and makes life more affordable for Yukoners.

Mr. Hassard: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this budget. I too would like to start by welcoming you, as well as the other new members, to the Legislature — the members for Vuntut Gwitchin, Whitehorse Centre, and, of course, Copperbelt North. I would like to just wish you all the best in your new roles and hope that you find as much satisfaction working on behalf of your constituents as I have found over the years.

Of course, I would like to thank my family, volunteers, and supporters as well. As you've probably learned in the past few weeks, an election is not an easy thing on our families, and we really do owe them a ton.

As for volunteers and constituents, I truly do appreciate their support. It's such a great feeling to see that continued support. The fact that I received more support in all three of my communities than ever before really is a wonderful thing to experience, and I certainly can't thank everyone enough.

Mr. Speaker, with this new coalition-type government that we're seeing today and the decision that they've made to cut this current Sitting to just 11 days without consulting the Yukon

Party on the length of the Sitting, we obviously are very limited in our time to debate a record budget, and that certainly is concerning. There is very limited time to bring questions forward to the government on many issues that have been brought forward to me and my co-workers by constituents from across the Yukon.

I have numerous questions regarding things such as the Nisutlin Bay bridge, the biomass heat agreement for TTC in regard to the Teslin school — those are just a couple of examples for Teslin. I have questions for the citizens of Ross River and Faro about things such as the Ross River school, the deplorable road conditions between Faro and Ross River, the condition of some of the streets in Faro where upgrades to the water and sewer have been done, and there is currently no contract in place to finish those street repairs.

But, Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that we have very limited time, I encourage others to take the opportunity to speak to this budget, but I hope that everyone is cognizant of the time and that we are able to move through this quite quickly and get down to the work of actually debating the budget.

With that, Mr. Speaker, again, congratulations on your new role, and it's a pleasure to have the opportunity to stand, as always.

Ms. McLeod: I want to first thank all the people in my riding of Watson Lake for their continued faith and support for me to represent them in this Legislative Assembly. My sincere thanks go to my family and to all of the volunteers who offered their time during the election campaign.

This budget, and particularly this budget document, is the most secretive document to date. It's nearly impossible to know how and where the money is going to be spent. My constituents and I are extremely disappointed that questions that they want answered will not be afforded the proper amount of time in this Sitting to see that these questions are asked and hopefully answered. I find that the level of secrecy is astonishing. Budgets affect all Yukoners and their daily lives.

My comments today are going to be somewhat brief as I said in the first Spring Sitting of this year that I would keep my comments short in an effort to get to the questions that are of importance to Yukoners. Unfortunately, that lasted for five days.

I know that again we're going to be afforded very little time to ask any of these questions — questions like how this budget will improve the lives of seniors who want to stay in their homes. I have asked this question repeatedly over the past few budgets and have yet to get any answers.

We know money has been granted to the Yukon from Canada expressly for home care, and yet no improvements to the lives of those seniors. Our community was promised lots — building lots for sale this spring. No confirmation has come to say that it will happen at all this year. What we have just seen is some talking points from the Premier.

As everywhere in the Yukon, housing was a common concern in my riding. There has been no consultation on the housing needs for the communities of Watson Lake and Upper

Liard, and I have yet to find one person who was consulted on a Housing First project.

There were numerous concerns expressed to me during the campaign around substance abuse and treatment, and so far, no information around treatment for rural Yukoners has come forward, but we have heard some talking points around land-based treatment — no details on what that is. Again, I'm pretty concerned that we're not even being able to ask any questions.

There were a great number of concerns expressed around K4 in our schools. There was no consultation with schools, parents, the daycare centre, or the creative play group. No one knows how this was supposed to work or even if it should be put into place in our community.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm also cognizant of the time factor, and I'm hopeful that we can wrap up debate on this second reading speech on the budget. I'm going to leave my comments there. I sincerely hope that we do get some time and that some of our major departments are given an opportunity for debate, but what we have seen in the past is that, for instance, the Health and Social Services budget, which is clearly the largest piece of the budget document, has been afforded a matter of a couple hours' worth of debate. I hope that we can see better.

Ms. White: It's a pleasure to be here again, as I have been definitely lucky to be here in the recent past.

The 2021 election showed us that Yukon wants politics to be done in a different way. Yukoners showed us this when no one party was elected with a majority government. In three separate election campaigns, I heard from every party how we would work together, but that wasn't the case for the 33rd or the 34th Legislative Assembly. We saw motions and legislation pushed through by both the Yukon Party and the Liberal government. We saw committee work rubberstamped by either party that was in power as they overrode group decision-making processes — but no more.

Committees will no longer have any one party with a majority of members, so here is our opportunity to work together for the betterment of all Yukoners. No longer will this House be used to waste time and to push through motions that are tabled by government to highlight what is already included in budgets, what is already being done, or what has been done, and no longer will good ideas from opposition benches be extinguished on this floor with amendments changing their original intent or just being voted down.

Yukon was experiencing a housing crisis when I ran in the 2011 general election, and again Yukon was experiencing a housing crisis in 2016, and the Yukon is still in a housing crisis in 2021. Thousands of Yukoners are renters, and with the housing market overheating for the last number of years, we have heard from so many tenants facing rent increases of \$200, \$300, or even \$400 at a time. Shockingly, this was allowed, because it's allowed under our current legislation, and there is nothing that we could do for these folks who reached out for help.

So, had the Yukon Party been open to actually fixing this problem when the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* was

first being created and then came forward in this House in 2012 — which they weren't — we wouldn't be in this current mess.

Limiting rent increases to inflation is a common-sense approach. This follows the lead of other jurisdictions across the country that are facing similar situations that we are facing in the Yukon. British Columbia and Ontario actually have a freeze in place for 2021.

In Yukon, rents will still go up, but it will be limited to inflation for the next two years. Manitoba, Québec, Nova Scotia, and PEI also all have similar protections in place. As a matter of fact, most Canadians live in jurisdictions with a rent cap in place if we look at the jurisdictions with the biggest populations, like Québec, Ontario, and British Columbia. This cap through inflation is not going to solve all of our housing issues. It was never meant to. It is an immediate measure to prevent the hundreds of dollars in increases that we have seen over the last year.

In the next 20 months, the government must reach out and improve the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* to provide better protection for tenants and flexibility for landlords. Most importantly, this government will not solve our affordable housing crisis without building more affordable rental units. We still have over 350 folks on the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list. So, we need to build and we need to build now, because this will take time and tenants who are facing these exorbitant increases don't have the luxury of time. So, at least for the next two years, they are protected as rent increases will be limited to inflation.

I have spoken at length in this Assembly about the importance of having a fair minimum wage. We know that the cost of living continues to increase at a much faster rate than our minimum wage increases of the past. No one who works a full-time job should need to access aspects of our social safety net, like the food bank or emergency funding through social assistance. Increasing the minimum wage to \$15.20 is in step with the original recommendations of the Employment Standard Boards in 2018.

I think that we can all agree on one basic fact: Your mouth is part of your body, so why does our supposedly universal health care system exclude our teeth from that equation? It is a question that the Yukon NDP and Yukoners from across the territory have been asking the Yukon government for decades. It is also something that experts have spoken about, and in the groundbreaking review *Putting People First*, the experts agreed that dental care is just as important as other forms of health care. Taking care of our mouths can prevent serious injury down the road and I can tell you that every election for the last decade, I have met people on their doors or in our office who cannot afford dental care and are suffering for it. Yukoners should not have to remain in pain because of a lack of extended insurance benefits.

Finally, implementing the dental recommendations from the *Putting People First* report, Yukoners will find relief in knowing that they won't have to delay getting treated for pain because of a lack of extended health benefits. This is an incredible step to preventing dental emergencies of the future. So, in Yukon, we are one step closer to equitable access to

health care for all Yukoners. I hope that Yukoners are proud to know that we will be the first jurisdiction in the country to implement a public dental plan.

The number of lives lost and Yukoners suffering in the grips of opioid addiction is truly staggering. This year alone, seven people have died in opioid-related deaths. The Yukon is in crisis and these numbers are telling us to act and to act now. So, we know and experts have been telling us for years that harm reduction works. By bringing in a safe pharmaceutical supply for folks who struggle with addictions, lives will be saved. So, gone is the conversation about whether it is helpful, and here is the conversation about putting it in place. For that, Yukoners should be proud.

With the Yukon NDP and the Liberal agreement, this agreement amends the greenhouse gas emissions target to a more ambitious target of a 45-percent reduction by 2030 compared to the 2010 emissions. But this can't be done in isolation, so there will be a creation of a Yukon climate leadership council with representatives from Yukon First Nations, environmental organizations, and the renewable energy sector, industry, labour, municipal governments, youth, and Yukon University. As I mentioned yesterday, the Yukon Chamber of Mines would like to be involved as industry representation, so I look forward to further conversations with them and others as we move forward, because this is an opportunity.

When I think about the difference in this 2021 revised budget and where we are here in this 35th Legislative Assembly, all I see is opportunity. All I see is the ability for us to work together, so here is an opportunity for all members to now bring forward ideas to discuss and debate on the floor of this Legislative Assembly, where now we have to work together in order to get things done. By doing that, it will be for the betterment of all of Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that this is our chance to truly work together, and for that, I am truly hopeful.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, before I start, I do want to welcome all the new MLAs and the old, returning MLAs. Mr. Speaker, I believe we were fellow Rangers together and I want to thank you for your service to our country.

I want to thank my family. I want to thank my constituents, the seniors, elders, and the diverse people in my riding for the support and the guidance during the campaign and during my last two terms and this term moving forward, whether it is during the good times or the bad times.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to take up a bunch of time, but my constituency work is, bar none, the most important thing to me, and it's very important to me. We have a rather large riding. Mr. Speaker, I haven't really had a chance to review the budget as we just received it today, but I do understand that there is not much change from the budget that we saw a few months ago.

I want to highlight a few things that are issues. They may not seem like major issues to some members in here, but they sure are to the riding. They need addressing right away, and I hope to get them addressed, either during departmental debate,

which will be short, or putting motions on the floor to highlight it. This shortened session doesn't give us much time.

There are a few things that I will highlight. For example, we have the wild, or feral, horses and elk between pretty much Champagne and Whitehorse, and the brushing needs to get done. I brought it up in the House before. In the beautiful community of Haines Junction, I've been waiting, and we have been waiting, for the business signs and the crosswalk to go to Da Kq. The north Alaska Highway — we haven't seen any money, and I haven't had a chance to really get into the budget to see if they're actually going to put some capital money into the north Alaska Highway. It's falling apart; we haven't seen a dollar spent on it for the residents north of Destruction Bay up to Beaver Creek.

The Kluane Lake School — I keep hearing about it. I've been hearing about it for five years, and now I hear about it today, and I'm so happy that it's being built. That's something that I wanted done, and I worked with the chief of the day to make sure that this could get done. I look forward to it getting done. I just hope that they go and engage with other community members and chat about what's going to happen to the old school and how it can be repurposed to something that's needed in the community.

We don't have a doctor. We had a doctor, Mr. Speaker, but we don't have a doctor. The government knew about it before last Christmas, and I sure hope that it's a priority for the Health and Social Services minister — to get a doctor back in place like we had before.

I guess one of the most disappointing things for me in the riding is our seniors facility. Shortly after the pandemic came, the actual seniors group was asked to leave the seniors facility, and they weren't allowed to meet there anymore. I had assurance that they would be back November 30, but they're still not in there. I sure hope that this is a priority for our housing minister and Health and Social Services minister. It's so hard for seniors to meet in these times, and I think that other members have talked about the effects of the pandemic when it comes to mental health and our seniors just dying of loneliness because no one can meet with them or come to see them.

We are now, I believe, three years behind on contracting services on major water and sewer upgrades within the municipality of Haines Junction. Again, it looks like the tender was waylaid too long and we're not going to see a whole bunch of work again this year, when our hotels are empty, restaurants don't have a lot of business — just locals — and gas stations. It would sure be nice to have business. It would have been nice to have it last year, too.

I heard lots from constituents during the campaign, and all the time, about — we need to get the government back to work so that the government services can be there for us. I know that we're working on it, and I hope that this is a priority, too.

I'll be tabling a petition next week about dumps. It's so important — dumps may not seem like much to a lot of people in here, but the closure at a dump and looking at fees at other dumps without consulting or talking to anyone — it's just not fair; it's not fair to the residents.

I think that probably, if you want to look at it, the biggest thing in the riding right now is our major time to make an honest dollar for the business community — it is with the tourism sector in the summer, and it's devastated due to the pandemic. I sure hope that there's more that can be done to help make us bigger and better when it opens up. Our neighbours to the south of us in Haines and Skagway — I think a conversation needs to be had with the United States and Canada on what we can do to help them so we can maybe go there and they can come here — looking at how the vaccines and everything is rolled out.

I sure hope that we don't keep moving backwards, Mr. Speaker, in my riding with the things that need to be done. I'm hopeful, listening to the Leader of the Third Party, where we can all bring things forward and things will get done.

In closing, I do want to thank Luke Campbell and Dave Weir, who I ran against, and I thank them for that. I want to thank, as always, our support staff and all my fellow colleagues in the House here today — on the great team that we have with the Yukon Party under the leadership of our new leader. I look forward to listening to a few others, but I sure do hope that they are short so we can get into departments and start debating.

Mr. Dixon: It's a pleasure to rise in response to this budget and to say a few words on behalf of myself, my constituents, and my caucus. I believe that I'm the final speaker from this side of the House, so I look forward to getting into these departments as we carry forth.

Before we do, I did want to take the opportunity to say a few words of appreciation from me for the privilege and honour of being here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. This is my second time being in this Legislature. I was a member of the 33rd Legislature as well. I'm very much looking forward to my new role as the Leader of the Official Opposition and Member of the Legislative Assembly for Copperbelt North.

A number of my colleagues have mentioned how important the support of our families is to all of us being here. I want to say a few words about that. I want to thank my wife, Brittany, and our children, London and Dawson, for their support throughout the election and our continued efforts since the election in allowing me to fulfill this exciting opportunity to be an elected representative and Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Of course, I want to also thank my parents, Linda and Donnie Dixon, for their support. Of course, my mom, Linda, was very much involved in my campaign. She is a seasoned campaigner and has been involved in politics for a very long time. I very much appreciate her support, wisdom, and love as I undertook this most recent endeavour. My sister, Bonnie Dixon, who managed my campaign in the last election — I want to thank her and her kids, Harlyn Dixon and Drey Currie Dixon, for lending me their mom for the duration of the campaign and having her help me through that. I would also like to thank my sister, Lindsey Anderson, and her husband, Kyle, and their two children, Aliya and Ivy, for their ongoing support and love.

Of course, beyond the specific campaign in Copperbelt North, I was part of a larger campaign as the leader of the party.

Of course, that involves a lot of important volunteers and supporters. First of all, of course, I would like to thank Ted Laking, who is our chief of staff but also was our campaign manager in the most recent election. I think that all of my colleagues would agree that we simply couldn't do what we were doing without Ted's support, and I very much want to thank him and Colleen, Henry, and James for lending Ted to us for not just the campaign but for so much of his time.

I want to thank Amanda Leslie, who was the director of communications for the campaign, Tim Kucharuk, Robin Boss, Danny Macdonald — all of whom work in our offices here but also played important roles in the campaign as well.

I would like to thank a few key volunteers — Linda Benoit, Jonas Smith, Carolyne Thompson, and Pat McElroy all played a huge role in the success of our campaign. I would like to note those folks for their support and engagement during the election.

I want to give a special thank you to our party president, Mel Brais. Mel obviously plays a very important role as the president of our party but played an incredibly outsized role in the campaign, running our campaign office. She and her husband, Paul, put an inordinate number of hours into our collective effort, and I know that, without her support and without her engagement, I know we wouldn't have had the success that we did in the 2021 election.

In addition to that, I want to thank the members of our party's executive. I won't name them all because we have a lot, but we have an incredibly engaged executive, and they have been putting a lot of wonderful hours into the work that they have been tasked with over the past year or so, since I became the leader of the party. I very much appreciate each and every one of them.

I do want to thank all of the candidates who ran in the last election — whether they were successful or not — for all parties, but I do want to say a special thank you and a few words of appreciation to Ted Adel and Saba Javed, who were the Liberal and New Democrat candidates for the riding of Copperbelt North, respectively, in the last election. I thought both ran exceptional campaigns, and I appreciate very much the honourable and respectful approach that was taken by both Ted and Saba in our neighbourhood. Saba lives just down the street from me and Ted lives not too far away either, so I know that both will remain engaged in the community, and I look forward to working with them both over the course of the next few years in my role as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Copperbelt North.

Both of my colleagues, the other leaders of the two parties, have noted how unique the role of running a campaign as the leader is, and this was my first time doing so. I had the real privilege of spending a lot of time outside of my riding, throughout the Yukon in a number of different ridings, connecting with constituents and voters around the territory. I don't think I got to every single riding in the duration of the campaign, but I got to as many as I could and spent a lot of time connecting with as many different communities as I could.

Of course, over the past year since I became the leader of the party, I have had the privilege and pleasure of travelling

around the territory and connecting with as many communities as I could, despite the fact that much of that engagement and outreach was occurring during a period in the Yukon when travel was very difficult and meetings were challenging. I want to thank all of the chiefs, mayors, community leaders, and community representatives whom I have had the pleasure of dealing with over the past year or so.

As we turn now to the business at hand, which of course is this budget — I know that many of my colleagues who were re-elected already have had the chance to speak to this budget or its predecessor, which was very similar. Many of them have already had the opportunity to say a number of words about the budget. I know that time probably won't permit me to dig in as much as I would like, but at first glance, one of the more concerning things I look at when I see this budget is the net financial assets of the territory. I know that in 2016, when I was last in these Chambers, the territory's public finances were in much better shape. We had net financial resources and were on track to continue so. Unfortunately, over the last years, we have seen that decline considerably, and the result is before us today in this budget, where we see a net debt of just about \$170 million, which is remarkable given the size of our territory's public finances.

What's even more concerning, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the trajectory that we are on as well. I know that in the budget document tabled a few months ago, we noted that we were on pace to see that net financial asset position decline even further to a startling \$300-million net debt.

Those are obviously concerning numbers to me and something that I think isn't being adequately addressed by the current government. What's even more worrisome about this is that I fear that the new way of doing business here — the coalition agreement structure that we see in place now — is going to exacerbate our spending and continue us on a dangerous path toward unsustainable spending. That's a concern I have more generally. As we move forward into the details of this, I'll have the opportunity to engage either in Committee on the Department of Finance or more generally across the span of different departments as we begin debate on these areas.

As well as being the Leader of the Official Opposition, I have taken on a few additional roles as well as critic for a number of departments. In some cases, these departments are very well known to me — either because I have formerly been the minister of these departments or because I have a particular interest in some of the work that they do. But some of them I'm less familiar with; I note that the Executive Council Office I've never been responsible for and haven't had the ability or the opportunity to direct before, but obviously as a former Cabinet minister, I dealt with the department a fair amount.

One of the areas in the Executive Council Office that I look forward to engaging with the Premier on relates to intergovernmental affairs, how the Premier views his role in the federation, what opportunities lie ahead of us, and how he'll be directing the department and the Intergovernmental Relations branch to engage with our colleagues around the country. Over the course of my time as a legislator previously, I made a

concerted effort to build relationships with colleagues across the country and I've learned, in my experience, that those relationships are so important — especially when difficult matters need to be dealt with at the national level and provinces and territories need to come together and either make a case to Ottawa or work with Ottawa to engage on important files.

I'm also the critic for the Public Service Commission and I was honoured and pleased to be the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission in my last time in office. I'm very familiar with a number of the files that the Public Service Commission deals with. I look forward to digging into those on this side of the House and doing my best to raise questions and concerns about some of the ongoings in that department.

I will also take on the role of critic for the Department of Environment. This is yet another example of a department that I was previously the minister of. I have spent a lot of time with the Department of Environment. I was previously one of the longer serving ministers of Environment and really appreciated my time in that department. I know that a lot has changed since I was there last, but I do suspect that many of the same issues still persist. I think that I will be well-grounded in those issues and able to engage with the new minister on those files.

Of particular interest to me, not only as the critic for the department but as a Yukoner who has been engaged in the hunting community for some time, I look forward to engaging with the minister on the strained relationship between this government and the hunting community. I know that, over the past few years, the former minister didn't quite have the strongest relationship with the hunting community, and that was evidenced by the cut to the funding of the Yukon Fish and Game Association that occurred in the previous budget.

In addition to cutting the funding for the Yukon Fish and Game Association, the government has had a fairly negative approach to dealing with concerns raised by the Fish and Game Association with regard to regulatory changes and the overall system of wildlife management, and I hope that the new minister can right some of those missed opportunities that the previous minister engaged in. It's my hope that, with some positive engagement from the new minister, things can be improved upon and a bit of a new direction can be taken from the previous adversarial approach that the former minister had with the hunting community.

An additional area that I'll be speaking about is the various corporations — the Yukon Liquor Corporation, the cannabis corporation, and the Lottery Commission. I had taken these on not because I have familiarity with the departments as a former minister but because I have an extreme interest in the field and in this sector of the economy, which I think contributes very importantly to our communities. In the past year, I have had the opportunity to connect with a number of businesses in the hospitality sector to discuss the impacts of COVID on their businesses but also to understand some of the ongoing challenges that began well before COVID.

There is a lot of detail to these and there is some nuance, but I think that one of the issues that sort of summarizes the breadth of the issues is red tape. I think that the Yukon Liquor Corporation, in particular, imposes a lot of red tape on

businesses, either through its pricing model or some of the rules that are in place for the operation of hospitality businesses, but I think that many of them could be addressed with some political leadership.

I know that the new minister for the Yukon Liquor Corporation has a lot of experience in that field and I am sure will appreciate some of the concerns that have been raised by the hospitality industry. I look forward to working with him to do our best to reduce red tape and reduce the burden on some of these businesses that have not only been affected by the COVID pandemic but have been impacted by red tape that has persisted for some time. I say that because I don't think that it started in 2016. The red tape that has burdened the business sector, and particularly the hospitality sector, has been going on for a number of years. That's something that I know probably wasn't dealt with as much as we would have liked in the previous Yukon Party governments, so I hope to see a change now going forward.

Additionally, I have several views on prospective changes to our regime when it comes to cannabis. I believe that the legalization of cannabis was a tremendous opportunity not just for our territory but for the country. I do think that the model that was chosen unfortunately squandered some of that opportunity, and I think that there is a real opportunity to adjust the model that we have in place now to allow for a greater opportunity for the business sector to take a leadership role in displacing the black market. That was one of the guiding principles of the legalization of cannabis here in the Yukon, and I think that the current model we have in place doesn't do enough to support the private sector in combatting the black market or even just creating business opportunities for a thriving new sector. Obviously, in the last election, the Yukon Party proposed the privatization of the cannabis corporation and the removal of Yukon government from the sector inasmuch as it participates today.

So, you know, that is something that is informed not only by my review of the legislation and my review of the regulatory framework within which that sector operates but extensive conversations with business owners and folks in the private sector who felt incredibly let down by the approach taken by the previous Liberal government and are looking for new opportunities and perhaps changes with the new minister that could improve opportunities for those businesses.

The final piece, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I wanted to touch on was a bit unique. After discussions with our critic for the Department of Education, he allowed me to keep hold of a very important issue to me, and that is early learning and childcare. I have, over the past year, spent a lot of time engaging with the childcare community and the early learning community to better understand the issues that face this sector and this community. Again, I have a number of thoughts about what the current direction is of this government with regard to early learning and childcare and some of the changes that we have seen recently.

As I mentioned yesterday in my response to the throne speech, I don't think that we need to rehash the dates in the election, but it is pretty clear that there is a difference of

approach between the three different parties on how this program should be delivered and what some of the shortcomings are of the current program.

When it was announced just a few days before the election was called, it was pretty clear to many in the childcare community that politics and electoral advantage was one of the driving forces behind the decision. I think that unfortunately took away from some of the sentiment behind it because I think that, really, while we have a unique opportunity in the country today to change the face of early learning and childcare in this country — and I think that the Yukon has an opportunity to be a leader in that front, and while they have been one of the first to engage in a new program in partnership with the federal government, which is providing a significant amount of the funding — I think that the model chosen for this support to families was the wrong one.

I look forward to bringing forward my thoughts on what some opportunities could be to improve that, and I look forward to discussing that with the new minister. I am sure that she is in the process of getting briefed and up to speed on the new program.

One thing I should note is that, despite the differences of opinion on the delivery of the benefits side, I certainly am very supportive of the additional supports and increases in the supports to childcare operators and, in particular, early childhood educators. I think that some of the changes that have been made so far are certainly in the right direction. I do have additional thoughts on some additional changes that can be made or at least considered and I hope that they are — that I'm able to bring those forward in a collaborative way and have the two other parties consider those.

I think that's actually possible. I know that during the election, I had the opportunity to participate in the early learning and childcare forum that was hosted by the community of practice, and both the current Health minister and the now-MLA for Whitehorse Centre joined me on that. I think despite the differences that we have on a few of the aspects of the program, there is a lot of overlap and a lot of agreement on some aspects. Either way, I'm excited to see this issue take such prominence in the election and take some prominence in the budget. I think that is one area where, while there is room for improvement, I think it's a positive step forward for that sector.

I'll leave it there. I think I've covered some of the brief areas that I wanted to cover today. I do look forward to getting into general debate and into departmental debate and I of course look forward to the briefings on the various departments. Unfortunately, because of the incredibly truncated Sitting that we are in right now as a result of the decision by the other two parties to limit it, we're going to have to cram in a considerable number of budget briefings into a very short time. I believe on Friday, we're scheduled for something like six or seven consecutively. That will be a challenge, but that's a result of the decision to limit this Sitting to only 11 days.

With this budget now being tabled today, we have nine days to review a \$1.8-billion budget — which, as I've expressed publicly before, I think it is inadequate and unfortunate that the other two parties decided to make that

decision without us. Obviously, we disagree with it, but I know that we'll have the opportunity to voice that disagreement at a later date when the motion comes forward to truncate this Sitting from its normal length to an unusually short one.

With that, I'll conclude. I look forward to engaging on this, and I thank my colleagues for the opportunity to speak at second reading to respond to this budget and to say a few words not only about my riding but my family and some of those who have supported me in getting here to become an MLA once again. I look forward to doing my best to represent my constituents, fulfill my role as Leader of the Official Opposition, and lead an effective opposition over the next few years.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It's my honour to speak about our Yukon government's 2021-22 budget today. As others have said, I will not take too much time, but it is an important opportunity to speak to the people of the Yukon about our priorities.

Our Liberal government and our team have always been clear that, every day, we are working for the people of the Yukon. We are dedicated to doing our work collaboratively with integrity, initiative, and fairness. That has always been our approach, and I'm looking forward to continuing that work here with the members opposite and our team, who have basically all indicated that they intend to be collaborative in our approaches going forward.

In addition to all of the regular work of government in the past year — all of the usual, regular, everyday work of government — we have spent the past 14 months working daily to keep Yukoners safe and to respond to a world pandemic. It is truly unprecedented work done by all the members of this House, and no government in the history of the Yukon has had to rise to such a challenge with respect to such concerns on behalf of Yukoners and keeping them safe.

I share the comments of many here that we have a special and unique opportunity to work on behalf of Yukoners in a new way. As we work together on this budget, I am hopeful. At the best of times, a budget creates conditions that allow individuals to thrive as the economy grows. I have said before that, in times of uncertainty, a well-crafted budget can provide the stability needed to steer through turbulence while charting a course toward calmer times.

I believe, and I know, that Yukoners will receive this budget as outlining a road map forward and providing some certainty in these still very uncertain times.

Governments must understand their responsibility to the people of this territory, Madam Deputy Speaker, and this one does. I daresay that all members of this Legislative Assembly come here mindful of the folks who sent them here to represent them and the responsibilities that rest on their shoulders.

This budget reflects an attitude and approach that ensures that the priorities that exist in every corner of this great territory are addressed. It ensures that every issue that we all heard about on Yukoners' doorsteps will move forward and will see progress.

One of our key priorities has always been that all communities matter, and I am so proud that our government has lived by that commitment and worked extensively in each and every community to meet them, to listen to their priorities, and to respond to their needs as they explain them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Yukoners have sent us all back to work here for them. I know that part of their trust in us resulted from our commitment to work collaboratively with Yukon First Nations governments and communities, and we commit to continue that work as we go forward.

As I noted yesterday in my reply to the Speech from the Throne — it was an honour to address this House — I am so proud of the work that the Department of Justice has done, and it is truly an honour to be its minister and the Auditor General for this territory.

We have set priorities at the Department of Justice through much hard work over the last mandate. We worked with the dedicated public servants as well as feedback from the community to set out principles. They include reconciliation with Yukon First Nations, working as a team, identifying and meeting our clients' needs, innovation and initiative, and communications. Our work will continue to be guided by these principles as we go forward in this mandate.

I am also incredibly proud to have been given the mandate of Health and Social Services. I am truly honoured to take on these responsibilities, and I will work extensively on behalf of Yukoners to continue the dedicated work of Minister Frost and her work to improve health care services, mental wellness services, and home care services for all Yukoners, no matter where they live in this great territory.

We will focus on our COVID response and the absolutely excellent vaccine program, including the opportunity for youth to be vaccinated in the coming weeks.

Mr. Speaker, it is an exciting opportunity with the *Putting People First* report to truly innovate and lead progress and serve the people of the Yukon into the future, with them at the centre of service delivery for health care services.

In closing — I mentioned my family briefly yesterday — my family and friends — and I just wanted to note again today my thanks to them and the recognition — perhaps on behalf of us all — that being a member of the government and a member of this House takes a toll on those relationships. It is wrong, but this job's demands on your time mean that often family and friends regularly take a back seat and they don't have you in some of the everyday moments of their lives. So, they truly are committed to this job as well, and I wanted to recognize that on behalf of all of our friends and families. When we decide to go down this road, they come with us.

Lastly, I would like to thank Yukoners for keeping us all safe by taking care of one another, by taking care of your family and your friends and your neighbours and your communities, by following the "safe six plus one", and by being vaccinated. Thank you to everyone. Keep up the great work. We will continue to lead. The Yukon has been an amazing leader in the response to COVID-19, and as we all work together, we will continue to do so.

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is my pleasure to rise today to respond to the 2021-22 main budget estimates in Bill No. 201, *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*. I would also like to acknowledge all of those folks who are new to the Legislative Assembly. It was really great to hear you speak in the Legislature yesterday. I take a lot of pride in seeing our new Speaker — our young new Speaker — of Northern Tutchone descent come into this Legislature and take your rightful place. Thank you so much and welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

I would like to also start off by once again thanking my family — particularly my husband, Rick McLean, and my sons, Jedrik and Colin Dendys — for their love and support. Thank you to my extended family and of course my friends for their endless love and support of me. Thank you to the many mentors in my life who keep me grounded, focused, and well — particularly the elders in my life who are not afraid to tell me when I'm off course or need to be set straight. So, thank you to all of those people — and you know who you are.

It is an honour and a privilege of course to serve Yukoners in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. As I said yesterday, thank you to Mountainview for putting your faith in me over the past four and a half years and for continuing to put your trust in me in this second term. I will work hard for you, make you proud, and be the best MLA that I can be by representing your priorities, concerns, and interests and by responding to the needs that you have.

I would like to once again thank the incredible team who supported me through the 2021 election, from financial support to emotional support and everything you can imagine in between. I had what I referred to many times as the "dream team" working on my campaign — led, of course, by the fierce Gina Nagano, who led my campaign in 2016 as well and, of course, my husband, Rick McLean, who ran six campaigns of his own in First Nation politics. He was really extraordinary during the election in helping to advise, be calm, and keep me calm. That was his main job. Also, of course, my very best friend, Keree Vallevand, and our comms team: Melanie Pang, Bing Giroux, Ally Meers, and Edwine Veniat — of course, my official agent, Victoria Fred, Conal Slobodin, Jackie Shorty, Cheyenne Bradley, Brandy Vallevand, Shirley Dawson, Jessie Stephen, Teresa Waugh, Lisa Anderson, and my son Colin Dendys.

There were many others who supported me throughout, but I wanted to actually say their names today because I think that I would certainly not be here without them. They believed in me and I'm very grateful to each and every one of them. The days were long and extremely tiring, but we had so much fun on the campaign trail too. Again, I'm truly proud of the campaign we ran and how we kept it positive and focused on our leadership and what we would bring to leadership in the Yukon, if given an opportunity to continue.

I spoke in March on the budget that's very similar. But I wanted to also just say thank you again to the public service for all of your hard work and for your dedication. The work that you do on behalf of Yukoners is tremendous. Valerie Royle — who is my Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture and who I'll continue with and with the Women's Directorate — we

built a really strong friendship, and that is how I worked with public service and Yukon government — to build that trust and friendship and to truly understand what they do.

I also want to mention Kurt Dieckmann from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. It has been an honour, and we did some tremendous work together — legacy work which I think is going to add a lot value to Yukon and keep our workplaces safe and modernized. I'm very happy to have worked with Kurt and of course Mark Pike, chair of the board, and all of the board members.

Again, I was able to speak to the budget in March, so I'm not going to go into too much detail, but this budget is really about people and putting people at the centre of our decisions. We are working to make people's lives better.

I will go into a little bit more detail on Education and not so much on the Women's Directorate. As I've already stated in this House, I'm so honoured to take on this file of Education. Our kids are at the foundation of everything we do and it is our duty to make sure that we are setting them up for success. My vision is that our education system can meet every single child where they are and help them to grow and be successful in whatever way they define success. I'm very lucky to be inheriting this file from such a strong former Minister of Education. She made huge strides over the past four years in modernizing this system.

I have inherited a really great department and a very strong team. The Department of Education has one focus and one focus only: What is in the best interest of our students?

Over the past year, we have faced an unprecedented set of challenges due to COVID-19. As we look forward toward recovery, the department will work to ensure that the education system at all levels provides positive outcomes for students and advances Yukon's social, economic, and community goals.

This budget represents our commitments to the next generation of Yukoners. We are building Whistle Bend elementary school. The budget has \$10.5 million, as the Highways and Public Works minister discussed today, to begin construction of the first elementary school in Whitehorse in over 25 years. We are building on our relationship 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. \$500,000 has been allocated in this budget to support planning and design for the project, with more allocated in the five-year capital plan as the project progresses.

We have \$8.7 million in the budget for new learning spaces and modular classrooms, including \$4 million to add new learning spaces to the Robert Service School in Dawson. There is more than \$2.6 million to improve online 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 the pandemic.

Something that I'm very passionate about is our early learning childcare program. Yukon is just the second jurisdiction in the country to do so. I believe, and our government believes, that all children should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning

opportunities, and I'm so excited to champion this file as a minister. We are investing more than \$25 million toward early learning initiatives in this budget. It includes \$15 million to support the new universal childcare program, which already supports families, saving up to \$700 per month per child. Those are our investments. We are excited about the recent announcement at the federal level for universal childcare. We know that this is going to be a huge impact to Canadians across Canada. However, we have made that investment already, and we will work with our federal partners to ensure that the investment comes to Yukon as well in terms of their recent announcement.

This will support Yukon families and, in particular, will help women who have been hit hard by the pandemic. This program is going to change lives. One of my young friends said that it's going to allow her to dream again, because she's a young mom with a number of children, and I believe that to be true.

We are also working 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. We are working with Yukon First Nations, school councils, and their communities to ensure that this program meets their specific needs. We will move forward together when they are ready.

In terms of the Women's Directorate, I am so pleased, as I have said, to have the opportunity to continue on as the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate. I am very proud of the work that we have achieved over the last four and a half years. There were many incredibly hard, emotional days, but we made some huge strides toward so many advancements for Yukoners. I spoke in March in detail about these, so I will just mention some of the areas that I have focused on and will continue to focus on. It is reflected in the budget as well. Of course, there is the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus strategy and the LGBTQ2S+ action plan. We will continue to work on gender inclusivity and diversity analysis. We will continue to work on establishing SART, the sexualized assault response team, to enhance it in Whitehorse and extend it to our communities. We will continue, of course, under the LGBTQ2S+ file, to work with Queer Yukon around the reality of a pride centre.

As I said in the beginning of these remarks, this budget is about people. It is about our young ones — the next generation — and ensuring that they have the best opportunities and a system that supports them to succeed. It is about people of all genders and sexual orientation having the supports that they deserve.

Over the next days, I look forward to the opportunity to really do a deep dive into the budgets of my portfolios. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues, and I have heard some of that today. Thank you so much for your remarks. It is good to know where you want to go with the discussion. I really look forward to discussing all of these really important matters.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm happy to rise again today to talk on the budget. There are a few things that I want to say. I'm going to try to keep my remarks fairly brief. I appreciate getting the opportunity to hear all the remarks so far, and I look forward to hearing from the members of the Third Party still.

First of all, what I would like to do is just talk about my wife, Susan Walton. She is a really lovely person. She's a nurse, and this is National Nursing Week, so I would like to acknowledge her. There was a comment that the Minister of Health and Social Services just made talking about how, when any of us put our name forward, we kind of bring our family with us. I have heard comments from other members of the Legislature talking about their families and how much they appreciate them.

Last night, I did a community meeting, so I did manage to get to see Susan somewhere after 10:00 p.m., and tonight I'm going to another community meeting, and I'm going to manage to see her, I hope, somewhere around 10:00 p.m., so it's nice, because some days I don't get to see her because we work, all of us — every one in this Legislature devotes themselves to trying to make the Yukon a better place. Of course, Susan helped out, but one of the things that I wanted to mention is that Susan stepped back from decades of work at the hospital, as a nurse at the hospital, and she shifted to teaching at the university, teaching health care assistants so they can contribute to our territory, but she also just recently put her name forward for giving the vaccines.

When I went to get my second vaccine, I nearly got her to vaccinate me. I thought they would probably say, no, that's a conflict, but the guy that I did get it from, the nurse I got it from, he knew that Susan was there, and he understood the relationship, and he was joking about: Did I want to go there and get the shot from my wife, Susan?

One of the reasons that I want to talk about this is because I just want to come back for a second to COVID-19. I feel so lucky to be a Yukoner.

First of all, I will just give a shout-out to all of those people who are helping out with the vaccinations — they are doing an amazing job. I went and volunteered when the clinic came to Carcross — I guess it was two times over four days — and it was just so smooth. It was great to talk to the people who were working at the clinics and to talk to the citizens who were coming to get their vaccine and how thankful we all felt to be getting vaccinated so quickly and it has helped to keep us all safe. I just really appreciate that work. Through conversations with my wife, Susan, I understand that more people are now coming out for their first vaccination, so that's great. She just lets me know that, yes, there are more folks coming. I watch the numbers each day and I get to see them. Every Yukoner can look at the numbers. That is really wonderful because it makes such a difference for us as a territory.

I want to talk, just for a minute, about a few comments from a couple of the colleagues from across the way. First of all, the Member for Lake Laberge said some things about how this Sitting is short — well, yes, it's short. Of course, no one is yet acknowledging that we had another five days earlier where we talked about the budget. Sorry, the Member for Riverdale

North mentioned it — and after he mentioned it, I looked back through Hansard and I saw that, in fact, everybody in the Legislature spoke at second reading. So, that was great; there was an opportunity to hear from people and their thoughts around the budget the first time. I thank the Member for Kluane who mentioned that this budget is not that much different from the budget that was tabled previously. In fact, we can note that, rather than shooting for a \$12.5-million deficit, we are now heading toward a \$6.5-million deficit. So, that is great. It is still red ink, yes — but it is not that red. When I look across the country — my goodness, this is a close-to-balanced budget during a pandemic. It is quite something.

Everyone got to speak on the length of the Sitting, and somehow the Member for Lake Laberge mentioned how, normally, the spring sessions are longer. So, I looked it up. I thought, okay, let's take a look. So, I went and checked out — since 2000, I came forward — and I thought, well, let's not put in the post-election periods because those are always a little bit different. So, I took those out because otherwise they would make this even more pointed. So, I ran an average for Spring and Fall sessions, and here we go: The spring and fall sessions are 30 and a half days average, in this century, for the spring session and 29 days average for the fall session — so, it is not that different.

Then I thought, well, even — let's not count last year, because last year was a pandemic, and we had — remember, we were here in the Spring Sitting, and we all agreed, unanimously, to end the session, because we thought it was not safe, and then we came back and had a 45-day session, which is not the longest ever, but was pretty long, and everybody here will agree it was long.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I got that wrong. I'm just going to back up for a second. The numbers, counting last year, for spring sessions, are 29 and a half days and 30 days for fall. If I take out last year, then I end up with 30 and a half days for spring and 29 days for fall. It's not that different. So, I looked at election years. What happens in election years? I looked again, starting from this century, and I saw basically two different times. So, here we go: In 2002, after the fall election, there was no session — so zero days — but they came back in the spring and had a 35-day session. In 2006, after the fall election — that was the re-election of Premier Fentie — the Sitting was 12 days. Okay. In 2011, when Premier Pasloski was elected — which, by the way, included many of the members opposite, including the current Leader of the Official Opposition — we had a Sitting of nine days. Then, after the 2016 fall election, when we were elected — when the Liberals were elected — we had no Fall Sitting, and then in the spring, we had a 30-day session. Now we have tabled a motion for an 11-day Sitting to focus on the budget, and we also had a five-day session — so it's an 11-day session. Fair enough. So, we've had a nine-day session, a 12-day session, an 11-day session, and somehow that seems like an anomaly to members opposite.

That's what I looked back and saw — and I'll take a look to see if I've missed something — that's great. In those times, we have an opportunity to talk about the budget. What else have we seen here, right now? An interest to try to move the debate

forward. I think we have introduced one very short bill to make sure that the budget can be executed and then the two budget bills.

I think that is actually an opportunity to speak. When I look back, and I tabled this during the last session — in that long fall session — and often general debate took — one time, it took nine days; one time, it took 13 days — it has gone long. If we get through general debate and get to those departments that the members opposite have asked for, I am looking forward to that.

Another comment that came up was to talk about the red ink and the net financial debt. You know where that is created? That's created by investing in our infrastructure. We are investing heavily in our infrastructure. I think that it's a good news story for a few reasons. First of all, as I talk to communities, to First Nations, and to municipalities, they all said they had projects that they wanted us to invest in. I believe that we were in an infrastructure deficit, so I think it's good to make those investments. We're getting really good dollars from the federal government at this time to go, so that makes it strong. As well, right now, as you come out of a pandemic, it's really good news to make sure that this investment is happening. It just helps the economy to keep moving. We worked hard to keep that happening during the pandemic, for that matter. I think that's really important.

So, if we're talking about this and the members opposite are saying that they're concerned that we're investing, I would like them to tell me which projects they want to drop — because that's where you would change that net financial debt or asset. That's the difference. So, right now, I think what we're doing is — yes, we're creating some net financial debt, but we're doing it by reducing the infrastructure deficit that this territory has seen.

I'm not sure which project — I've heard discussions today about the Burwash school. Is that the one that we would drop? I heard about the road between Ross River and Faro and investments in that road. I heard the Minister of Highways and Public Works talk about the Teslin bridge. I heard the Member for Watson Lake talk about the Housing First project. I just want to know which ones the members opposite are not interested in, because I would like to talk about that and say, okay, let's remove those ones or have that discussion.

Now, I personally think that it is good to have this investment. I know that it is significant and I know that it creates net financial debt for the long term. But, really, I don't want to conflate that net financial debt or asset with our surplus or deficit. We worked very hard over the last term to turn the budget around. We had a Financial Advisory Panel come in. We had them come in here and act as witnesses so that everybody within the Legislature could ask questions, probe, prod, and think for themselves about what they would do if they were making decisions based on the advice that came from that panel.

We worked hard to get the budget back into a surplus, which we did, and then the pandemic hit. But what I will say to you is that, today, we are doing the second reading on a budget that has a \$6.6-million deficit, but it has built into it more than \$10-million in contingency around COVID-19.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: \$15 million — thank you — a \$15-million contingency around COVID-19. What I want to say is that between when we first drafted that budget and tabled it here in the Legislature a couple of months ago until now, we have just been getting better with COVID-19. The vaccine has been rolling out super well. We just got the terrific news about the Pfizer vaccine coming for our youth and that opportunity to protect our young folks. Especially as we watch the Northwest Territories right now, I think it is so crucial. I think those are really good news stories.

One thing that I just want to touch base on for a second is that one of the files I am going to have is working with the Department of Environment and on the issue of climate change, because one of my files is energy, and it's talking about how we get to that 45-percent target, and it's the climate change leadership council. I, too, am looking forward to it.

I also want to acknowledge that I spoke with the Chamber of Mines, and they made the same offer to me that they would like to be involved. A lot of people have been reaching out, whether it has been other governments, whether it has been other not-for-profits — individuals who are engaged. People are keen to try to help us get there as a territory. What I would like to say — because I heard offers from the Official Opposition saying that they would like to be engaged — is that I think here is an opportunity where they could be at the table. I would like to acknowledge that when I first met the Leader of the Official Opposition, he was the Minister of Environment. I was working up at the then-college, now university, doing some work on climate change. I gave a presentation to the college and he was there. I thought that his questions were really astute, very thoughtful, and I appreciated the work that he was doing at that time. I think that here's an opportunity. So, when the Leader of the Third Party stood up today and talked about this council, she talked about the opportunity that we have to try to find ways to bring ideas from across political spectrums and be able to share those ideas not just from political parties, of course, but from different walks of life, different communities, and different ways of thinking so that we can work together to try to achieve something more. I think that it is a real opportunity.

Just to sum up, Mr. Speaker, I think that this year's budget sets us on a path to recovery and is working to make life more affordable for Yukoners, and I think that we are leading the country in the fight against COVID-19. It's so important that we all work together for the benefit of the territory, and that's what we're committed to doing.

I'm looking forward to hearing from the other members of the opposition. Just one small comment: When the Leader of the Official Opposition said that he was the last to speak from the opposition, I think he meant from his party, because I still have a couple more whom I'm hoping to hear from, if they wish to rise.

I'm looking forward to that and looking forward to general debate and then really looking forward to getting into the departments when we can start getting into the meat of the budget.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: My good colleague from Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes is always such a tough act to follow. I'm going to be relatively brief here this afternoon as I respond to the budget.

This is an important budget for Yukoners. It marks the territory's first confident steps toward recovery from our pandemic. It marks our first as a minority Liberal government, supported through the confidence and supply agreements that we signed with the New Democratic caucus. Like my colleagues, I'm excited to be working with the Third Party.

The budget is important because it provides stability for Yukoners in uncertain times, and it was heartening to see our colleagues in the New Democratic caucus recognize how important it is in these times to work together for the benefit of all Yukoners.

This budget shows leadership and strong economic stewardship, as we have seen the deficit drop by \$6.1 million, a remarkable accomplishment coming from the pandemic, especially given that we have been providing nation-leading supports to our citizens and business community. This budget will continue to support Yukoners through COVID-19, mitigating the impacts on local employees, employers, and organizations.

We will spend more than \$11 million for programs to support Yukoners as we begin our recovery from this pandemic. It is important to note that our sick leave policy has recently been recognized in the national media as the best in the country, especially given the stumbles that we've seen in the provinces.

Here in the territory, citizens have rallied behind our Liberal government's people-first approach, and their sacrifices, thoughtfulness, and innovation in the face of this global disease have allowed us to live a life that is not quite normal but a far sight more free than life in most of the rest of the country. That's a hard-won benefit that Yukon citizens have achieved. It's something that they should take pride in and celebrate.

This budget's capital budget will build roads, bridges, improve airports, and drive innovation in the tech sector. This budget is investing in new schools. It supports universal childcare and early childhood education. It's good to hear the Leader of the Official Opposition's qualified support for this legacy program.

We will spend more than \$70 million for social supports and mental wellness and substance use programs. We are investing in renewable energy projects throughout the Yukon, and we have identified and will fund more hydro projects in the Yukon and northern BC to further improve our grid and make it a lot more environmentally sensitive. We are making our businesses more efficient and starting to tap our forests for biomass heat, even while we reduce the wildfire risk around our communities. I was recently out in Mary Lake discussing the wildfire plan, and I'm excited to dig into Community Services as we execute on our government's plans.

Our Liberal government is going to build housing lots. We're committed to getting about 1,000 new lots developed to

supply the demand that our strong economy and low unemployment rate is creating for new housing. We are also proceeding with a housing development at 5th Avenue and Rogers. We're going to contribute \$1.4 million for rent supplements, including the new Canada-Yukon housing benefit, which provides Yukon households with up to \$800 per month to help them afford to rent a home.

We secured \$40 million for the territory under the national co-investment fund. In Watson Lake, we're investing \$1.5 million for a new Housing First project in Watson Lake, following in the footsteps of Pauline Frost, who just did a magnificent job in the portfolio during the last mandate.

In Community Services, we're going to spend money on the Whitehorse southwest fuel-break project. We're going to replace some ambulances. We're going to improve medical communications equipment and make sure that the staff have all of the equipment they need to do their jobs.

Throughout the Yukon, we have public works and water treatment facility upgrades and fire halls and community wells to build. There is an awful lot of improvement going on in our infrastructure. The goal, of course, is to, by working together, make our society stronger, fairer, healthier, more efficient, and more resilient and improve the lives of all Yukoners.

Many of us this afternoon have talked about time being short and I think that it is probably important that we get on with the discussion of the budget in earnest. So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to sit down and hear from the rest of my colleagues in this House.

Ms. Blake: I am still learning the process that happens in the Legislature and it has been really interesting to hear the responses to the budget.

I would like to take this opportunity to just bring forward some of the concerns that I have heard in my community during campaigning. During door-knocking in my community, I have heard from citizens in regard to express needs and hopes that they have for the community. One of the priorities of my home community is to really look at the mental health supports of our people in the community.

Our community has a history with residential schools and the impacts continue to be evident in our community. We have a need for more specialized family supports in the community for our family members who are raising our children. There is a need for a home for our children — to keep our homes in the community when they are involved with systems.

There are concerns that have been raised by our people who provide support for water and sewage delivery and the need for training to be brought into the community for citizens. There have been concerns raised about supports and recreational services for youth in the community and the need to establish an outdoor recreational site that our children could have access to in the winter months and the need for education and training opportunities within the community — because, right now, when our people want to access training programs or further education, they have to leave the community and that is not possible for all people due to the challenges that exist outside the community.

I have listened to concerns from members regarding the care of our elders and the need to implement training in the community so that our people could take on roles to provide care in the community to our elders and to keep our elders in the community and the need for training regarding palliative care so that our people could be kept in the community for end of life, instead of having to leave the community.

Citizens have raised concerns about the need to have resources in place to allow us as a community to establish our own land-based programming in the community, because, right now, our people have to leave the community to access supports in the territory or outside and that's not always possible when we have families with children.

I think one of the biggest priorities right now is mental wellness, as we experience a lot of suicides in the community. It's an urgent need for our people to have mental health supports in place in the community that will help our people have hope and see beyond the struggle that they face.

Being in Old Crow — it's a unique community. We live in isolation where we don't have a lot of the support services that we see Outside. I believe in the opportunity to bring those resources to the community so that they're more accessible to our people.

Another concern was the need for access in the community to dental and optometry services. Those are some of the concerns that I just wanted to bring forward.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'll be very brief in my closing. It will be nice to get to a vote here today, so thank you very much, everybody, for their comments today from all the different MLAs. It is great to hear from everybody, especially as they recount the door-knocking in the writ period and all of the concerns that we've heard from Yukoners.

I will do some updates on the budget — some of the numbers — and then I'll sit.

The revised 2021-22 budget shows that government continues to invest in the health and well-being of Yukoners in response to COVID. The budget also demonstrates the government's commitment to making strategic investments in infrastructure. The 2021-22 revised main estimates forecast, as we've heard, a deficit of \$6.6 million, largely driven by our government's continued economic and public health response to support Yukoners through the pandemic.

The 2021-22 main estimates also forecast net debt of \$169.6 million. This is driven by our continued investment in key infrastructure and by recent spending in response to COVID-19 as well. The budget shows our government leveraging every dollar to deliver on the key commitments made throughout our mandate, investing in the territory's future, and supporting Yukoners in order to quickly rebound once the global pandemic ends.

Over the past four budgets, we have laid a strong financial and economic foundation, allowing us to mitigate some of the

effects of COVID-19 in our territory and also set ourselves up to continued economic and social success moving forward.

The change in the fiscal situation from the 2021-22 main estimates tabled in March of this year resulted from additional federal funding recently identified and additional Health and Social Services commitments for Yukoners.

The revised 2021-22 fiscal position is also related to an additional \$330,000 for the territorial election and pension plan expansion added to the revision of the 2020-21 Supplementary Estimates No. 2. Forecasted O&M expenditures total \$1.36 billion, with recoveries offsetting this amount by \$112.3 million.

The O&M spending includes \$25.2 million for early learning and childcare, including our investment in early childcare programs. There is \$18.3 million for initiatives to support the *Our Clean Future* strategy and \$4.3 million for initiatives in response to the *Putting People First* report on health and social services in the Yukon.

O&M spending is also driven by \$48.9 million for public health and economic response to COVID-19, also including \$15 million, as mentioned, set aside to account for changing circumstances amid the ongoing pandemic — a contingency fund that hopefully we will not have to spend, Mr. Speaker.

Capital expenditures represent a record \$434.3 million, with recoveries offsetting this amount by \$159.4 million. In this capital budget, we are increasing our investment in the areas of health, education, transportation, renewable energy, and green infrastructure. The government has increased capital expenditures to take advantage of federal recoveries in an effort to provide necessary infrastructure for Yukoners. This includes the Burwash Landing school, Whitehorse hospital secure medical unit, and electric vehicle charging stations as well.

Revenues, excluding the recoveries of expenditures, total \$13 billion. \$1.8 billion are transfers from Canada, which have increased by six percent over the 2020-21 main estimates. Territorial revenues related to taxes and other general revenues total approximately \$191 million.

Mr. Speaker, this is clear that we are on the right financial pathway forward. I want to thank everybody for their comments today. I hope to get support from all Members of the Legislative Assembly today. I think, from some of the remarks that we heard from the Yukon Party, that they will not be supporting this budget today, which is disappointing, especially given the hard work from the public service that has gone into preparing the budget and allocating the funds to Yukoners to make sure that their lives are better.

I do appreciate the support from the New Democratic Party, and I'm very encouraged by our collaboration in this House on important matters. It bodes well for the next few years here in Yukon.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

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

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

Second reading of Bill No. 201 agreed to

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 8 — Appointments to Members' Services Board

Clerk: Motion No. 8, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It is moved by the Hon. Ms. McPhee, Government House Leader:

THAT the Hon. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 45(2), be appointed Chair of the Members' Services Board;

THAT the Hon. Nils Clarke, Currie Dixon, Brad Cathers, and Kate White be appointed to the Members' Services Board;

THAT the board have the power to call for persons, papers, and records and to sit during intersessional periods;

THAT the board consider:

(1) budget submissions for the following votes:

(a) Vote 1 — Yukon Legislative Assembly, including the Conflict of Interest Commission;

(b) Vote 23 — Office of the Ombudsman, including the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner;

(c) Vote 24 — Elections Office; and

(d) Vote 26 — Child and Youth Advocate Office; and

(2) policy questions concerning matters such as:

(a) space allocation;

(b) staffing;

(c) caucus funding;

(d) media gallery House rules; and

(e) Hansard;

THAT the board fulfill its statutory responsibilities, including those in the *Legislative Assembly Act*, the *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, the *Elections Act*, the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*, the

Ombudsman Act, the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act*, and the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the board.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to have presented this government motion with the cooperation of the other parties, the opposition parties here in the House. Both the Yukon Party and the Yukon NDP have provided names for the membership of the Members' Services Board and you have just enumerated all the very important responsibilities of that board. As a result, I ask that there be support in its entirety unanimously in this House for the membership of this important board and its functions.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, we appreciate this motion coming forward and do support it as worded.

Ms. Tredger: I am rising to support this motion as well. We think that this is an exciting opportunity to have a really collaborative structure on these committees. It is unusual. It is the first time in a long time that no single party has a majority on this committee and we look forward to the opportunities for collaboration that this will give us.

Motion No. 8 agreed to

Motion No. 9 — Appointments to Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges

Clerk: Motion No. 9, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the Hon. Richard Mostyn, the Hon. John Streicker, Patti McLeod, Brad Cathers, and Annie Blake be appointed to the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges established pursuant to Standing Order 45(1);

THAT the committee have the power to call for persons, papers, and records and to sit during intersessional periods;

THAT the committee review, as necessary, such standing orders as it may decide upon;

THAT the committee, following the conduct of any such review, report any recommendations for amendment to the Assembly; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the committee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government motion, brought forward by procedure to name those named here in the body of the motion to serve on the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, I urge us all to support so this important committee can do its work.

Mr. Cathers: Unfortunately, with this committee, we find ourselves in the situation where the Liberal government and their NDP coalition partners have chosen to depart from the

long-standing practice of discussing committee structure through an all-party process, which is typically at House Leaders' meetings, and instead, in the agreement that they announced in late April, they cut a side deal — or a backroom deal, if you prefer — on what the structure of those committees would be and completely excluded the Yukon Party, which was tied at eight seats with the Liberals for the most seats in the Assembly, and also, I have to remind the members, is the party that actually won the popular vote in the territorial election.

So, completely excluding us from the conversation about committee structure has left us with some concerns on the structure of the committees that the two other parties agreed to while cutting us out of that conversation. Unfortunately, due to their lack of willingness to discuss this in a collaborative way, we're left with our only opportunity being through proposing changes here in the Legislative Assembly.

We had a problem repeatedly during the last term, when the Liberal government had a majority on SCREP, whereby they simply decided not to call meetings to deal with some of the issues that we wanted to see addressed. So, we do have a concern with the proposal of having a government member have all the control of whether this committee actually meets and discusses issues. We think that we would be supportive of allowing the Third Party member that the Third Party has identified for sitting on this committee to be the convenor of that committee and providing, in the motion itself, the requirement that the chair of the committee be a private member instead of giving a minister control over calling this committee.

It would certainly be unusual. To the best of my knowledge — I think it is unprecedented, at least in recent history, to have a minister be the chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. It's typically a private member.

Therefore, I am pleased to propose an amendment today.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Cathers: I move:

THAT Motion No. 9 be amended by:

(1) deleting the phrase "Hon. Richard Mostyn, the Hon. John Streicker, Patti McLeod, Brad Cathers, and Annie Blake" and inserting in its place the phrase "Annie Blake, the Hon. Richard Mostyn, the Hon. John Streicker, Patti McLeod, and Brad Cathers"; and

(2) inserting the phrase "THAT the Chair of the committee be a private member," before the phrase "THAT the committee have the power".

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT Motion No. 9 be amended by:

(1) deleting the phrase "Hon. Richard Mostyn, the Hon. John Streicker, Patti McLeod, Brad Cathers, and Annie Blake" and inserting in its place the phrase "Annie Blake, the Hon. Richard Mostyn, the Hon. John Streicker, Patti McLeod, and Brad Cathers"; and

(2) inserting the phrase "THAT the Chair of the committee be a private member," before the phrase "THAT the committee have the power".

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. Monday.

Debate on Motion No. 9, and the amendment, accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 4

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, May 17, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin

DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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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
Monday, May 17, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motion has not been placed on the Notice Paper, as it is now outdated: Motion No. 21, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North.

In addition, the following motion has not been placed on the Notice Paper at the request of the member: Motion No. 26, 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

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming a number of people who have joined us today in the gallery for the tribute today to Archie Lang. We have with us today Karen Lang, Archie's wife, and his son Graham and his partner, Kim. I don't see Simon there, but I believe Simon must be home listening to this; Meagan Lang and Kevin Hannam and their two kids, Margaret and June. Fraser Lang and his wife Paola Lang are here as well. Their newly arrived Isabella, I believe, is also at home, staying warm and listening to this.

We have Danielle Lang, Hector Lang, Laura Lang, Mollie Lang, Heather Deuling, Luke Deuling, Ted Staffen and Bailey Staffen, Lorraine Nixon, Linda and Don Dixon. Patrick Rouble is here as well.

I think I got everyone there. If I missed anyone, my apologies, but please join me in welcoming these folks to the gallery.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have just one more name to add to the list, an old colleague of mine, Ms. Sue Staffen — if we could welcome her as well, please.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Archie Lang

Mr. Dixon: It is a pleasure to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party caucus to pay tribute to a former member of this Legislature, a friend to many of us, and a truly exceptional Yukoner, Archie Lang.

Archie passed away peacefully earlier this year, on March 10, after losing a short battle with cancer. Archie led a remarkable northern life and was surrounded by many unique, remarkable northern characters. Whether you had the pleasure of experiencing adventures, or misadventures, alongside Archie or had the pleasure of hearing about them afterwards from him, there can be no doubt that stories played a large role in his life and are a wonderful legacy that he has left for all of us. His sense of humour and his storytelling are something that all those who knew him will certainly cherish and remember. Whether he was sitting on a barstool or sitting at a boardroom table, those around him were in for a treat.

Archie's own personal story was one of a Yukon life well lived. His family moved to the Yukon from the Dawson Creek area in 1958 when his father, Hector, found work at the new Whitehorse dam working on a fish ladder. So, he, his twin brother Daniel, and their older sisters, Mary and Heather, moved to Whitehorse.

Archie graduated from F.H. Collins high school in 1967, and it is said that, while his grades have been lost to the fog of history, he was selected as class president by popular acclaim.

As his father, Hector, became one of the Yukon's premier bridge builders, Archie realized that his talents were better suited to a different type of business. His entrepreneurial endeavours were many and wide ranging, and they certainly began quite young. He was barely old enough to drink when he bought the Caribou Hotel. It was at the age of 25 when he bought the Watson Lake Hotel and quickly established himself as a renowned proprietor. It was also in Watson Lake where he met the love of his life, Karen.

Karen and Archie were known for driving much of the social activities of southeast Yukon. During that time, there wasn't a ball or gala that didn't have their fingerprints on it. They expanded the reach of their enterprise there to include a grocery store, a gas station, and an outfitting concession.

Anyone who has ever spoken to Karen or Archie about their life in Watson Lake will know how important and impactful that time was for them. It was also when they began to grow their family. All three of their children, Graham, Meagan, and Fraser, grew up in Watson Lake.

Archie was an incredibly proud father. He would regale just about anyone with stories about the many accomplishments of his children. In fact, people whom he barely knew would often be treated to stories about young Graham, "Pie Face", or "My Little Fraser" — although he did remark on occasion: "I have three kids. Two are lawyers and the third needs one."

In 1994, the Langs moved to Whitehorse and took on the Super A grocery store, the Capital Hotel, and Sgt. Preston's Lodge in Skagway. Over the following years, Archie would eventually own and operate grocery stores across the north, from Dease Lake to Old Crow.

It was in 2002 that Archie sold off his businesses and made the jump into politics. He was talked into it largely by an old friend from Watson Lake, Dennis Fentie, with the promise that they probably wouldn't win anyway, so why not give it a shot?

Archie's campaigns have become the stuff of legends. In 2002, his campaign was styled "the March for Arch". His

promise to his prospective constituents was “a chicken in every pot”. In his first two weeks of strenuous campaigning, it is said that he locked up every single vote in the Casa Loma. It was at that time that Karen took a more forceful role in the campaign and instead insisted that he expand his reach somewhat. So, he went door-knocking. He particularly enjoyed knocking on doors of houses that had the signs of his competitors. He was known to say, “Well, I can see from your sign that you are undecided.”

As election day approached, Archie received what he described as a “frightening call”. It was Dennis, calling to inform him that they might actually win. Sure enough, Archie, Dennis, and the Yukon Party won the election and formed government in 2002.

Over the next decade, Archie held a variety of ministerial portfolios throughout government. While he was an accomplished businessman, he also carried with him the wit, colourful language, and directness of a barman. This made for immensely entertaining political direction to the public service. One public servant whom I spoke with recently recalled direction being given to a group of senior officials that involved a hula hoop and a certain act of personal hygiene. Unfortunately, the Standing Orders of the Legislature don’t allow me to offer much more by way of example.

Archie also enjoyed representing the Yukon as a public official. He was always a hit at ministers’ FPT meetings. I can personally attest to ministers from other jurisdictions approaching me, years after Archie had retired, to inquire about him and how he was doing. Those conversations usually led to deep laughter. Archie also enjoyed hosting visitors to the territory. In 2007, when Yukon hosted the Canada Winter Games, Archie could often be overheard telling unsuspecting visitors to the territory that he was the captain of the men’s synchronized swimming team. The team’s name was “Ton of Fun” and they were only allowed to begin practice after 10:00 p.m., when all the children had left the facility.

Mr. Speaker, anyone who knew Archie has more stories like this than they will ever be able to remember, but I know that for so many of us, we will recall them unexpectedly and they will bring a smile. As much as I enjoy recollecting the lighter moments, I think that it is also worth noting that Archie’s time in politics was substantive.

He led important files at an important time in Yukon’s development. Leadership from people like Archie Lang and Dennis Fentie helped create the Yukon that we know today. Their time in office was a period of incredible growth for the territory.

As I said at the start, Archie led a remarkable northern life. He was successful in business, in politics, and in government. He was a generous man who loved his family deeply and was incredibly proud of them all, and he has left an incredible mark on this territory and all those who had the pleasure of knowing him.

Without any doubt, he was a truly incredible Yukoner, and we will all miss him.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Archie Lang. Archie will be remembered as a community leader, a champion of the territory, and a beloved patriarch to his extensive Yukon family. He is also remembered as a long-standing member of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. In 2002, Archie gave up a successful career as an entrepreneur to enter politics. As was shared with us, his long-time friend and former Premier, the late Dennis Fentie, wisely recruited Archie for his leadership skills, his business savvy, and his knowledge of the territory.

Part of his success as a politician was his status as a lifelong Yukoner who knew his audience. Archie’s parents were homesteaders who worked hard to provide a good life for their four children, moving around the Yukon and finally settling in Watson Lake. Archie’s childhood friends from Watson Lake say that he was a natural leader. At F.H. Collins high school, he was vice-president of the school’s student council. At age 25, he had purchased the Watson Lake Hotel. By all accounts, Archie enjoyed running the Watson, connecting with patrons, entertaining them with stories, and being a pillar in his community.

He met his wife, Karen, in Watson Lake, and that’s where the couple raised their children, Graham, Meagan and Fraser. Archie would eventually own and operate grocery stores, hotels and gas stations in Yukon, northern BC, Northwest Territories, and Skagway. He volunteered his time with the Yukon Energy Corporation board, the Yukon Outfitters Association board, the Robert Service society, and the Father Mouchet project in Old Crow.

Archie was elected twice by his riding of Porter Creek Centre in 2002 and 2006 and served as an MLA until 2011 when he announced his retirement. During these years in the Legislature, he served as the Minister of Highways and Public Works, Minister of Community Services, and Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Following his leave from politics, he remained active in his community and was able to spend more time with his family.

Mr. Speaker, when I think back, one of my fondest memories will be — over the last number of years, Archie took an opportunity to volunteer in the community and volunteer with children in some of our schools. My fond memory will be my youngest son coming home to tell me that he had a message for me, that a gentleman had been at their school making lunch with them, and that gentleman wanted my son to let me know that I have the same job that he used to have but that he was much, much better at it than I was. So, about two hours later — because that was just after 3 o’clock — a phone call came in from his teacher. His teacher was calling me to let me know that she was apologizing because there was a volunteer at school today making lunch and he might have used some colourful language. I then quickly found out who it was. My message back for the following week was: Number one, let him know that, now that the economy is really strong, he probably needs some more workers, and you should get a job from him; and the second thing was to make sure that, when he’s in your school, you spend as much time as you possibly can next to him and listen to everything he says.

Upon his leave from politics, he remained active, doing many, many things in our community. Archie leaves behind a legacy of good humour and loyalty. He will be missed.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, today I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the life of Archie Lang. I thank the others for their stories and their tributes because they were beautiful.

I remember the first time that I met Archie. The Yukon is a small place, and Hector, a friend whom I went to school with from the very beginning until we graduated, was excited about his cousins who had just moved in from Watson Lake. He was so excited that a bunch of us went over to the house on Bell Crescent to welcome Graham to town. I know that we were on the back deck, and it is foggy as to whether or not the house was white and if the deck was raised or if it was on the ground, but we were on the back deck. All I remember is Archie, because he came out and he was telling us about the war that he was undertaking against a squirrel family that had mistakenly chosen his house to move into. His story was animated and hilarious, and just like the rest of his life, it left an impact.

Since his passing, so many stories have been shared, and it makes me think of cut gems and how the more angles that a gem has, the more it sparkles, and Archie's life truly sparkled. We have been able to hear and read stories from those closest to him, and for that the Yukon is so lucky, because it is through these retellings that we have learned more about the man himself — generous, caring, genuine, passionate, and, most of all, funny.

So, to all those who loved him, we are so sorry for your loss, and the impact that he made on individuals in a place he loved will be felt forever.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further tributes?

Are there any 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. Dixon: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to pause the implementation of rent control, as outlined in the Liberal Party's confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democratic Party, in order to:

(1) develop solutions to mitigate the harm that this announcement has caused to tenants and landlords; and

(2) properly consult with affected Yukon landlords and tenants on the details of any rent-control proposal prior to implementation.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct a liquor pricing review.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to seek approval from Members' Services Board of legislative amendments that will:

(1) enable the establishment of an electoral district boundaries commission prior to the next election; and

(2) require that, if changes are proposed by any commission after their draft report, those changes be subject to additional public consultation, especially with people affected by the change.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a territory-wide type 1 diabetes strategy to be completed by September 2022 in partnership with the Yukon type 1 diabetes support network and including consultation with the following:

(1) persons who live with type 1 diabetes;

(2) the Yukon Medical Association;

(3) an adult endocrinologist;

(4) a paediatric endocrinologist;

(5) a paediatrician;

(6) the diabetes centre;

(7) the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation of Canada; and

(8) other agencies or agents as may be identified through the Yukon T1D Support Network.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to ensure that parents who choose to homeschool their children have the option of using paper-based curriculum instead of being forced to use online video courses from the Aurora Virtual School.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to provide the Yukon Hospital Corporation with the stable and predictable funding that it needs to meet the health care needs of Yukoners, including providing an annual increase to core funding for our hospitals.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reflect current COVID-19 measures by ensuring that all Yukon government workers, regardless of classification, have access to paid sick leave.

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 provide communities with nearby garbage-disposal options by taking the following actions:

(1) keeping the Silver City solid-waste transfer facility open;

(2) pausing plans to close other solid-waste facilities; and
 (3) consulting with affected businesses and communities and First Nations before making a decision to implement fees at solid-waste transfer stations.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize the importance of ensuring that people in the Kluane riding have a full-time doctor located in Haines Junction by taking action, including:

(1) explaining to residents why the government did not issue a tender for a replacement physician when the current physician gave notice in December 2020; and

(2) ensuring that steps are taken immediately to find a physician willing to live in the community and provide service to the people of the surrounding area.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to dedicate a portion of its Highways and Public Works 2021-22 capital budget to the north Alaska Highway.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use its 2021-22 budget to build turning lanes at the entrances to the Takhini and Mendenhall subdivisions.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a territory-wide type 1 diabetes strategy to be completed by September 2022 in partnership with the Yukon type 1 diabetes support network and including consultation with:

- (1) persons who live with type 1 diabetes;
- (2) the Yukon Medication Association;
- (3) an adult endocrinologist;
- (4) a pediatric endocrinologist;
- (5) a pediatrician;
- (6) the diabetes centre;
- (7) the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation Canada; and
- (8) other agencies or agents as may be identified through the Yukon T1D Support Network.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon COVID-19 vaccination program

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, our territory has been managing the impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic for 15 months now. While 2020 presented significant challenges for Yukoners, it ended on a hopeful note when the first COVID-19 vaccines were approved in December 2020. We began to see hope of the return to normal on the horizon.

Today, I am delighted to share that more than 75 percent of eligible adults in the Yukon have now received their first shot of the vaccine. This is absolutely fantastic news for our

territory. In just five months, we have immunized 75 percent of our adult population with a first dose — an amazing achievement. To some, those five months may feel short. To others, they feel like a lifetime. For all of the staff working on the front lines and behind the scenes to deliver this vaccine, I am sure that they have been unforgettable. We have been through so much to get to this point, and so many amazing people have put elements of their life on hold to dedicate themselves to this effort.

Many of you familiar are with Team Balto, Togo, and the team at the clinic here in Whitehorse, known as Fox. These teams are the boots on the ground. They set up the clinics and provided the immunizations. They are the faces that you saw and continue to see when you get your vaccine. Running these clinics has required hundreds of staff — everything from greeters and screeners to cleaners, schedulers, and, of course, immunizers. They have worked long hours to make this rollout a success.

We visited our rural communities three times, and now the capable staff in the community health centres are managing ongoing immunization requests.

I would also like to acknowledge the people behind the scenes making this effort possible. You don't see their faces in the clinic, but without their work to plan and carry out the clinics, we would not be in the fortunate place we are today. Our success is really a result of the incredibly knowledgeable professionals who have been leading this rollout. The speed and scope of the work that was required to get to this point has been nearly impossible to keep up with, but they have managed it with professionalism, grace, and kindness.

Finally, I want to thank Yukoners for being patient, stepping up, and taking their shot. The more people who receive the vaccine, the safer our territory will be. I am exceedingly proud of the work that has been done to date, and we should all be. Now we look forward to increasing vaccination rates further and leading the way out of the pandemic.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, as the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, I would like to begin, on behalf of our caucus, by thanking all the Yukoners who have worked so hard on the territory's rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations. This includes nurses and other health professionals, managers, administrative assistants, IT logistical support, people responsible for transporting vaccine, and others.

We are doing well as a territory in vaccination rates in comparison to other jurisdictions in Canada. We have been fortunate that the federal government and provinces have recognized and supported the Yukon, NWT, and Nunavut in getting access to vaccines more quickly than a per capita allocation would have given us.

But any vaccination campaign is only successful because of the people who make it happen. It is those Yukoners who deserve the credit for our high vaccination rate — the people working on the front lines and behind the scenes of the Yukon's COVID-19 rollout. To all of you, our sincere thanks.

I want to give a special thank you to people who had retired and chose to begin working again to help out with the vaccination rollout due to their own personal commitment to our territory and their fellow Yukoners. 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.

Thank you again to everyone involved for all that you have done as part of this effort, and please keep up the good work.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners care deeply for one another. That's what we see reflected in the uptake of the COVID vaccines. In my home community of Old Crow, the safety and protection of our citizens remained a priority as plans were unfolding for the vaccines to arrive in the community.

Planning efforts with community resources such as the local health centre, RCMP, and First Nation leadership ensured that support was in place for an accessible space for the vaccine clinic, appointment bookings, and transportation. The First Nation worked collaboratively with Yukon government to determine the best approach for citizens to secure appointments and ensured that our most vulnerable populations had access to get vaccinated. There was ongoing communication with the community while preparations unfolded for the COVID-19 vaccine clinic to arrive in Old Crow. With the support put in place by the local First Nation and ongoing communications, citizens felt at ease to book appointments, ask questions, express concerns, and attend their appointments. There was high uptake for the vaccines in Old Crow.

I want to tell all the people who played a role in this process in Old Crow and across the territory — to know how much their work is appreciated.

I also have a few questions for the minister, moving forward. In her response, I am hoping that she can expand on what is currently being done to encourage those Yukoners who have been reluctant to access the COVID vaccination to date. The minister mentioned that the staff in community health centres are managing ongoing immunization requests. What does that look like? Do they also deliver vaccines, or are they expected to have the ability down the road, or are we talking about managing appointments?

When it comes to vaccines for our youth, I was concerned that the minister spoke about medical travel last week and didn't commit to have vaccine teams travel to all communities. It doesn't seem very efficient to have youth, who will often need to be accompanied, travel to Whitehorse when we know that there are more people in many communities, including seasonal workers, who we could vaccinate at the same time.

I would appreciate it if the minister could share some information about how she is going to determine which communities will have a clinic for youth vaccination and which ones will need to travel to Whitehorse, either for the first or second dose.

Lastly, I am hoping that the minister can share what the timeline is to vaccinate our young people.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the comments from the members opposite. It's certainly a positive day.

Mr. Speaker, more than 75 percent of eligible adults in the Yukon have now received their first shot of the vaccine. As I said, this is absolutely fantastic news, and we are on the road to achieving an amazing opportunity to have as many Yukoners vaccinated as they choose to be, in just five months so far.

I want to, once again, thank Team Balto and Team Togo and Team Fox, along with all of our dedicated public servants who have contributed to the vaccine effort.

This vaccine rollout is a legacy project for our government and our territory. It has been noted that our territory is leading North America when it comes to vaccine uptake. Canada's chief public health officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, recently called the Yukon — and I quote: "... a model that we're all looking towards for success." That work continues, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, I joined Yukon's chief medical officer of health to announce the next stage of our vaccine rollout. I was very pleased to share that we have made arrangements with the federal government to obtain enough Pfizer vaccine doses to get all Yukon youth, aged 12 to 17, vaccinated. This is welcome news for Yukon families and great news for our territory. These vaccines are helping to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on our health care systems, and they are saving lives. We will have more information to share about our youth vaccine rollout in the coming days.

In response to one of the comments that were made, the announcement last week included the plan that vaccines for youth would start very soon and be completed — the first round — by the end of school, which, in most jurisdictions and communities here in the territory, is mid-June.

I encourage all Yukoners, including our youth, to step up and take their shot. The more Yukoners are immunized, the safer our territory will be. Our vaccine uptake will also help us return to normal.

As the Premier announced earlier this month, we are beginning to lift restrictions as of May 25. Fully vaccinated Canadians will be able to enter the Yukon Territory without self-isolating. Our bars and restaurants will also be returning to full capacity for indoor table service in the very near future. We would not be able to move forward — we would not be in this fortunate position — without the dedication, patience, and kindness of all Yukoners, and I thank them. Our government will continue to provide the steady leadership needed to get us on the path to recovery.

There is a comment from one of the members opposite regarding medical travel. That is, of course, a last resort. We plan to be in as many communities as possible to reach our youth in the vaccine days coming forward very soon and be completed, as I said, hopefully by the end of school.

The comment with respect to medical travel was for individuals who might not be present at the time or who might not be able to take the vaccine on those dates. We will, of course, support them in being vaccinated throughout the territory.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD**Question re: Individualized education plans**

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal coalition agreement states that — and I quote: “The recent cancellation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for children with special learning and neurodiverse needs will be reversed. Those IEPs that were cancelled will be reinstated within 30 days.”

In order to meet this commitment, the minister needs to know how many people this affects. We were surprised last week, when we asked about this, that the minister was unable to tell us how many students will have IEPs reinstated, so I will give her another chance to answer this today.

How many students need to have IEPs reinstated to meet the commitment made by the confidence and supply agreement?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. I want to reiterate what I said last week in terms of our value around education. We provide all students with educational programs that meet their learning needs so that they can reach their maximum potential.

Individual learning plans are a very important tool, and they will continue to be legislated — support for students in need of special education programs.

We have been clear that, in the fall of 2019, Mr. Speaker, the school branch staff made a presentation to school administrators and school staff that clarified the processes in place to determine which type of learning plan is appropriate for students requiring additional learning support. In some cases, this meant that the school staff worked with parents to shift a student from an individualized education plan to student learning plans or behavioural support plans. We are now working to implement our recent commitment to provide any student who was shifted from one of those plans into a different one after the fall of 2019 with the option to shift back to the IEPs.

Mr. Dixon: The inability of the minister to answer that question clearly is quite concerning. The coalition agreement between the Liberals and the NDP is contingent on the government reinstating IEPs. If the minister is unable to tell us how many students are affected, how will the Liberals meet the requirements of the coalition agreement?

Mr. Speaker, there is a confidence vote later today. If the minister isn’t able to live up to this agreement, the NDP have pledged to vote against the government. So, I want to give her another chance to answer that question.

How many students need to have IEPs reinstated to meet the commitment made in the confidence and supply agreement?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Our school staff are reaching out to parents to provide them with the opportunity to switch their learning plan to the one that suits the students whom we are talking about today. We are continuing to collaborate with those parents to address their students’ program needs.

I want to just say, while I am on my feet, that we are very much working with the NDP. We appreciate the partnership that we have struck with the New Democratic Party. Both of our teams absolutely appreciate the need for a stable

government to guide the Yukon right now. We will live up to our agreement, and we are working diligently to do so.

Mr. Dixon: It is going to be very difficult for the minister to live up to this agreement if she doesn’t even know how many students we are talking about.

The minister has, I believe, 11 days to get this done now, Mr. Speaker. Last week, the minister claimed that there are no new resources in this budget for EAs to support the reinstatement of IEPs. So, we are left wondering how the Liberals will live up to this commitment if they are not putting any new resources into supporting the students affected by the Liberal cuts to IEPs or hiring EAs so that we can see those cuts fully reversed.

The support of the NDP is contingent on this being done by May 28. If the minister can’t tell us how many kids we are talking about and she is not putting new resources into this, how is she going to live up to this commitment?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will probably not comment on some of the preamble in what I think is a question — somewhere in there — and I will try to ignore the insults.

We are working diligently with our parents to ensure that all of our students who may have been shifted from an individual education plan are given the opportunity to move back to the plan that best suits their child. They will be given a choice, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to work diligently with all of our partners.

I want to also talk about, while I am on my feet, a part of one of the reviews that we are currently doing, which is the inclusive and special education. We are working with our Yukon First Nations, parents, staff, and stakeholders to create greater clarity around learning plans.

I’m really proud of the work that has been done to date. I’m looking forward to the receipt of this review in the very near future, which will help inform us of our next steps in Yukon with all of our partners, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education

Mr. Kent: On December 12, 2019, the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education wrote to the Legislative Assembly’s Public Accounts Committee, asking to meet with the committee to discuss the Auditor General’s report on education. They were denied the opportunity to do this.

Can the Liberals, who held the majority on the PAC at the time, tell us why the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee were denied the opportunity to meet with the Public Accounts Committee as they had requested?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I’m happy to stand and talk about the work of our government.

The Government of Yukon is absolutely committed to delivering effective and accountable education programs and services to Yukoners. The Government of Yukon accepted all of the recommendations contained in the 2019 Auditor General’s report. The department is using the recommendations from the audit to guide its plans and decisions to improve and modernize learning support for Yukon students, in

collaboration, of course, with Yukon First Nation governments and our partners in education. The department is committed to working with students, educators, families, Yukon First Nations, and education partners to address the issues and recommendations contained in the audit report and to ensure that students have the support that they need to be successful.

As I stated just a few moments ago, one of the outcomes of the Auditor General's report is the review of inclusive and special education, which I'm looking forward to receiving soon and will inform our steps going forward.

Mr. Kent: So, as I stated, in December 2019, the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education wrote to the Public Accounts Committee asking to meet with the committee to discuss the Auditor General's report on education. In the spring of 2020, the Public Accounts Committee met to vote on this request. The Liberals at the time held the majority on the committee.

Unfortunately, as the Leader of the NDP pointed out, at the CYFN leaders' debate during the election, the Liberals used their majority on the committee to vote it down. Can the Liberals tell us why they voted against allowing the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee to meet with the Public Accounts Committee?

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please.

The Guidelines for Oral Question Period state, "A question is out of order if it seeks information from the Chair of a Committee about proceedings in a Committee which has not yet made its report to the House but is in order if it asks only if the Committee has considered a certain matter, when the Committee will next meet, or when a Committee report will be tabled in the House."

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This will be my final supplementary.

So, referencing the CYFN leaders' debate, as I pointed out, that happened during the election, the Leader of the NDP pointed out that the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education was denied the opportunity to appear as a witness. The fact that the committee denied the chiefs the opportunity to appear — the Liberals must have shut down that request.

So, why did the Premier share incorrect information when speaking at the CYFN leaders' debate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue on with some of my comments around some of the work that has been done since the audit report was released. Our education agreements are in place with all Yukon First Nations, and this is something that we take a great deal of pride in. We have dollars allocated in support of those agreements. I myself — my very first meeting outside of government was with the Yukon First Nation chiefs to talk about First Nation education outcomes and our next steps going forward.

I have talked today about the review on inclusive and special education and the findings that will come out of that particular report and that I am very much looking forward to receiving. We have a good foundation to move forward,

Mr. Speaker. I am absolutely committed, as the Minister of Education, to work on First Nation education outcomes, and I am grateful for the opportunity to do so. I will continue working with all of our partners to ensure that we have respectful relations going forward and to live up to our commitments.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic self-isolation requirements

Ms. White: Like so many others, we're very happy to hear that 75 percent of Yukoners have been given their first dose of the vaccine. This, along with the easing of restrictions for self-isolation for fully vaccinated Yukoners and visitors, has certainly made our summer a little brighter.

When the chief medical officer of health announced that anyone coming into the territory who is fully vaccinated would not have to self-isolate, there was confusion as to how this would be implemented. The *Health Information Privacy and Management Act* may prevent workers at our territory's entry points, like the Whitehorse airport and checkpoints along the Alaska Highway, from being able to verify whether people are fully vaccinated.

Does this government have a plan in place, beyond relying on our honour system, to confirm that people entering the Yukon are fully vaccinated against COVID-19?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much for the question. I think that it is a very interesting area of development not only in public health and safety across the country and, in fact, Mr. Speaker, across the world, but it is a very interesting area of public health development and law across the world and here in Canada.

With respect to plans to verify vaccinations for individuals entering the Yukon Territory, yes, there is a plan to do so. Initially, it will be quite straightforward to verify vaccinations for Yukoners and to verify vaccinations for individuals from British Columbia. Canada and health ministers and chief medical officers of health across Canada are working together to determine how this could be done for the entire country, knowing that we are in a new area, on new ground, and trying to do this all on behalf of Canadians and Yukoners for their safety.

Ms. White: Knowing that we're merely like a week and a half away from May 25, it would be great if that information could be shared with the Yukon as a whole.

Some Yukon families have begun to make plans to travel or welcome loved ones to the territory in keeping with the recent announcement that no longer requires vaccinated individuals to self-isolate. Unfortunately, we still don't know how the recent self-isolation rule for vaccinated people will be applied and, more importantly, who they will apply to. Currently, no COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for children under 12 years old, but children are still capable of spreading COVID-19. Many Yukon families are unclear about their obligations, and tourism operators don't have the answers for potential clients with young children.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister clarify for Yukoners whether or not children under 12 entering Yukon will have to self-isolate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the very important question, because certainly it's something that Yukoners are asking themselves. Individuals with children under the age of 12 will still be required to comply with the public health and safety rules. Specifically, children under the age of 12 who are not eligible to be vaccinated yet will need to self-isolate upon returning if they were to leave the Yukon Territory. Upon returning here or if they travel here, they will be required to self-isolate. That was part of the announcement made by the chief medical officer of health two Wednesdays ago — if I can say it that way — and the Premier at that public announcement.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, that was not clear in that announcement. When it was announced that Yukon's self-isolation requirements would be removed for vaccinated individuals after the May long weekend, some Canadians began their plans to come to the territory once they have received their second dose. The federal government approved a number of COVID-19 vaccines to be administered across the country, including Moderna, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, and AstraZeneca. This means that workers at Yukon's entry points will have to check and validate a variety of documents that prove vaccination. With travel resuming between our territory and our neighbours to the east and south, this government will be responsible for ensuring that Yukoners and non-Yukoners alike have been fully vaccinated upon entering the territory.

Mr. Speaker, how is this government collaborating with other jurisdictions as we continue to ease restrictions and welcome vaccinated Canadians to the territory?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I can indicate that the most important part of that question is in fact the knowledge and confirmation that this government is cooperating with governments across Canada and, in fact, across the world, as well as with chief medical officers of health. As I said in response to the first question, the ministers of health meet on a regular basis, sometimes weekly, to discuss these items and others like them because, of course, they are rapidly moving. Other ministers, including myself with the Justice portfolio, are speaking to ministers in Canada and others across the territory regarding public safety issues and how that will unfold as the country gets more and more vaccinated.

In addition to that, the chief medical officers of health meet, telephone one another, and have Zoom meetings, virtual meetings, certainly weekly and often more than once a week. The opportunities that are afforded here by vaccines for Canadians are fast moving. They are changing quickly and they have to be attended to on a daily, if not weekly, basis by all of those responsible in Canada.

Question re: Midwifery legislation

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, this spring the government announced that Yukon families were closer to being able to access regulated and funded midwifery care. Until this past April, midwives were able to provide their professional services to parents and babies. That ability to provide

midwifery support was cut off as of April 15. Midwives are now unable to practise in the Yukon without providing their own insurance, which is cost prohibitive. When will midwives be able to provide their professional health services to Yukon families once again?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government remains committed to moving forward with the integration of funded and regulated midwifery services into our Yukon health care system. Successful implementation of midwifery takes the support of all our health care partners. We look forward to continuing to work with them on the integration of midwifery. We are taking a phased approach to the integration of midwifery services in the Yukon with establishment of full midwifery services in Whitehorse as the first priority. Once the program is up and running, we will then look to have midwives practise and provide services in Yukon communities.

We have now hired the necessary expertise to assist with the development of Yukon's midwifery program, and the finalization of the regulations helps us to have a solid foundation to build on the program. That work is underway, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Blake: Sending expectant parents out of territory for weeks to give birth is hardly a solution. The Yukon Association for Birth Choices advocated for an interim solution that would allow midwives to continue providing their services to parents, babies, and families. Instead, in the middle of a pandemic, the government has offered mothers, and a partner or escort, coverage for medical travel and expenses to travel to another jurisdiction to receive care from a midwife.

Has this government considered interim solutions to allow midwives to continue to offer their professional services in the Yukon, especially during a pandemic?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. Certainly, here in the Yukon Territory, the interim measures that have been noted are just that — interim measures — for the purpose of having the fully fledged and authorized program come into place. With the support of our midwife experts and other health system partners, we are working toward the launch of midwifery services in the fall of 2021. This is not initially what we had hoped would be the case, but a lot of intervening circumstances in the world have brought us there.

I should note that we know from local and national expertise — the experience of other jurisdictions and the experience that they have there — that having finalized regulations provides certainty that is needed to finish building the program and other health system partners in having their support throughout that. That is the current state of the situation. The regulations will be completed and the entire program launched to the satisfaction of Yukon families that choose to have midwifery services as soon as possible and no later than the fall of 2021. It is a delay that we have not been pleased with, but we are adjusting.

Ms. Blake: Travel during the pandemic outside the Yukon is currently not advised. For parents to have to leave their families and supports behind is not ideal and not how most families want to give birth. Even with some costs covered by the proposed travel subsidies, there will still be costs that many

cannot afford. This option will only be available to those who can afford it.

Mr. Speaker, there has to be a better way. Will the minister commit to meeting with the Yukon Association for Birth Choices to consider other interim solutions so that families can access midwifery services without having to leave the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government is committed to providing regulated and funded midwifery services as a birthing option for Yukoners — a very important step in progress for families. We support the safe practice of midwifery in the Yukon and believe that access to safe birthing will benefit all Yukoners. It is not something that has been contemplated in the past. We have done the hard work of developing regulations and standards of practice, together with health partners, and now we are investing in midwifery.

New midwifery regulations came into effect this spring to allow licensed midwives to safely support mothers through pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period and will come in. It is critically important that those regulations be fully implemented prior to the services being provided.

Of course, I think that the member opposite is mentioning a letter that I received late Sunday night from the people who are concerned about this issue. I am absolutely pleased to meet with them to talk about options and to talk about their points of view and their view going forward, because this is something that we are in together to provide services to Yukoners.

Question re: French immersion programming and capital plan for schools

Mr. Kent: French immersion continues to be one of the most popular programs in Whitehorse schools. This fall, we understand that there will be four kindergarten classes at Whitehorse Elementary and two French immersion kindergarten classes at Selkirk Elementary School. Now, Selkirk is a dual-track school that hosts both French immersion and English stream students.

The school community is very concerned that it will no longer be a dual-track school as the number of French immersion students entering the school continues to outpace the English stream students. Will the minister commit that Selkirk Elementary School will remain a dual-track school going forward?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I know that the member opposite is well aware that I have been on the job for about a week, and I'm working hard to get up to date on all of the files. I'm working hard to ensure that I am well briefed on all of the matters before me. I will endeavour to get the information that he is requesting today back to him in a legislative return or in another Question Period.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that. As the minister will no doubt know, Whitehorse Elementary School is one of the oldest schools in the Yukon and it is at or near capacity. The five-year capital concept references the replacement of an elementary school but gives no indication of which school will be replaced. It also says that planning won't start until next year.

So, can the minister confirm if this planned school is a replacement for Whitehorse Elementary School? If not, which school is it for and when will work start on Whitehorse Elementary?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I know that the member opposite is well aware as well that we committed during the last election to build another elementary school in Whitehorse. That planning is certainly going to be underway. It is in the five-year capital plan. I would be happy to bring more information back to the House when it is available. We'll continue to work with all of our partners as we go forward.

Mr. Kent: It would be great if the minister can also let us know which elementary school in Whitehorse they are planning to replace.

In 2017, the previous Minister of Education promised this Legislature a 10-year capital plan for school replacement, which would include schools to support French immersion. This, of course, never happened, as the previous minister broke this promise year after year.

Will the new minister promise to deliver on her predecessor's commitment for a 10-year school replacement plan? If so, when will that be ready?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We continue — absolutely — to work with school communities on planning for their short-, medium-, and long-term facility needs. The Government of Yukon has a five-year capital plan which includes school replacements and renovation projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and suitable for many years to come. The plan is based on current information and facility assessments. Should needs change, this plan is flexible and may be adjusted — for example, if safety issues are identified. The priority of renovating or replacing schools is based on criteria such as building age, seismic mitigation, considerations on operational needs, and enrolment growth. Of course, conversations with Yukon school communities about the longer term planning for their facilities are ongoing and will continue over the next short time as decisions are made for future school project planning and development.

I know that the member opposite is likely aware — as we just stated — that we are planning to build a new elementary school in Whitehorse. We are moving ahead with Whistle Bend. We've committed to working with Kluane First Nation on a new school in Burwash Landing as well, along with a lot of other commitments.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Tredger: I would like to introduce a visitor to the Legislature. Jim Tredger is probably best known to most of you as the former Member for Mayo-Tatchun. He's best known to me as my dad. I would like to give him a very warm welcome.

Applause

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Motion No. 20 — Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne — adjourned debate

Clerk: Motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, moved by the Hon. Ms. McLean; adjourned debate, the Hon. Mr. Pillai.

Speaker: Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, carrying on from our comments last week, I would like to again thank the folks at Energy, Mines and Resources. I had an opportunity, as well, last week — and I will again — to thank the folks, specifically the deputy ministers, Mr. Stephen Mills and Mr. Paul Moore, who were there by my side through the last four and a half years. I just really appreciate all of their help and support.

Again, thinking about the work that we had the chance to accomplish together — the folks who are within Energy, Mines and Resources — really proud of the work that they did and so much was undertaken. I think back to the work of finalizing the Peel plan, as well as starting the Dawson regional land use plan — very key items — moving and helping folks along — and my colleagues — in developing *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*; at the same time, finishing off the work for the agricultural policy, which would guide our sector for the next 10 years; long-awaited work on the development of off-road vehicle regulations — again, really substantial efforts put into this work; signing our MOU, which we did with Yukon First Nations — that work was done within just the first few months of having an opportunity to work with the team there — and so very quick work by the folks in our policy teams; again, created our innovative renewable energy initiative work with Yukon Development Corporation but really aligning with the work of Energy, Mines and Resources. Again, having the team there — Energy Solutions Centre — helped guide us and other stakeholders with our independent power production policy. So, those were really good.

When you think about the power production policy, which gives the opportunity to purchase that power — the mechanism in place — the policy mechanism — and then being able to capitalize our funds through Yukon Development Corporation — what was really the ability to foster another sector, really, within the Yukon — we have seen that, whether it is driving through Whitehorse and seeing some of the work that's being done or the infrastructure that's going up or going through the riding of Lake Laberge and seeing some of the work there or the announcements in Old Crow — really, some key pieces that made some substantial changes in the Yukon that are going to lead to a lot of innovation and self-determination for many, as we see that infrastructure bring in revenues to some of those remote communities as well as to entrepreneurs here.

I will just pivot a bit over to working with Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation. I want to thank the folks at Yukon Development Corporation for a lot of

the work that I just mentioned. They were absolutely key, but when we think about the many, many projects that have been undertaken — really, almost every community — from Old Crow to Watson Lake — has a project underway at some point within the continuum. That could be anything from Old Crow, where we are seeing the infrastructure being turned on after very substantial support by Yukon government investing in that partnership, right through to other projects that are going through the feasibility stage right now and looking to develop.

Again, the board at Yukon Development Corporation — I want to thank them — the former chair whom I got to work with — and the current chair as well, Mr. Pemberton — and the entire board for committing to looking at some changes in the direction of what would happen with the Development Corporation as well as with the Energy Corporation.

When I think about the Energy Corporation — just a big thank you to Andrew Hall and the team there. Upon coming into the role early on in January — it was just a few days after signing that MOU with our self-governing nations — I had the opportunity to go through the integrated resource plan, which had just been completed. It was a very quick presentation. I remember that it was an hour to go through 64 slides and the future of energy in the Yukon.

One of the things that really became quite present was the fact that we weren't in a position — there wasn't as much emphasis on where we would go with a renewable energy strategy.

So, over the last number of years, the Yukon Energy Corporation actually continued to work closely with the Yukon Development Corporation to look what was happening with our climate change strategy. I just want to thank the board there as well — and the chair, Ms. Cabott, and the team — because they committed to ensuring that there was alignment and integrity on the commitments to the government on how they would produce energy.

Really, that led to the 10-year renewable electricity plan and really looked at developing a number of other pieces of infrastructure — both in the Southern Lakes area as well as in northern BC in conjunction with the Taku River Tlingit. But also, it opened up the opportunity to double the amount of energy that we would be purchasing from entrepreneurs, development corporations, and community-led organizations. Really, it has been a true catalyst for the opportunity of entrepreneurship in that energy sector.

Again, I think that the good work that was done in the early stages was to ensure that the Yukon might be coming to the table a little later than other jurisdictions with the independent power production policy, but that gave a great opportunity to look at best practices and to look at challenges across the country. So, the pricing mechanisms that were put in place at 16.8 cents — really the cost to displace diesel gave us the opportunity to have a system in place where we're buying energy and I would say that we're not overpaying, but we are doing it in a feasible way. We're respecting the taxpayer and the ratepayer. We're also providing an opportunity for so many folks to look at different lines of business that they can be involved in.

Turning to working with Economic Development — again, I want to thank the many folks who have been involved in the work of that department. The key is that, in the last year, the department really rose to the occasion — 53 hard-working folks — 53 or 54 hard-working folks in that department. At a time when Yukoners needed that department the most, people really committed to ensuring that they did the work that was needed. They went above and beyond. There were a lot of late evenings and time away from their families. They were given an opportunity to use their creativity and their expertise to come up with solutions and they truly did.

They did that. They took the risk. They had the support to take the risk. What we've seen is — there could be some debate back and forth in the Assembly here around the programs that were rolled out — if they were absolutely effective and if there were any challenges. For folks who have done that work — and there are some here within the Assembly as well who are now elected officials and who know that when you have 10 days to build a policy and then capitalize a program with millions and millions of dollars and there are only one or two little aspects of it that maybe need some tweaking — that's something. We have to commend our public servants for that work. Again, there are some key pieces. I get to continue to work with that group of people.

There is an immigration strategy that will be coming out very soon. There is the innovation strategy. The department has already started the good work of looking at a platform commitment around an innovation commission, which is really an opportunity, over the very short run — taking an opportunity to take some experts from the Yukon to oversee some of the proposals that have come forward from many different groups. We have a lot of different proposals.

Some groups are looking to really grow the start-up sector — looking at 300 to 400 start-ups that they want to recruit over the next decade. Other groups are looking to take that good work that was done around the angel investment report that was done by the National Angel Capital Organization, NACO, and to start that here. They are all people who many of us know, and they're leaders in our community. We just want to take that opportunity to go through those multiple proposals. That work is now getting moving at Economic Development.

The compression of the fund that was there — there were multiple funds. What really was the goal was to try to make some big impact investments, whether it be in agriculture, in the digital space, or in mining — you name it. Having that ability to pull maybe larger amounts of money together to really push some of those projects ahead with the whole mindset of continued diversification within the space — so I really look forward to the continued work and I appreciate the work of Mr. Ferbey there as deputy minister and the rest of the team. So many areas — so many people who worked so hard within Economic Development.

This mandate will give an opportunity to work with a few new departments, which I am very excited about. The tourism, culture, and heritage team — I've had a bit of interaction so far over the last couple of weeks, as we have just gotten into our roles.

There will be lots of eyes on the department as well as my office to ensure that we roll out our Great Yukon Summer. There are aspects that are all being worked on, as we sit here today, and we will be rolling out pieces of that. That is really important. We are going to see movement across the Yukon border, and we are going to have that opportunity to see visitors. That will build over time, but when you are running a tourism operation, you still have an obligation. As you get ready for those folks to come, you are still going to have to get your team hired and you are still going to have to be in a place to get your infrastructure working. In order to do that, you need cash flow. I ask — and there will be further conversation about this, but we debate here hard and we put our personal lens on things, but I think — for this one, I know — that lots of members will come together.

It is so important this summer for everybody in the Legislative Assembly to ensure that we are cheering on our tourism sector in the Yukon and that we make sure that as many of our friends and our family members are spending dollars with local tourism operators. I know that most of us here — we are all doing that anyway. But please, I ask — and for anybody who tunes in as well from the Yukon government in the public service — we have to really lean in as much as we possibly can to ensure, especially now, going into these early months of the summer, that if we have a choice on how to spend that family budget and that dollar, please spend it here with a tourism operator, somebody in the hospitality industry. Those are the folks who have been the hardest hit over the last year, and I think that we all have an obligation — they make this territory such an incredible place with what they provide. We have an onus to look out for them, like many have over the last year.

Again, as we roll that project out, there will be opportunities for funding for events, which we are excited about. There is also opportunity there to help some of our local companies to update their marketing strategy and to focus it locally if they haven't before. It gives us the opportunity, as well, to do the good work of ensuring that — one thing that the previous minister did a fantastic job of, as well, is the communication out to all of the communities to ensure that communities were ready to embrace those opportunities, and they know that it is being done in a safe way and that the businesses in those communities are actually showing folks that they are doing it in a safe way.

As well, doing the work to finalize the incentive program over the summer, which we think can be something that can make a significant impact — where we have a Yukoner rate, but we have the opportunity to make the operator whole on that discount — again, another big piece.

Then looking toward the fall of this year for the early rollout — a pilot, really — for a music festival. There have been a lot of people who have contributed to that concept and I think that there is an opportunity for many. Early on — this is just really about taking a look at that shoulder season. Before COVID — over the last number of years, we have all looked — whether in the private sector or in government — to understand that the shoulder season is a key time for us to extend the opportunity for tourism operators. It is a beautiful

time of year here in the Yukon. A lot of people don't know that the northern lights viewing is pretty exceptional at that time of the year. So, looking at models across the country where the vision is that, over time, in years to come — where, for a period of a week to two weeks, if there is any community out there that wants to host these types of events, we will structure them. So, whether you're listening to some jigging in Old Crow or it is an event in Watson Lake or an event at Eagle Plains or Dawson City — that's the goal — to really have something that will draw people. I know that, this year already, companies like Air North are really excited and will be putting packages together. Those are some of the pieces that I am excited about, just out of the gates with tourism.

My predecessor did an amazing job focusing on culture and heritage. I am very excited. I am a huge history buff and so I am loving the opportunity to support the heritage infrastructure across the Yukon — understanding how important it is and that it is here for future generations to learn and understand.

The other amazing opportunities — when I think back to working with Champagne and Aishihik — thinking about the Long Ago Peoples Place and the work done there and the special relationship at that time — from the First Nation and then again with the Yukon government and BC government at that time — and the vision, going forward, about what heritage chapters in agreements — how life can be breathed into them. So, I'll be leaning on my colleague and the former minister to help me there.

Again, on the culture side, we do know that there is an extraordinary amount of people who are involved in creative culture. When we think about analysis across North America about what can make a thriving city — when we think about scholars like Richard Florida, who has said that the creative class just adds to your economy — it helps you build a knowledge-based economy; it helps you recruit; it helps you diversify.

So, taking a look at all those individuals who can contribute so much here in the Yukon — but now, the work of my colleague — putting that into a strategy that is moving out and then being able to figure out how to really increase the GDP contribution of those folks and make sure that they can live a great quality of life and doing the things that they're passionate about and understanding how that, again, helps build quality of life for all of us.

So, those are some of the exciting things. There are some other pieces that I think we'll be talking about during budget debate on some commitments on infrastructure — really needed. So, I say to all the folks out there that I'm looking forward to spending time getting to know you — whether it's stopping at the visitor centre to see what's happening on the front line for that department or spending time with some of the scientists who work there to understand the important, important work that they do.

Moving to the Yukon Housing Corporation — we had an opportunity this morning to take a look at the exceptional building that's on Jeckell — that 47-unit building — incredibly built. Again, the senior management team was there. I want to

thank them for taking the time out of their day to walk through. What an extraordinary building. The contractor who is there — Wildstone — is doing an incredible job — lots of Yukoners on-site working — which we always want to see. That certainly was the case today. I think that it is really, again, going to add such a quality of life to so many folks who need that sort of support from us and from Yukon Housing Corporation. Really, we'll give them a good boost up. I think that we're looking forward to seeing that building completed and then opening up.

I'm still learning lots from the corporation. Of course, there are almost 1,000 units that they oversee and the staff is spread out across the Yukon. I'm looking forward to meeting with folks in the communities as well as at the corporation — and a lot of new projects that are on the horizon. We'll have an opportunity, again, during budget debate to talk a bit about that.

I was happy to have a phone call from the minister last week. He reached out to let me know that he was making sure that the Yukon is at the table in his mind when he is starting to look at programs. I had an opportunity to work with him on the immigration file — and I really have to give credit. I still remember — I was in Watson Lake and I had just attended a meeting with the Member for Watson Lake. I was outside after that meeting, and we were very aggressive to ensure that the Yukon was taken into consideration when new federal programs were being built. He listened and he executed on that and now our community pilot project is built to really help a lot of entrepreneurs in the private sector in some of our communities in the Yukon. That was birthed from that negotiation and conversation. So, I have watched that federal minister respect the uniqueness of our territory. He has reached out to let me know that there are some new programs coming and there is going to be more opportunity to build that infrastructure, so I look forward to that.

Again, to Mary Cameron — thank you for the support initially here as we go through bringing me up to speed on the work.

Yukon Liquor Corporation and lotteries — there is a new deputy minister, Mr. Dennis Berry. It has been great to start to work with him, and I have a lot of folks to get to know. I apologize to the folks at liquor and lotteries that I have not had a chance to get over and really dive in and meet folks and understand how their department works — but as was stated here, I did spend lots of time on the private sector side, where I was a client — definitely — of the Liquor Corporation, so I am coming at the responsibility — understanding that I want to see, of course, us be as client-centric as possible and understand what that relationship will look like. Of course, there was work done by my colleague and predecessor, who did fantastic work around renewed policy work. There is lots there.

Again, I think that my colleague who shepherded us through the work on cannabis — we can debate here in a partisan way, but the reality is that he did a phenomenal job. There are things we are going tweak. I am getting advice on how to look at those things, and we want to make sure the private sector has every opportunity to thrive in that space. We are listening to folks and we are going to get that work done. There was really good early work done, and it was done in a

way — when you look at other jurisdictions, it didn't move quite as smoothly — and the same with lotteries, understanding all of their responsibilities.

So, just to close up, now going back to the responsibility that's always paramount for all of us, which is our ridings, thinking about other organizations that I'll have an opportunity to continue to work with — touch on that with the Friends of McIntyre Creek. Their ongoing efforts to protect the important McIntyre Creek corridor are appreciated by many in Porter Creek South and there is very broad support for their work. The area not only provides an important wildlife corridor through the City of Whitehorse, but it is an important recreational area and is well positioned for use by Yukon University, which we hope to see grow over the years to become a real destination for international students; it has already. Anybody who had an opportunity to watch the convocation over the last number of days would see that the student body is so international, and I think we're going to continue to see that.

That work is so important in McIntyre Creek. During the election, folks would have heard the commitment made by the Yukon Liberal Party to working with the City of Whitehorse, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwächän Council, and the university to understand how to maximize the best use of that area and, in some cases, to understand that it affects the ecosystem for southern Yukon because of how much the City of Whitehorse — how much sprawl we've seen — and then now understanding that it is a key wildlife corridor.

I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues. I'll be in a different role because, in this case, I'll be working as an MLA for Porter Creek South, but I am looking forward to working with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Minister of Environment, and the Minister of Community Services to undertake that and to look at that commitment and to follow through — again, some of the key pieces that I will be looking at to do for the citizens who have let me come back here to represent them.

Another concern that I will touch on is — just spending time at the door speaking with many elderly folks who have spent most of their adult life in Porter Creek South. Their children grew up there, and now they're in the community. It became very apparent that we need more community supports.

There are lots of individuals — I went to their homes, and of course, we had a massive amount of snow this spring — and they were looking for help to have individuals remove snow from their house or to shovel their driveway — you name it. I have reached out to the community association and have committed to providing an opportunity where people in the community, on a monthly basis, can get together. We can host an event at one of our local restaurants in Porter Creek, so we are making sure that, at a microeconomy level, we're giving back, whether it's Trails North or one of the other restaurants — you name it — Smoke & Sow. We bring folks — seniors — together where they have a chance to have those supports but also where we have a chance to understand, through very grassroots dialogue, what their priorities are and how we can, as a community, support those folks.

Third — understanding that there have been different impacts as the population has grown in the community over the years, and looking at the good work that was done by my colleague in Mountainview — is how we look at community safety plans as well. I know that other MLAs in the area will be interested to help and support to make sure that the community of Porter Creek is safe and that it is still an exceptional place, which it is, to live and to bring up a family or to retire.

The school councils continue to do amazing work. Folks take time away from their families. They are there making sure that they present the best possible opportunities for their children and their friends' and neighbours' children. So, continue to work, whether it be at the high school level or the elementary level, with school councils and to listen to what their concerns are.

Again, there are so many people who come together to volunteer. The party's executive does so much, and I want to thank the folks who are there at the executive level. They put in hours and hours and then, when an election comes, it even becomes more demanding, and so I want to thank those individuals as well as the staff in our Cabinet offices — the folks who were with us over the last number of years and the folks who are with us now. Again, when we come down to the Assembly, whether it is to give a tribute or to share some words like I am today, all of that comes together because of the great work that all of those folks do on our behalf. They really don't get the credit that they deserve. I know that's the same for the other parties as well with their caucus teams.

I would like to acknowledge the good work that was done by my colleague Pauline Frost as well as my colleague Paolo Gallina over the last number of years. I miss them and appreciate the good work that they have done. I look forward to the rest of the 35th. I'm excited to get into budget debate and I appreciate what a gift it is to be able to come back here to represent the folks in Porter Creek South.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to close debate on the Speech from the Throne for the first Sitting of the 35th Yukon Legislative Assembly. I want to thank Commissioner Bernard for delivering the Speech from the Throne in such an eloquent way. I have tremendous respect for our Commissioner, which is why I was somewhat disappointed to not hear from all of the members in the Legislative Assembly.

When I think back on my time in the Legislature during the 34th Legislative Assembly, I think often of my very first speech, which was my Reply to the Speech from the Throne. I listened intently, Mr. Speaker, to the stories and the heartfelt thoughts of why we are here.

I listened intently to the Member for Whitehorse Centre, the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, and, of course, our previous Speaker, the Member for Riverdale North. Even though the former Speaker has been here for four and a half years with us,

this was perhaps the first time that he was able to speak in this way in the Legislative Assembly. I thought a lot about my very first speech, and I went back and read a number of others in preparation for this 35th Legislative Assembly.

I was disappointed to not hear from all, and I wanted to say that. I wanted to thank every member who did reply to the Speech from the Throne for their words and for helping us to understand who you are, where you come from, and what your passions are.

On that, I am not going to say much more, other than, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that the Speech from the Throne is ambitious; it is inspiring; it is a reflection of our commitment to Yukoners. It is a reflection of our commitment to keep going and to carry on with the many foundational plans that we have worked on with Yukoners over the past four and half years. I am happy that it reflects the views, also, of the New Democratic Party and reflects the commitments that we have made together to continue for the benefit of all Yukoners within our government.

On that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. I will conclude my remarks.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

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

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

Motion No. 20 agreed to

Motion to engross Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to the Commissioner in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to the Commissioner in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor.

Motion agreed to

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 9 — Appointments to Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges — adjourned debate

Clerk: Motion No. 9, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee; adjourned debate on the amendment, Mr. Cathers.

Mr. Cathers: I will be brief. Just to recap for members and those listening, we've proposed an amendment to this motion to establish the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges to make the convenor of the committee a private member and to propose that the chair of the committee would have to be a private member. The reason for this, of course, was that there was an ongoing problem during the last term that the Liberal private member who chaired the committee was not calling meetings of this committee and work stalled. Considering the track record of the Liberals of not being willing to call this committee, we're proposing that the convenor of the committee be a member of the Third Party and that the requirement be inserted that the chair of the committee be a private member, which in layman's terms means someone other than a minister.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that the characterization of the member opposite — of what was occurring in the last term and the former chair and their role — is inappropriate in these circumstances.

I am pleased to say that we have worked closely with the Third Party, the New Democratic Party members of the Legislative Assembly, and that each of the parties have put forward names of individuals to be on this particular standing committee as part of the Legislative Assembly. The standing committee has been constituted by way of the motion that I have put forward here, for particular reasons. Members from the Yukon Party and their role in this particular committee have not been affected in any way by the conversations and the discussions that we have had with the New Democrats, and the motion should, in my view, proceed as it has been delivered to this Legislative Assembly, and the amendment being proposed should be defeated.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

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. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

Ms. Tredger: Disagree.

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

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

Amendment to Motion No. 9 negated

Speaker: Resuming debate on the main motion, Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as you mentioned, we are resuming debate on the main Motion No. 9, which is to appoint the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. Obviously, the amendment brought forward by my colleague from Lake Laberge was just defeated in the House. It would have accomplished naming a different convener to the committee so that the committee actually gets called as well as naming a private member to chair the committee. Back to the main motion, the convener will be a Cabinet minister and the chair of the committee will also be a Cabinet minister, a member of the Liberal caucus.

Again, as my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, mentioned, he and I were both members of this committee in the 34th Legislature in the previous mandate with the Liberal chair. I have to give credit to the former chair. At the start of the committee's deliberations, there was quite a bit of work accomplished. We put together a work plan and made some changes to the Standing Orders that all parties agree on. But then toward the last half of the Liberal government mandate, the meetings ceased to happen; the chair didn't call them. As I mentioned, we did have a fairly substantive work plan put

together which would have led to some improvements to the Standing Orders and the way we conduct ourselves in here, but we could not get the chair to call a meeting.

That said, Mr. Speaker, I am going to propose an amendment to this motion which will allow for regularly scheduled meetings and for the committee to be convened. I will read that amendment into the record now.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Kent: I move:

THAT Motion No. 9 be amended by inserting the phrase "THAT the committee meet a minimum of four times each calendar year, no later than 30 days after the adoption of this motion by the Assembly" before the phrase "THAT the committee have the power".

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt South:

THAT Motion No. 9 be amended by inserting the phrase "THAT the committee meet a minimum of four times each calendar year, no later than 30 days after the adoption of this motion by the Assembly" before the phrase "THAT the committee have the power".

Mr. Kent: I am not going to take very much time. Before I moved this amendment, I explained the rationale for it. But again, essentially all it says is that there needs to be quarterly meetings of this committee and that the first meeting has to be convened within 30 days of the adoption of this motion by the Assembly.

I have listened to the Government House Leader talk about how they came up with an arrangement with the New Democrats, but there are three parties represented in this House and those deliberations normally would have taken place at House Leaders' — but that particular part for this motion was included in the coalition agreement that the NDP and the Liberals have put together.

So, that said, we just want to make sure that the committees can continue to do their work; that it's not at the call of the chair; that this committee in particular has to meet four times per year; and that it has to meet within 30 days of the adoption of this motion of the Assembly. I'm hoping that all members will see that this is a reasonable request being made by the Official Opposition and will vote in favour of this amendment.

Speaker: There appears to be some missing language and I will re-read the amendment:

THAT Motion No. 9 be amended by inserting the phrase "THAT the committee meet a minimum of four times each calendar year;

"THAT the committee convene no later than 30 days after the adoption of this motion by the Assembly"

before the phrase "THAT the committee have the power".

So, what was inserted after "calendar year" is "THAT the committee convene".

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to seek a five-minute recess for the purpose of conferring with my caucus. We had not been advised that this amendment would be coming forward. It is not generally the role of the House to indicate when committees should be convening. It is in the spirit and intent of working together that I would like to consider this with my caucus, but I'll need five minutes to do that.

The other question I have is whether or not the words that have been inserted by you, Mr. Speaker — “THAT the committee convene” — have been accepted as the amendment. Is that the proper form for the member opposite who has brought the amendment to the floor?

Mr. Kent: Just for the record, I do accept the changes that you read in, Mr. Speaker, with that correction to the amendment to the main motion.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, perhaps in my earlier submission to you, I wasn't clear that I would need to request unanimous consent for the five-minute recess that I've requested in order to meet with our caucus about the amendment that has been brought to the floor.

Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: The House will recess for five minutes.

Recess

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Does any other member wish to be heard on the amendment to Motion No. 9?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, we are now addressing the amendment to Motion No. 9, having been brought forward by the Member for Copperbelt South. I also note that four additional words were added to make it completely clear that the plan would be for the committee to meet four times within each calendar year and that the first of those meetings would be convened within 30 days after the adoption of the motion that is on the floor today.

I appreciate very much, Mr. Speaker, having the opportunity to speak with my caucus regarding this motion and the amendment to it. I note that, as I have earlier, I was not aware that it was coming forward. I think that it is important to note that we all understand and support the value of the committee — what's known as SCREP, the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges — because of the important work that they do regarding the work of this particular Legislative Assembly. I appreciate the comments from the member opposite about giving credit to the former chair, because, in fact, the committee did meet a number of times early on in the last 34th Sitting of the Legislative Assembly and did some important work going forward.

In the 14 years prior to that, the SCREP — or the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges — met, I think it

is fair to say, very erratically. My quick opportunity to look was that they only met maybe twice in that period of time. Certainly, four times a year is going to make an increased opportunity for the important work of that committee to be done. That will be supported by all of the parties here in the House. I am happy to indicate that, in the spirit and intent of working together — and presumably, in particular the Yukon Party's commitment to regular meetings — we can support this amendment to Motion No. 9, noting that it will not only be a new day for the government and the important work of SCREP but a new day for the participation by the Yukon Party in what has been very low commitment to the SCREP in the past. I'm happy to see that change.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, today, in speaking to this amendment, I think that it's important to note that we can revisit the mistakes of the past and we can bring up what I would consider to be less than stellar reputations from all parties in this House, or we can choose to chart a path forward.

I appreciate that, in the past, SCREP, at different times, has had a substantial amount of work ahead of it. It had a meeting or two, and then it has fallen off. We will be supporting this motion in the hope that future legislative assemblies will have that ability to meet four times a year and make those changes that are important. We thank the Yukon Party for this amendment and I look forward to a final vote.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the amendment?

Amendment to Motion No. 9 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the motion as amended?

Motion No. 9, as amended, agreed to

Motion No. 10

Clerk: Motion No. 10, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the Hon. Nils Clarke, the Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Yvonne Clarke, Brad Cathers, and Annie Blake be appointed to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments established pursuant to Standing Order 45(1);

THAT the committee have the power to call for persons, papers, and records and to sit during intersessional periods;

THAT the committee review such regulations made following the date of its appointment as it may decide upon;

THAT the committee review such other existing or proposed regulations as are referred to it by the Legislative Assembly; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the committee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This is the third in a series of motions to set the standing committees for the Legislative Assembly of this particular Sitting. I note that the names have

been provided by all three parties, that the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments be established pursuant to Standing Order No. 45(1), and I urge the support of this motion on the floor of the House this afternoon.

Mr. Dixon: It is a pleasure to rise and speak to this motion, which, of course, names the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. Like some other committees in the past, this is one that has seen sparse use and we would like to change that. So, going forward, Mr. Speaker, we think that this particular standing committee has a lot of opportunity to conduct work on behalf of Yukoners and on behalf of the Legislative Assembly.

So, with that, and consistent with discussion in the Legislature previously, I would like to propose an amendment.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Dixon: I move:

THAT Motion No. 10 be amended by inserting the phrase “THAT the committee meet a minimum of four times each calendar year;

“THAT the committee convene no later than 30 days after the adoption of this motion by the Assembly”

before the phrase “THAT the committee have the power”.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt North:

THAT Motion No. 10 be amended by inserting the phrase “THAT the committee meet a minimum of four times each calendar year;

“THAT the committee convene no later than 30 days after the adoption of this motion by the Assembly”

before the phrase “THAT the committee have the power”.

Mr. Dixon: The amendment to this motion is consistent with the previous amendments that we dealt with earlier today. Given the unanimous support given earlier, I expect there to be the same with this. We are hopeful that the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments can begin the important work that it is tasked to do in this motion, including calling for persons, papers, and records, as well as reviewing such regulations as sent to it by the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing this amendment pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank you for the amendment from the members opposite. Again, it's not something that we were aware of going forward for today's debate. As a result, a quick consideration needed to be done for this particular amendment to the motion. I am going to indicate that I think it's incredibly important that the parties here in the Legislative Assembly work together on the legislative committees and in many ways. I'm certainly happy to hear that from the members opposite and the Official Opposition.

We have committed to working together with all parties. We will, of course, convene, if this motion were to pass without the amendment, a meeting of the statutory instruments

committee — important to do so — but I think it would be foolhardy, at this point, to commit to the number of meetings that are necessary in a particular calendar year based on the fact that a full review must be done by the members who will be appointed to this committee, and that includes me — to the roles and responsibilities of the committee, the scope of the committee, the parameters of the work they are required to do. I say that, Mr. Speaker, because I note that the committee information that I have been able to obtain is that the committee only met once in the 34th Sitting of this Legislative Assembly and never in the 33rd, never in the 32nd, and never in the 31st.

So, but for a few members of this Legislative Assembly who sat through the 34th, nobody has any experience with respect to the roles, the responsibilities, the scope of this committee, and the work that it should tackle. It is no doubt important work, Mr. Speaker, but it would be inappropriate at this time to commit to four full meetings. Maybe we need six meetings in a calendar year; maybe we need 10 meetings in a calendar year. I'm not sure what the scope of that work would be — bringing forth to that committee — and the idea of committing to four meetings in this particular calendar year with the record of the committee not meeting and work to be done going forward, I think, is something that the committee should do. We will commit to convening a meeting of that committee and determining that with the members who should be appointed and hopefully will be appointed by virtue of this motion.

So, I'm not supporting the amendment.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

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. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

Ms. Tredger: Disagree.

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

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

Amendment to Motion No. 10 negated

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

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise today. Unfortunately, the history with this committee has been that the committee has not met, when in fact there was a need for it to meet. As the Liberal members should recall, we — as the Official Opposition — on multiple occasions, urged government to call this committee during the pandemic to discuss and review ministerial orders and orders-in-council that were in place and that were affecting the lives of Yukoners and to empower the committee to have the ability to hear from the public regarding those. Unfortunately, the government chose to dismiss those requests multiple times.

It is also interesting that the Government House Leader claimed that this committee had met once, but to the best of my recollection, the committee did not actually meet during the time that the Liberals were in office. It certainly — if it did meet — did not actually do anything that fulfilled its mandate. This committee has been part of the Standing Orders for many years, and if the committee is not acting in the way that is envisioned, then the effort of the Government House Leader tabling this motion is really, to some extent, a farce.

We want to see this committee doing the work that is envisioned under the Standing Orders, and that includes that the committee actually has to meet.

Another matter in this that we have, Mr. Speaker — that we believe that this motion should be improved — I will speak to momentarily. I do just want to remind the House and those listening and reading that the NDP-Liberal coalition — or the Liberal-NDP coalition, whichever they prefer to call it — departed from the long-standing practice of this Assembly of having an all-party discussion on committee membership and structure and chose instead to cut a backroom deal that includes membership of the committee and who would be chair of the committee — which party, I should say, would chair which committees — and set the membership of those committees. That is a disturbing trend.

Subsequently, the coalition that chooses to try to say that they're not a coalition — but what walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, if I may use the analogy — chose to come up with another backroom deal to shut down this Sitting after 11 days, which, of course, would make it one of the shortest Sittings in history. Our staff, in reviewing the amount of time that legislative assemblies have sat during the spring in the last number of decades, have determined that the shortest Sittings in the spring were under either a Liberal government, an NDP government, or the Liberal-NDP coalition government. If this Sitting is to be 11 days in length, it would be not as short as the mere nine days that this Assembly sat last year, but it would still be shorter than the previous Liberal government, which held the record for the shortest Sitting with 23 days.

So, again, speaking to the role of this committee itself — if a committee never meets, there's no point in having the committee on the books. That is, to some extent, the show of having a committee when the committee doesn't actually fulfill its actions.

So, Mr. Speaker, in the interest of strengthening this as well as allowing the committee a clear mandate to address the issue that is most frequently raised by Yukon citizens and businesses as well as NGOs, faith leaders, sports organizations, and so on, I am pleased to propose an amendment.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Cathers: I move:

THAT Motion No. 10 be amended by:

(1) inserting the phrase “or Executive Council” after the phrase “referred to it by the Legislative Assembly”; and

(2) inserting the phrase “THAT the committee review any regulations and ministerial orders issued under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* within 45 days of such regulations or ministerial orders being issued;” before the phrase “; and THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly”.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT Motion No. 10 be amended by:

(1) inserting the phrase “or Executive Council” after the phrase “referred to it by the Legislative Assembly”; and

(2) inserting the phrase “THAT the committee review any regulations and ministerial orders issued under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* within 45 days of such regulations or ministerial orders being issued;” before the phrase “; and THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly”.

Mr. Cathers: What we have seen during debate on this motion earlier — it was surprising to see the NDP voting against having this committee meet to hold the government to account. We are hopeful that, if this committee is established, all members will recognize, including the convenor of this, that there's no point in having this committee in the Standing Orders if the committee doesn't actually meet and do its job.

With the amendment that I have proposed here this afternoon on behalf of our caucus, we have recommended increasing flexibility to allow the Executive Council to refer matters to this committee — that is to provide more flexibility between Sittings in the Legislative Assembly, as currently the wording tabled by the Government House Leader requires matters to be referred to the committee by the Assembly itself, so that amendment would simply increase flexibility.

What we are proposing with the second part — that the committee review any regulations and ministerial orders issued under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* within 45 days of such regulations and ministerial orders being issued — is all about creating more of a public process and oversight to allow people who have concerns, suggestions, and comments regarding how ministerial orders issued under the emergency powers being used by government — which I remind members that, despite the constant pretence by government that those decisions are

being made by the chief medical officer of health, in fact, they are being made by Cabinet and the minister responsible. That is the very definition of autocratic government, when, behind closed doors and without public process, Cabinet makes a decision, uses emergency powers, and Yukoners are forced to live with it.

The proposal that we have brought forward today would provide for a process, using the statutory instruments committee, that, if regulations or ministerial orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* are issued, there would be the requirement for the committee to review it, and the committee could choose, for those that it felt appropriate, to hear from the public regarding those matters. That is inserting democracy in place of the autocratic approach that is here today.

So, for the NDP, they have a choice here today. They have a choice to vote for the committee working and listening to Yukoners, or to vote for secrecy and autocratic decision-making by the Liberal Cabinet. I would also just make one mention — the Government House Leader had suggested that maybe four meetings weren't enough. If they would like to propose that this committee should meet six times a year or 10 times a year, we're certainly open to having the committee do more work. In fact, the Liberals have chosen not to allow the committee to fulfill its function at all. I would encourage members to vote for this amendment for public oversight, for democratic process, and a review of emergency orders. If they choose to vote against it, it will be a sad day for democracy and a sad day especially for the NDP, which may want to consider a new party name since they're no longer new and it's not very democratic anymore.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'll rise briefly this afternoon on this proposed amendment to express a bit of concern. I'm quite puzzled by the comments of the member opposite in his criticism of me having brought this motion forward. I think he was suggesting that we not have a statutory instruments committee at all, which is puzzling. Then I thought that he might be speaking against the committee, and then, ultimately, he brought in an amendment to the motion that, of course, is to strike the committee. I'm not sure where we are, but I'm going to go forward on the basis that there is support at the Yukon Party for the statutory instruments committee.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to administrative law, tenets, and all good rules, committees should, in fact, set their own agendas. I think that the submission here in this amendment will potentially interfere with the scope, roles, and responsibilities of this particular committee. Of course, I would have perhaps more cogent thoughts about all of this had we known that this was coming forward and the opportunity to make a true debate. Nonetheless, I think all of my comments are relevant in this particular situation.

I guess I want to remind the Official Opposition, as well as Yukoners who are out there listening, that the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, in fact, has the authority to review any regulation that comes into effect after the committee is formed.

The Legislative Assembly may also refer — this body may also refer — existing or proposed regulations to this committee for review. That's the current scope and responsibility.

I could go on, but that's the summary of the current scope and responsibilities of the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments — an important committee and an opportunity for us all, with the motion that's before this Legislative Assembly, to strike that committee and have that work get underway without the amendment that is before the House at the moment.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'll add a few more comments. The first one is that I don't understand. I went and checked with the Clerk of Committees to ask how often this committee had met from 2002 — from when Premier Fentie was elected — including the Member for Lake Laberge, who was elected at that time and who, I think, joined Cabinet a few years later. The committee met no times during Premier Fentie's first term, it met no times in the term after, and it met no times in the Pasloski government after that.

When someone is talking about ducks in here, the thing I'm looking back at is: What is the record? What does it show? Okay, fine. That's all right.

I also think that we want to be able to suggest that the — well, the member opposite, when he was putting forward his submissions on his amendment, he talked about how, if we voted against this, it would mean that the committee is not allowed to do something or it is not allowed to look at regulations or not allowed to meet. It's just the opposite, Mr. Speaker. The committee is entirely allowed to look at it. As my colleague, the Government House Leader, just pointed out, that's there in the rules of the committee. I would think that the committee gets to decide what it would look at.

I want to talk, just for a second, about those *Civil Emergency Measures Act* ministerial orders. I was responsible for those during the last Legislature. When we broke after nine days because of a pandemic — an emergency that hit here and everywhere — and it was unanimous, by the way, Mr. Speaker. It was unanimous in this House that we agreed to end the session early. Then there were requests to reconvene the Legislature. We said, "No, we're not doing that, but how about we do the next best thing, which is to come into this place and allow there to be open, recorded debate — answering questions on a budget and on any of these orders." The response that we got back was, "No, thank you." We submitted that.

I think that there were five letters coming from the Government House Leader, and I tabled them all here in the Legislature. They are on the record. The members opposite said, "No, thank you." That is not what they wanted.

I ended up coming to the impression that they wanted to criticize that we weren't meeting. I don't know, Mr. Speaker.

So, I think that it is important to note that, when it comes to these ministerial orders, I then stood up in this Legislature several times and said, "Please bring forward the ones that you are concerned about. Let's talk about them here in the Legislature." It didn't happen.

So, okay — and I have no problem that the members opposite still wish to talk about these orders; I think that is

great. What I would like to do is to let the committee that we are looking to create today, or populate today, through the main motion make its decisions about what it wants to do with regulations.

I will leave it there. I think that it is important that we talk about the democracy of this place. I will always stand up and challenge when members opposite suggest that this is a lack of democracy when, in fact, I think that we did additional.

One last point I will note: When we are talking about shorter sessions, I believe that it was under the Pasloski government, when they got re-elected, that they convened for nine days. We are convening for 11 days after an additional five days earlier this spring. So, just when we are comparing these things, that is the comparison. The members opposite — I think there are one, two, three, four, five, six of them who were members of that government — chose to sit for nine days, and they are criticizing that 11 days is short.

The other thing that the Member for Lake Laberge criticized was that he doesn't like special warrants, but, of course, if you get to 11 days here, what you do is you pass the budget before you get to a special warrant, which somehow contradicts what he is saying, but that is fine. I am looking forward to voting on the amendment.

Mr. Dixon: I hadn't intended to rise to speak to this amendment but feel compelled to do that now.

First of all, I know that members opposite in the government caucus want to spend a lot of time talking about the past. They want to talk about 2002; they want to talk about 2006, 2011, and 2016. We have a chance now to move forward and to do things a little bit differently, and the way that we want to do that is to actually have these committees meet and do the work that they are tasked to do. In the past — and whether it happened under the Yukon Party or the Liberal Party or whatever other party in the past — this particular committee never met; it didn't meet.

Last year, it was asked to meet. Members of the committee asked to meet to review the OICs and ministerial orders issued under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the then-chair denied that opportunity.

This committee has been sought to meet before from its members and was denied the opportunity by the Liberal chair at the time. So, that is one of the problems here. That is why this amendment has come forward, because the Liberals have used their opportunity, and their chair of this committee, in the past — as recently as last year — to deny the committee the ability to do its work. That is the issue, Mr. Speaker. The issue is that this committee needs to meet.

We can discuss whether Dennis Fentie or Darrel Pasloski called this committee to meet — that doesn't matter. What we are talking about is how we move forward now. That is why we put forward this amendment, because we want this committee to meet. We want this committee to begin to engage in the types of activities that are contemplated in the original motion. That's why my colleague outlined some of the questions about the nature of his committee in his opening remarks. If we are not going to have this committee meet, then why do we bring it

forward? That's why we are saying that we want this committee to have a clear sense of what it can do and what it cannot do.

That is the opportunity we have here today. That is the opportunity that I am worried is going to go past if we don't pass these types of amendments and allow the Liberal Party to continue to use their chair of these types of committees to deny them the opportunity to meet. We know that is what happened. We know that has happened a number of times. Yes, it happened under the Yukon Party, and it happened in years past as well. But it needs to stop, and that is why we want to see these changes come forward.

I have heard the Premier talk about how he wants to do things differently now and how he wants to see changes to the way that these committees operate. Well, here is an opportunity to do that, Mr. Speaker. Here is an opportunity to pass an amendment to this motion that will give a clear sense of opportunity for this committee to step forward and start to review some of the things that we think are important.

Obviously, the members opposite are correct: Of course, the committee can meet and set its own agenda. But it cannot do that if it doesn't meet. So far, the Liberals have used their chair of this committee to deny the opportunity for it to meet. That is the problem. That is why you see amendments like this one, which have clear timelines for meeting, explicit direction for the committee to actually do some things, because we want to see that happen.

Mr. Speaker, I obviously will be supporting the amendment. If members of this Legislature do want to see this committee meet and do the work that we are tasking them to do, then they should pass this amendment as well.

If they do not, fine. Fair enough. But at least what I think I am hearing from my colleagues across the aisle is that they are now willing to call this committee to meet. None of them have said that yet. They have said that the committee can set its own agenda, but not one of them has yet committed to having this committee meet. If my colleagues across the aisle would like to take the opportunity, I would encourage them to at least make a commitment to have this committee meet and do the work, regardless of how they vote on this amendment.

Ms. White: It's impressive to know that it has taken merely days for the new, nicer Yukon Party to shed that skin. I'm always hopeful; I'm an optimist — anyone who has been here before knows that.

I would just like to have a word with my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, possibly suggesting that, if he wants anyone to take him seriously when he speaks about collaboration in this Chamber and working with others, maybe he should consider the way he speaks to other people. Maybe that would be a start.

Then maybe I would suggest that, when we talk about the new, nicer, kinder Yukon Party — one that is more inclusive — that maybe we would check about how we speak to other members or about other members in this Chamber.

There was a real opportunity — I would like to point out that this motion was tabled days ago, knowing that it was coming for debate. But instead of the Yukon Party having a

conversation with either me or others in the Yukon NDP or across the way with the Liberals, instead we have a motion moved on the floor of this Chamber without the ability to actually have a conversation in a way that can be a back-and-forth, because only one person is able to speak at a time here.

So, if we want to talk about collaboration, maybe we can think about how we refer to each other; maybe we can think about the words that we choose. Because there just hasn't been enough time to look at this, we will not be voting in favour of this amendment.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I wasn't going to speak, either, on this, but I concur with the Leader of the NDP on her statements here. It's about the sincerity of whether or not the Yukon Party actually wants to work to make things better or if they want to play "gotcha" politics in the Legislative Assembly. This motion has been out for a while. The Leader of the Official Opposition has not made any overtures to reach out to talk about this, yet they will have the Member for Lake Laberge speak about how, well, if a committee doesn't meet, maybe we shouldn't even have that committee.

Yet again — and I will bring up the past, because the past is an important part to discuss how we move forward — again, in 14 years of the Yukon Party, they had this committee and it didn't meet. So, I guess what the member opposite is saying is that it shouldn't have even existed in the time of the Yukon Party.

Now, it is always good to compare the past — and we will always bring up the past on a motion of how we can move forward. Now, we've taken an amendment already. We want to work with the Yukon Party. We asked the Yukon Party if they would provide a deputy chair and chair of the Committee of the Whole; they denied. We're still waiting to see — if we're going to meet you halfway, Yukon Party, you have to be there to that other side of halfway. We're still willing to partner. We would love to be able to discuss these types of motions in advance. This committee has not met in decades. To give a commitment on the fly like this for a committee that hasn't met in a long time — I think that we've already done enough today with talking about the amendments that are on the fly here. We've already convened about them with our colleagues and said we're willing to go halfway — we're willing to meet halfway. But, again, it's the sincerity right now at this point which I'm really questioning.

Mr. Kent: I want to take the opportunity to respond to some of the stuff that the Premier said and just mentioned in his remarks about working together.

So, let's go back to the CASA or the coalition or whatever agreement was signed between the NDP and the Liberals. The structure of these committees appeared in that agreement. At no time — and for obvious reasons — did the Yukon Party have any involvement in developing that agreement, nor would we have expected them to. But I was quite surprised, as the House Leader, to see the legislative committees referenced in a coalition agreement between the Liberals and the NDP. It was quite disappointing. So, to accuse us of not working in good

faith or not providing information is a little bit rich coming from the Premier when it comes to his remarks here today.

Then, at the initial House Leaders' meeting with me, the Government House Leader, and the Member for Whitehorse Centre, we were informed at that meeting that a deal had been reached between the Liberals and the NDP on an 11-day Sitting — no discussion and no idea of what the legislative agenda was going to be. I had to ask the Government House Leader after that what bills were coming forward — if it was just money bills. It turns out that it was money bills and the amendments to the *Child Care Act*.

But again, doing side deals, doing backroom deals, and ignoring how we normally do things is something that we've seen in the early days of this Liberal and NDP agreement and it's pretty disappointing — and again, pretty rich for the Premier to stand on his feet and criticize the Yukon Party for not bringing forward amendments for consideration when backroom deals have been done not only on committee structure but on the length of the Sitting.

I would remind the Premier that he should think twice before making those comments and accusations against the Yukon Party.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the amendment by the Member for Lake Laberge?

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. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

Ms. Tredger: Disagree.

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

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

Amendment to Motion No. 10 negated

Speaker: Is there any further debate on Motion No. 10?
Motion No. 10 agreed to

Motion No. 11

Clerk: Motion No. 11, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT Currie Dixon, Scott Kent, the Hon. Richard Mostyn, the Hon. Jeanie McLean, and Kate White be appointed to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts established pursuant to Standing Order 45(3);

THAT the committee have the power to call for persons, papers, and records and to sit during intersessional periods; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the committee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to Motion No. 11, which is the institution and structure of the Public Accounts Committee. Each of the parties have put forward names of individuals they are naming to take on the responsibilities of this important committee, and I urge everyone to support this motion.

Mr. Kent: The Official Opposition will be supporting this motion as is. We look forward to the Public Accounts Committee getting on with their work as soon as possible, and we look forward to having those meetings convened as soon as we possibly can.

Ms. White: I have had the pleasure of serving on the Public Accounts Committee for a number of years and look forward to getting back to work.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?
Motion No. 11 agreed to

Motion No. 12

Clerk: Motion No. 12, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the Hon. Nils Clarke, the Hon. Ranj Pillai, Scott Kent, Geraldine Van Bibber, and Emily Treder be appointed to the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees established pursuant to Standing Order 45(3.1);

THAT the committee have the power to call for persons, papers, and records and to sit during intersessional periods; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the committee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, this is the fifth in the series of motions to bring forward and constitute a committee here of a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly. This is the

Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, established pursuant to Standing Order 45.

I can, of course, note that the committee has met many, many times over the last Sitting of the Legislative Assembly. I can also indicate that they do very important work with respect to the structure of other boards and committees throughout the territory. Each of the parties have put forward these names, and I urge everyone to support this motion.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?
Motion No. 12 agreed to

Motion No. 4

Clerk: Motion No. 4, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT, notwithstanding Standing Order 75(2), the maximum number of sitting days for the 2021 Special Sitting shall be 11 sitting days;

THAT, notwithstanding Standing Order 75(7), the provision of chapter 14 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly shall apply to the 2021 Special Sitting in the same manner as if it were a Spring or Fall Sitting; and

THAT the provisions of Standing Order 76 shall apply on the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for the 2021 Special Sitting.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yukoners have sent a clear message, and we have discussed it on several occasions here today on both sides of the House — that we need to move forward together for the benefit of our territory. We are committed to working collaboratively with all MLAs and to make Yukon a better place to live. This matter is before the Legislative Assembly for the purpose of determining the length of the Sitting with respect to, primarily, a budget that was introduced almost in its entirety — almost in its exact same form — on March 4.

The other individuals in the opposition were briefed in early March. I appreciate that some of them weren't here. Following the election, it was made very clear throughout the media, and since the election over a month ago, that we would be proceeding with a budget that was virtually the same as the one previously introduced. There have been briefings on this version of the 2021-22 budget recently — I think early or late last week — and they continue. The opposition has been clearly informed on the earliest possible date that the budget bills would be the ones introduced primarily for the purpose of dealing with them in this Sitting. There is one other bill — the *Child Care Act* — for the purposes of having those responsibilities transfer from Health and Social Services to Education. Again, the members opposite are quite familiar with that.

Mr. Speaker, it is not unusual for a post-election Sitting. I appreciate that the members opposite aren't that keen on looking back or seeing what happened before, but it is the basis

of the concept of “precedent”. It is an important one in this House, and it is an important one in our legal system and important for us all to recall how things were done in the past — and was that an appropriate situation, or should we change?

The members opposite have been very concerned about comments regarding when the Yukon Party formed governments, both in 2006 and in 2011. Mr. Speaker, after the 2006 election, the Assembly sat for 12 days — I dare say not that different from 11, recognizing that we sat for five days early in March — and that Sitting saw two budget bills and amendments to the *Income Tax Act* — no doubt, serious changes to the law. After the 2011 election, when the Leader of the Yukon Party was first elected, the Assembly sat for only nine days, and that Sitting also saw two budget bills passed.

My point is that it’s not terribly unusual following a general election. The opportunity for us to speak and debate the budget is an important one. It is critical, on behalf of Yukoners, that this work be done. The Legislature was recalled as soon as possible, exactly a month following the general election — and an opportunity for those bills to be introduced. Again, I indicated to House Leaders, as soon as possible, that the motion would be coming forward. We filed a motion at the earliest possible opportunity to indicate that there were to be no surprises, that this is an appropriate length of this particular Sitting, and that the work on behalf of Yukoners can be done in the Legislative Assembly for the purposes of passing the bill and moving forward on the important initiatives that are set out in both the supplementary budget and mains budget for 2021-22. I urge all Members of the Legislative Assembly to support this motion.

Mr. Dixon: I suppose it goes without saying that we don’t agree with this motion. We certainly don’t agree with the Sitting length. We have expressed that several times so far.

Obviously, the members who spent their time — across the way, at least, over the past week or so — researching previous Sittings and determining Sitting length — based on those, I would note that, in none of those cases that they cited was there a \$1.8-billion budget. That’s a substantial piece of public business that needs to be thoroughly scrutinized and considered. Quite frankly, we don’t believe that the 11-day Sitting that is being proposed in this motion is at all sufficient.

The first several days of this Sitting, as we know, were populated by the throne speech and some of the attendant issues related to the legislative Sitting that come after an election. That is obviously not unusual, but what is unusual is the significantly small number of days to scrutinize this size of budget. That is a remarkable departure from reviewing budgets of this size in the past, Mr. Speaker.

I would also note that this Legislature has not fully considered a budget since the spring of 2019. Last year, we had a truncated session as a result of COVID. That was something that all members at that time agreed with, and that is fine, but we don’t have that excuse anymore. I don’t think that we are faced with the kind of constraints and issues and pressures that were faced in the spring of 2020, and 11 days to consider a \$1.8-billion budget is, quite frankly, inadequate.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is not just me who feels this way. Obviously, our colleagues on this side of the House certainly note the inadequacy of it.

I took great interest in the postings of the former Clerk of the Assembly, Dr. Floyd McCormick, who, of course, is Yukon’s preeminent scholar and authority on these issues in the public. He noted that the current post-election Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly is a Special Sitting. This means that chapter 14 of the Standing Orders does not apply. The Assembly, therefore, is back to the procedural situation that existed prior to 2002 where there is no mechanism to: (a) designate a maximum number of sitting days for the Sitting and (b) arbitrarily bring the Sitting to an end once the maximum number of sitting days has been reached.

In response, the Government House Leader has proposed Motion No. 4, which, of course, we are debating today, which, if adopted, according to Dr. McCormick, would impose (a) and (b). There would be 11 sitting days with Standing Order 76, the guillotine clause, being applied at the end of day 11.

To quote Dr. McCormick further: “This is a very low number of sitting days for a Sitting where the Assembly is debating a main appropriation bill ... The government should not proceed with Motion 4. Instead, the Assembly should consider the main appropriation bill and a few other measures on the Order Paper without the prospect of an arbitrary guillotine-induced ending.

“Instead, the Assembly should, by motion, bring in other, less draconian measures, to ensure a higher level of scrutiny.”

So, Mr. Speaker, this is not just the Yukon Party posturing on this.

This is a legitimate case where an insufficient amount of time is being offered up for debate on public business of this size. We don’t believe that a \$1.8-billion budget can be thoughtfully or thoroughly scrutinized in the allocated time in this motion. We don’t believe that the entirety of the business that is put forward to us in this Sitting can be thoughtfully and thoroughly considered in 11 days. The combination of the throne speech, a \$1.8-billion budget, and legislation is obviously a unique amount of business. It’s a significant amount of business. That’s why we proposed a much longer Sitting that would be more in line with past practice with regard to main appropriation bills.

Now, I know that members have given examples of years past where supplementary budgets were introduced or changes to the *Income Tax Act* — or whatever it was — but that is not the case today. Today, we are dealing with a throne speech, a \$1.8-billion budget, and a piece of legislation, and 11 days, quite frankly, isn’t good enough.

Now, in discussing this, I know that, over the course of today, we’ve had a chance to review some of the discourse between the party leaders about this. I note that on May 3, I wrote a letter to both of the leaders of the two political parties asking for — and I’ll quote from myself: “In the spirit of collaboration and in order to fix this issue and ensure that committees include a proper and reflective balance of MLAs, the Yukon Party caucus is willing to sit down with members of your caucuses to discuss a path forward.” Of course,

Mr. Speaker, that offer of collaboration and that offer to sit down was met with silence. The only letter that I received in response from the Premier confirmed that the membership standing committees would be determined by the Members of the Legislative Assembly, as we did earlier today. Of course, I noted no willingness to take me up on my offer to sit down and collaborate.

Nor did the Leader of the Third Party. Her response to me came in the form of an e-mail, to which I won't speak at length, but she asked some questions about it. I, of course, replied. The end of my reply, though, I think is worth noting and that is that — and I quote myself on May 6: "We are genuinely interested in coming to a solution that is agreeable to all three parties as we believe Yukoners have sent the message that they would like us to work together collaboratively. I believe compromise is possible and I would be willing to meet at your earliest convenience." Again, that e-mail unfortunately went unresponded to.

So, now, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the length of this Sitting, we've had similar interactions, obviously, despite requests for better engagement through House Leaders, as is the normal practice when it comes to the setting of sitting days. Our offers and requests to be further engaged were denied. Obviously, this is a result of the confidence and supply agreement agreed to by the Liberal Party and the NDP. As a part of that agreement, this 11-day Sitting is what we've had foisted upon us.

So, for the reasons I have outlined, we disagree about the appropriate length of the Sitting. This is an inadequate amount of time to deal with this.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to propose an amendment.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Dixon: I move:

THAT Motion No. 4 be amended by deleting the word "11" and replacing it with the word "30".

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt North:

THAT Motion No. 4 be amended by deleting the word "11" and replacing it with the word "30".

Mr. Dixon: In speaking to this amendment — the reason why I have proposed 30 days is because, as we all know, the Standing Orders suggest that the Legislature should sit for 60 days a year. Typically, the Spring Sitting is a longer sitting, somewhere between 30 and 40 days, especially when considering a main appropriations bill.

Obviously, in normal circumstances, if there isn't able to be agreement among parties for the Sitting length, the default is to go to 30 days. That is what has pushed us to this number, why I proposed it as an amendment, and why we believe that this Sitting of the Legislature should sit for 30 days. I believe that 30 days is much more in keeping with past practice when it comes to the consideration of main appropriation bills. Typically, the main appropriation bills debated in the Spring Sitting last anywhere from 28 to 40 days. Obviously, as I

mentioned in my opening, the Legislature hasn't properly considered a main appropriation bill since the spring of 2019, and I think that it is an entirely appropriate thing for this Legislature to do to begin to dig into the main appropriation bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is clear that 11 days simply isn't enough and we look forward to voting on whether this Sitting should be much longer, and in the case of this amendment, I propose that it be 30 days.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: You know, just for — through you, Mr. Speaker — in speaking to the comments from the Leader of the Official Opposition — the Member for Lake Laberge, last session, also suggested that I don't run numbers and that I let that stuff go. I'm afraid that I won't be able to. It is just so in my nature to try to add things up and count things up — I'm sure much to the chagrin of my departments, when they see me convert their PDFs into spreadsheets and try to look things up.

I actually did the work of looking up the past sessions while I was sitting here in the Legislature after the Member for Lake Laberge spoke. I downloaded the data off of Hansard and then I ran it into my computer. Here is what I said the other day and I will say it again: The average length of Sitting for the spring session is 29.5 days — this, since the year 2000 — and the average length of Sitting for the fall session is 30 days. Okay, if I take out COVID — because COVID really was an anomaly; it was not normal, and if I take it out, then the average for the Spring Sitting is 30.5 days and the average for the Fall Sitting is 29 days. It is not — as the Leader of the Official Opposition just characterized it — between 30 and 40 days.

Sure, okay, it is between 30 and 40 days — it is 30.5 — but it's not to suggest that it's somewhere near 40 days.

The other thing that I want to comment on is that — and I really believe that there are two things that we have to keep in mind here. The first one is the democracy of an election. That election was held, and Yukoners voted in the people who are here in this Legislature. It wasn't a majority government; it was a minority government. The seats are balanced as eight for the Official Opposition, eight for us, as the Liberals, and three for the New Democrats. Our belief is that what that message was — exactly with what the Leader of the Official Opposition said in a comment recently and in his correspondence that he was talking about — that we should find ways to work together and to take decisions for Yukoners based on that.

I don't believe that will always mean that we agree. I fully understand, appreciate, and like that there are ways in which we disagree — but we have to find a way to do that respectfully, as always. I think that is, in effect, direction from the public.

So, it was not 100-percent yes on the budget that we had tabled, but it was more or less close to a yes, with some working together. We sought to work together. I believe that the Premier spoke to both leaders. I stand to be corrected, but that is my understanding. I think that one of the things — when the 11 days is discussed here now, the way that I would like to describe it to Yukoners is that 11 days takes us to May 31. The reason that's important is because we had in place the ability, through

a special warrant, to spend up until that time. If you go past that time, you have to create another special warrant.

We did that with an abundance of caution but, really, what I would rather do — and what I would debate here today — is that I would rather get the budget passed so that we can move on and come to the recovery that we're expecting here. We need that ability, as a territory, to move ahead on the path of recovery.

I heard the Member for Lake Laberge actually debate that when he first spoke — I'll have to check back through Hansard, Mr. Speaker — but he spoke either to the second reading of the budget or it was to the throne speech, and he talked about his concern that we would use a special warrant. Well, here's the opportunity — the 11 days gets us to a decision on this budget. The thing that we should note — and the Government House Leader mentioned it earlier — is that this is not a new budget. It's not something that was sprung on the members of this Legislature.

We effectively tabled this — very close to the same budget — in fact, it's \$6 million to the better, more or less, is my recollection — and I think that is just saying, "Here, it's the same budget that we tabled before with a few improvements, and now let's get going with it without a special warrant."

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

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. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

Ms. Tredger: Disagree.

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

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

Amendment to Motion No. 4 negated

Speaker: Is there any further debate on Motion No. 4?

Mr. Kent: I too am going to weigh in on the length of the Sitting — the motion that is before us today asking for an 11-day Sitting in this current Sitting. I spoke about it earlier today, but when I was informed at the first House Leaders' meeting that the Liberals and the NDP had come to an agreement on the length of the Sitting and that it would end on May 31, I have to tell you that I was incredibly shocked, surprised, and dismayed by the fact that the Government House Leader made that announcement at our first House Leaders' meeting.

It was extremely disappointing because, in past Sittings, in my role as Opposition House Leader, we had discussions on the length of Sittings, depending on the number of bills that would be introduced. Obviously, that would go into the Sitting as well — usually by day five, all of the bills have to be tabled and then, after that, discussions that normally would have started a little bit earlier would pick up in earnest. Sometimes we agreed on the length of the Sitting and sometimes we disagreed. If there's a disagreement, obviously the default under the Standing Orders is to go to 30 days. Sometimes the government will agree with one of the opposition parties and the amount of time is set that way. But again, there's an open dialogue and a discussion and we're not bringing forward amendments on the floor of the Legislature to try to discuss and set the number of days that are available for the Sitting.

Listening to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — and to be fair, he reached out to me over the weekend, after I made an off-mic comment during his comments last week about the number of days in the year 2000 — because he did go back to the turn of the century when he presented his data here — and he got back to me and mentioned that there were 23 days after the change in government that year.

I think that the most important thing — when we're talking about the year 2000 and the year 2021 — is that both of those years saw spring elections. All of the other years with the Special Sittings that happened after elections were in the fall. There was already a budget in place; there were perhaps some money bills, as mentioned — supplementary budgets of some sort. But again, just going back to 2000 — I did do a little bit of research, but I was also here; I was a member of the Assembly who was elected for the first time in 2000. There were eight days that the former McDonald government had at the start of that Sitting. They introduced their budget and then they called the election.

When you look to 2021, we spent five days in here before the Liberal government called a spring election. To note, as I mentioned earlier, those are the only two spring elections that have been held without a budget in place.

When you look at the Sitting in 2000 that happened under the new Duncan government, it was 23 days. It started in early June, and it went into July. It wasn't the most fun Sitting that I have ever experienced here — given the temperatures, the heat, and the evening Sittings and the other aspects. There was no guillotine clause in place — none of that had been enacted yet. But again, the Duncan government sat for 23 days and debated

what was largely an NDP budget. It was largely the budget adopted from the previous government, similar to what the Minister of EMR said here earlier.

So, when you look at that spring, there was the eight days of the NDP and 23 days of Liberal — so that was 31 days. Since then, there has been a 29-day Spring Sitting in 2006 and a 28-day Spring Sitting in 2016 and then, of course, last year's anomaly with the pandemic and the nine days that we sat. But, for the most part, all of them have been, as mentioned, 30 or above.

When talking about the Special Sittings during a fall election, I think that the government is comparing apples to oranges, because the only Spring Sitting without a proper budget in place was in the year 2000, and there were 31 days total. Now they're asking us to commit to 16 days.

When we adjourned prior to the election call — adjourned on that Thursday, the fifth day of the Spring Sitting — we had just concluded second reading on the budget and then picked up after the election with the throne speech — obviously that's a day; it's a truncated day, but it's a day nonetheless — then responses to the Speech from the Throne that concluded today after a break last week on Thursday. Then there was the budget speech and second reading speeches again by many members. Of course, there are new members in here as well who would have liked to respond to the budget and others who kept their responses relatively brief.

The fact that the government is trying to equate this Special Sitting to others that have happened in the fall when spending authority is already in place is — well, it's an alarming thing that they're doing in trying to let Yukoners know that this is the usual way of doing business. Obviously, the Member for Copperbelt North — the Leader of the Official Opposition — went through the comments made by the former Clerk of the Assembly, Dr. Floyd McCormick, so I won't repeat what Dr. McCormick said.

With last year's COVID pandemic, this year's early election call — spring election call — and the fact that it was done before the budget was passed — you have to go back to 2019 to go to the last year that the main estimates were actually scrutinized in a fulsome way in this Legislative Assembly. By the time we do it again, it is going to be 2022. So, three years, Mr. Speaker — three years without any scrutiny or oversight of spending authority by the government.

Again, I am not arguing about last year's nine-day Sitting; I know why we truncated it. There was a lot of fear and trepidation and other things that were happening in the Yukon, throughout Canada, and the world. But, again, we have an opportunity here to sit for a reasonable amount of time to allow an incumbent government to be scrutinized on what they say is the budget that they presented to Yukoners — largely the budget that they presented to Yukoners before they called the election in March.

Again, as I mentioned, normally these discussions would be held by House Leaders, but I am going to make an amendment to this motion.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Kent: I move:

THAT Motion No. 4 be amended by deleting the word "11" and replacing it with the word "20".

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt South:

THAT Motion No. 4 be amended by deleting the word "11" and replacing it with the word "20".

Mr. Kent: I'm going to be brief in my remarks. Obviously, normally these discussions on the length of the Sitting would take place at House Leaders', but we were not given that opportunity. The Government House Leader announced that it would be an 11-day Sitting and let us know that it was after discussions with the New Democratic Party. Those closed-door discussions are certainly not the way that I'm used to operating in this Legislature as the House Leader, and I have to say that I was very disappointed.

We're hoping that the government will consider 20 days, which would align more closely to what occurred in 2000 with the 31 days total that were sat the last time that we had a spring election in the Yukon.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't think that this amendment is substantially different from the last one. I think that we've had extensive debate with respect to the matter. I am happy to either speak briefly on the actual motion — but I guess it's important to make sure that I correct the record here.

Here in this Legislative Assembly is where the sitting days are determined. I expressed the information to the House Leader for the Yukon Party about what motion I would be bringing forward and informed him of that. We had an additional discussion today about the length of the Sitting, very briefly.

I am not going to disclose in this House what the Yukon Party was talking about with respect to the length of the Sitting today because I have respect for the House Leaders' meeting; I have respect for the opportunity for us to have open discussions at that place —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order. The member has the floor.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much.

I am disappointed, frankly, that the member opposite has characterized our conversation about the length of the Sitting as somehow it being decided. What I expressed was the event that I would be introducing a motion, that the length of the Sitting was going to be introduced to the Legislative Assembly for the purpose of determining what that is.

I also think that it is important to correct the member opposite in relation to — I believe I heard him correctly when he said that there would be no opportunity to scrutinize this budget if this Sitting was 11 days. I can indicate that we have spent approximately three hours debating motions here today — all time that could be determined and used to scrutinize the budget. Of course, the "no scrutiny" makes the impression that

nobody is going to do their job here for the next however many days that we are here in the Legislative Assembly, and I certainly hope that this is not what is being said. We won't be supporting the amendment.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

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. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

Ms. Tredger: Disagree.

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

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

Amendment to Motion No. 4 negated

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

Mr. Cathers: While this afternoon has not been overly surprising, it has been disappointing that we have seen the government, along with their NDP partners, vote to shut down the constructive amendments that we proposed. I would note that my colleagues, the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Official Opposition House Leader, proposed a longer Sitting earlier in debate on this motion. This motion itself does not need to be brought in.

I would quote, as well, the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Dr. Floyd McCormick, in his capacity as a private citizen now — who, in weighing in — as he has chosen to do on several occasions in his area of expertise but as a private citizen — noted today on social media — and I quote: “The government should not proceed with Motion No. 4. Instead, the Assembly should consider the main appropriation bill and the

few other measures on the Order Paper without prospect of an arbitrary guillotine-induced ending.”

So, it is not just the Yukon Party Official Opposition saying that this is a problem. This motion does not need to be brought forward. It invokes an end to the Sitting. It shuts down debate. It will allow millions of dollars — probably tens or hundreds of millions of dollars — in departments not to have scrutiny in this Assembly.

What I want to also point to is that there is no good reason for this Sitting to be short. We have heard excuses from the government. We have heard them attempting to compare Fall Sittings, which don't deal with a budget of the same size, which we know is comparing apples and oranges — but coming back to the simple, fundamental point that there is no good reason why this Sitting should be shorter than normal.

This government has been returned. They only have one new minister. We have the largest budget in history. We're in a pandemic, and as we have stated consistently, in a pandemic with unprecedented restrictions and unprecedented spending, with unprecedented rules affecting people's lives should come increased democratic oversight and debate in the Legislative Assembly, not less.

Again, the one simple question that defines the question we're voting on here today — all of the questions — comes down to this: There is no good reason why this Sitting should be shorter than normal. Instead, we have seen the Liberals and the NDP cut a backroom deal that would slash this Sitting down to 11 days, which is effectively 10 days, because the throne speech took up one day — there was no Question Period and no debate.

I would have to remind members that, although we are tied with the Liberals at eight seats apiece, the Yukon Party won the popular vote. What they have done, through their backroom deal, is deprive the party that won the popular vote of the chance to even ask questions in this Legislative Assembly — slashing both Question Period and debate in the Assembly to one-third of what is normal, with two-thirds of that simply being lost.

Again, the fundamental point is that there is no good reason this Sitting needs to be shorter. There is no good reason, during a pandemic or with the largest budget in Yukon history, to have shorter debate than normal — no good reason, just excuses.

If members vote against democratic oversight, that fact stands for itself. They can attempt to spin it, they can attempt to provide excuses, but voting to shorten democratic debate is an action that stands for itself.

Spring budget debate is typically the longest here in the Legislative Assembly — typically 30 to 40 days. Even one of the government ministers, in attempting to spin excuses, acknowledged that Spring Sittings typically were around the 30-day mark according to the numbers that he was pulling from selected Sittings. Here we would have a situation of it being a third of that if this motion passes unamended.

So, I'm going to give the other members of this Assembly who are not part of the Yukon Party one final chance to accept a constructive amendment to this motion, and that is to delete the application of the guillotine clause so that if there has not

been debate on all departments, they will not simply be able to ram through hundreds of millions of dollars, potentially, without any debate on those departments. If indeed there is enough time for sufficient questions to be answered to satisfy members — all of whom were duly elected by people across the territory — then, of course, the Sitting could wrap up on schedule. Of course, the other option is that it could simply go longer.

So, again, just before I introduce the amendment, I have to again remind members that excuses are one thing, but the question comes down to the fact that there is no good reason for a shorter Sitting. There is no good reason to suspend debate on the largest budget in Yukon history through the premature use of the guillotine clause after only, really, 10 days in the Assembly, some of which were taken up by matters other than the budget.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Cathers: Accordingly, I move:

THAT Motion No. 4 be amended by deleting the phrase “; and THAT the provisions of Standing Order 76 shall apply on the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for the 2021 Special Sitting.” and inserting the word “and” after the phrase “11 sitting days”.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member Lake Laberge:

THAT Motion No. 4 be amended by deleting the phrase “; and THAT the provisions of Standing Order 76 shall apply on the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for the 2021 Special Sitting.” and inserting the word “and” after the phrase “11 sitting days”.

Mr. Cathers: I would point out that having a Sitting this short in the spring and pushing through this motion — which, as I mentioned, not just the Yukon Party but also the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Dr. Floyd McCormick, expressed his view: “The government should not proceed with Motion No. 4. Instead, the Assembly should consider the main appropriation bill and the few other measures on the Order Paper without the prospect of an arbitrary, guillotine-induced ending.”

Again, it really does beg the question: Why is the government afraid of facing the oversight of this Legislative Assembly? Mr. Speaker, there is no good reason for the Sitting to be so short. To push through Motion No. 4 in its current version would be an unprecedented step by Yukon government to ram through its agenda with a short Spring Sitting.

Members will have to choose for themselves how they want history to remember them. If you vote against democratic oversight and for invoking closure of debate without proper oversight, that fact stands for itself — choose wisely.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

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. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

Ms. Tredger: Disagree.

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

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

Amendment to Motion No. 4 negated

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

Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

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

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

Motion No. 4 agreed to

Speaker: Pursuant to the Order of the House, I declare that the current Sitting shall be a maximum of 11 sitting days with the 11th sitting day being Monday, May 31, 2021.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 200: *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21 — Second Reading*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 200, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm pleased to rise and begin debate on the *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*. Overall, Mr. Speaker, the *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21* forecasts an increase of \$33.4 million in gross operation and maintenance and capital spending. This is made up of \$24.9 million in operation and maintenance and also \$8.5 million in capital. This is offset by an increase of \$28.7 million in operation and maintenance recoveries and also \$9.6 million in capital recoveries.

Revenues are forecast to increase by \$8.5 million due to an increase in own-source tax revenue from continued economic growth. These changes are forecast to result in a revised deficit of \$7 million, which reflects an improvement in the government's fiscal picture from the first supplementary estimates.

This also reflects a slight increase of \$300,000 over the supplementary estimates that we tabled in March, which include \$125,000 to cover the cost of the territorial election and \$205,000 for additional costs related to pension plan expenses.

This overall change from last year's main estimates is largely the result of Yukon's positive collaboration with Canada and our ability to access federal funds to support Yukon and Yukoners through the pandemic.

The year-end debt is now forecast to be \$88.5 million. The year-end net debt is forecast to be \$88.5 million, which also reflects the adjustment for the 2019-20 Public Accounts based upon actual performance.

Overall, these changes show a government responding to the needs of Yukoners as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, directing supports where necessary and working with our federal counterparts to access recoveries whenever possible.

I will get into some of these details. Overall, we are seeing an increase of \$24.9 million in O&M expenditures as part of the second supplementary estimates. While this amount is not negligible, it is offset by an even larger number of recoveries. While the recoveries are indicative of the level of federal support that we received to deal with this crisis, the numbers

also demonstrate that the Yukon government took action when it saw the need to do so.

Some of the costs included in the appropriation bill introduced last October were for measures that did not have federal support at that time. Mr. Speaker, this government did not wait for federal funds to be guaranteed before it put the work in for Yukoners. We did, however, leverage those positive relationships afterwards to secure support funding — which are included in this bill.

These expenditures are also critical at a time when so many Yukoners need an extra bit of support. While a notable share of these expenses are for COVID-19 supports and related expenses, there are other costs as well. COVID-19 O&M expenses can largely be broken down into three categories, and that includes \$8 million in economic relief and recovery, \$6 million for health care and public health response, and also \$5 million in emergency management expenses.

Under education supports, there's also a \$1.9-million decrease. This represents a deferral under the safe return to school funding for classes in April, May, and June of last year to 2021-22. This funding is also 100-percent recoverable from Canada.

I am happy to provide further information about each of these. Economic relief and recovery spending represents the supports that Yukoners have come to expect during the pandemic. This has enabled businesses to stay open and has allowed employees to receive paid time off if they need to self-isolate, and it has also allowed us to maintain critical supports for our tourism and arts sectors.

\$3.9 million went toward the regional relief and recovery fund under this category. This program provides supports to medium- and small-sized northern businesses impacted by economic disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This program is also 100-percent recoverable from Canada. Within the Department of Education, \$3 million has been provided to enhance supports under the workforce development agreement.

In order to keep Yukoners safe, mandatory self-isolation requirements have restricted Canadians and international visitors. This public health measure has resulted in a significantly reduced 2020 tourism season, unfortunately. The government is committed to supporting our tourism and culture sector throughout the pandemic. In the first supplementary estimates, the Department of Tourism and Culture was approved for \$7.8 million, the majority of which was for economic relief supports for the industry.

In these second supplementary estimates, we are reflecting the allocation of some of the funds approved in the first supplementary estimates, which includes \$2.7 million for the tourism accommodation sector, \$1 million for the tourism non-accommodation sector, which includes visitor-dependent food and beverage businesses, and \$300,000 for tourism and cultural non-profit organizations.

We are also including additional supports for this sector. These funds are coming from lower spending in other areas of the department. There is \$450,000 for implementation of initiatives in the tourism relief and recovery plan and \$350,000

to enhance cultural funding, such as the Advanced Artist Award and “On Yukon Time” initiatives.

Under the health care and public health response segment of COVID-19 spending, I mentioned the \$6 million in additional O&M spending. Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw attention to the success of “this is our shot”, the largest vaccination campaign in Yukon’s history.

Since vaccines began, tens of thousands of Yukoners have been vaccinated against COVID-19, with the aim of vaccinating 75 percent of the territory’s eligible population. As we heard today in the ministerial statement, we’ve achieved that for the first dose and we’re on a clear sight toward getting that for both doses.

Funding appropriate under Health and Social Services will primarily be directed toward the cost of this vaccination program and other associated costs, including staffing for mobile teams and the mass vaccination clinic in Whitehorse as well.

Resources will also go toward transportation and accommodations in the communities as well as technical supports.

Lastly, under COVID-19 O&M spending are costs associated with emergency management. This includes costs to respond to immediate needs during the pandemic. This work includes things like installing space dividers in Yukon government work spaces, procuring PPE equipment, maintaining border controls and highway messaging boards, as well as maintaining the COVID call centre. \$5 million in O&M spending is included as part of this category, as additional spending was required across various departments.

Mr. Speaker, there are also non-COVID O&M increases as part of the supplementary estimates and they total \$7.8 million. The largest individual expenses are in Health and Social Services — \$2 million was directed toward social assistance, with \$1.5 million of that being in Whitehorse and \$500,000 in the other communities. Also under Health and Social Services was \$1.1 million for extended family care agreements.

The Executive Council Office also saw \$1.08 million directed toward capacity funding for the implementation of final and self-government agreements and for consultations and negotiations for Yukon First Nations and transboundary indigenous groups.

Highways and Public Works made up the bulk of the additional non-COVID funding at \$4.24 million. This includes: \$1.1 million for electricity and fuel costs at Yukon government workplaces and buildings as a result of rate increases and higher demand; \$540,000 for emergency road washout repairs on our highways; \$400,000 for the Dawson City ice bridge construction; \$861,000 in winter snow removal and plowing; and \$325,000 for additional staff at the Procurement Support Centre.

Lastly, as I mentioned, \$125,000 of this supplementary estimate went toward funding the territorial election in April and also \$205,000 went toward additional pension plan expenses.

The remaining O&M is split between various projects including more initial actions as part of the *Our Clean Future*

and additional care and maintenance work at mine sites, particularly at Wolverine.

I will talk a bit about O&M recoveries. While these costs are notable, they do come with significant federal recoveries as well. Members may notice that, despite this increase in spending, Yukon’s deficit has been reduced in this supplementary estimate by \$24.6 million. This is partly the result of an increase in projected revenues but more so a result of our positive relationship with Canada and maximizing cost recoveries wherever possible.

Some of these recoveries are being applied to expenditures that were included in the first supplementary estimates. At the time, we knew that we had to ensure that departments could respond to the pandemic, but we had yet to finalize the next phase of the northern support agreement with the federal government. We now have certainty on that funding. As part of the supplementary estimates, Yukon will see an additional \$28.7 million in total O&M recoveries, compared to its \$24.9 million O&M expenses.

The largest recoveries are in Health and Social Services at \$12.2 million, followed by \$4.6 million in Community Services, \$3.9 million in Economic Development, and \$2.6 million in Energy, Mines and Resources. These recoveries consist of \$21.8 million for COVID-related expenses and \$6.9 million for non-COVID items.

Moving to capital, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon government saw an increase of \$8.5 million in gross spending, as I mentioned earlier. Contrary to the O&M spending, these capital expenses were largely incurred for non-COVID projects. The largest capital expense occurred within the Yukon Development Corporation. \$11.6 million is included in these supplementary estimates to cover progress on electrical capacity projects, such as the Mayo-to-McQuesten transmission line. This expense is 100-percent recoverable, with 75 percent of recoveries coming from Canada and with 25 percent from Yukon Energy Corporation making up the remainder.

Additional capital expenses include \$1.1 million under Yukon Housing Corporation’s community partnering and lending to cover additional costs on the Normandy Manor project and \$500,000 for additional costs to cover more work than forecasted on Whitehorse’s mixed-use housing project. The former is 100-percent recoverable.

Throughout the year, some projects were accelerated, while some other projects experienced delays. This supplementary estimate reflects a \$10-million increase in highways and other transportation projects and a \$10-million decrease in building development projects that are being deferred to the next year when further progress will be made.

The last noteworthy capital expenditure was for \$1 million for repair and maintenance work on equipment at the Whitehorse hospital.

There are also minor changes in revenue in this supplementary estimate. We are forecasting revenues to increase by \$8.5 million. This is driven primarily by \$11.8 million in additional revenues coming from personal and

corporate income tax and a \$2.5-million decrease in investment income related to lower interest rates.

Income tax revenue modelling is more volatile as a result of COVID-19. These revisions from the 2020-21 first supplementary estimates result from higher than expected positive impacts of economic and financial supports at the territorial and federal levels and from a delay in the final 2019 income tax data, which resulted from income tax deferral provisions.

Mr. Speaker, overall, these supplementary estimates show a Yukon government doing what it takes to support Yukoners while also leveraging positive relationships with other levels of government to maximize value for our dollar. We positioned the territory well so that we can continue to benefit from the strong economic foundation that we had prior to the pandemic. This will also allow economic growth to continue to trend positively in the year ahead, and we are ensuring that this territory navigates this pandemic with as little harm as possible, both to Yukoners themselves and to our economy.

We will continue to do what's right to make sure that we support industry, and also individuals, until we can all resume normal life.

I would like to once again thank every Yukoner and public servant for the contributions to these many efforts. I want to thank mayors and councils, and chiefs and councils, for the conversations that we've been having over the last 14 months in dealing with the pandemic that we're in. If we didn't have the financial wherewithal coming into this pandemic, I shudder to think where we would be.

Also, if we didn't recreate the conduits to communication through the Yukon Forum, helping to make sure that we — in tandem with all leadership in Yukon — dispel some of the initial onslaught of misinformation that was happening nationally, internationally, and locally — having that leadership in all communities, helping us —

Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on Bill No. 200 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

**Written notice was given of the following motions
May 17, 2021:**

Motion No. 39

Re: liquor licence discount (Dixon)

Motion No. 40

Re: Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments review of the *Child Care Act* (Dixon)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 5

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, May 18, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin

DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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, May 18, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motion has not been placed on the Notice Paper, as it is not in order: Motion No. 29, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, which took place yesterday. This is a day to promote the rights and wellness of LGBTQ2S+ communities. The date, May 17, was chosen as it commemorates the removal of homosexuality from the World Health Organization's international classification of diseases in 1990.

We are able to speak out against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia because of the many years of advocacy work by those on the front lines. Because of this work, LGBTQ2S+ people's identities have been decriminalized. They now have access to legal services, marriage, and are protected against discrimination and hate in Canada; however, there is still a great deal of work to be done at all levels.

Around the world, prejudice and discrimination result in inequity for LGBTQ2S+ people. While progress is being made in Canada toward a more accepting society for people of all identities, our work is far from done. In Canada, the LGBTQ2S+ community still experiences barriers in accessing health care, education, recreation, public facilities, and even travel because of their identity.

Despite these uncomfortable realities, we cannot underestimate the resilience and power of LGBTQ2S+ people. In Yukon, we have seen first-hand what a dedicated group of advocates can accomplish. We became the fourth jurisdiction in Canada to ban conversion therapy for minors after Whitehorse's high school students brought forward their vision for a future that provides safety for not only themselves but for the generations to come.

We have also seen organizations in our community come together to provide supports and resources to the LGBTQ2S+

community. All Genders Yukon Society has been providing funding and access to mental health services for trans, two-spirit, and non-binary Yukoners, as well as their network of loved ones. This work is vital in protecting the mental wellness and strengthening the bonds between our community members.

The work of Queer Yukon Society has been a foundational support for the LGBTQ2S+ community in Yukon. Since 2013, they have organized and promoted community resources and events like the Pride Parade. Most recently, Queer Yukon, along with many partners including the Government of Yukon, established the Pride Centre. Their work brings Yukoners together and honours and celebrates inclusivity and diversity.

Progress is being made here in Yukon due, in large part, to these community organizations. They hold us to account and remind us that we must do better. It has been my honour and pleasure to work closely with many of these organizations during the development of the LGBTQ2S+ action plan.

In closing, today and every day, I challenge all members and all Yukoners to stand up against homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. I challenge you to continue learning more about LGBTQ2S+ issues, find new ways to be an ally in all spaces in which you can add your voice.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Monday, May 17 as the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia — also known as a worldwide celebration of sexual and gender diversities.

We stand today to recommit to denouncing prejudice and discrimination against those based on gender or sexual preference. We commit to stand up for the rights, equality, and the dignity of all people and to ending discrimination and violence against LGBTQ2S+ individuals within our community.

I, Mr. Speaker, appreciate every step taken to help every person be their true and authentic self. I believe that every individual in our community has the right to feel safe and to live their lives without discrimination and without fear. I will continue to be an ally of this community. I'm the proud father of a beautiful, smart, creative, and wonderful daughter. My daughter also happens to be transgender. I would love nothing more than to see her continue to thrive in our community and to live her life free from discrimination. This is all that a parent wants for their children.

I visited the Rainbow Room at Porter Creek Secondary School a couple of years ago and was so happy to see that there is a safe and welcoming space where students can be themselves and lean on one another. I would also love to see all schools model after PCSS and create such a space for students where peers and staff can come together and talk, laugh, learn, and be themselves. It's important for our kids to know that they are welcome and that they are not alone. It is also important that our schools strive to follow policies around sexual orientation and gender identity and anti-bullying. I look forward to seeing

more good stories coming out of the Yukon schools and our Yukon communities.

Yesterday we celebrated sexual and gender diversity around the world, and I believe that the Yukon has made great strides toward equality for all. I am proud of the advocacy and the work being done throughout the territory today.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia. I thought a lot about what to say on this topic — what the significance is of a day like today. I was talking about it with a friend, and she said, “It’s a day when people have to pick a side.” That really resonated with me.

It is a day when people have to get clear about their values, about which side they are on — and that matters. There has been an incredible amount of progress made, but it can slip away at any time unless we are willing to fight for it, unless we have allies willing to stand with us.

There is also, of course, a great deal of work to be done. There are kids out there and there are adults out there who need their leaders to stand up and say, “We’re on your side.” I have spoken before about the barriers facing members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community — barriers that range from personal attacks to subtle aggression to systemic disadvantages.

Today, I want to particularly thank the many people who are working to dismantle those barriers. There is an overwhelming amount of work to be done, but I have seen firsthand the people who chip away at it each and every day — at board meetings, volunteering at events, or by being the chosen family and community for each other. I see us fill in the cracks left by our society. I see us taking care of each other. Thank you all for doing that; thank you for doing that every day of the year.

Applause

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy that you are allowing me to take a moment to introduce a special guest and a person who has really advanced the work of the LGBTQ2S+ community in Yukon — Joe Wickenhauser, who works with Queer Yukon and who has been responsible for a lot of really great work.

Welcome to the House today. Thank you for coming.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International Museum Day

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to International Museum Day. Founded in 1977, International Museum Day offers a chance to highlight the important role that museums and cultural centres play in safeguarding and interpreting the world’s cultural and national heritage.

This year’s International Museum Day theme is: “The Future of Museums: Recover and Reimagine”. The theme speaks to the upheaval of the previous year and the challenges that lay ahead as we look toward recovery. It invites museums, their staff, and the communities that they serve to share new

practices, business models, and innovative solutions for the social, economic, and environmental challenges we currently face and those yet to come.

The effects of the pandemic on our cultural institutions are undeniable but have also led to the innovative programming and opportunities for organizational development.

Yukon’s museums, interpretive centres, and First Nation cultural centres have responded to this COVID-19 moment not with submission, but with optimizing it to work on the development of new programming across digital platforms to improve reach and access and to address collections’ care needs.

This summer, we are partnering with the museums and cultural centres on a digital version of the popular Yukon gold explorers passport program aimed at encouraging Yukoners to visit heritage centre sites and cultural facilities. Yukoners are justifiably proud of the unique identity represented through our history: our First Nations’ culture and heritage, the stories and oral traditions that we share with the world, the arts and creative activities that we pursue, the internationally significant artifacts and specimens, and the built heritage and sacred places that we protect and preserve for future generations.

We are proud to recognize this international event that will share our vibrant culture and heritage with museum professionals from around the world. The International Museum Day — we commend Yukon’s museums and cultural centres for adapting to new ways of engaging the public and transmitting their knowledge and passion for Yukon’s distinct cultures and heritage. Acting as both witnesses and protectors of our collective past, the impact that these institutions bring to bear on cultural enrichment and exchange cannot be understated.

I ask the members of the House to join me in extending sincere gratitude to those who operate museums and cultural centres for their devotion, skill, and passion and ensuring that our culture and heritage are protected, preserved, and interpreted for the enjoyment of all Yukoners for today and tomorrow. I invite all Yukoners to seek out and participate in the event or program this summer at a museum or cultural centre to experience our heritage. We are proud to continue our support for these invaluable Yukon institutions and look forward to the meaningful ways in which they will continue to protect our past, interpret our present, and inform our future.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to International Museum Day. The theme of 2021 is: “The Future of Museums: Recover and Reimagine”. That says it all.

When the disease affecting the world began, all outings were cancelled and museums closed.

Museums rely on visitors who pay a fee to attend and see the displays and art. This business model has been lost for more than a year, and many still remain closed.

Museum Day was set up in 1977 to have a day to honour and draw attention to the diversity and importance of culture and science that is shared in these facilities. It is also to allow

the curators and museum workers an opportunity to celebrate their vocation, to share stimulating, educational, and interactive opportunities for guests.

When I was a bit younger, when I heard the word “museum”, I thought of a collection of old stuff from decades past — of course, way before I was born. Now, a lot of what I grew up with using is now in museums — wow.

The majority of people, when travelling, have taken time to visit a museum or some collection of interest. Several years ago, we were in Gander, Newfoundland, and we visited the North Atlantic Aviation Museum. The focus was the link that Canada had during World War II and for transatlantic flights. The main feature is the magic found between two countries — US and Canada — during 9/11 when 38 airliners were stranded in Gander and how the locals stepped up to welcome and care for close to 7,000 guests who had come from away.

We also found a private car collection museum done up with old memorabilia in relation to a particular car vintage, like a '57 Chevy with a jukebox and a soda fountain display.

There has been a rebound of sorts for museums within the virtual world by hosting virtual discussions, games, trivia, as well as community challenges. Everything is on the table to spark renewed interest.

Our national museums and art galleries in Ottawa are amazing.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg is absolutely a must. To traverse the history of humans and how rights were abused and marginalized from the 1600s to the present day — very sad, very traumatic, and very disturbing at times, but very necessary to continue the conversation about humans and how our rights can be infringed upon.

The Royal BC Museum in Victoria is a favorite for me with a history of the west coast, the First Nations, and there are even ties to the Yukon in some of the displays.

Each facility is amazing and so worth every minute that you spend there — to see, hear, feel, and interact. In the Yukon, there are the cultural centres such as the George Johnston Museum in Teslin, the historic sites like Fort Selkirk on the Yukon River, the *SS Klondike* in Whitehorse, the Yukon Transportation Museum, the Keno City Mining Museum — and the list goes on.

We have such magnificent facilities, and if you have not gone to visit yet, this is your chance. Take some family time to learn about our history and the work involved in the displays and research. You will be pleasantly surprised.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate history, heritage, and culture as we mark today as International Museum Day. Museums, heritage, and interpretative centres are important connections to our past. Yukon's rich history is reflected in its numerous museums and heritage centres. These special spaces are sprinkled across the Yukon, sharing our stories with visitors and locals alike. They give us space to learn, gather, and celebrate our history.

Yukon's museums and cultural centres allow and encourage a cultural exchange. They help us to learn more

about ourselves and those around us by building a mutual understanding of where we have come from. Yukon's northernmost museum is perched on the bank of the Porcupine River — the John Tizya Centre. Not only does this building hold artifacts and stories of the Vuntut Gwitchin, this space has become a sacred hub of language revitalization.

I hold my hands up to Brandon Kyikavichik and the passion he carries as he immerses himself in learning, understanding, documenting, and protecting the Gwich'in language, our stories, and family history. Brandon is a living encyclopedia for us in our community. His ability to recite stories and our language so passionately enables us to stay connected to our history. With the incredible support of our respected elders — Marion Schafer, Irwin Linklater, Jane Montgomery, Mary Jane Moses, and the late Joel Peter — Brandon has dedicated himself to the preservation of our language. His journey hasn't been an easy one, but long after we are all gone, our language will still exist because of the love that Brandon has shown our ancestors, and this is worth celebrating.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling the *Report on Subsistence, Travel & Accommodations of Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly 2020-2021*, dated May 2021.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling the 2020 annual report for the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

Mr. Istchenko: I have a document for tabling and an attached letter to the Minister of Community Services with respect to Yukon government's decision to close the Silver City transfer station and impose fees at the Destruction Bay solid-waste facility.

Mr. Dixon: I have for tabling a few letters: The first is dated May 3 from me to the leaders of the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party regarding the Yukon Party's exclusion from discussions about the committee structure for the Legislature; a May 10 response from the Premier; and a response, as well, from the Leader of the Third Party. I referenced these yesterday, so I thought that I should table them today.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the community of Ross River to immediately begin the process of building a new school.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to work with the communities of Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay, Haines Junction, Canyon Creek, Champagne, Mendenhall, and Takhini to improve the current standard of highway vegetation control, as requested by those communities, in order to address safety concerns and improve visibility.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to take action to ensure that milled highways are resurfaced, including ensuring that contracts are issued early enough in the year to allow resurfacing to be done before the end of the construction season.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to initiate consultations with the St. Elias Seniors Society, the Village of Haines Junction, and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations on the construction of phase 2 of seniors housing in Haines Junction.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with other Canadian jurisdictions to determine what proof of vaccinations will be accepted for visitors entering Yukon starting May 25, 2021.

Speaker: Are there any statements by ministers?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon highway border enforcement

Mr. Cathers: Yesterday, the Minister of Health and Social Services was asked by media how her government intends to verify whether people entering the territory are vaccinated or not. In response, she said, “You will also be asked to sign a waiver to access your information.”

Has the government consulted the Privacy Commissioner on whether or not gaining access to people’s health records for the purpose of entering the Yukon is compliant with the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act*?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. This is an extremely live issue with respect to verifying individuals’ vaccinations records. Community Services, the chief medical officer of health’s office, Health and Social Services, and the Department of Justice are working

diligently to determine what the process will be and what provisions of our Yukon laws — more than just the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act* — will be determinative of what that process will be.

I appreciate the question. Certainly, it is, as I have said, a live issue. It is something that is being worked on immediately so that Yukoners will have the benefit of proceeding pursuant to the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health — and ultimately the decision of government — about going forward to help alleviate some of the issues with respect to those individuals who are fully vaccinated for the purposes of alleviating the requirement for self-isolation upon return to the Yukon if they have left that location.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, this is concerning Yukoners because the government has announced changes, but they don’t know if they can actually legally implement those changes. As you know, the Yukon’s southern border crossing is currently staffed by private contractors. Now the Liberal government is talking about having a private contractor demand that Yukoners and other Canadians entering the territory provide their private health information.

Has the minister done a legal analysis of whether or not this is actually allowed under Yukon law, and, if so, will she agree to release publicly the legal and privacy analysis that she has conducted on this measure that actually indicates that the government can lawfully do what they have announced?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, I appreciate the question. This is a question that is top of mind for Yukoners. As I have indicated in the answer to the first question, this work is ongoing; it is being done as we speak. It has been done steadily since these matters have been contemplated and more intensely in the last number of weeks when the chief medical officer of health made recommendations that, in fact, some of these self-isolation requirements could in fact be relaxed if an individual was fully vaccinated.

I want to take the opportunity to remind Yukoners that “fully vaccinated” means both doses — in the territory — of the Moderna vaccine, as well as two additional weeks past your last dose of vaccine. It is very important for Yukoners to know that this is “fully vaccinated” — that the current recommendations made by the chief medical officer of health do, in fact, deal with individuals who are fully vaccinated, and that the opportunity for them to return to the Yukon without the requirement to self-isolate is, in fact, a great step forward. Yukon is leading this particular initiative and the rest of Canada is watching.

Mr. Cathers: I must point out that this is timely as May 25, when the rules change, is fast approaching. We don’t even know if the government can legally do what they have said they will do. This is unfortunately becoming a pattern with this government. Just like we saw with the rent caps, there is no public consultation and, when pressed, ministers can’t explain the details of their own plan.

Mr. Speaker, if someone enters the territory through the southern border, are they required to wait at the border until this private contractor can verify through their private health records whether or not they were vaccinated?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Throughout the pandemic, we have worked with the chief medical officer of health, of course, as a partner, as well as partner governments throughout the territory — First Nation governments, individual community chiefs and councils, individual community governments, mayors and councils, as well as our partners across the territory and across Canada with respect to chief medical officers of health and ministers of health, ministers of justice, ministers of community services and their responsibilities, because this is an issue that Canada has never dealt with before.

With respect to lifting some of the restrictions, if fully vaccinated Yukoners want to leave the territory and return, the opportunity for them to do so, without being required to self isolate for 14 days, is, in fact, a positive step forward. I'm not sure what the member opposite is suggesting. We, of course, will need to verify that Yukoners and those trying to enter the Yukon Territory have been fully vaccinated. The process for doing so will be a declaration for them to provide the information necessary.

We look forward to this change on behalf of Yukoners and the opportunity for them to proceed in a way that has not been allowed in the last 15 months.

Question re: Secure medical unit

Ms. Van Bibber: The construction of a secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital is badly needed. Staff at the hospital have been flagging safety concerns to the Liberal government for at least two years. Unfortunately, the Liberals have significantly delayed the construction of this project over the years. On March 8, the former Minister of Highways and Public Works said that construction would start this year.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us if this is still on track and when construction will start?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. The secure medical unit is an important element at the Yukon hospital. I appreciate that the question has been brought up. As far as the information that I have — not having been fully briefed on each and every file in Health and Social Services — my understanding is that the planning and construction will continue this year. I am sure that the other part was when it would be completed. I do not have that date with me, but the secure medical unit remains a priority for the Department of Health and Social Services and for Highways and Public Works. As a result, the project is proceeding this year.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Liberals have delayed construction of the secure medical unit for years, and this has put patients and staff at risk. In his 2019 budget speech, the Premier stated — and I quote: “This year’s Budget also provides \$1 million for a larger secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital...” But on November 3, 2020, the former Minister of Health and Social Services admitted that the Liberals never spent any of that funding.

Now we know that there is \$5.7 million for it in this year’s budget. Can the minister confirm if all of the necessary planning work in consultation with the Yukon Hospital Corporation has been completed to allow construction to begin immediately?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, in 2019-20, funding was provided to the Yukon Hospital Corporation for planning and design of the secure medical unit. The Hospital Corporation provided the department with a business case for a review back in 2019. In 2020-21, we worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to plan for a new secure medical unit and further define funding requirements. We also worked closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and other partners, including psychiatrists, to ensure that current psychiatric services at Whitehorse General Hospital are safe and effective. We are working with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and our resident psychiatrist to improve existing psychiatric services at the Whitehorse General Hospital. This group will continue to make recommendations on a high-level action plan to improve the current secure medical unit as the new secure medical unit is being built this year.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, finally, when will the new secure medical unit be complete and in operation? We would like a timeline.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, I appreciate the question. The new secure medical unit is envisioned to improve the physical space leading to better safety and outcomes for patients, staff, and physicians to enhance programming to better support patients and to improve recognition and respect for First Nation needs and cultures. This is, of course, the ultimate goal in providing service through the secure medical unit when needed at Whitehorse General Hospital. The proposed model of care for the new secure medical unit will include considerations of physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health — a full opportunity to do so.

The work has been ongoing, as I have outlined in the answers to previous questions, with respect to the opportunity to have the secure medical unit completed at Whitehorse General Hospital, an improvement that all Yukoners will welcome should they or their loved ones require the services of such a unit.

Question re: Early learning and childcare program

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, this government announced and implemented an early learning and childcare funding program for families with preschool-aged children. This is great news for those families already receiving daycare services through a licensed provider. Unfortunately, too many families are not able to secure daycare due to lack of available spaces. This, of course, has been compounded by the pandemic.

Daycares in Dawson City and in Old Crow have long wait times — in some cases, for over a year. What is this government doing to support families who are stuck on a wait-list or are unable to access affordable daycare now?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, our government absolutely believes that all children should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning opportunities. We recognize that capacity is a concern, and thank you very much for the question. Work is ongoing to provide more integrated, collaborative programs and services to better meet the needs of Yukon families.

We have made an historic investment, as was pointed out in the preamble for the question, in terms of our universal childcare program that is making childcare more affordable and providing much-needed resources for Yukon families.

As of March 31, 2021, in Whitehorse, there are 1,540 full-time licensed spaces, of which 1,253 were occupied. As of May 12, 2021, the Watson Lake childcare centre is licenced for 45 children. It currently has 30 children enroled, no wait-list, and capacity to add about 15 more children.

When we get into other communities such as Dawson, as of May 12, the Little Blue Daycare had a wait-list. They currently have 20 spots with 36 children on a wait-list. Tr'inke Zho Daycare has 45 enroled with —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. White: Although I thank the minister for those lists, what I was looking for were solutions.

So, not only are there long wait-lists at many daycares throughout the Yukon, but some communities are without any licensed daycares at all. Ross River and Pelly Crossing are two such communities. Having no licensed daycare leaves families with very few options. Some will pay for unlicensed daycare, and others will be forced to remain home even though they want to go back to the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, what is this government doing to support families and communities where no licensed daycare is available?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I was going into the spots that are available now in Yukon and the work that is yet to be done, we absolutely recognize that there is a lack of spaces for early learning childcare. We are committed to, with our overall plan around universal childcare, work to advance additional spaces and licensed facilities.

Since April 1, 2021, one new childcare centre has opened up — in Whitehorse, mind you. I know that you are asking specifically about the communities, and it's going to take some time working with all of our partners to ensure that we are working to provide that capacity in the community.

Three more centres have been licensed to substantially increase the number of spaces. Again, this is in Whitehorse. However, we are moving toward more options for the communities.

We also have K4 that is coming online that will allow for more spaces in childcare centres as well.

Ms. White: So, now we've heard about lack of licensed daycares and lack of available daycare spaces through all of our communities. We've also heard from parents about the lack of available daycare for parents who don't work the traditional nine-to-five, Monday-to-Friday jobs. Many parents are looking for daycare support so they can work shift work or weekends. Finding daycare for these families is next to impossible.

What is this government doing to ensure more flexible daycare options for families who work shift work or on weekends?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, our government believes that all children should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning opportunities, and we are absolutely committed to working with all of the stakeholders,

Yukon First Nations, and others to enhance options for families and to find that flexibility in terms of what the needs are. The work is ongoing in terms of capacity concerns. We are absolutely committed, though, to realize that dream of having universal childcare for all Yukon children, which will, in many ways, advance the outcomes of education in our territory.

Question re: Contract procurement

Mr. Kent: So, the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works made the decision to change the practice of publicly opening tenders. Previously, the practice was to publicly open the tenders and post the bid prices on the website immediately. This was open, transparent, and accountable. Under the new practice that the former minister brought in, tenders are now opened behind closed doors and the information about pricing is not made available to the public and the contractors until days — sometimes weeks — later. This process, of course, is less transparent and creates delays.

So, will the new minister commit to reversing this policy and revert back to the practice of opening tenders publicly and posting prices on the procurement website immediately?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the Member for Copperbelt South.

I certainly am not going to commit to any change of policy on the fly, but I can advise as follows: Government of Yukon is committed to the fair and open transparent procurement of goods, services, and construction while balancing the interests of Yukon businesses, ensuring best value for money, and adhering to trade agreement obligations.

Government procurement is a significant contributor to the local economy. Getting value for money is more than really considering the price paid. We recognize the strategic role and importance of our spending.

Our government is making it easier for businesses to work with the Yukon government through our new e-procurement system, Yukon Bids and Tenders.

Since early 2020, when COVID-19 started having impacts on the economy, the Department of Highways and Public Works took immediate steps to keep procurements running and to support procurement authorities already under contract.

The department issued guidance to procurement authorities across the government to ensure that appropriate supports to the local business community were in place. Some of these measures include increased use of purchasing cards for goods, maximizing the use of invitational tenders to local businesses, and the increased use of value-driven tenders.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, this issue came up at the leaders' debate on business and the economy. Responding to this question from a member of the business community, the former Deputy Premier made a clear commitment that a re-elected Liberal government would reverse this practice. He said that it was a good course of action and committed his party to acting on it. Meanwhile, the former minister has said that he was quite proud of the change that he had made.

So, will the new minister live up to the commitment that the former Deputy Premier made to the business community

during the election, or was this just another case of the Liberals saying one thing to get elected and then doing the complete opposite?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, just a bit of background on that debate. First, about 10 minutes before the debate occurred, I and the Leader of the Official Opposition, as well as the Leader of the Third Party, received a new question that hadn't been tabled. It was this particular question.

My recollection is that, as this was brought forward and the question was asked, for most of us — we did not have detailed information about this process. I had never been part of a procurement analysis or judging. So, at that time, as I remember, it looked to be a good practice to be as transparent as possible — and we would look into it. That was, as I remember, the answer that was there. We can go back and take a look at the footage, and I think — even from the other folks who were in the room — it was pretty consistent with where we were.

So, again, I had no understanding of this change in the process, but I think that, for anybody here, we want it to be as open as possible. It's also very important to understand: What were the legal ramifications that were taken into consideration when these decisions were made? I would assume that my colleague will probably be doing the same thing to look at what the ramifications were of the request and making sure that we use best practices going forward.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, that video is available online. The former Deputy Premier said, in response to that question, that it was a good course of action and he committed his party to acting on it.

Mr. Speaker, this is a simple question about leadership and accountability. The previous minister made a change that has made this process less transparent. It has created delays in awarding tenders and it has delayed the start of jobs.

The former Deputy Premier committed publicly during the election to the business community to reverse this change. Clearly, this was an example of the Liberals saying one thing to get elected and then getting into government and doing the exact opposite.

So, now it falls to the new minister. Which one of his colleagues will he be listening to on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the final question. I will certainly seek some guidance from my colleagues who had the honour of this position and related positions in the 34th Assembly, but I can assure the member opposite that I will also be taking the guidance of the professionals in the Department of Highways and Public Works who are managing tenders and contracts on a daily basis.

I look forward to continuing the process of receiving briefs from my department with respect to all manner of contracts that are being let this year. I also look forward to meeting with the member opposite, should he have any additional questions or concerns and any specific asks that he has of me or my department to consider matters in which contracts are being let. I am open to that; my door is open.

In any event, as I said, I will follow best practices, and ultimately, I will be in the position where I will be making the calls going forward.

Question re: Yukon Fish and Game Association funding

Mr. Dixon: Over the past several years, the relationship between the Liberals and the Yukon hunting community has declined considerably. The hunting community has increasingly felt like an afterthought to the Liberals. In fact, the Liberals didn't even mention hunting in their platform. The Liberal government and the former Liberal Environment minister cut the annual budget for the Yukon Fish and Game Association last year and let them know that a further cut is coming this year.

How will the new Minister of Environment repair the relationship with the Yukon Fish and Game Association?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

The Department of Environment supports a number of non-governmental organizations through transfer payment agreements. This funding helps carry out the goals and objectives of the government's policies and programs. We support a wide range of initiatives, including participation in government processes and implementation of specific projects.

The department must make decisions in allocating limited resources to various organizations. During the fiscal year 2021-22, the department is providing a total of \$1,067,000 to fund seven Yukon non-governmental organizations, which provide public services on behalf of the government. These include the Yukon Wildlife Preserve, the Yukon and Dawson humane societies, the Yukon Conservation Society, the Yukon Trappers Association, WildWise Yukon, and the Yukon Fish and Game Association.

These are not the only funding arrangements provided by the department to non-governmental organizations, but they represent the largest.

We strive to divide the available funding among organizations to ensure that Yukoners enjoy the most services for the best value.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister listing the organizations that the department funds. I would note that the YFGA was the only one to receive a cut last year, and that was a very clear message sent to the Yukon hunting community from this Liberal government.

Now, the Yukon Fish and Game Association offers amazing programs that encourage Yukoners to get outdoors and promotes wildlife conservation and management. Like most non-governmental organizations, the Yukon Fish and Game Association operates on a fairly small, tight budget, so a 25-percent cut to their annual contribution from the Yukon government really hurts. It could mean one less family fishing day or one less Yukon women's outdoor event.

So, will the new minister reverse the cuts that the previous Liberal minister made and restore the budget of the Yukon Fish and Game Association?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the follow-up question from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

The Government of Yukon has a working relationship with the Yukon Fish and Game Association, and staff at the Department of Environment are in regular contact with the organization's leadership. Department officials meet regularly with the Yukon Fish and Game executive to discuss wildlife management approaches and associated hunting opportunities.

We support the Yukon Fish and Game Association's operations by providing annual funding. In 2020, this amount was \$70,000. This is a significant amount of money, especially considering the number of environmental groups that come to YG for annual support. Although amounts can vary from year to year, depending on competing priorities, we provide this annual contribution to ensure the continued availability of important educational programs and community outreach activities for Yukon's hunters and anglers.

Communication protocols are used as appropriate to ensure joint projects made possible through these funding agreements are communicated clearly, consistently, and collaboratively.

I look forward to meeting with the Yukon Fish and Game Association and fostering a collaborative relationship.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, in a \$1.8-billion budget, when a government cuts an organization's funding by tens of thousands of dollars, that makes a huge impact to that organization and sends a very clear signal about the priorities that this government and this minister have.

Obviously, the organizations and the hunting community at large were very disappointed with the cuts tabled by the previous minister and had high hopes that they could begin to repair that relationship with the new minister. Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to be the case.

I am glad that the minister mentioned a communications protocol because, in the contribution agreement that was put forward last year, the Liberal government included a gag order on the organization. The gag order was aimed at preventing the Yukon Fish and Game Association from speaking up on behalf of its members and criticizing decisions of government. Thankfully, after a legal opinion, the association was successful in having it removed.

Will the new minister commit that he will end the practice of trying to put gag orders on organizations like the Yukon Fish and Game Association and restore their funding?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that final question.

As I heard abundantly in the 34th and now in our new Legislature, the members opposite are certainly very interested — and rightly so — in issues related to consultation and that stakeholders ought to be consulted. Now the member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, is asking a minister to make a decision on the fly.

As I said, I am open to further consultation and to further discussions with Yukon Fish and Game Association, and I certainly recognize the valuable work that they do for hunting and angling enthusiasts.

With respect to the issues of communication, these are normal and standard components of funding agreements with

the government. There is nothing in the agreements that were previously signed that prevented the funding recipients from speaking to their own projects paid for with funding raised by their members or other sources.

In any event, I certainly support the Yukon Fish and Game Association and look forward to a fruitful and productive relationship going forward.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Kent: 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, May 19, 2021. They are: Motion No. 40, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North; Motion No. 14, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; and Motion No. 30, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South.

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon NDP will not be putting forward a motion, in order to maximize time for debate on the budget.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 2: *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 2, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McLean.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to present these amendments that will finalize the transfer of the mandate for early learning and childcare from the Department of Health and Social Services to the Department of Education. I would also like to take this moment to thank the staff who are responsible for preparing these amendments and for helping us to bring them forward today.

These amendments will formalize the transfer of responsibility for the *Child Care Act* to the Minister of Education and will allow the minister to designate a director from Education to be responsible for carrying out the responsibilities under the act.

Currently, the director of Family and Children's Services has that responsibility. As per the recommendations in *Putting People First — the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services*, we are aligning all early learning programs and services under the Department of Education to allow for improved planning and decision-making.

In order to make this possible, amendments to the *Child Care Act* and regulations, the *Health Act*, and the *Government Organisation Act* regulations are required. Until these amendments are passed and come into force, the Minister of Health and Social Services remains responsible for the act, but the director of Family and Children's Services has delegated their responsibilities under the act to a person in Education, which allows Education to effectively assume authority under the act as of April 1 of this year. These amendments are therefore essential to bring clarity and administrative efficiency in delivering the early learning and childcare mandate.

Across Canada, eight jurisdictions have integrated early learning and childcare with Education, those being Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

The transfer from Health and Social Services to Education ensures that early learning and childcare services are coordinated at all levels, including the transition into kindergarten and the school years. High-quality early learning opportunities support improved long-term outcomes for children in all aspects of education and development. The integration of early childcare development programs and the education system will help to create a learning continuum that begins at birth and has a positive long-term impact.

Over the past few months, we have heard support for the transfer of early learning and childcare to Education, and people are excited about the opportunities that this presents. Early childhood educators are especially pleased about the focus on children and high-quality early learning.

I firmly believe that the act before us today will allow us to continue on our journey to support improved planning and decision-making while keeping the child firmly in the centre. During the engagements on universal childcare and early kindergarten, it has been made clear that a complete review and modernization of the *Child Care Act* needs to happen, but that will take much longer.

It will need to be addressed in a very thoughtful way, where everyone's view can be heard and considered. We will continue to work with First Nation governments, stakeholders, and Yukoners to move this forward.

Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to rise and speak briefly to this bill at second reading. Of course, this bill was tabled back in the previous Sitting earlier this year and died on the Order Paper when the election was called, and so now it comes back again for discussion.

To begin, on behalf of the Yukon Party caucus, I certainly want to thank the officials who provided briefings for our team. In particular, I want to thank Michael McBride, who I know did a lot of work on this and had briefed us the first time around and is either retired or retiring very soon, so I want to thank him for his work on this.

Obviously, this comes around the time of the implementation of the new early learning and childcare program. I wanted to let the minister know that I will reserve my questions for that program for the Department of Education

discussion and won't be raising those types of questions in the debate in Committee on this bill. I did want to note that the few questions that we did have with regard to this bill that we will ask in Committee — I will mention them now so that the minister can prepare them and we can expedite Committee on this.

We will be interested in discussing the type of consultation that occurred on the bill and which groups were met with and their respective positions. I do understand that there is a variety of opinion on where the correct location is of this branch — whether it should be in Health and Social Services or in Education. There are a few different opinions on that, and so I look forward to hearing about which groups said what.

For our part, we agree with the transfer to Education. I believe that my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, did a motion on this in a previous Sitting, and we were happy to see this change happen. I believe that placing the early learning and childcare branch in the Department of Education offers a nice integration of early learning into the education system and also recognizes the importance of early learning as a part of lifelong learning in the territory.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we will be supporting this bill. As I have indicated, we will have a few questions in Committee when we do get to that period.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, today I am rising to speak in favour of Bill No. 2. The very first time I had a conversation, or even heard the concept about early learning and childcare being put into the Department of Education, was during a debate hosted by l'AFY in 2016. The reason it was suggested there is that the preamble of the *Education Act* says that every child is guaranteed and should have access to education. This is a way of making it truly universal — by moving it out of the Department of Health and Social Services toward Education.

The bill in front of us is small. We could say that it was a precision bill to do one thing, but what it does is very large. I do have questions about how some of that will work, but it will be in the Department of Education where those questions are asked. At this point, I think this is the way forward and we look forward to getting this through.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.
Ms. McLeod: Agree.
Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.
Mr. Hassard: Agree.
Mr. Istchenko: Agree.
Ms. White: Agree.
Ms. Blake: Agree.
Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.
Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare this motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 2 agreed to

Bill No. 200: Third Appropriation Act 2020-21 — Second Reading — adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 200, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will cede the floor to my colleagues.

Mr. Dixon: We're eager to get into Committee on this and so we look forward to raising our questions at that time.

Ms. White: It's not often that I'll agree with the Yukon Party, but here I am — I agree. Let's get into Committee of the Whole.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I did a good encapsulation yesterday of the items in the supplementary budget, so I will also, here in the final part of the second reading, sit very quickly here so we can get into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.
Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.
Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.
Mr. Dixon: Disagree.
Mr. Kent: Disagree.
Ms. Clarke: Disagree.
Mr. Cathers: Disagree.
Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.
Mr. Hassard: Disagree.
Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.
Ms. White: Agree.
Ms. Blake: Agree.
Ms. Tredger: Agree.
Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yea, eight nay.
Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 200 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 has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

Bill No. 200: Third Appropriation Act 2020-21 — Second Reading

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I would request some time for our officials from the department to join us.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause-by-clause debate.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 200 read and agreed to

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, read and agreed to.

Chair: Mr. Kent has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 2, and Schedules A, B and C deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Hon. Mr. Silver that the Chair report Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Bill No. 201: First Appropriation Act 2021-22

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm just going to introduce my official here. We have Scott Thompson, Deputy Minister of Finance, with me today. Thank you very much to both Scott and to the department for all of their amazing work to keep not only me and my team up to date and briefed, but the opposition as well.

With that, I will cede the floor to the opposition.

Mr. Dixon: In order to expedite debate and get into departments, we won't have any questions in general debate.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, we look forward to general debate in departments as well.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, the matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Mr. Kent: May I suggest a five-minute recess, Madam Chair, so that officials can attend with the minister?

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief five-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Community Services

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Madam Chair, it's an honour this afternoon to speak to the budget for Community Services. I

know that there is a lot of talk about expediting the budget discussions this afternoon, and I'll certainly do my part. I just want to say that I am new to this whole role. It has been a whirlwind week as I got my legs underneath me in this new world that is Community Services.

It is a smaller department than my last gig over at Highways and Public Works, but it is certainly a many and varied department, like my last role. The Department of Community Services has the majority of the legislation that this government — well, not a majority, but it has a huge share. About 30 percent of all the legislation in the Government of Yukon resides within the Community Services realm, and so it is a very exciting and detailed department to oversee.

We are responsible for Protective Services, Corporate Services, Community Development, Finance, and all sorts of other services that are very essential for the territory — corporate registries, raffles — there are all sorts of things that we do.

Our budget this afternoon provides details on how our department is protecting people and property, how we are advancing community well-being with the work that we are doing with First Nations and municipal governments, and how we are building thriving communities around the territory. The department's main estimates include more than \$121 million in capital expenditures and just over \$106 million in operation and maintenance expenditures.

Madam Chair, I would like to provide you with some highlights of this year's Community Services budget. Infrastructure Development: The Infrastructure Development branch is responsible for managing infrastructure projects built with federal infrastructure funds. The ongoing partnerships that we have with Canada and municipalities, First Nations, and unincorporated Yukon are helping us to build vibrant, healthy, sustainable communities. We are addressing core infrastructure priorities for roads, clean drinking water, green energy, solid-waste and waste-water management at territorial and local levels.

This fiscal year, the Yukon government will be investing \$81 million to continue a range of infrastructure projects around the territory. This funding is largely supported through recoveries from the federal small communities fund and Investing in Canada infrastructure program. All of these projects address ongoing needs of Yukon communities.

Since 2018, we have been meeting regularly with First Nations and communities to develop multi-year plans for infrastructure projects. Consulting with communities, these plans are updated continually as priorities and needs change over time. These projects are providing jobs for Yukoners, enhancing economic development, and improving well-being for Yukoners.

Over 10 years, from 2018-19 to 2027-28, the Infrastructure Development branch is responsible for making effective use of the more than \$594 million that is available through the Investing in Canada infrastructure program to fund infrastructure programs across the territory. Most of these projects are cost-shared between Canada, Yukon, and other partners on a 75:25 percent basis.

This year, Madam Chair, we are budgeting \$48.5 million to build projects with the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. Many of these projects are in progress while others will be starting this year. For instance, under ICSP, the integrated community sustainability plan, several projects are underway.

The Kwanlin Dün First Nation is building a community hub that will provide a central location where their citizens can access health, social, and cultural programs and services. The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation is building a new community centre in Old Crow. We will also be supporting the City of Dawson on planning for a new reservoir and sewage lagoon to address the municipality's waste water needs.

Similarly, Yukon government is committed to contribute to a new recreation centre in Dawson. Community Services is funding the ongoing planning work for this important project. Planning and site selection work will continue this year.

The City of Whitehorse is building a public transit station — a hub on 2nd Avenue — that will enhance public transit for commuters. It will also be replacing aging transit buses.

We will continue to work with the Teslin Tlingit Council on a community hub for their citizens in Teslin and a community centre for the White River First Nation in Beaver Creek.

In Faro, we will continue to make upgrades to the town's water, sewer, and roads. We will begin construction of a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth centre in Dawson.

In Mayo, a new water well will be built for the water plant serving the community.

Work to upgrade Mount Sima snow-making will continue this summer as part of a larger project to replace aging diesel infrastructure used on the hill.

We are planning upgrades to sewage lagoons in communities around the territory, including Carcross, Carmacks, Ross River, and Haines Junction. For Burwash, a new boat launch is in the works.

Plans are also ready to start this year on the first phase of the next round of water and waste-water upgrades for the Town of Watson Lake.

Madam Chair, the small communities fund will be helping us work on \$25.9 million of projects around the territory. Some, as with ICSP, will focus on clean water and waste-water systems, such as public works facilities upgrades in Mayo and for the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and a new public works facility for Old Crow.

In Carmacks, construction will begin this year on a combined fire hall and emergency medical services space.

In Teslin, a new fire hall and public works building is planned, led by the Village of Teslin. As well, green energy retrofits will be made to the village's municipal centre and to the Teslin Tlingit Council public building. Construction is also underway for a new public works fire hall building in Watson Lake.

In Dawson City, ongoing water and sewer work will resume this year as part of long-term efforts to upgrade the aging infrastructure in the community.

This summer, in addition to some of the projects mentioned a moment ago, we will finish constructing the skateboard park in Whitehorse. Once complete, the facility will be turned over to the City of Whitehorse.

Madam Chair, as the main land developer in Yukon, we are working hard to address Yukon's lot shortages and supporting economic development with significant investments in developing new residential, commercial, and industrial lots around the territory. We know that, with Yukon's increasing population, the demand for lots continues.

The branch uses three approaches to deliver on land development needs: developing lots and subdivisions in Whitehorse and communities; advancing opportunities for private sector land development; and, finally, supporting First Nations to develop their land for citizen housing and economic development opportunities.

As we all know, building in Yukon is challenging given our geography, short construction season, and limited resources. As a key land developer, we can invest the required capital costs to maintain and restore lot inventory in the territory. We can also support land development planning work that builds on the municipality's important official community plan.

Madam Chair, our \$32-million budget for land development includes \$21.7 million for continued development of the Whistle Bend subdivision and Whitehorse area and \$8.3 million for development of rural lots in Yukon.

In just nine short years, Whistle Bend is already a bustling neighbourhood. We can see, from the response to lot sales, that it is a place where Yukoners want to make their homes. When it is complete over the next few years, it will be home to up to 10,000 residents. Demand for lots in Whistle Bend continues to be brisk. In December 2020, the largest ever Whitehorse lottery was launched for 249 residential and eight commercial lots. The draws on January 12 and 13, 2021, resulted in more than 780 applications with all lots selling.

Madam Chair, we have work underway on phase 6 of Whistle Bend for completion this summer. It will create some 171 lots for a planned release later this fall. The phase 7 construction tender just closed. It will supply another 90 residential lots targeted for release in the fall of 2022.

This year, we will also begin detailed design of the final phases of Whistle Bend — phases 8 to 15. We are anticipating tendering phases 8 and 9 this year, as well as a lift station. Phase 8 will be a small, one-season development intended to supplement phase 7 with another 50 or so lots in the fall of 2022. In addition, we will be releasing another 27 commercial lots along Keno Way.

Looking at infill in the City of Whitehorse, we will be servicing four new lots in Logan subdivision for release later this year — that is just down the street from me. Helping the Whistle Bend neighbourhood become even more beautiful, we will be tendering work on Kaska Boulevard and for a revised Cadzow Park design shortly. Two tenders for bioswale seeding, walkways, and a boulevard will close shortly.

Land Development branch is working with rural communities, providing support and being guided by the

community priorities and community plans, to meet short- and medium-term demand and plan for their land development needs for the long term.

We are going to be very busy this year, Madam Chair, with feasibility planning and implementation of projects across the territory in partnership with municipalities and First Nations.

We will also be initiating planning of the Dredge Pond 2 country residential subdivision and heritage park and advanced design of a commercial subdivision. As well, this spring and fall, we will be releasing some urban and industrial lots and start detailed design of the Dome Road once the master planning process wraps up this summer.

In Mayo, we are finalizing development for five to 10 vacant lots in the Village of Mayo to be available later this spring and fall. We are also designing a small downtown residential subdivision.

We have completed feasibility work on multiple sites in both Carmacks and Watson Lake. We are working with these municipalities to prioritize and tender projects for a variety of lot types this spring and summer. In Watson Lake, we hope to tender the Frances Avenue serviced urban lot extension for release of about 10 lots in the first phase. We are advancing the feasibility and preliminary design of the Garden Creek industrial subdivision and finalized country residential lots.

We are partnering with First Nations and providing dedicated support to help them meet the growing housing needs for their citizens and provide economic development opportunities. Our joint master planning process with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation is underway for the Range Point area. Subdivision construction could begin as early as the summer of 2022 or 2023.

Madam Chair, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations' Marshall Creek subdivision infrastructure expansion project is extending water and sewer services from the Village of Haines Junction into the subdivision that will provide services for more than 30 future homes for CAFN citizens and improve services for some who are already living there. A lift station will also be built this year to meet future needs. I was in the community last fall, and I can attest that it's a very exciting time for the citizens of Haines Junction and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

We are finalizing the design of the Yukon government's half of the Teslin Tlingit Council-YG Lone Tree country residential project for tender soon, and that will provide about 23 new lots.

Finally, we're exploring parallel planning with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation for adjacent Yukon government and Carcross/Tagish First Nation parcels and to look at a second access in Carcross.

We have initiated planning discussions with a number of other First Nations, including Selkirk First Nation and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. As well, we will continue discussions with the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kluane First Nation to identify, in advance, their development needs.

Protective Services division — Madam Chair, I will now move on to Protective Services. This division houses emergency management coordination, first response, and

public safety agencies, including building safety and standards, Wildland Fire Management, the Fire Marshal's Office, Emergency Measures Organization, and Emergency Medical Services.

Investments in personnel, equipment, training, and infrastructure improve Yukon's ability to prevent and prepare for emergencies, to respond when they occur, and to reduce the loss of life and property.

With these budget allocations to Protective Services, this government is investing in the advancement of community well-being by protecting people and property. Accordingly, Madam Chair, we have allocated \$37 million of the department's operation and maintenance budget and \$2.6 million of the capital budget for the Protective Services division.

Madam Chair, since the global pandemic was declared in March 2020, Yukon has been largely successful in mitigating the importation risk of COVID-19 in the territory due, in large part, to our health protection measures such as self-isolation upon arrival and the provision of information about such requirements.

The Emergency Measures Organization in the Department of Community Services has responsibility for the Emergency Coordination Centre and its activities related to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yukon's border support measures have afforded our government the opportunity to provide meaningful local employment opportunities to members of the Liard First Nation, reflecting our government's priority to work closely with First Nations and local governments to foster positive, respectful relationships and build local capacity.

We are allocating \$3.2 million in O&M funding in 2021 to support the continuation of ECC operations and border support measures. While we are beginning the process of easing self-isolation restrictions for vaccinated individuals entering the territory as of May 25, some measures of border support will be required well into 2021, later this year.

Fire Marshal's Office — Madam Chair, we are budgeting \$1.7 million this year for operation and maintenance of the Fire Marshal's Office and approximately \$1.2 million for capital expenses. This includes \$450,000 to operate 15 community fire and rescue halls and two special operations groups, as well as honoraria and training travel expenses for approximately 130 community volunteer firefighters.

The Fire Marshal's Office provides all infrastructure related to unincorporated fire departments. This includes fire halls, personal protective equipment, and training resources.

From September 2020 to February 2021, volunteer fire and rescue halls have responded to approximately 140 calls across the territory. In addition to fighting structural fires, Yukon's volunteer fire departments work with Wildland Fire Management crews to manage urban interface wildfires that may threaten community infrastructure throughout the territory.

We also support training, recruitment, and retention of volunteers and promote gender diversity in the fire service through such programs as the Ember Fire Academy.

Madam Chair, fire prevention planning continues throughout the Yukon with an emphasis on communities with low volunteerism in fire departments. The Fire Marshal's Office participates annually in Fire Prevention Week, a nationwide initiative in October to reduce and prevent the loss of life and property from home fire and other home safety incidents. The Fire Marshal's Office also works with partners to conduct annual fire safety and carbon monoxide public awareness in social media campaigns.

As part of the Yukon government's COVID-19 response, the Fire Marshal's Office has been providing staff to support the Emergency Coordination Centre and the CEMA enforcement team at the Whitehorse airport since the pandemic was declared in March 2020.

Wildland Fire Management — Madam Chair, we have undertaken a strategic renewal of how Wildland Fire Management operates, focusing on a modern approach to managing wildfires. This requires investments in forest fuel management near communities and a continued focus on prevention, mitigation and preparedness, and response.

We are investing \$21.7 million in operation and maintenance funding for the Wildland Fire Management branch. Wildland Fire Management is moving toward being an agency that leads a whole-of-government approach to forest fire management and the creation of wildland-fire resilient Yukon communities.

Wildland Fire Management's new strategic vision includes support for the creation of community wildfire protection plans. It also includes continued FireSmart investments and large landscape-level fuel management projects. Last year we treated an estimated 225 hectares of land. This year, we are planning to treat another 245 hectares of land and are committing \$1.27 million to hazard-reduction investments this year.

Madam Chair, we hired a full-time fuels management forester in late 2020. This was designed to lead landscape-level fire risk reduction projects such as the Whitehorse south hazard-reduction project, partially funded by the federal government. This 400-hectare fireguard will greatly reduce the city's wildfire risk and provide a ready-made control line to help firefighters safely work on future fires in the area.

For more than 20 years, Wildland Fire Management has worked closely with Yukon First Nations. We are increasing investments in Yukon First Nation initial attack fire crews, training, and generally enhancing the capacity of Yukon in the wildfire season. We recognize that a changing climate means that the fire risk is unpredictable in Yukon and can extend into the fall. For 2021, we have hired four new seasonal emergency response officers to increase our capacity to oversee crews and manage incidents.

This year, the White River First Nation has an initial attack crew for the first time, so all 14 First Nations will be involved in keeping communities safe from wildfire across the territory, with YG employee initial attack crews for the same length of season. This means that the Government of Yukon now has a full response capacity to wildfires from April 1 to September 30 every year.

In addition to significant investments in wildfire resiliency in Yukon, Wildland Fire Management continues to be dedicated to providing world-class fire suppression to protect life, property, and infrastructure across the territory. Wildfire management funding further supports our fulfillment of action items in the government's climate change, energy, and green economy strategy, as well as the Canadian wildland fire strategy, and recognizes the higher cost of managing fire in the boreal forest.

To support Emergency Medical Services this year, we are budgeting \$10.4 million in operation and maintenance funding and \$581,000 in capital.

In 2020, Yukon EMS responded to 6,094 ground incidents in the Whitehorse catchment area and 1,722 in the communities, 871 incidents via Yukon EMS air ambulance, and 2,092 client visits to the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

Madam Chair, as well as the two stations in Whitehorse, Yukon Emergency Medical Services supports 15 ambulance stations in rural Yukon communities. Together we provide professional, coordinated care throughout the Yukon guided by leadership, dedication, and partnership.

This past year, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted additional safety measures for our first responders —

I will leave it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. McLeod: I would like to congratulate the minister on his appointment to Community Services and to welcome and thank the officials for attending with us today.

My first question today is about staffing. I would like to know how many new positions are being contemplated in Community Services this fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for her congratulations. I will extend the same. It's great to be debating with my colleagues across the House again, albeit in a new role. I would also like to take a second before I answer the question to welcome my officials this afternoon — Matt King, the deputy, and Phil MacDonald, the director of Finance — who are here with us today.

To answer your questions, we have three new positions in our wildland fire office. They are helping with reorganizing with the wildland fire unit to management. That's it; we have three new positions. They are going to help with our transition in working with the Yukon First Nation wildfire crew — 20-person unit. We will have a number of different roles, but that's how many positions we have — three new positions.

Ms. McLeod: So, if I heard correctly, there are three new positions in wildland fire to assist with the transition. Can the minister confirm that those three positions are all in Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Madam Chair, I can report that, of the three positions, two are actually located in the communities; one is in Haines Junction, one is in Dawson City, and the other one is in Whitehorse.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that.

I have a few questions about CEMA. What is the number of ministerial orders issued under CEMA? We probably want to go back to when the pandemic was declared in March of 2020.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We don't need a whole history lesson, but on March 27, that is when we declared our first state of emergency under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. My colleague did an amazing job shepherding that aged act into action and actually using it to protect Yukoners.

The effort that this government, working collectively as a whole, has put on has really led the country and kept Yukoners safe, and from that safety that we provided, it allowed us to have an economy that is one of the leaders in the country as well.

The ministerial orders we brought into place cover a range of topics and are reviewed by departments on a monthly basis to ensure their necessity to support Yukoners and respond to the pandemic. Again, that is one of the things that my colleague made sure of. We are constantly reviewing these things to make sure that we need them. We don't want to be bringing in orders that aren't necessary to the safety and well-being of Yukoners.

He also made a commitment to bring every order before Cabinet for clarity and to make sure it was transparent and that we knew what we were doing as a government and not unilaterally putting orders in place, and he has been absolutely fastidious in his approach to these orders. For that, I thank him.

We were asked how many active orders there are in force at the moment. There are actually 14. There are amendments to the liquor licences, declaration of the state of emergency itself. There are some education measures. There is an enforcement order under COVID that sets out the authority and powers of enforcement officers as well as arrest powers of the RCMP in enforcing CEMA. There are health protection orders that outline the self-isolation requirements, including exceptions to these requirements, and lists the various limitations on gatherings, eat-in restaurants, bars, dentistry, personal services. That's an important one as well. There are leases, approvals and regulatory timelines, which allows deputy ministers to renew or extend the term of a lease or approval that was granted by their own department and was set to expire during the emergency. We have a leave regulation that provides one leave of absence without pay for 14 days for employees who are subject to a health protection matter. Again, when it comes to leave, Madam Chair, the territory is leading the country in terms of our leave provisions. Limitation periods and legislative time periods — it enables the suspension of various limitation periods during the state of emergency for a prescribed time immediately after it ends.

We have masks in indoor spaces. These things that we continually use in this building are brought into force and regulated though the CEMA orders we have.

Medical practitioners' provisional licensing — we know that some medical practitioners cannot operate without some sort of registry. This allows that to happen so we have the medical professionals we need. Pharmacist authorization enables the expansion of scope for pharmacists to allow prescriptions to be extended during the state of emergency.

Rent deferrals — this is under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, which resides in Community Services and protects those who are required to remain in place while

adhering to health protection orders. It gives some protection from rents being in arrears.

Telephone and electronic meetings enable organizations — including business corporations, associations, limited partnerships, and societies — to hold meetings electronically or by teleconference so they may continue operations and comply with relevant legislation. Again, a very, very important order stemming from this CEMA legislation.

And last, the waiver of airport fees. This is very important to our local airlines. We waived airport parking fees, landing fees, loading bridge fees for all aircraft. This was set to be self-repealed in December 31, 2020, but it was repealed by OIC 2020/93, and then it is brought back into force.

So, that's what we're looking at, Madam Chair. That's what they're for. There are 14 of them. They're very important to the operation of the territory's business and to actually maintaining the safety that we so need in the face of this global pandemic that is afflicting millions and killing people around the planet.

Ms. McLeod: Madam Chair, my question actually was a query about how many ministerial orders have been issued under CEMA, which the minister did not answer, but he did answer the question that I was about to ask, which is how many are in force currently. So, there are 14, and I acknowledge that.

If the minister could get me that number of how many orders have been issued under CEMA since it became necessary, I would appreciate that.

What public and stakeholder consultation was done on any of these ministerial orders?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Madam Chair, there's a lot to unpack in that question. I appreciate the Member for Watson Lake's clarification of the question.

As with anything, when you're dealing with government in situations like this, the answer can be as complicated or as simple as you want. I listed the 14 orders that are currently in effect, but underneath each one of those orders, every time we renew them, there is another number.

So, you could actually probably count that as 30 orders, but in fact it deals with 14 different issues and they are one order, but the way that this rolls out — when you renew it, you get a new number, it adds to the list, but it actually isn't a new order at all. We have 10 that have been repealed or have been let to expire, and they include amendment of government contract provisions, which enable deputy ministers to amend and finalize government contracts administered by their own department without any right of appeal by the contractor. That one has now been allowed to expire. Underneath that one item, there are two renewals that happened, so that could be counted as, really, two separate orders, but it's not; it's one.

Border controls measures, which were repealed on June 30, 2020, set out the parameters of who is permitted to stay or travel through the Yukon. That was allowed to expire as well. Medically exempted drivers who are 70 years of age or older, who were required to submit a medical examination certificate from having to do so during the state of emergency — that is one order that has now been either repealed or

expired, but underneath that one order are two other numbers that could be counted toward the total, but it is the same order.

Exemption to self-isolation requirements — this was repealed on November 20. Exempted residents from BC, NWT, and Nunavut from having to self-isolate upon entering Yukon is now repealed — again, two separate numbers underneath that one, as well, which would add to the total but doesn't actually add to the number of orders that we were enforcing.

Property tax relief — repealed on September 9 — enabled property owners in the Yukon to benefit from an extended due date regarding taxes that were otherwise payable — now repealed.

Remote cannabis sales — now I know this is of interest to the members opposite. They like it. We didn't do it under CEMA; we are looking at doing it legislatively, properly. This was something that we didn't have to keep doing under CEMA, so it has now been revoked. Again, two extensions to that one — we could count it as two extra orders, but it is not. It is one order, now repealed, and we are going to do the actual ability for cannabis retailers to sell their product online properly through legislation.

School council elections — again, repealed.

Self-isolation exception for traditional activities — that was repealed on September 9.

Social assistance regulation override — that was taken out as well. It made CERB fully exempt from social assistance income calculations until June 2020 — no longer necessary. It's gone.

Virtual commissioning, signing, and witnessing — again, now gone — two renewals under that as well.

Madam Chair, what I'm saying here is that, in total, with the orders that are in existence — 14 — and the repealed/expired of 10, we had a total of 24 orders. We have been very careful and diligent about how we actually enact these orders and how we don't let them stay beyond their best-before date. We get rid of them as soon as we possibly can, and we'll continue that practice.

The other question that we had was on consultation. We had health consultations three times a week with every community and First Nation at the beginning of the pandemic. After several months, we went down to weekly meetings, by agreement, so we didn't hold them as often. They weren't as necessary, but in the very beginning of the pandemic, my colleague had regular meetings with First Nations and communities three times a week.

We had a business advisory committee made up of businesses across the territory, a cross-section; we had the tourism advisory committee that also advised us. We had, I would say, weekly meetings with our federal and territorial counterparts across the country as to the state of the pandemic and what sort of best practices they were bringing into effect to manage this pandemic. We had our public health officers of Canada. The CMOH, the chief medical officer of health's office, also consulted with community members on a regular basis throughout the pandemic.

We had lots of consultation going into this thing, guiding us as we navigated this unprecedented health crisis that the territory, Canada, and the world faced since last March.

Ms. McLeod: Does the minister know how many briefings were provided to opposition members?

On the back of that, does the minister have an idea of the number of staff who are dealing with CEMA enforcement and the number of staff involved in developing CEMA policy?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm going to deal with the relatively easy answer first, and that is the number of officers we have enforcing CEMA orders. We currently have five CEMA officers under Justice tasked with enforcing our CEMA orders.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we utilized conservation officers, natural resource officers, and liquor inspectors and Yukon government enforcement staff at various sites across the territory such as the borders and our airports to make sure that people were checked and that we had some sort of oversight on our borders. That number is difficult to pin down at the moment. It was an all-of-government approach, and it was pulled from many, many different players. The numbers ebbed and flowed as needs came and went during the months of the pandemic. But currently, we have five CEMA officers under Justice dedicated to enforcing our CEMA orders.

As far as the briefings that were offered, I know from my colleague that we had briefings with the chief medical officer of health at least every week at the beginning. I know that we were in front of the cameras talking to Yukoners on a regular basis as well. Those briefings were certainly available to all Yukoners, including the opposition. We also had opposition briefings with the CMOH — that is what I'm led to believe — at the beginning. Those were on a regular basis. They dropped away probably over the summer months. I know that we offered to have a briefing in here in the House, but that offer wasn't accepted.

Then, in the fall, we also had another briefing for opposition members. We also had the debate in the House — many, many hours of debate — over our government motions day during that fall session where we debated our CEMA orders.

We had updates, as well, in many government departments. It's very difficult for CS itself to aggregate all of the meetings that we had because they happened in Health and Social Services and in Education throughout as we went through this pandemic, but we certainly offered briefings, gave them, and were open to talking with the opposition on this matter.

Ms. McLeod: I don't know if the minister can answer this, but I will ask anyway. It was one that I had asked previously and he didn't answer, and that was the number of staff involved in developing CEMA policy — if the minister could give us some indication of how many employees are involved with that.

What is EMO's role in managing the pandemic response?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am going to start again with the policy question. It's a little bit easier. In Community Services, we didn't have any additional policy staff to help with the

pandemic. The crew stepped up and triaged their existing policy work in favour of the COVID response, and we made it work.

For Health, I'm sure you can ask when my colleague comes to the floor under budget debate. Health had the COVID response unit, which helped the chief medical officer of health's department, and they'll be able to talk about what resources were deployed there.

As for CS, there were no new policy resources needed in that shop. The member opposite, the Member for Watson Lake, asked about the Emergency Measures office. The director of the Emergency Measures office is a civil emergency planning officer under the act. He takes that role. The Emergency Measures office coordinates the Yukon government response through the Emergency Coordination Centre. It provides incident command. It was the office that brought in people from across government to make sure that they were pulled in to help with this emergency.

The Emergency Measures office made sure that these people were supported and trained. They also supported community emergency plans, supported the planning work, and they basically provided the structure through which the Yukon government responded to this pandemic throughout the territory at an operational level.

Ms. McLeod: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for that.

The previous minister was opposed to using time-limited legislation instead of the emergency orders, so will the new minister consider a more democratic approach by considering time-limiting legislation?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Just to be clear, I believe that the member opposite is asking us to bring in time-limited legislation, as opposed to CEMA. I am not entirely sure if the member opposite was asking us to bring in time-limited legislation in the midst of the pandemic, which would have been impossible, given that legislation probably takes a minimum of 16 months to get through and drafted and the whole bit. What we did have though is the CEMA, which is an ancient document. We have committed to reviewing that, to have a committee struck to review CEMA to make it better for the future. We can hope that this will be the only crisis we will face, but there will be other crises that future Yukon governments will face, and we need better tools to do that. We are more than happy to look at the toolbox and fix how we do it, to learn from what we have just gone through and make the improvements necessary.

That said, CEMA itself is a time-limited structure. We have orders that are in place for 90 days at a time. Even the state of emergency is something that lasts for 90 days and isn't extended over a period of time. It is not something that is ubiquitous which comes into being and never goes away; it is something that we have to consciously renew every 90 days. So, that in itself is a time-limited measure. You can see the breadth of the 14 orders that are currently in place — the 10 that have been repealed or have been allowed to expire, a total of 24 that we have used — were essential in managing this crisis and making sure that Yukoners were kept safe and were allowed to conduct their lives in a structured way throughout.

It's not unprecedented — this once-in-100-years event that this pandemic has proved to be.

The fact that we were using this antique legislation that, I believe, came into being in 1966 — am I correct in that? I'm calling it "antique", Madam Chair, but it's actually three years younger than me. So, I guess I'm dating myself and calling myself names at the same time. In 1966, the legislation came into effect. It's three years younger than me, so it is a very old piece of legislation and needs to be retooled. We're more than happy to do that, and I'm sure, with the cooperation and good fellowship of my colleagues on the opposite side of the floor, we will get that work done so that future governments will have a better regime.

That said, as I was saying, the current CEMA structure that we put in place did actually, in the end, serve Yukoners very well. We have made it through this pandemic better than almost every other Canadian jurisdiction — arguably, probably better than any other Canadian jurisdiction — and we have kept our citizens safe. We have allowed them to conduct their lives in a way that approached normalcy for much of the year. We have our children in schools; we have avoided many of the great lockdowns that we've seen in many of the other jurisdictions of the country. We have had our people out playing hockey; they are going to the gym; they are still going to restaurants; our restaurants are open. That's not happening — the UK just opened their restaurants. In many cases in Canada, these places are shut down and locked down and have no access to the public. That's not the case here, Madam Chair. Here, we have managed to have one of the strongest economies in the country and one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country throughout the pandemic because of the measures putting people first that we put in place. We haven't seen that in Alberta; we haven't seen that in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, or Québec — we have seen it here. We have seen it a little bit in the Maritimes, but the structure that we put in place — the approach that this government took, the sacrifices that our Yukon citizens made in the face of this pandemic — and they were significant. And because of their thoughtfulness, and their compassion for their fellow Yukoners, we have had a very good showing throughout this pandemic. It's not that people haven't suffered, not that there haven't been costs, but relatively speaking, Yukoners should hold their head high and say, "Look at what we've done", because it has been magnificent.

Ms. McLeod: I guess the short answer to that would have just been no.

The minister's reluctance to subject these orders or the path forward through a pandemic or any other emergency through a legislative process and a democratic process is not something that is seen as desirable. Okay.

I want to move on from CEMA, then. I would like to talk a bit about community pools and rec centres. So, under Community Development in this budget, there is a \$125,000 increase to \$250,000 for community pools capital maintenance. Can the minister provide more information about this increase?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Madam Chair, thank you for your patience.

Yeah, there is a \$125,000 increase in our pools maintenance budget. Environmental health went out and identified some issues with our pools. It costs \$125,000 to fix. We're fixing them so our citizens across the territory have pools that work and that they can use this summer. That's the short answer.

Chair: 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.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Ms. McLeod: We were speaking about the \$125,000 increase for community pools capital maintenance. The minister advises that it is as a result of requests for upgrades from environmental health. I am going to leave that one there for now.

The Pelly Crossing swimming pool closed on February 18 — or the tender closed on February 18. It looks as though it has not been awarded as of today.

Can the minister provide an explanation on the status of the project and the reason it has not been awarded?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The Pelly pool is a very exciting project. I am happy to say that we are, of course, proceeding with it. It is an important facility to the community of Pelly. It was built back in — close to the 1990s, I think. It has been around for a long time; it is in need of replacement.

The bid came in during the election, so the department had to extend the irrevocability period. With the election resolved, we have moved forward with the tender. We have reconfirmed the project and are in discussions with the low bidder, and we are working toward an award, so it is happening.

Ms. McLeod: I will note that the election was called some weeks after that closing date. However, are there any other community projects that have been waylaid or delayed due to the election?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I think that the member opposite referred to any other government projects that have been waylaid or delayed as a result of the election. I can speak for Community Services. This was the one major project that we had to deal with, upon being sworn in as ministers. This was the project I had to deal with. There were no other projects of substance — really big capital projects — that had been waylaid or delayed as a result of the election.

Ms. McLeod: I'm going to come back to that response in a little bit. I want to stay on pools, though. The pool in Haines Junction was closed about three years ago due to structural issues. Can the minister give us an update on discussions that the government is having with the Village of Haines Junction on a new pool and recreation centre?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: When it comes to community projects and Community Services, it is the communities that come forward with their wish list. I can report to the member opposite that we are actually looking at the cost and scoping of the project, but Haines Junction has a list of priorities that they have presented to us. We make those submissions through the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan, and it's assessed at that level.

At this point, the pool is not top of the list for the community of Haines Junction. There have been some discussions about it, but they have put forward a list of their priorities and we're following through on their list.

Ms. McLeod: The Beaver Creek community centre recently changed hands and is now operated by the White River First Nation. Can the minister confirm whether the community centre is now open and accessible to the community as it has been in the past? Can he confirm that the gym and the pool are now open?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It doesn't come as any surprise that our pools are seasonal operations. We are currently working with the White River First Nation to open it this summer. The community centre is not open yet. We are working with the White River First Nation on operational details for that facility in opening it up, into the future, but we're still working out the details of that project.

Ms. McLeod: Can the minister provide us with an update on the work for the Ross River pool?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have contracted an engineer to do the upgrades to the pool in Ross River, and the plan is to have it open this summer. The upgrades that we're contemplating, through the engineer we have hired, are part of the \$125,000 that we talked about earlier. It's important to these communities that they have facilities that operate this summer. We're working hard. Operating these facilities in rural Yukon is not without its challenges, but we're confident that we'll be able to have the kids in these rural communities swimming this summer in the pools that they have in their communities.

Ms. McLeod: I would ask the minister to speak up a little bit, because I am having trouble hearing what he's saying. Thank you very much.

Can the minister provide us with an update on the Carmacks Recreation Centre?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will work at projecting my voice a little bit more. It's one of those things that booms and it sometimes trails off, so I will endeavour to project a little bit more.

The new arena in Carmacks is an important project, of course. It will enable the community to, once again, enjoy ice skating, hockey, curling events, and community gatherings.

We all know some of the history of this project. I can report to the House and to the member opposite this afternoon that the contract has been put out to finish the structure. We have been working very closely with the Village of Carmacks on the project. Of course, we do appreciate the citizens' patience surrounding this delay, and we are dedicated to completing the project, which is why we've let the contract and we are

optimistic that it will be finished relatively — well, “relatively” in air quotes — soon.

Ms. McLeod: The minister said that the contract had been put out. Just a little clarification on that — has it been tendered or has it been awarded?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Relatively quick this time — tendered, not awarded.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you very much for that.

Now, I want to switch gears a little bit here and go over to solid waste. Can the minister provide an update on where the government is at in terms of negotiations with municipalities on regional landfill agreements and the status of each of those?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Solid waste — this is a world unto itself and it is one that I am wading into slowly with the assistance of my colleague and my colleagues in the Department of Community Services. We are working with municipalities to improve solid-waste management operations to develop regional agreements. That is very important — explore enhanced stewardship through next steps in the *Designated Materials Regulation* and explore extended power producer responsibility and develop a strategy to handle landfill liabilities.

Garbage is expensive; garbage costs money. The stuff that we buy and the stuff that we chuck out on a regular basis doesn’t come for free. You can’t put it in a free store because there is too much of it. We overwhelm our ability to consume in this territory and frankly across the continent. It costs money to dispose of the things that we buy, the things that we get rid of and cast off in favour of the new stuff that we buy. That cost is tangible, and it is something that we have inherited because, in the past, we haven’t done it well. We have decades of garbage — nauseous substances that are sitting in our rural communities. We are trying to wrangle that. I know that my colleague, since his election in 2016, has been working with this file to bring a little bit more order out of the chaos.

Municipalities are continuing to evaluate liability and other factors in order to implement regional facilities. Overall, our collective vision with municipalities is for sustainable solid-waste management. It includes improving waste-management facility operational standards, implementing user-pay across the territory — because, as I said, Madam Chair, garbage is not cheap and it comes at a cost — enhancing the designated materials regulations, implementing extended producer responsibility where possible, and ensuring an efficient and effective recycling system.

We are making changes, Madam Chair, and we are asking all Yukoners to join us as we improve how we deal with solid waste as a territory. With collective efforts, we can, and should, reduce waste, maximize the life of our landfills, which is vitally important, and limit the negative impact that we are having on the environment. I know that we have all committed to that in this House, and this is part of that. There is a cost that is going to come through these initiatives.

Phase 1 of our plan, Madam Chair, was for all Yukon government sites in Whitehorse and the Whitehorse periphery to have tipping fees, gates, and staff in place. We did that by August 1, 2020, and that is now implemented. We have done

that. It was a colossal effort, and it is a difficult transition for people to have to start to pay to get rid of the stuff that they have accumulated over their lifetimes, but you can’t just go chucking it in a pit anymore and expect it to go away, like magic. There is a cost to these things.

Phase 2, which is where we’re at now, includes tipping fees, gates, and staff in place in all other Yukon government rural sites, except for Old Crow and Beaver Creek. The reason for this is that people will go to some of these sites and chuck their stuff out to avoid paying \$5 to get rid of it out of the back of their truck, or whatever it is, in the dump. They’ll drive 50 or 60 kilometres to avoid paying a \$5 fee.

So, we have to have consistency across the system, and that’s what we’re striving to achieve, and that’s what phase 2 is all about. Part of that reconciliation will be the closures of the Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, Braeburn, and Keno sites, and we know how difficult that is. I have heard from the member opposite from Kluane and his advocacy for keeping the Silver City site in place, but the object is to close them. I know that it’s a difficult decision for this territory to make, but it’s a necessary decision, and we’re going to move ahead with that.

But before we do that, we want to make sure that we have regional agreements in place with municipalities. We don’t have those agreements in place, and those sites that I just mentioned won’t be closed until we have those agreements in place. We’re going to continue to work with our rural partners to make sure that there’s a consistent approach to garbage, to waste and refuse, and to recycling across the territory. That’s difficult. Absolutely, it’s a difficult adjustment for people in the territory to make, but it’s an important adjustment for people in the territory to make, because frankly, this is stuff that we’re buying and have to get rid of. We have to pay for that, and we have to make sure that the territory can sustain the cost of the garbage that we’re getting rid of in the territory.

I’m sure that you’ll have more questions, and I’m happy to answer them.

Ms. McLeod: Indeed I do. Just a quick question on why Old Crow and Beaver Creek are exempt from the current work that the government is doing by way of closing landfills — and, of course, that we are not going to close Old Crow and Beaver Creek is what I’m guessing — but insofar as applying the tipping fees and the staffing?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to thank the Member for Watson Lake for that question because it’s a good one and it allows me a little bit of clarification.

The member opposite asked why Beaver Creek and Old Crow were exempt. As I stated in my previous answer, they are not exempt. There are no exemptions here. We are striving for a consistent approach throughout the territory. There are no exemptions here. This is trying to find a consistent approach throughout the territory, and Old Crow and Beaver Creek are captured in that effort. There is a phased approach. I talked about phase 1 — achieved — tick box — thanks to the good work of my colleague, my predecessor, the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes.

Phase 2 is in process, and it involves all the things that I talked about in phase 2. It is challenging, but we are working

through those challenges. It actually came at a request of the AYC to get a sustainable solid-waste approach across the territory. That is where it came from. The Association of Yukon Communities said, "We want this to happen." So, we dove in. It is important that we have a consistent approach across the territory. There is an advisory board and their recommendations are public, thanks to the transparency of my predecessor in this role.

But we were talking about Old Crow and Beaver Creek. They are not exempt, but they are part of phase 3, which is scheduled to be brought into effect in April 2022, just like the other ones were in April 2021 and April 2020. But like everything, COVID has had its effects on this thing, and these are challenging issues to deal with at the best of times, so we are going to work through the difficulties. We know what the difficulties in Old Crow are.

Madam Chair, you will know this better than anybody. How do you get solid waste out of Old Crow? It has to be flown out or brought out on an ice road or something. It is very, very challenging, so it takes a little more imagination and a little more elbow grease to get a consistent approach in a community like Old Crow. Same thing with Beaver Creek, up the north highway. Their landfill is further out of town. It is further out — it is one of the furthest communities that we have in the territory anyway — and apparently their landfill site is somewhere in no-man's land between the US and Canada border, further complicating things for us. You have to cross the border when you go to the dump, or so I am led to believe.

So, there are no exemptions. Beaver Creek and Old Crow will be brought into this plan. It's just going to take a little bit more time and a little bit more work with those communities to make it happen, and we're committed to doing that. As I said earlier, garbage is expensive. The waste that we produce in this consumer society we live in is costly, and we have to start accounting for the costs of getting rid of the stuff that we no longer want.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that clarification.

The minister recommitted to the closure of the transfer stations at Johnsons Crossing, Braeburn, Silver City, and Keno City and is proceeding full speed ahead on that.

Can the minister explain to the House how the shutting down of rural waste transfer stations is consistent with supporting those small businesses that support those rural transfer stations or how shutting those transfer stations down is consistent with, for instance, the aging-in-place strategy and keeping seniors in their homes? They depend on these transfer stations — if the minister could just comment on that, please.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This is an adjustment for Yukoners, especially Yukoners living in the catchment areas of a regional landfill catchment area served by a much larger landfill and yet inconveniently betwixt and between — currently having landfills nearby that are very expensive to operate — for a very small population. So, we're looking at changing the model, and we're working with the communities contained within the catchment to come up with a plan for the operation of these landfills.

You can imagine that, if we had one of these very small landfills like Braeburn, Silver City, Keno, or any others that we've mentioned — Braeburn and Silver City are probably better examples — where we had no controls on it and people were dumping noxious substances because we just can't afford to have them gated and managed like we would the other ones.

We're trying to set up a consistent approach throughout the territory. You have people from, say, Haines Junction going up to Silver City, dumping stuff in there, and then the government has to then truck it all the way back down to the facility where it should have gone in the first place.

It is one of those things that people are going to have to adjust to. We are working with the communities and the regional centres to make sure that this helps the individuals. It is not going to help. It is going to be an inconvenience. There is no doubt about it, but there are ways. Yukoners are industrious, they are innovative, and they adapt to things like this, and maybe there will be garbage pooling. Community Services may be able to put dumpsters out there that will be collected and brought into those facilities on a regular basis to make sure that these are done, but we are working with the regional centres to make sure that we have solutions for these residents who are caught by the closure of something that was very convenient — a legacy landfill that really now has to be shuttered as part of the consistent approach that we are striving for throughout the whole territory.

We have heard from the members opposite and we have heard from citizens, from Yukoners, how inconvenient this is. We are listening to these things, and we understand that, but we also understand that maintaining these expensive sites — boutique landfills — in small areas with very little population just is not something that we can sustain any longer.

I think that is a good point, too. It is not just about the money either. There is an environmental cost to having landfills that are not monitored properly, where people go and throw whatever — used oils. All of these things have an environmental cost — very extraordinary environmental cost — and we have to start to manage that better for the benefit of all citizens.

Ms. McLeod: Madam Chair, we have heard a number of concerns about tipping fees at rural solid-waste facilities. Can the minister please explain how the fee rates were set and whether or not there was any effort to coordinate these fees with municipalities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I don't think that the member opposite was suggesting that the rates set at these regional land use facilities are set willy-nilly or fast and loose. They were done in concert with the communities that they are serving. Deep Creek, for example — the rates that we charge residents of Deep Creek are the same rates that we charge in Whitehorse. There is no difference. So, that's a deal if you're out in Deep Creek. It's not a deal if you're driving from Whitehorse to Deep Creek, which used to happen. People would take their stuff out to Deep Creek and dump it because it was free and they didn't want to pay a dollar a bag here in Whitehorse.

If you go out to Deep Creek and take your garbage there, it's a buck a bag; bring it into Whitehorse and it's a buck a bag.

What we're seeing is that there is less garbage going to Deep Creek, because there are fewer people driving out to Deep Creek to dump their stuff from Whitehorse, which we would then have to truck back in. The cost for us to manage the garbage from Deep Creek, as the government, is about five times what the residents are paying in tipping fees. So, a dollar-for-dollar amount — you pay a dollar to dump a bag of garbage in Whitehorse, and it costs the government about \$4 to \$5 to actually deal with that garbage.

So, by keeping the garbage from being trucked out to Deep Creek and then trucked back in by YG, it is a significant cost to the government, and we are saving that money. So, that is the method to what we're doing, and it aligns with the regional facilities. I don't have the number at the moment for what it would be in Haines Junction, or whatever it could be comparatively speaking, but in Whitehorse, it is the same as it is in the regional landfill. That is how it is working; it aligns with the closest facility. The fees are the same.

Ms. McLeod: Yes, there was nothing really — I was just asking how the fees are set. For that one landfill at Deep Creek, I gather that it is based on the Whitehorse rate. I know, for instance, that some landfills around the territory — those rates are double what Whitehorse charges, so the question was whether or not there has been any effort to coordinate the fees throughout the territory so that Yukoners are paying the same rate, but we can come back to that another day.

We also understand that, recently, it was decided that fees would be waived this coming weekend for the Whitehorse area. However, there has been little or no communication about this. In fact, the former Minister of Community Services has posted on Facebook that more notice was needed.

So, will the minister consider extending the waiving of the fees for more than just this weekend?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I begin with a correction because, inside Whitehorse, a buck a bag does cover the cost of garbage. Whitehorse itself, the municipal landfill here in the city, does recover costs. It's the outside periphery places where it doesn't cost a buck a bag; it's significantly more expensive — so just a point of clarification to correct the record. But Whitehorse is covering its costs. It is places like Deep Creek that cost a lot more than a buck a bag. Nevertheless, that's what they're charged.

How are these rates set throughout the territory? They are set by municipalities for their own landfills. Dawson City and the other municipalities set the rates for tipping fees within their landfills, and those are the fees that will be charged by YG in the periphery site that we run. It is municipalities setting the rates, and YG will match the rates that municipalities deem necessary to run their landfills responsibly. That's how it's being set.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that clarification, but can the minister answer my question regarding the extension of the free weekend of garbage deposits beyond one weekend?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It's all very exciting in this new role. You are learning all sorts of things all the time.

The order just came in to my colleague and me — I think I'm on day 10 — and we signed the order for this tipping fee holiday, as of, I believe, late Friday. The point being is that we have partners in this in Whitehorse — the City of Whitehorse and the Whitehorse landfill. I'm going to be talking to my colleagues at the City of Whitehorse about promoting the tipping-fee free weekend. The reason why it's happening this weekend is because that's when Whitehorse decided to hold their tipping fee holiday, and we're aligning with the City of Whitehorse for precisely the reasons that I've been talking about this afternoon — so you don't have people from Whitehorse driving out and dumping their garbage in one of the satellite landfills, and then we have to truck it all back in again.

Unfortunately, no, we will not be extending the date beyond this weekend. We are aligning with Whitehorse so that all garbage is treated equally. We will work with our partners in the future to publicize this. I will say this, on behalf of CS, that we have been publicizing the tipping-fee free weekend — a little tongue twister — locally, with posters and that type of thing, but probably more can and should be done. I'm certainly in support of that, and we will work with our partners at Whitehorse and with my extraordinary crew at CS to do that promotion in the future.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the minister for that. I am going to move on a little bit here. I want to talk about infrastructure and development.

In the Village of Haines Junction, they have been undergoing a number of years of water and sewer upgrades, and they are currently awaiting the award of phase 3. There was and is a concern that, due to a number of factors, including the current wait time for procuring materials, they will not see any work done during this construction season. The minister, in a previous answer when we first started today, had indicated that this project was one that was delayed due to the election.

Can the minister confirm that this project will be awarded in time to get the work done this year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I hope that I have this right because I may have misheard the member opposite. You are talking about in-ground infrastructure in Haines Junction — Marshall Creek. Is that correct? I am seeing a nod.

So, working with my officials — I do not know what information the member opposite has. If she has information that she is willing to share with me, I will gladly look at it, but the information that we have is that there is no delay on this project. There are no expected delays on this project this year. As far as the Pelly pool goes, there are no expected delays on that one either. We are within the time period with the contractor honouring its agreements, so we are confident that both projects are slated to go ahead this year. I have not heard anything to the contrary.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for his response.

In the minister's opening remarks, he was referencing the development of building lots in Watson Lake. I would like the minister to expand on that a little bit and tell me what the plan is. I can say that today was the first time that I have ever heard that this is a phased approach to lot development for the Frances Avenue extension and the release of 10 lots this year. I would

like a confirmation of the stage of development for those lots and whether or not the government is able to confirm that 10 lots will hit the market this year.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am sure that it is no different for my good colleague from Watson Lake — when I was out on the hustings a few weeks ago, housing was the issue that was consistent at the doors; it was the issue that we heard about most often.

We are committed to providing the supply that the territory needs to meet the demands that we see in the territory and, by so doing, lessen costs, allow businesses to recruit people, if they have to, to come out here. We have other initiatives, like the universal childcare program, to free labour within the territory to come back to the labour pool, and by so doing, not have to house those employees, but we do have a supply-and-demand issue in the territory that we're addressing.

In Watson Lake, we have completed feasibility planning and design for various country, urban residential, and industrial development projects. We're awaiting Watson Lake council's direction pending the official community plan completion — Liard First Nation challenges. The target is the spring and summer of 2021 for tender and construction of country residential lots and small urban residential subdivisions.

That's the plan. That's where we're at. We're targeting, for Watson Lake, the Frances, Thompson, Garden — 25 lots in 2022-23. So, next year, we have slated for lots to be released: 25 lots in Watson Lake, for Frances, Thompson, and Garden Creek.

Ms. McLeod: The Frances Avenue extension was reported to be in line for the release of 23 urban building lots this year. So, the minister indicated in his opening remarks that this was a phased approach to development for Frances Avenue. If the minister can confirm that 10 urban building lots on Frances Avenue will be released this year, I would like to hear that — or not.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said in my earlier answer, we completed feasibility planning and design for various country, urban residential, industrial development projects within the community of Watson Lake. We are awaiting and working with both the Watson Lake council and the Liard First Nation on direction from those two entities — those two governments.

At the moment, the information that I'm getting is that we have: at Frances, 10 lots, urban residential; in Thompson, country residential, 10 lots; and in Garden Creek, industrial, five lots. Those are slated for development in 2022-23.

It looks like, to my mind — and we're going to look into this with my departmental officials — that we will have 25 lots, both urban residential, country residential, and industrial lots, at those three sites in 2022-23.

I don't have any information about lots being released in Watson Lake this year. We will check with our partner governments at Watson Lake — the Watson Lake community as well as the Liard First Nation — about where we're at with these lot developments.

Ms. McLeod: I'll certainly be reporting back to my mayor and council, who will be very disappointed to hear this — I can tell you. But I want to thank the officials for joining us

today, and I would like to turn things over to my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King.

Ms. White: So, one of the questions that I've asked often — well, actually, in the last four years for sure and probably the years before that — was about emergency planning and sharing those plans with others. I know what your predecessor had to say and so here's a new day.

I'm sure everyone's familiar with the Wood Buffalo municipality — so the municipality of Fort McMurray. There was a fair-sized disaster there, as some might remember, when there was a forest fire.

On the website, when you go to the municipality of Fort McMurray, it talks about the regional emergency management plan, and it says that — it is described as "REMP". It says that the REMP is not designed to address all hazards, risks, and community vulnerabilities. It is adaptable to different emergency events and flexible to meet the needs of a municipality with regional communities.

The reason I bring this up is because, whenever we ask about emergency planning in this House, we are told: "Well, things could change, the plan might change, and we can't give people information because it might not be adequate." So, it is important to note that this plan that they have tied to their website is 88 pages long, and the reason I say this is because it has an incredibly different series of plans, under different circumstances. I highlighted one section and so, for Hansard, I will send them the link, but it says: "The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo is no stranger to disasters and can attest to the importance of emergency preparedness and collaborative resilient communities. Given the ever-changing emergency management environment, Council and Administration determined the need to develop a Regional Emergency Management Plan (REMP) inclusive of our urban and rural communities. The REMP is developed with the clear objective of addressing both natural and human-induced hazards and disasters as these are increasing in both frequency and severity across the world resulting in ever-growing human suffering and economic cost."

So, Madam Chair, the reason why I bring this up is that, in these 88 pages, it gives examples of what might have to happen during emergencies. It talks about different situations, different emergency plans, different things. The reason why I am highlighting it is, on a regular basis — for sure in the City of Whitehorse when people say, "What is the plan during an emergency?" We are told, "Well, it depends on the emergency and it depends where it is happening." I appreciate that, but I also know that, during times of crisis, if we were to reach out and try to put something out — I remember 9/11. I remember when downtown was being evacuated. That was an exciting time. I remember when the former Member for Mayo-Tatchun, Jim Treder, was a principal and he talked about what happened when his school had to get evacuated and how that caused mass panic across families. It was upsetting.

The reason why I want to highlight the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and their emergency plan is that they say it doesn't take every hazard, every plan, into account, but they want people to have an idea.

So, if someone wants to read to have an idea of what their plans are, there is this document online. It gives people a bit of an idea. For example, I did not know until a number of years ago that the Canada Games Centre could be our gathering spot — absolutely. Some people in Riverdale know that you can cross the dam if you need to. We understand that emergencies can happen. We understand that forest fires or floods can happen in different places — all these different things — but the reason I am bringing up the emergency plan and sharing it with people is so they have an idea of what might be expected of them in that time of crisis.

There is an entire six minutes before we move on. I am going to put another thing on the record.

I have talked often about seniors and vulnerable people in times of emergency. I bring this up because, for example, 600 College Drive has an elevator and has three floors, and there have been times over the years where I have advocated to try to get people with mobility issues off the third floor to the first floor because, when the power goes out, the elevator does not operate. We know that there are problems with the Closeleigh Manor elevator. We know that there are problems with elevators in the territory, to be perfectly honest. One of the concerns is: If we have a large-scale emergency, what happens to vulnerable populations?

Interestingly enough, again, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has a vulnerable persons registry. You can choose to sign up. It is free, it is voluntary, and it is a confidential service. It is aimed at improving the safety of residents living at home who would be at greater risk during emergencies. The VPR provides key information to local emergency services about vulnerable people within the region during local, large-scale emergencies. The reason why I am highlighting this is that, when we talk about emergency preparedness, I often ask about cases of fire. Do we have fire drills in seniors complexes or apartment buildings? Do we talk about what to do in the case of an emergency?

When I was a kid, we used to talk about escape plans from fire in your house. It was something that we did in school. I don't know if my nephews are still doing it.

I just wanted to highlight this one area in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, or Fort McMurray. We know that they had a large-scale emergency, and this is what they developed after it — in recognition that, in times of crisis, if people have a bit of an idea of what they need to do, it is helpful.

Madam Chair, I look forward to having further conversations about this, because today is unfortunately just not that time.

Seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. White that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Hon. 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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. 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. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled May 18, 2021:

35-1-3

Report on Subsistence, Travel & Accommodations of Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly 2020-2021 (Speaker Harper)

35-1-4

Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board 2020 Annual Report (Mostyn)

The following documents were filed May 18, 2021:

35-1-1

Standing committees of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, letter re (dated May 3, 2021) from Currie Dixon, Leader of the Official Opposition, to Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier, and Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (Dixon)

35-1-2

Standing committees of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, letter re (dated May 10, 2021) from Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier, to Currie Dixon, Leader of the Official Opposition (Dixon)

35-1-3

CASA (confidence and supply agreement), e-mail re
(dated May 6, 2021) from Currie Dixon, Leader of the Official
Opposition, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (Dixon)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 6

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, May 19, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin

DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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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, May 19, 2021 — 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, I wonder if we could all please welcome several guests who are here today for our tribute to Yukon Mining and Geology Week. We have with us Anne Turner, the executive director of the Yukon Mining Alliance. She is also the president and founder of Yukon Women in Mining.

We have Leneath Yanson, project manager for the Yukon Mining Alliance. We have Randy Lewis, circumpolar advisor for CSR Management Inc., and Darlene Laureano, also from CSR Management.

From the Yukon Chamber of Mines, we have President Ed Peart. We have the executive director, Samson Hartland — and also a city councillor. We have directors from the board: Nikolett Kovacs and Loralee Johnstone. We have executive policy analyst Brianne Warner and the president of the Yukon Prospectors Association, Grant Allan.

Could we welcome them, please?

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Road Safety Week

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to pay tribute to National Road Safety Week, the Canada Safety Council's annual campaign to raise awareness about the behaviours that put drivers, passengers, and other road users most at risk.

It is a national call to action for Canadians to take greater precautions and adopt safer habits when behind the wheel. Too many lives are lost and people injured every year in Canada because of bad decisions, particularly when it comes to impaired driving, distracted driving, and speeding.

It is no coincidence that National Road Safety Week falls during the Victoria Day long weekend — a weekend when Canada's roads and highways see a surge in traffic volumes.

As Canadians celebrate, it is also a time when we see a rise in the number and severity of accidents due to impaired driving. Alcohol, drugs, and excessive speed are not the only menaces that we need to worry about, however. Distracted driving is now the number one killer on Canadian roads. According to the Canada Safety Council, texting while driving makes a crash or a near crash 23 times more likely.

As difficult as it may be to not take that call or to ignore that text, it is important that Yukoners do not pick up their phones. If you are driving, leave the phone alone.

Mr. Speaker, it's up to each and every one of us to take responsibility and make safe driving habits a top priority, not just this week but each and every time we get behind the wheel.

As a government, we're also doing what we can to make Yukon's roads and highways safer. For instance, we're rewriting the *Motor Vehicles Act* to accommodate advances in technology and to reflect best practices.

We're working with Mothers Against Drunk Driving — or drinking and driving — the RCMP, and other local stakeholders to combat the danger of alcohol- and drug-impaired driving, and together with the RCMP and National Safety Code officers, we're conducting road checks of commercial vehicles throughout the territory to ensure that they are operating in a safe manner. The safety and well-being of Yukoners remains a priority for government.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish all Yukoners a safe and fun-filled summer. While enjoying all that our beautiful territory has to offer, please be mindful of construction zones, observe posted speed limits, and be cautious of wildlife on the highway or on the right-of-way. As Yukoners, please watch out for one another.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize May 18 to 24 as Canada Road Safety Week, driven by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police as an initiative to increase public compliance with safe driving measures.

We are all responsible, as drivers, to ensure that our roads are safe for other drivers, passengers, and pedestrians. Most accidents are preventable, and drivers must be aware that the choices they make before and while on the road are what determine the risk of accident for themselves and others. Impaired driving is unfortunately still a problem across this country and the main cause of vehicular accidents. Alcohol, drugs, and fatigue all lead to impairment. Distracted driving is another leading cause of accidents and has finally been acknowledged as such and legislated across the country.

Another law that has come into effect in many jurisdictions is "slow down, move over". The Official Opposition has been pushing for such legislation, as well, here in the Yukon. This legislation would require drivers to slow down and move over when passing emergency vehicles and other workers such as tow-truck drivers, carrier compliance vehicles, electrical workers, and others who are at risk by just doing their jobs on the side of the road. We will continue to advocate for this legislation on behalf of those workers and urge Yukoners to remember the importance of "slow down, move over" when passing vehicles with lights flashing.

This week, and always, take a look at the decisions that you make as a driver and make sure that those decisions are the best for everyone sharing the road with you.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to National Road Safety Week. Think about how much time Yukoners spend on the road, how proud we are of our highways, our roads — big and small. For our communities, they are our lifeline. They also connect us to the places we love so much — our campgrounds, our cabins, and our tourism operators. They are our access to rivers and mountains and forests. I imagine that we were all alarmed to hear the results of Operation Corridor — a blitz of commercial vehicle road checks done by the RCMP and Highways and Public Works in early May.

There were charges for fatigue and impaired driving, speeding, poorly secured loads, and careless driving. This highlights the need for a week like this one — a time when we pause to think about road safety. For most of us, driving is something that we do every day. We don't even hesitate as we get in our vehicles and make our way through our towns and across our territory. It is only when there is a tragedy that we think of the risks.

So, today, I encourage us all to pause and remember that it is up to all of us to keep each other safe. Let's work together to keep our roads safe for all Yukoners.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon Mining and Geology Week and National Mining Week

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today to pay tribute to rocks — to pay tribute to the Yukon Mining and Geology Week taking place this year from May 31 to June 4.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon Mining and Geology Week provides an opportunity to share information about exploration and mining with Yukoners, to think about the history of mining and the future that we will shape together. This year, the Yukon Chamber of Mines, Yukon Women in Mining, and the Yukon Geological Survey will partner with the Klondike Placer Miners' Association, Yukon Producers Group, Yukon Prospectors Association, and the Government of Yukon to commemorate and celebrate Yukon's 125-year mining history.

Yukoners can discover geology, historic sites, and iconic places. The public will also be able to virtually explore projects and mines through online tours and videos. Mining and Geology Week helps Yukoners to better understand the mineral sector and how it shapes our territory.

The event is also an opportunity to share information with Yukon students. Many events are fun, educational, hands-on, and include the annual "Where?" challenge — a contest that challenges kids to discover where their stuff comes from. Youth who take an interest in geology can now train for mining-related careers at Yukon University.

Another important part of Mining and Geology Week is sharing of information. Data on mineral exploration and production highlights in the territory are published every year by the Yukon Geological Survey. For anyone with an interest in rocks, these publications are an invaluable source of information.

Mining and exploration contribute significantly to Yukon's economy by supporting local businesses and

communities throughout the territory and providing good-paying jobs to Yukoners. The mining industry provides many opportunities for Yukoners and we look ahead to a future for the industry where these opportunities continue to grow and develop. Working with First Nations and municipalities, we are building a foundation for a sustainable mining industry that protects the environment, that provides tangible benefits for our communities, and that aligns with the vision in Yukon's *Our Clean Future* strategy.

The Yukon's mineral sector will play a critical role in shifting our energy economy to a renewable energy future.

To wrap up, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the folks at the Yukon Chamber of Mines and everyone else who has done a fantastic job organizing the upcoming events. I encourage all Yukoners to take time to join the activities put on by the Chamber of Mines and the Yukon Geological Survey during Mining and Geology Week.

On behalf of the Liberal government, happy 125th anniversary for mining week in the Yukon — happy quasquicentennial and happy rocks.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Mining Week which takes place each year during the second week in May. We celebrate the importance of mining to the lives of Canadians, Yukoners, and acknowledge the incredible contributions of mining through our history.

The last couple of years have been a little different here in the Yukon, forcing us to press pause on some of our usual much-anticipated events. Yukon's Mining and Geology Week — hosted by the Chamber of Mines, Yukon Women in Mining, the Yukon Geological Survey, and other industry partners — is well known among Yukon kids who, in past years, have looked forward to smashing geodes and climbing on equipment, among other things.

This year, Yukon Mining and Geology Week will take place from May 31 to June 4. Industry and partners will be hosting a variety of activities, including a scavenger hunt and field trips to the Whitehorse Copperbelt.

The Yukon has 125 years of rich history in mining and exploration. The benefits of mining on the territory, both direct and indirect, spread across all areas of our economy and throughout each community. Operating mines, including placer operations, employ hundreds of Yukoners. More are put to work during the exploration and drilling phases.

Revenues from mining in the territory flow through our communities to our First Nations and allow significant investments, not only in infrastructure but in educational and social areas.

Mining has shaped the Yukon into what it is today, driving innovation, promoting environmental awareness and well-being throughout the territory. We are proud to celebrate mining as a foundation of Yukon's incredible history and look forward to future years of mining and exploration across the territory.

Thank you to our mining industry and industry partners — some of them are here today — for their work and dedication to mining, exploration, sustainability, and our environment. Let us just hope that your licences and permits come in on time and your gold pans are full.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to encourage folks to pan the riches of this year's Yukon Mining and Geology Week. For 11 years, the Yukon Chamber of Mines, Yukon Women in Mining, and the Yukon Geological Survey, with their partners from the Klondike Placer Miners' Association, the Yukon Producers Group, Yukon Prospectors Association, and both the Yukon Department of Economic Development and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, as well as the Department of Education, have worked together to showcase Yukon's mining history.

This year, in celebration of Yukon's 125-year mining history, events have been organized. I invite Yukoners of all ages to safely explore the territory to discover geology, historic sites, iconic places, as well as virtually visit exploration projects and mines through online tours and videos.

Schools and families, friends and mining week adventurers will be able to share their Yukon Mining and Geology Week explorations online, showcasing their discoveries on Facebook and Instagram.

I thank my colleagues for the information and history of the week that they have shared, and I am going to drill down to an event that has captured my imagination.

So, if you are like me, you love a good scavenger hunt. The Yukon Geological Survey has planned one heck of a Yukon scavenger hunt where you will learn about geological locations and occurrences, rocks and minerals, iconic places and paths, businesses, services, virtual projects, and, of course, mines. This event has been organized to allow participation from every corner of our territory, both in person and virtually. Mining and Geology Week will have exhilarating prize categories, and the Chamber of Mines has hit the trail to support local businesses in search of a bonanza of exciting prizes. So, if you plan on doing one activity during Mining and Geology Week, I suggest you get ready to explore your own backyard through this year's scavenger hunt.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I have two letters for tabling. The first is from the Yukon Real Estate Association to the Premier, dated May 13, requesting consultation on the proposed rent control, and the second is from the Yukon Real Estate Association to the Premier, dated May 17, noting that no consultation occurred on the rent control.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have two documents for tabling. The first is a transcript from yesterday's Question Period regarding

procurement, where the Member for Copperbelt South quoted inaccurately comments from a recent debate. The second is a transcript from the actual debate that occurred in the recent election and clearly demonstrates that what the member opposite said yesterday is inaccurate.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to make improving Takhini River Road a high priority and move forward with a major upgrade to the roadbed, ditches, and road surface.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with commercial garbage haulers in the City of Whitehorse to restore commercial garbage service to customers on the Mayo Road, Takhini Hot Springs Road, and Ibex Valley areas.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that patients' voices are heard on the decisions with regard to coverage for medications by creating a patient advisory committee to advise the formulary working group.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Dempster fibre project

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, our Liberal government is investing in infrastructure to support our communities and help grow our economy. Today, I am pleased to provide an update on the Dempster fibre project. An 800-kilometre fibre optic line will run along the Dempster Highway between Dawson City, Yukon and Inuvik, Northwest Territories.

Reliable telecommunications are vital to diversifying our economy and helping Yukoners participate fully in the digital economy. This project will provide Yukoners and communities across the north with access to more reliable telecommunication and Internet services.

ROHL Global Networks, in partnership with Dagoo Services, has been awarded a \$67-million contract for the construction of the Dempster fibre line. I am particularly happy to share that more than 20 percent of the contract value will be subcontracted to First Nation businesses. This has been a long time coming, Mr. Speaker, and through our work on this important project, we are writing a new story — one that takes ambitious groundbreaking steps forward in many areas.

This is the first transboundary infrastructure project led by the Yukon. Since January 2019, we have worked closely through consultation and engagement with the eight First Nation and indigenous groups whose traditional territory the fibre line will cross here in Yukon and in the Northwest Territories. This engagement has occurred at all stages of project development, from inception to project design, from procurement methods to job opportunities. As a result of these discussions, project operations will ensure protection of heritage and social and cultural resources while minimizing environmental impacts with special consideration for the protection of permafrost, wetlands, caribou, and nesting birds.

We have provided training courses to First Nation and indigenous citizens in both wildlife and environmental monitoring. This certification, recognized by the Environmental Careers Organization Canada, will lead to the graduates having employment opportunities during the construction of the line and for their future career. This project is the first of its size in the Yukon that incorporated a negotiated procurement plan that will result in direct employment and training opportunities for First Nation citizens and subcontracting opportunities for First Nation businesses.

Construction of the fibre line will begin this summer in Dawson City and is scheduled to be completed in 2024. This is an important milestone for the Dempster fibre project. Investing in more reliable telecommunications and Internet service for Yukon communities will help Yukoners to participate fully in the digital economy. Moreover, it will also bring real economic benefits to northern communities as well as employment opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, this project will ensure that northern communities have Internet and cellphone services that they can rely on even in the event of a cut to the fibre line like the one that occurred last week.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement today.

It is important for Yukoners to know the timeline related to this project over the last five years under the Liberal government in order to understand the massive mismanagement of this project by the Liberals.

In 2016, the project was ready to go. In fact, the Liberal election platform from 2016 even promised to — and I quote: "... accelerate the completion of the fibre optic redundancy project." In 2017, the former Deputy Premier decided to make his mark on the file and, instead of accelerating it, he paused it. In fact, he even took the bold move of attacking Northwestel in the media. To quote from a February 2017 *Yukon News* article — and I quote: "... Northwestel hopes to apply for permits in March and begin construction on the Dempster line in the winter.

"Pillai said that's news to him. He accused Northwestel of taking a 'cavalier approach' in assuming the Dempster project is going ahead."

Shortly afterward, the former Deputy Premier iced the plan and went on and did a study to look at building a redundant line

toward Skagway rather than through the Dempster. He did this despite this study already having been done years earlier.

Moving along on the timeline of mismanagement by the Liberals, in 2018, the Premier said — and I quote: "... you can be guaranteed that the route has been picked and the work will be done this summer." Of course, 2018 went by without the work being done that summer. In the summer of 2018, the government released a fact sheet about the project that said construction would start in 2019. Later that year, the Highways and Public Works minister said that work would begin in the fall of 2019. Of course, we went through 2019 without the work beginning. In 2019, the Liberal government issued a newsletter on the project, which stated that construction was supposed to start in March 2020 — again, another missed timeline by the Liberals.

Moving along, fall 2019 documents sent to the Mackenzie Valley Review Board changed the construction date yet again — this time to spring of 2020 — and they further said that it would be completed in two years.

So, the Liberal government's own environmental assessment documents said that construction would start in spring of 2020 and that it would be completed by 2022. Well, we went through the spring of 2020 without construction. We know that construction will not be completed in 2022.

Moving along to last year, the Liberal government submitted a YESAB application in the fall of 2020. That application says that construction is now expected to be completed in 2025.

The timeline on this project does not paint a pretty picture for the Liberals. Year after year, they continue to miss timelines — at least half a dozen timelines that they have missed with respect to this project — and I think it is important to note that every single one of these timelines are ones that they themselves committed to.

Unfortunately, as a result of these Liberal delays and mismanagement, our territory is still vulnerable to telecommunications outages like the one that we experienced last week.

So, I appreciate the new Minister of Highways and Public Works telling us that construction will now be completed in 2024, but, of course, you will have to forgive Yukoners for being skeptical as the last two ministers in charge of the Dempster fibre project missed every single timeline that they set for themselves.

Ms. Tredger: As mentioned, last week's interruption of Internet service was a reminder to all Yukoners of the importance of the Dempster fibre line project.

While for some folks it might be a good reason to take a night off from the latest Netflix show or to send the kids to play outside, interruptions of service like these can have much more serious consequences. From our 911 service to any financial transaction that requires a credit card, Yukoners depend on reliable infrastructure to conduct their day-to-day lives and to respond to emergencies.

I would also like to note that this project is a very long time coming. We've been talking about it for 10 years. It was first

talked about and promised by a Yukon Party government, but little actual progress took place. The previous Liberal government also saw this project being delayed, so it is a relief that work will actually start on it this summer.

It is also important to note that this project will improve our telecommunications infrastructure, not only in Whitehorse but in many communities along the route that will have the redundancy required to prevent outages, as we saw last week, once the project is complete.

We're happy to hear about the work that has been done with the First Nations whose traditional territory is affected by this project and that economic, cultural, and environmental considerations have been at the centre of these discussions.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have not been the Minister of Highways and Public Works for long, but I do know the history of this file.

During their time in government, Yukon Party started looking into different fibre routes, but nothing happened beyond that. During the 2016 election, the former Yukon Party leader stated that the fibre line was in the works. That was not true as there was no plan, no consultation had been done, and there was no budget. In short, the Yukon Party never got it done.

It wasn't until our Liberal government was elected that we made real headway. Less than five years after taking office, our Liberal government has secured funding with the Government of Canada for nearly \$60 million, negotiated a deal with Northwestel to operate and maintain the line at no cost to government, secured the permits, and gotten shovels in the ground. Compare that to 14 years under the Yukon Party when no progress was made. If this is not accelerating the project under a Liberal government, then what is?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order. The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: It's all right. Our Liberal government is investing in infrastructure to support our communities and to help grow our economy. We are pleased to be moving this project forward. Reliable telecommunications are vital for diversifying our economy and helping Yukoners participate fully in our digital economy. This project will provide Yukoners and communities across the north with access to more reliable telecommunications and Internet services.

Construction of the fibre line will begin this summer in Dawson City and is scheduled to be complete in 2024. Investing in more reliable telecommunications and Internet services for Yukon communities will help Yukoners participate fully in the digital economy. It will bring real economic benefits to northern communities as well as employment opportunities. This project will ensure that northern communities have Internet and cellphone service that they can rely on, even in the event of a cut to the fibre line like the one that occurred last week.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 vaccination verification measures — protection of privacy

Mr. Cathers: Two weeks ago, the government announced that they would be relaxing border restrictions on May 25. That date is now just six days away. But, like many things from the Liberal-NDP coalition, the details in the implementation plan are left to the last minute. Yukoners are wondering how government is going to relax border restrictions while balancing safety and protection of privacy.

Yesterday, we learned that the minister did not even consult the privacy commissioner prior to arriving at the decision to make people sign waivers to give access to their private health information. As the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General, why did the minister not think that it was important to consult with the privacy commissioner about accessing people's confidential medical records?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I had the opportunity to answer this yesterday. I also had an opportunity to speak to the media about this yesterday, but here we are again — I'm happy to reiterate what I said regarding the plans going forward.

Unfortunately, the Yukon Party takes a stance that I'm not really understanding. I'm wondering if the Yukon Party supports changes to self-isolation requirements or not. That's not really clear. Complaints come with respect to there being no advance notice, but we have been very clear all along that, in the event that something is recommended by the chief medical officer of health — his recommendations are based on science — it then becomes government's responsibility to consider those, to respond, and to implement them if they are satisfactory.

The process going forward — the criticism often comes that they haven't been told soon enough about things or, if they have been told soon enough about things, they have not been told enough details about them. So, there is really no wining, Mr. Speaker. The truth is that we provide the information to Yukoners as soon as it becomes available, and we are mindful of protecting them at every stage of this process.

Mr. Cathers: The minister did not answer the questions yesterday, and if she is wondering what we are saying, we are reminding the minister that government has an obligation to respect people's rights and the rule of law and to be forthcoming.

May 25 is six days away, and the government's announcement is still short on details. This has become common with the Liberal-NDP coalition, including their haphazard plan for rent control where details were not announced until less than 24 hours before implementation. We have seen it as well with the decision to reverse the Liberal government's cuts to individualized education plans for students. Now we are seeing it with respect to their plans to gain access to private health information of Yukoners.

As we have already noted, the southern border is staffed by private contractors. Under this plan, private contractors will be asking Yukoners questions about private and confidential health information. How will the minister ensure that the

privacy of Yukoners is protected, and what assurance does the minister have that what she is proposing is not against privacy legislation?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government has been committed all along to a one-government approach. That is no different from our response to COVID-19, which has been, no doubt, as Yukoners know, lengthy and complex.

The Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Social Services, and the Department of Community Services, to name just three, are working diligently on the process of implementing the most recent recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. As a result, we are working together to ascertain the expertise that is necessary.

Let us be clear — and what Yukoners deserve to know is that vaccines will need to be verified. That is not just here in the Yukon; it is across the country; it is across the world. With the success of the Yukon vaccines and the success of our opportunities here to keep COVID-19 at bay and to keep Yukoners safe, we are in the enviable position of being very early in that process to determine how that work is done.

We are doing that work with our partners across the territory, across this government, and certainly across Canada and the world to determine how to best implement the opportunity to verify vaccines in the least intrusive way possible.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, the rule of law still matters. Today, privacy commissioners from across the country released a joint statement about proposals such as the one the Liberals are proposing. The statement says — and I quote: “... it is an encroachment on civil liberties that should be taken only after careful consideration.”

It goes on to say this about vaccine passports and similar measures — and I quote: “... must be developed and implemented in compliance with applicable privacy laws. They should also incorporate privacy best practices in order to achieve the highest level of privacy protection...”

It also specifically mentions the importance of consulting with privacy commissioners. Despite this, the minister did not consult with the privacy commissioner. Since she didn’t consult with the privacy commissioner, how can she assure Yukoners that this encroachment on civil liberties will incorporate the highest level of privacy protections as noted in the joint statement by privacy commissioners from across the country or that it is even legal?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I almost don’t know how to go there, to be frank with you. I think that the allegation or the insinuation that somehow the Government of Yukon is acting against the legal interests required is in fact an insinuation, and it’s not clear information for Yukoners. Yukoners deserve clear information, Mr. Speaker, and they deserve facts that are based on science and a government that puts their safety ahead of everything.

We have heard the opposition suggest opening the borders to Alberta earlier. Again, I ask the question whether or not they are supportive of these changes that have been recommended by the chief medical officer of health as we go forward. I hope that it won’t surprise the members opposite that, as a former

Information and Privacy Commissioner, I completely agree with the statement that came out from the information and privacy commissioners across Canada today. It is excellent guidance. It is a great reminder that the privacy interests of Yukoners and Canadians must be paramount. Again, we will be verifying vaccinations so that we can move forward as a country, but we will be doing so in the least intrusive way possible.

Question re: Whistle Bend school

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, last week, when I asked about the Whistle Bend school, the minister said that the project is not delayed. He said — and I quote: “... it is still on time with respect to the planning and ultimately getting shovels in the ground.”

However, in our briefing with the Department of Education, we were told that the school has been delayed because of additional time needed for design work and review processes.

The government Bids and Tenders website also indicates that the project has been delayed four times. Can the minister explain the discrepancy between what he told us and what the Department of Education told us?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the Member for Porter Creek Centre. This is from the perspective of Highways and Public Works. This is the most recent information that I have, but I can certainly return to the department and return to my officials, and I will get back to the member opposite in due course with respect to the schedule. But the information that I provided to the House last week is the most recent information that I have, but as indicated, I will return to the member with updated information as required.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, it is challenging for us and for our constituents when departments provide us different information from what the minister provides us in the Legislature. When I asked about the budget for the school, the minister refused to provide a clear answer. But when the former minister addressed this issue back in March, he said that they have budgeted \$36.5 million for this project.

Can the minister confirm that this is still the current budget for this school?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from the Member for Porter Creek Centre. As I believe I answered last week, in the five-year capital project, money is set aside for schooling priority projects. What I said — I believe — is that \$10.5 million is budgeted in the current construction year for the Whistle Bend school.

Just to confirm as well, Mr. Speaker, building a new school for the community of Whistle Bend is a high priority for our government. We have worked with the Department of Education and Whistle Bend project advisory committee throughout the project to ensure a schematic design that incorporates important community elements. A tender for this design/build project was issued on March 9 of this year. Construction of the school is scheduled to begin in late 2021, with the occupancy of the school planned for the winter of 2023. I know that the vibrant, dynamic, and rapidly growing

community of Whistle Bend — those families are excited to have a state-of-the-art school being built in that community, which will house, I believe, up to 425 students. So, exciting days are ahead for Whistle Bend.

Ms. Clarke: Last week, I asked about the traffic impacts of the new school on Whistle Bend and Mountainview Drive. The minister shrugged and said that was the city's problem. However, the government is building an infrastructure project that will significantly impact traffic. So, they share responsibility.

The document in the tender package for the new school includes a traffic study. That study says that the school will add over 100 new trips in and out of Whistle Bend during the peak hours in the morning. Will the minister commit to working with the city to take measures to alleviate the traffic that Whistle Bend will face as a result of the new school?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for that final question from the Member for Porter Creek Centre. I thank her for her concern and advocacy for her constituents in Whistle Bend.

One of the overarching purposes of building an elementary school in a new subdivision would be, in my view, to reduce the in and out traffic, because you will actually have students who are resident in Whistle Bend and they will be, hopefully — through active transportation — bicycling, walking, or whatever they might be doing, to their school.

It's certainly possible that there will be some traffic coming in, but I would think that the overall impact would be positive because those students would not be leaving Whistle Bend.

Of course, in the big picture, the Department of Highways and Public Works will work closely with the City of Whitehorse. We have a strong working relationship. Ultimately, if different plans have to be made with respect to traffic flows in Whistle Bend, then we will engage in those discussions with the city.

Question re: Social housing

Ms. Tredger: Over the last few years, a growing number of Yukoners have been struggling with homelessness. Many more have insecure housing and are hopping between short-term rentals and couch surfing for months on end as a last resort.

NGOs have worked hard to support Yukoners in these situations, stepping in to fill in the gaps left in government services. Unfortunately, the housing shortage means that many people are living long term in hotel rooms. We have heard countless stories about the often unsafe conditions that these clients face — many of whom are families with young kids.

For years now, the government has been paying hotels every month to house social assistance clients who can't find other more appropriate long-term accommodation. Does the minister know how many people are living long term in hotel rooms in this territory?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First and foremost, I think that it's important that we identify the fact that our government recognizes that stable, affordable housing is foundational to the health and well-being of all Yukoners.

Together with our partners, we continue to increase housing options for all Yukoners, and we are taking a multi-faceted approach to the increase in availability of housing across the territory. I do want to thank the Housing Corporation — as we talk about these challenges around housing — for the great work that is being done right now on the 47-unit building. I want to touch upon the fact that this is, again, going to alleviate the immense pressure that we are seeing in the housing continuum right now — and the amazing work that is being done and the folks who are overseeing that — the project manager — so again, great work being done.

Of course, we saw the development of almost 600 units in the 34th Legislative Assembly — again, taking more pressure off of the immense increase in folks looking for houses.

I also want to touch upon, before I hand it over to my colleague in Health and Social Services — specific to the questions around folks staying at hotel stays. I think it's also going to be very important, as we talk about wait-lists — we haven't talked about that yet, and I look forward to those questions, but I've asked the Housing Corporation to dig into the analytics to that so that we know exactly who is on that housing list as we go forward and discuss it.

Ms. Tredger: I'm glad to hear it acknowledged that having a safe place to live affects every part of a person's life because we know that people in stable housing are mentally and physically healthier. Even though this government frequently speaks of a whole-of-government approach or a one-government approach, it's clear that they haven't approached housing this way.

Yukoners are living in hotel rooms that are not set up for success. They lack basic needs like a full kitchen or safe shared spaces. Every month, the Yukon government pays thousands of dollars to house people in these less than ideal conditions.

Can the minister share how much the government spends to house Yukoners in hotel rooms every year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I do not have the figure that the member opposite is looking for at my fingertips, but I will endeavour to provide it to her.

I should note, and take the opportunity, to speak to Yukoners about the important steps that we have taken to address housing and housing services, including the housing action plan here in the territory. It makes reference to and includes shelters and transitional housing, with particular attention paid to our most vulnerable Yukoners. We're also committed to ending and preventing homelessness through community collaboration initiatives, such as the Safe at Home plan and the Reaching Home program.

There is a clear need for low-barrier housing and shelter services for Yukoners who have complex care needs, and we must have ways to support all people. It is critical. We do, in fact, provide funding to support a number of the shelters in the territory, including the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre's Youth Emergency Shelter, Kaushee's Place, Betty's Haven, the Dawson Women's Shelter and the men's shelter, and the Help and Hope for Families women's shelter in Watson Lake, to name a few.

The Social Services division of Health and Social Services supports the Council of Yukon First Nations, as well, on a project that I will speak about, hopefully, again.

Ms. Tredger: Yukoners who live in hotels face the constant threat of eviction. Unlike regular tenants who must be given three month's notice, people who live in hotels have even less time to find a new place to live. Now, as hotel operators begin to consider reopening to travellers, Yukoners living at these hotels and motels are facing even more uncertainty and even more risk.

Does this government have a plan to protect Yukoners who live in hotels rooms once tourism in the territory picks up?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I just want to touch on the fact that, when we are looking at supports that are in place through the Yukon Housing Corporation — just for information for the public — again, I think now, with our COVID-19 rent assistance, we have helped over 170 households over the last number of months. I will endeavour to get some key information that you have requested on the relationship that we have between the government — whether it be Health and Social Services or housing — and how that relates for individuals who are staying in hotels. It has been a long practice — something that I do not think anybody in the Assembly wants to rely on, but there is a long history of that.

I will just make the statement that I know we can go through the long history of how the territory got here, and I do not think that does any justice. What I will say is that moving forward, it is really about working with my colleagues. I am excited to be doing that work, to be here and be accountable to both opposition benches. We have Community Services, Highways and Public Works, as well as Energy, Mines and Resources — we are really bringing those teams together. We are moving forward on Whistle Bend; we are moving forward on 5th Avenue and Rogers, and we are also supporting indigenous governments, as we saw in the announcement this week from Kwanlin Dün. I think it will take all those things.

Question re: Land use planning

Mr. Kent: I have a number of questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources regarding land use planning.

A little over three years ago, the former Deputy Premier announced what he called “a new way of doing business” when he tied a sub-regional land use plan to the environmental assessment decision document for a mining exploration tote road north of Keno City.

This new way of doing business has so far been a disaster, as the delays have caused uncertainty for companies and actually may have contributed to ATAC Resources refocussing their investments in Nevada this year. According to yukon.ca, the final draft plan for the Beaver River watershed was due in March 2021, which is one year later than what was committed to.

Can the minister tell us if this document is finished and, if so, when will the public have a chance to comment on it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that we continue to work with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun toward finalizing a land use plan for the Beaver River

watershed, located north of Mayo. In November of last year, we denied ATAC Resources a permit to construct a tote road at that time. If ATAC Resources wishes to submit their own road access management plan again, they will need to reconsider the mitigations proposed to address the issues identified in our record of decision. I have had a quick call with ATAC and I look forward to talking with them further.

We will continue to accept and review applications from all claimholders in the area who are planning to carry out exploration programs. All applications will follow the typical assessment review and approval process.

I look forward to answering further questions. I will say that there was some slowdown due to COVID and I have asked for an update on anticipated timelines. I don't have a date in front of me here today, but I know that folks are continuing to work on it and we will continue to work with industry as well.

Mr. Kent: We have heard the Premier, over the past year or so, brag about where to get the most up-to-date information — and that is from yukon.ca. Yukon.ca says that the draft plan was to be finalized in March 2021, so obviously that statement and the website are incorrect or they need an update.

So, the evening before the Premier called an early election in March, the government put out a news release regarding a mineral staking withdrawal in the Dawson regional land use planning area. The amount of land withdrawn was 12 percent of the planning region and affected existing claimholders in the area.

So, can the minister tell us which individuals or organizations were consulted prior to withdrawing this land from mineral staking?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for alerting me to the fact that there is something out of date on the website. I will reach out to the department; I am sure that we will get that updated, and I am sure that it was inadvertent. I am happy to try to make sure that we keep that information up to date.

Second of all, the member opposite asked about the conversation that was had with respect to withdrawals. So, what I will say is that the Government of Yukon and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation formed the Dawson land use planning commission in December 2018, and the commission is developing a land use plan for the Dawson region to achieve the objectives of chapter 11 of the *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement*. The commission has amended the target date for the draft plan to May 2021 and the recommended plan to early 2022. The amended timeline reflects delays in operations — again, due to COVID-19.

The member opposite asked about the interim withdrawal of mineral staking in parts of the planning region, and the areas selected for the interim withdrawal represent key areas for conservation based on Government of Yukon analysis and the commission's preliminary conservation areas — and, of course, we would have been speaking with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as well.

I'll answer further questions as they come.

Mr. Kent: So, the minister essentially confirmed that there was no consultation with affected claim holders or mining organizations like the Klondike Placer Miners' Association or

the chambers of mines. If I am incorrect in that assertion, he can correct the record in his final answer.

However, the NDP-Liberal coalition agreement commits to accelerating land use planning and committing additional resources to the process. Can the minister tell us what the budgetary impacts of this will be and when he anticipates this accelerated process to begin?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I do want to say that we have no intention of circumventing the land use planning process. I will say that, when I first sat down in my new role with the Yukon Chamber of Mines, we had a good conversation. We talked about the Dawson land use plan. We talked about the areas withdrawn. We were actually working through the maps and talking about them — about where they have interests and where they have concerns. We agreed to continue that conversation. But I will continue to use the Dawson land use planning process and the planning processes as they have been laid out under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. So, that is how we'll work.

We have also indicated, based on the Peel plan — and I was really happy to see that come forward. We have said that, under the Peel plan, we would work iteratively to withdraw lands. I hear from environmental groups that we should be withdrawing more; I hear from industry groups saying that we should withdraw less. So, it's always a balancing act, Mr. Speaker. I think that the process that we work under is based on chapter 11 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite asked about a budget and timelines for the broader land use planning process. I would be happy to look into the budget —

Speaker: Order.

Question re: Mining legislation

Mr. Dixon: Section 4, item 3(c) of the confidence and supply agreement between the Liberals and the NDP reads as follows — and I quote: “To meet the commitment to Yukoners made at the time of devolution, successor legislation for the mining sector is required. Subject to meaningful consultation Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Liberal Government and the Yukon NDP Caucus will develop and implement such legislation during the term of the agreement.”

Mr. Speaker, the term of the agreement is from now until January 2023. If I am reading that right, they are proposing to have a new *Quartz Mining Act* and a new *Placer Mining Act* tabled by next fall.

Mr. Speaker, my question is simple. Is that correct? Can the government confirm that they are going to have these two pieces of legislation tabled by next fall?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will comment very quickly on CASA. Yukoners deserve a stable government, and this agreement allows us to work in that direction, especially when we are working through the pandemic. There are a number of items that are in the CASA, including a commitment to successor legislation.

I would like to thank the Yukon Party for also committing to successor legislation in the election campaign. It seems that all three parties think that this is an extremely important next

page for us to be turning together on reconciliation and in drawing down on self-government agreements, and we will again do our best job to work with CASA to make sure that these extremely important initiatives are underway and developed.

We also know that the Mineral Development Strategy Independent Panel released their final *Yukon Mineral Development Strategy and Recommendations* on April 15 this year — of course, successor legislation being one of the cornerstones of that documentation.

Again, I'm really glad to hear that the Yukon Party is now moving toward reconciliation and wants to see successor legislation happen, and we will do our utmost to make sure that we expedite this process.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the question was simple: Does the government intend to live up to the commitment in the CASA, which is to have that legislation tabled by next fall?

The CASA is unambiguous. The Premier was very ambiguous in that statement, but the CASA is unambiguous. It says that we will have these two pieces of legislation developed and implemented by January 2023. So, in order to do this, these pieces of legislation will have to be tabled in the Legislature in October of next year. That is just 16 months away, Mr. Speaker, and these are two massive pieces of legislation. They are complex and foundational to one of the most important aspects of our economy.

Does the Premier actually believe that it is possible to live up to this commitment?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There are many things under the confidence and supply agreement that talk about how we will work together constructively with parties here in the Legislature, and I think that we did that because we heard from Yukoners that they wanted us to work together to serve them and to collaborate more. So, we'll continue to do that.

When I met with the Chamber of Mines — I understand that the Yukon NDP had also met with the Chamber of Mines, and one of the things that we all talked about — all of us — and what I think that the members opposite have also talked about was — just in the earlier questions from the Official Opposition House Leader — to make sure that we are engaging with industry, with the Chamber of Mines, and talking with them. I think that it's also there in the agreement — that it talks about how we will work with industry and discuss issues with them.

I think there is also, as we look through the mineral development strategy, a range of pieces under successor legislation — for example, the *Lands Act*, the *Placer Mining Act*, and the *Quartz Mining Act*. There is a lot of work that's there. What I think is that we are going to work hard for Yukoners in order to get to successor legislation. I'm happy to say that we're working together and happy that all parties in the Legislature agree on that.

Mr. Dixon: I would encourage the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to read the CASA because it makes no reference to “in consultation with industry” at all, although he just committed, on the floor, that he will do that.

But, Mr. Speaker, since I have him up, I have a simple question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. One

of the fundamental tenets of both of these pieces of legislation is, of course, the free-entry staking system. I would like to ask the new minister a very simple question: Does he support the free-entry staking system of granting mineral rights — yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'll just disregard all the jeers from next door there. At the same time, there is nothing ambiguous about what we're saying. We made good on making an agreement with the NDP for the confidence and supply agreement, and we will absolutely endeavour to make sure that every single part of that agreement gets done in the time frame in which it was designed.

I think, really, Yukoners saw a lot of ambiguous language from the Yukon Party during the election campaign. It was interesting. One campaign ago, carbon pricing was the biggest voodoo ever invented, and then this year, the leader campaigned on carbon pricing. So, the only thing ambiguous right now is whether or not the Yukon Party stands by —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order. The member has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, sir — stands by their previous stance on carbon pricing or taxing or whether this is an important part of dealing with climate change.

When it comes to the specific agreement — the CASA — we will make good on the commitments. There is no ambiguous nature there at all, Mr. Speaker. We signed this agreement with the NDP and we'll make good on it.

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. 40

Clerk: Motion No. 40, standing in the name of Mr. Dixon.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt North:

THAT the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments review the *Child Care Act* and all corresponding regulations; THAT the committee conduct public hearings; and

THAT the committee report to the Legislative Assembly on its findings and recommendations no later than May 19, 2022.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion, Motion No. 40.

As has been outlined, the intent of this motion is to provide some guidance to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments with regard to its work — in particular, knowing that a review of the *Child Care Act* and all the corresponding regulations under that piece of legislation could be reviewed.

It also notes that the committee can conduct public hearings and that the committee should report to the Legislative Assembly on its findings with recommendations no later than May 2022 — which, of course, is one year from today.

By way of background, I was first elected as the leader about a year ago. Since that time, I have spent a lot of effort, resources, and time of my own to engage with this particular issue. It is one I am interested in and want to see developed and advanced in the territory.

One of the ways I have gone about that is by trying to immerse myself in the issue and connect with as many of the affected stakeholder groups as possible. In the early stages of my leadership over the last year, I began meeting with and reaching out to as many of these groups as possible. I have spoken to members of the childcare board and had conversations about their work. I have met with the Partners for Children organization, which falls under the Network for Healthy Early Human Development. That, of course, is a community action program for children — CAPC program — that provides workshops, information sessions, and supports to parents, children, and practitioners in the field.

I've met with representatives from the early childhood education community. Of course, there is now an early childhood education community of practice. I've tried my best to reach out to a variety of members of that organization, both here in Whitehorse and around the territory. I know that there are representatives from a number of other communities in that community as well.

I've done my best to reach out, tour, and visit as many childcare facilities as possible. I've also taken the time to tour and meet with senior officials from the Child Development Centre and with the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate.

While there is a lot to say about the childcare field and the early learning and childcare field as a whole, I think that one of the prevailing sentiments that I heard throughout my time over the last year of meeting with representatives in this field has been the need to review the *Child Care Act*. That is something that has been made very clear to me. It is something that I know a number of organizations have raised, either officially or unofficially. The sentiment is quite clear that the time is now to review this act.

One of the clearest explanations for this comes from the Yukon Child Care Board itself. As members know, the Child Care Board is a creature of the *Child Care Act* and it receives its authority from that act. Every few years, the Child Care Board issues a report to government which is then tabled in this Legislature. In those reports over the last number of years, the Child Care Board has, over and over again, suggested that the *Child Care Act* needs to be reviewed. I would point to the most recent annual report of the Child Care Board, which is from 2018-20.

In that report, the Child Care Board says the following: "Another project we have been working on is showing the need to modernize the *Child Care Act* for reasons including: the language and intent of the Act do not reflect current best practices in ELCC and lag somewhat behind many other jurisdictions in Canada; recommendations from the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission's review indicate the need to consider First Nation culture and heritage into ELCC; the Comprehensive Health Review conducted by the office of the Chief Medical Officer indicated a need to systemically rethink ELCC in Yukon, including bringing the management of child care services under the Department of Education; due to a declining pool of early childhood educators, the critical need to attract qualified people to the field (and retain them) is getting much harder; and the stability and resiliency of essential services in ongoing and future emergency situations should be proactively mitigated."

The Child Care Board, on this issue, concludes with a formal recommendation, and that recommendation reads: "The Yukon Child Care Board recommends that the *Child Care Act* be modernized to address current issues, reflect best practices in the field and to strengthen the ELCC industry as a whole."

Mr. Speaker, there are many other organizations that have expressed an interest in seeing the *Child Care Act* reviewed, but I think the Child Care Board's recommendations from their most recent annual report do a good job of summarizing those.

I would note that, before us on the floor of the Legislature in this Sitting, are changes to the *Child Care Act*. While those are good to see and we are happy to review those changes, I don't think that the changes that we have before us today represent the extent of the review that is contemplated by the Child Care Board. So, I think that more work is needed. That is the nature of this motion. It is clear from a number of aspects and players in the field of childcare that this act needs to be reviewed, so that is why we have identified this particular act and the corresponding regulations associated with the act.

Next, I think it's worth noting that this motion seeks to have the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments conduct this review. The reason for that, Mr. Speaker — as we discussed earlier this week, the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments is a standing committee of this Legislature that has a lot of potential and a lot of opportunity before it to conduct work on behalf of the Legislature and that its new composition — having come from a minority situation in the Legislature — allows for a different set-up on that committee.

Given the current structure of the committee — it being an all-party committee, one that is a standing committee of this Legislature and one that has an existing handbook and a set of rules associated with its operations — I think that it's well suited to take this work on.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is ultimately how we've determined that the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments is the appropriate body here. I know that it is not probably the perfect body for this but, other than setting up a select committee, I think that this is the best of the standing committees that we have available to us. I believe that the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments is the best suited of the standing committees to look at this issue.

The other matter I wanted to note was the broad view that I got earlier this week related to a common consensus, I believe, in the Legislature today about the need to have these standing committees to work and to function as they are intended. I

believe that reviewing a statute and corresponding regulations is precisely what this committee is designed to do.

As we all know, the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments has not met in years — perhaps even decades. I think that reinvigorating that committee — I should correct myself, Mr. Speaker; it has met. It did meet in the last Legislature — only once though, and long enough to elect a chair and then, of course, the chair never recalled the committee again. It has met, but it hasn't done a lot of actual work and a lot of the actual function that it's intended to do.

I think that there is an opportunity now with no party having a majority on the committee and with the composition of the committee having been established already — and that there's a general consensus, I believe, in the Legislature that these committees ought to do real work and ought to function appropriately — that there is a sense that this could be the appropriate vehicle for this.

So, because of the fact that the early learning and childcare field is of such interest these days, there is so much going on in the field, and there are a number of new programs coming forth from the government that will require a new way to look at the early learning and childcare field, I think that now is the appropriate time to review this piece of legislation and I think that conducting that review in an all-party way through a standing committee of the Legislature is an appropriate way to do so.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, that is a brief summary of why I think that this is an important issue and why I think the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments is an appropriate vehicle for this discussion. I am very hopeful that members will agree with me, and I look forward to providing this order of reference to the standing committee to begin conducting this work on behalf of the Legislature.

It is obviously entirely appropriate for the Yukon Legislative Assembly to provide this kind of direction to its standing committees, and with the support of my colleagues today, we can have this standing committee begin this work immediately. I look forward to seeing the results of that work come from the work of the members on that committee.

I myself am not a member of the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, but I do think that the five members of that committee are well-suited to conduct this work, and I certainly look forward to them taking on this task and carrying out this very important work because it is an important issue and it is an important issue that affects a great deal of Yukoners today.

With that, I will conclude my remarks and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the opportunity to address this motion on the first Wednesday of motions here in this Sitting. I appreciate the opportunity to do that.

I don't think that it will — I hope that it won't — surprise anyone that I will agree with much of what the Leader of the Official Opposition has said, but I do have some distinctions about this particular motion.

Yukoners have sent a clear message that we need to work together for the benefit of the territory and that is what we are committed to doing. We believe that this Assembly works best when all members can put forward good ideas and come together to support those ideas and advance the public good. We will continue to work with our partners across the territory to advance community priorities that benefit Yukoners. It is, in my view, the work of government — and perhaps the most important aspect of our work.

The substance of this motion is the review of Yukon's *Child Care Act*. The second aspect of this motion is the process or the method by which that review should be done. I will speak first to the review of the *Child Care Act* — and this is where our government and my remarks today will align with those of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

I will speak first about the review of the *Child Care Act* and then about the process. This review is necessary. The review must be done and will be done. The review of the *Child Care Act* is a commitment made by our government and by me personally during the recent election — and before, based on the work of the early learning childcare program going forward.

On April 7, I had the pleasure of participating in a forum that was hosted — or some called it a “debate” — by the early learning childcare community. I was joined on that Zoom call by the Leader of the Yukon Party conservatives and by the Third Party House Leader. I think that we were all very pleased — I guess she was not then the Third Party House Leader but the candidate for Whitehorse Centre at the time. I think that we were all very pleased — I'm not speaking for them — that the forum was very well-attended by possibly over 100 people on Zoom, and we were all joined by early learning childcare experts, operators, parents, early learning childcare professionals, and others.

On that call, we each made brief statements and then spent almost two hours answering questions from the participants. One of the commitments that I was able to clarify and to make clear is our commitment to review the *Child Care Act*. Our platform committed to the modernization and improvement of the early learning childcare program. As everyone now knows, the first phase of that initiative began on April 1, 2021, when our universal childcare subsidy came into effect, reducing the monthly cost of childcare by \$700 per child for Yukon families.

Our early learning childcare model is built on the three principles of quality, affordability, and accessibility. In order to fully support the implementation of our early learning childcare model, a review of the *Child Care Act* is necessary and will be done. The *Child Care Act* has not been reviewed — or it had but a few minor regulation changes since 1995, or 25 years ago. The time for a meaningful review is long overdue.

I want to ensure that the members of the Official Opposition have heard our commitment clearly and that they understand what I am saying on behalf of our government.

Now, on to the process suggested by the motion. The process requires that the review of the *Child Care Act* be done by the Standing Committee for Statutory Instruments. That committee, as debated earlier this week, is populated by the Hon. Mr. Nils Clarke, me, Ms. Clarke, Mr. Cathers, and you,

Madam Deputy Speaker — all skilled and talented individuals, but I daresay, not experts in the intricacies of the *Child Care Act*.

To be clear, this motion requires the review of the *Child Care Act* legislation. It is important to note that the mandate of the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments does not have the jurisdiction to review legislation. “The Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments has the authority to review any regulation that comes into effect after the committee is formed. The Legislative Assembly may also refer existing or proposed regulations to this committee for review.” Madam Deputy Speaker, that is a direct quote from the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, from the website of the Legislative Assembly where the mandate of the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments is explained to the public and to anyone who might want to learn about it, and certainly it is the mandate for the Members of the Legislative Assembly to abide by.

As we noted earlier this week in debate, the standing committee has not met for decades. The Leader of the Official Opposition made reference to this. They have met, with one reference made by the Leader of the Official Opposition, in the 34th Legislature, but no substantive work was done. The last time they met before that was in 1991 — some 30 years ago.

Again, as I noted a few days ago, it is the strongest tenet of administrative law that committees should be responsible for their own process and priorities. The Leader of the Official Opposition noted, in his opening remarks, that his motion was an attempt to provide guidance to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. Madam Deputy Speaker, I submit to this Legislative Assembly that the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments does not, in fact, need guidance.

The committee should meet, constituted newly by way of a motion here in this Sitting — they should meet, for the first time in some 30 years. In a substantive way, they should review their mandate, and they should determine their process and their priorities. That will help them carry on with the work that they are mandated to do — again, the review of regulations, not legislation.

These comments by the mover of this motion, the Leader of the Official Opposition, also named a number of the experts that should, in fact, and must, in fact, be consulted with respect to the review of the *Child Care Act*, including the Yukon Child Care Board.

In the spirit and intent of working together, I want to reiterate our commitment to review the *Child Care Act*, but we must involve independent experts, stakeholders, and communities going forward. It is not, in my submission to this House, work to be led by politicians. It is a policy review of the act; it is a policy review to take into account experts and those who are experts in the field of early learning childcare. In fact, as I've noted earlier, in order to properly implement the full extent of our early learning childcare program, the *Child Care Act* must be reviewed and must be more modern and must be more responsive to Yukoners' needs.

As a result — and primarily as a result of the fact that the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments is not the appropriate vehicle — I cannot speak in support of this motion

as it does not contemplate including enough of the stakeholders who have been mentioned by the Leader of the Official Opposition in the process. The method, or the process, that this motion seeks to use for the delivery and review is not appropriate and is outside, in fact, the jurisdiction of the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments.

Our government recognizes that the current *Child Care Act* needs to be reviewed and is committed to doing this work in an open way — in a way that is full engagement and consultation.

As I noted earlier, I had the honour of working with the early learning childcare community, not only during the campaign but previous to that in our work on the universal childcare program and the ultimate early learning childcare program that will continue to be rolled out in different phases to the benefit of Yukon families and children.

I publicly made a commitment at the time to review the act. I do so here again today. There is no question whatsoever that this will be a priority. Our government remains committed to the review, but we don't agree with the mechanism suggested in today's motion. That suggested approach puts the review in the hands of multiple elected officials instead of industry experts and it commits a legislative committee that has not met in, really, over three decades with the task of this review.

As I have noted, the review of this legislation is outside the jurisdiction of this committee. We believe that there is a more appropriate method to conduct such a review. Our work on this review will take a broad approach and will include opportunity for stakeholders across the Yukon to share their concerns — and members of the opposition in this House.

We will also seek independent input and expertise for the review. We look forward to moving forward with this important piece of legislation to ensure that it works for Yukoners and — most importantly — that it works for Yukon children.

Ms. White: I just take the liberty of saying what you might have said, as a member of this committee. So, although we are glad to have had the government commit to going forward with the *Child Care Act* review — I think that it is important. It was mentioned during the election and it was mentioned again right here on the floor. We know that, with recent changes, it is a great time to review that act. But I think that it is important to note — as mentioned by the Leader of the Official Opposition — that this committee has only met one time in recent history. So, it seems strange that, through this motion, the agenda would be set for a committee that was only appointed this week and has yet to have their first meeting together.

As with other committees of this Assembly, I think it is best that the committee will decide what their work will look like for the next duration of time, rather than be directed by this motion. I am sure that the committee would consider recommendations for reviews to be done, but ultimately it is that committee who would decide their work plan going forward.

We believe that the committee should meet and make their decisions about the work that they want to prioritize. We are aware that there is currently legislation in place that does have

review times that have not been met or are due shortly. There are a few examples.

The *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, which is to be reviewed five years after coming into effect — I can speak and say that currently has been done by the Child and Youth Advocate Office itself and is awaiting next steps. The *Health Information Privacy and Management Act* is to have a comprehensive review of this act before the fourth year of its coming into force. The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* is to be reviewed within five years of the act coming into force. Looking into the future, the *Lobbyists Registration Act* will also need to be reviewed. I'm sure that this committee will create a list of the outstanding reviews that need to be done. They will set their own work plan and figure out the process forward.

For those reasons, the Yukon NDP will be opposing the motion, but we are looking forward to the *Child Care Act* review taking place.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Dixon: Madam Deputy Speaker, I can see the writing on the wall for this one. That has been determined by the other parties, of course. I do want to address a few issues that have been raised though. The first is related to the idea that somehow looking at legislation is outside of the mandate of the standing committee. I would note that the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments is a creature of this Legislature, and as such, its mandate is whatever the Legislative Assembly tells it to do. So, it is not quite accurate in any way to say that it is unable to look at this issue because it's legislation. Of course, the motion includes legislation and regulations. The regulations pursuant to this act are dated and are substantial and I think that they ought to be reviewed in the context of the act review itself.

It is certainly not the case that the standing committee can't review this because it's legislation; that is just simply not the case at all. The standing committee is a creature of this Legislature and as such we can direct it to do things. That is unfortunately the reality. I see that the Government House Leader is shaking her head, but the reality is that we can pass these motions as legislators and, of course, we are able to do that.

The second piece relates to the review of the act. I'm pleased to hear the commitment from the government that they will be reviewing this act. That is positive. This act does need to be reviewed, and the minister has acknowledged that. I do worry though about the level of commitment because — as we've seen in the confidence and supply agreement and as we've seen in the government's legislative agenda otherwise — the reality is that my prediction on this is that we aren't going to see a *Child Care Act* reviewed and tabled in this Legislature, certainly not before the agreement between the NDP and the Liberals runs out. I don't think that's going to be the case at all, and that's really unfortunate.

The reason why we wanted to include the date in this motion to spur the committee on in its work was because we

know that the government has dragged its feet on this. These recommendations have come for years and years now to update this act. At least the last two annual reports from the Child Care Board have referenced the inadequacy of the act.

I do worry about the level of commitment from the government on this. I do stand to be corrected. If the minister is genuine in her commitment and immediately launches a review of this act, I will be proven wrong and I will be happy to admit as much once I see that new legislation thoroughly reviewed and tabled in the Legislature.

The other issue that concerned me, Mr. Speaker, was the notion that legislators shouldn't lead the review of legislation. Quite frankly, I think that is not the case at all. We have seen Members of the Legislative Assembly review numerous pieces of legislation over the history of this Legislative Assembly and do so quite successfully. The way that they do that is by tapping into the resources available in our community with regard to expertise. I've sat on several standing committees or select committees of the Legislature that have easily and frequently sought the advice of industry experts. The ability for groups like the Child Care Board, industry experts, and those in the field themselves to come forward and provide their input to a standing committee is a well-established process and one contemplated in the motion that establishes the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. So, of course we would seek their input if this were to pass. Of course, we would be calling them as witnesses and seeking their advice, because they truly are the experts and their input is incredibly important.

But, ultimately, legislation comes to the Legislative Assembly and we as legislators have to review it, debate it, in some cases amend it, and then ultimately pass it.

It is fully within the purview of Members of the Legislative Assembly to review legislation. That is quite literally what our jobs are, so the notion that we are incapable of reviewing legislation because we are not industry experts is misguided from the Minister of Health and Social Services.

It is clear, like I said, where this going. Despite our interest in having this act reviewed quickly and in an all-party way, it is the interest of the other two parties in the Legislature to deny that opportunity and to allow the government to lead this review on its own timeline.

Like I said before, Mr. Speaker, I hope that I am proved wrong. I would be happy to see this legislation thoughtfully reviewed, comprehensively reviewed, and then tabled in the Legislature before the conclusion of the confidence and supply agreement between the Liberals and NDP, but quite frankly, I don't see that happening, so I fear that this will be another lost opportunity and that this legislation will not appear in the 35th Legislature. I really hope that I am wrong, and I look forward to seeing that legislation come forward, but it will not be through an all-party process, obviously. I am disappointed to hear that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to bringing this to a vote and hearing my colleagues' votes on this important motion.

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. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

Ms. Tredger: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 8 yea, 10 nay.

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

Motion No. 40 negated

Motion No. 14

Clerk: Motion No. 14, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Watson Lake:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to initiate upgrades to the two Alaska Highway crosswalks in Watson Lake to include pedestrian-activated flashing lights.

Ms. McLeod: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to my motion calling for the Minister of Highways and Public Works to provide for pedestrian safety in my community of Watson Lake. As you may know, the Alaska Highway is an important traffic route directly through the community of Watson Lake, so the substance of this motion should be largely self-explanatory.

Watson Lake is similar to parts of Whitehorse such as Porter Creek, where the Alaska Highway actually divides the community in two, and it is important for pedestrians to be able to cross the highway in a safe manner. Whether it is an elder crossing to the grocery store or a child getting to school, they deserve safe passage and the same as a resident in Porter Creek.

Traditionally, these types of motions have been dismissed by the Liberal government. However, the NDP leader has recently encouraged us to bring such motions forward, as they

feel that, with the minority government situation that we are in, we are much more likely to get consent and hopefully real action taking place.

With the appointment of a new Minister of Highways and Public Works, I would like to, once again, call attention to this matter and reiterate the importance of highway safety for the residents of Watson Lake, especially for pedestrians. During the long Yukon winters, we were subjected to long hours of darkness. We currently have two crosswalks in Watson Lake that help pedestrians cross the Alaska Highway. Neither are equipped for pedestrians to push buttons to notify oncoming traffic that someone is waiting to cross. Unfortunately, we have seen a number of near misses in town, where drivers have little time for reaction upon realizing that there is a pedestrian on the highway.

I know that my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, has raised the same issue in the House and has been requesting push-button activated crosswalks for residents of Porter Creek by Super A and 17th Avenue for a number of years. She has voiced the same concerns that I am today. I find it alarming that the government could listen to safety concerns from Members of the Legislature for many years and simply dismiss or disregard them.

Today, I would like to ask members to recognize the importance of pedestrian safety and the fact that an act as small as adding pedestrian-activated flashing lights to a crosswalk could very well save a life.

I thank all of my colleagues in the Legislature for listening to the concerns for the safety for my constituents, and look forward to seeing this motion pass today with unanimous consent.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am pleased to speak to Motion No. 14. Thank you to the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this motion for debate.

Yukon's transportation network is crucial to all of our communities as well as our territory's economy. Our Liberal government has made it a priority to invest in upgrading our roads, highways, and bridges to support our communities, to make road transportation for our territory safer, and to create economic opportunities. Over the past couple of years, the Department of Highways and Public Works undertook several significant projects to improve safety along the Alaska Highway, Yukon's busiest transportation corridor. This included better lighting, signage, and pedestrian crossways.

When we took office in 2016, Yukon was in an infrastructure deficit. We have made it a priority to address this deficit for the benefit of all Yukon communities. In this year's budget, we have included more than \$54 million for highways and bridges throughout the territory. We have taken a whole-of-government approach to improving our transportation network.

Officials in the Department of Highways and Public Works continuously assess the state of our roads and highways to prioritize investments. Officials in Community Services work directly with municipalities to identify community priorities so that we can support local solutions.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Highways and Public Works, my view — which I hope resonates with members of this Assembly — is that comprehensive safety reviews need to be conducted prior to addressing potential highway safety issues in order to make a determination on a project that would be correct for Whitehorse, Watson Lake, or in fact any other Yukon community. There are guidelines to follow regarding highway safety, as there are specific standards and prescribed rules as they pertain to the safety of pedestrians.

I will note for the benefit of the Assembly that there are risks associated with taking a piecemeal approach on road safety, but we are prepared to initiate work on this issue. Our Liberal caucus will support the motion brought forward by the Member for Watson Lake. Yukoners have sent a clear message that we will all need to work together for the benefit of the territory, and that is what we are committed to doing.

We believe that this Assembly works best when all members put forward good ideas and come together to support those ideas that advance the public good. I look forward to working with my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, in order to engage with the community of Watson Lake to provide long-lasting solutions for pedestrians.

This government will continue to deliver and will always be on the lookout for the best interests of Yukoners. We will continue to balance engagement with residents and their needs while conforming to important highway safety guidelines.

Ms. Tredger: To speak to this project a little bit, it has been asked for by the citizens of Watson Lake for a long time — for many, many years. As we consider the importance of different projects, it's important that we take in the reality of life in rural communities. The highway is quite literally the centre of Watson Lake, and many different types of users need to cross it many times every day. This is actually something that we've asked for in the past, so we're very happy to reiterate this call by supporting this motion.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to add my voice to this discussion about safety — traffic safety in this case. Safety is a subject that I have paid close attention to for almost a decade — much more than that, of course, but professionally, for almost a decade.

In 2012, I started a new career in the civil service at the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. After that, I worked for Highways and Public Works and, of course, have cast an eye to public safety as it pertained to highway safety, community safety, airport safety, and the myriad of sectors that it touched. Now I'm Minister of Community Services, following in the footsteps of my colleague, the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, and I'm looking at it now from a community point of view.

It has been an honour to serve Yukoners as a civil servant with an eye toward safety, and I have to commend the civil service itself for its efforts to keep Yukoners safe at work and at home. Civil servants, certainly in the last year and a bit and before that, have worked tirelessly in the service of Yukoners in so many ways.

They have worked to preserve the health and safety of Yukoners, whether you are an engineer, a nurse, a grader operator, a wildlife officer, an administrative assistant, a systems analyst — in fact it does not matter the position that these people hold in the civil service. I have seen first-hand how safety is foremost in their minds, and that service and commitment to people's safety in the territory deserves to be recognized, so thank you.

This afternoon, we are looking at traffic lights in Watson Lake. That's the gist of this motion that we are debating this afternoon. Roads that wend their way through the territory connect us to our friends and family and our doctors. They carry needed supplies north. They also carry travellers — Americans and tourists in much better times — through to Alaska and to all our communities throughout the territory.

Over the last four and more years, our Liberal government has made investments in bridges, culverts, and the very roadbeds that carry our cars and trucks across the territory. We put together a plan to assess our highways, rate them and, based on that rating, designed a schedule for brush-clearing, line-painting, regular maintenance and safety improvements throughout the territory — all 5,000 kilometres of the road. That is the very first time that has ever been done, Mr. Speaker — that consistency, that planning. It deserves to be recognized.

I know that my colleague, the current Minister of Highways and Public Works, has spoken this afternoon about assessments that are done annually — or in some cases, more often — to support investments and improvements across the road network. That is important work, and it needs to follow that national standard so we are not striking on our own to do things that are not consistent with traffic standards in BC, Alberta, and the rest of the country. Consistency across the road network perpetuates road safety.

We also need to keep in touch with our communities when we are making decisions. I know that my predecessor in this role made it a regular part of his job to regularly visit communities at least once a year — often twice or more. It was an amazing schedule that he maintained. He also kept in touch by phone — phoning municipal leaders, keeping in touch weekly with the Association of Yukon Communities. These are practices that I plan to emulate.

Since coming into Community Services, I know that the community advisors attend regular municipal council meetings to keep informed about community affairs and their needs and desires. In Watson Lake, I have heard the community's desire for more Emergency Medical Services staff. I've heard the need for more lots. That is a need that the community shares with most others in the territory. I've also heard that the community is quite progressive in its approach to waste management and is supportive of regionalization of its landfill and consistency across the territory. I really think that is great to see. I commend them for that.

Now, the Member for Watson Lake has brought forward a motion asking for button-activated crosswalk lights on the Alaska Highway for community safety. I am committed to working with the community of Watson Lake to prioritize the critical municipal investments that the community would like

us to make. We will continue to work with the community to identify problems and address them. Community Services is committed to working with Highways and Public Works and the community of Watson Lake to find solutions to the problem that it has identified and wants addressed. We will do that in a responsible manner, a manner that is consistent with the rest of the territory, and we will do it with our partners throughout the territory.

We will, of course, be supporting the motion this afternoon.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the NDP member for her comments; they are very much appreciated. While I heard the members from the Liberal caucus say that they support this motion, I'm quite concerned that the language that they used — it sounds like more of a threat to Watson Lake that, if they proceed with these pedestrian crossings, they are going to lose somewhere else. That's kind of what I heard from the Liberal government. So, I hope that's not the case. I certainly am going to be engaging fully with my community on this. I can pretty much guarantee that. The Liberal members should be quite assured that this is not a matter that is just going to go away or be forgotten about; we are going to continue to follow up on it.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the members for their support of this motion that is important to the people of Watson Lake.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

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

Motion No. 14 agreed to

Motion No. 30

Clerk: Motion No. 30, standing in the name of Mr. Kent.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt South:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a territory-wide type 1 diabetes strategy to be completed by September 2022 in partnership with the Yukon T1D Support Network and including consultation with:

- (1) persons who live with type 1 diabetes;
- (2) the Yukon Medical Association;
- (3) an adult endocrinologist;
- (4) a pediatric endocrinologist;
- (5) a pediatrician;
- (6) the Diabetes Education Centre;
- (7) the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation Canada; and

(8) other agencies or agents as may be identified through the Yukon T1D Support Network.

Mr. Kent: I thank colleagues and members of the House for the opportunity to speak to this motion here this afternoon. I think that those who were here in the 34th Legislative Assembly will know that supporting Yukoners and their families who are living with type 1 diabetes is something that's very important to me and that I've talked about on a number of occasions throughout the 34th Assembly, and this is the first opportunity in the 35th Assembly for us to address an issue to support the T1D community.

This motion might look very similar, if not identical, to a motion tabled by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin on the same day that I tabled this one. Of course, that is no coincidence. Members of the T1D Support Network reached out to the Leader of the Third Party, I believe over the weekend, and she reached out to me, and we came to an agreement on Monday to table similar or exact motions, and I am very pleased that we were able to do so.

I would also like to thank, of course, the T1D Support Network, and I am going to name the board: Marney Paradis, Jill Nash, Rachel Hrebien, Kevin Jack, and Brayden Kulych. They do tremendous work on behalf of their constituency, whether it is support or advocating for supports for Yukoners and their families afflicted with this disease. Some of the community initiatives that they have undertaken include hosting a diabetes forum a few years ago and Camp Becca, which is for young adults who have type 1 diabetes to get together. That camp is named in honour of Rebecca Pollard, who was a member of their board and had type 1 diabetes and passed away tragically.

They have also done educational interventions and public awareness campaigns such as the Boulevard of Hope, which was a tree display at the top of Robert Service Way throughout

the month of January, to raise awareness of type 1 diabetes and how difficult it is for those who are living with it.

It is through these efforts — and for those who don't know these individuals or this organization, the expertise that they have and how well-informed they are — I believe that they are perfectly positioned to partner with the Yukon government to develop this type 1 diabetes strategy and lead this important work on behalf of Yukoners.

I mentioned in the 34th Legislative Assembly that all of the MLAs who sat here during that time made great strides to support Yukoners and their families who live day to day with type 1 diabetes.

Motions in this Legislature — private members' motions introduced by members from both the Yukon Party and the New Democratic Party at the time — were passed unanimously. Equipment authorizations were made, starting with a pilot project for Yukoners under the age of 18 to access CGMs, or continuous glucose monitoring devices. That pilot project led to coverage for all Yukoners in the fall of last year for those CGMs, which are important lifesaving devices that monitor glucose levels in real time. In many ways, the work that we as legislators accomplished in the 34th Assembly is leading the country, if not the world, in helping people who are affected by this terrible disease.

During the most recent election campaign, the Yukon T1D Support Network put questions to all three parties. They put forward four questions and published them on their Facebook page. One of them was asking whether or not each party would create a Yukon T1D strategy, which is the subject of the motion that we are debating here today. I'm pleased to let the House know — and for those who don't know — that all three parties made a commitment to create the Yukon T1D strategy. Of course, that is one occasion when all three parties came together in support of a common initiative, and I am hoping that we can get all three parties to support the motion that is before the House here today on this.

2021 and into 2022 mark the 100th anniversary of the research and then the discovery of insulin. There is a certain ceremonial appropriateness, I guess, to the timing of what we have identified here as starting work in 2021 and carrying on into 2022. I just want to read briefly from an article on *The Canadian Encyclopedia* website. It was written by Michael Bliss and published online in August of 2015. I will provide Hansard with a copy of this as well.

It's just a brief excerpt from that, saying: "For many years scientists believed that some kind of internal secretion of the pancreas was the key to preventing diabetes and controlling normal metabolism. No one could find it, until in the summer of 1921 a team of University of Toronto began trying a new experimental approach suggested by Dr. Fredrick Banting. By the spring of 1922, the Toronto researchers — Banting, Charles Best, J. B. Collip and their supervisor, J.J.R. Macleod, were able to announce the discovery of insulin. In 1923, Banting and Macleod received the Nobel Prize for one of the most important, and most controversial, breakthroughs in modern history."

I think about what important and monumental years those were — 100 years ago. This year leading into next year — for us to create a Yukon strategy around type 1 diabetes and continue in this 35th Legislative Assembly with leading-edge policy and support for this community — dragging other provinces and jurisdictions along with us — is extremely important.

The list of individuals to be consulted with here is certainly not exhaustive. As is portrayed in the eighth bullet, other agencies or agents may be identified through the Yukon T1D Support Network. I am sure there are other experts that will help in creating this strategy. With that said, this is an opportunity for us to honour a mutual campaign commitment that was made by all three parties in the spring election, and I am hoping that Members of the Legislative Assembly will support this motion that I have brought forward here today.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say thank you to the member opposite for bringing this motion to the floor of the House today. It is an important one for sure. Yukoners have sent the clear message that we all need to work together for the benefit of the territory, and that is what we have committed to doing. We believe that this Assembly works best when all members can put forward good ideas and come together to support those ideas and advance the public good. I believe that this is what the Member for Copperbelt South was speaking about today. We will continue to work with our partners across the territory to advance community priorities that benefit Yukoners.

I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak for a few moments about some of the important work that has been done on behalf of Yukoners in recent years with respect to this particular issue. Yukon has become a national leader in providing supports to individuals living with type 1 diabetes.

In 2018, Yukon began a two-year pilot project to fund continuous glucose monitoring devices for Yukoners up to the age of 25. Following the pilot project, Yukon became the first Canadian jurisdiction to fund continuous glucose monitors for children up to the age of 18. That was done in March 2020.

Yukon has additionally established a glucose monitoring program for adults. Adults with type 1 diabetes are able to access their choice of either fully funded flash glucose monitors — and that was done back in October 2020 — or a continuous glucose monitoring system.

Yukon is the first in Canada to fund continuous glucose monitoring devices for all individuals with type 1 diabetes and joins Ontario and Québec in funding the flash monitors for adults. Adults are encouraged of course to work with their physicians to discuss which of these devices they would like to use. The implementation of Yukon's permanent funding for glucose monitoring was not impacted by COVID-19. The government committed to funding glucose monitors in the March 2020 budget at the conclusion of the pilot project.

The chronic conditions support program offers the diabetes wellness series and the diabetes wellness 2.0, done in consultation with the Diabetes Education Centre and the City of Whitehorse. This series includes a team comprised of a

dietician, a nurse, a pharmacist, and an exercise specialist who work with individuals to develop self-management strategies.

Chronic disease nurse educator supports are available to offer one-on-one education, case management, system navigation, and annual foot checks to clients with diabetes. The chronic conditions support program also offers supervised exercise programming.

A chronic disease management toolkit is available to provide chronic care providers, including physicians and nurses, with supports to monitor patient test results. They also provide patient recall and deliver chronic care based on clinical guidelines. The toolkit client registry management will be improved and will be incorporated into the 1Health system through that improvement.

Any strategy — which is what is contemplated by this motion — would require participation of Yukon First Nations. COVID-19 has underscored the need for a high-functioning, person-centred health and social care system which includes advancing reconciliation and reducing health inequities for First Nation persons. This need is reflected in the *Putting People First* report and is committed to with respect to the work that will be done going forward on the implementation of the recommendations from that report.

As noted by the Member for Copperbelt South, all parties, during the most recent election, were asked by the Yukon TD1 Support Network about their commitments and understanding of these issues. I haven't yet heard from the Yukon TD1 Support Network, but I do look forward to meeting with them in the near future and to working together going forward.

As part of that process during the election, the Yukon TD1 Support Network provided a number of questions that I believe were answered by each of the individual parties. The response that was sent by the leader of the party, Mr. Sandy Silver, answered a number of questions from that organization. I just want to quote a couple of parts of that letter, and I'm happy to table a copy of it for reference.

One of the questions was about children in schools who are dealing with type 1 diabetes. In response, the leader of the Yukon Liberals said — and I quote: "We are mindful of the special circumstances of TD1 children and youth and understand that a TD1 specific policy in Education would serve Yukon families and address parents and students concerns." Again, in response to a number of the questions, the Leader of the Liberal Party said — and I quote: "Our ongoing work with Yukoners with type 1 diabetes, their families, local advocacy groups and industry coincides with recommendations in the *Putting People First* report on enhancing supports for individuals for improved health outcomes."

Later in this correspondence, the leader of the Liberals said — and I quote: "We will continue to work with patients to address their concerns regarding drug and device needs." That is a bit of the information that I previously noted — and perhaps most importantly for the conversation in today's debate, the leader of the Liberals then said — and I quote: "We would be very pleased to work with you to develop a Type 1 diabetes strategy to respond to the needs of Yukoners."

Mr. Speaker, I'll take the opportunity to table a copy of that letter for the convenience of my colleagues. I would like to table the letter from which I've quoted.

Clearly, the Yukon Liberal government has in the past and will continue to be supporting the services to the betterment of Yukoners who are dealing with type 1 diabetes and we will, as a result of the comments I've made today — and we appreciate the details provided by the member opposite — we will be supporting this motion.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for bringing forward this motion. He's correct; the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin tabled the exact same motion on the same day, actually, because the Yukon NDP — just like the Yukon Party and the Liberals — believe that those with type 1 diabetes deserve our support.

We have done a lot of work, like was mentioned before, during the 34th Assembly, and I think this is just carrying that on.

In conversation with two powerhouses within the type 1 diabetes community advocates — Jill Nash and Marney Paradis — on the weekend, we talked about the importance of creating a territory-wide strategy. The reason for that is that it's important that health decisions or direction be given the overarching — well, the understanding of those living or supporting those with type 1 diabetes.

We went through the possibilities and what it would look like — and we wanted to make sure that the list was broad about those in consultation, although I did hear the minister mention the importance of consultation with First Nations — a text message saying, "Absolutely — no problem. We'll have those conversations." So, it is an ongoing conversation.

The one thing that is really important — we talk about the strategy — we know that, within the Department of Education, for example, there is not disease-specific understanding sometimes within the department for what is required for a student living with type 1 diabetes — understanding that there can be an emergency kit that will have different things that might be needed, understanding that, you know, there is a parent on the other side of the phone looking at those numbers, and understanding that if there is a crisis, there is a timeline where there needs to be intervention. So, partially, developing the strategy is a way of making sure that we are able to address all those different angles.

There is a lot to be said in that we are at the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin and how far we have come and how far we can go. It's true that Yukon leads in a lot of different ways right now and that is really incredible. It is a pleasure to hear that this is going to have universal support. I know that those on the front lines of advocacy for those with type 1 diabetes are ready to go. They are ready to do the work, they are ready to be involved, and they have some ideas about different things that can also change when we look to the chronic disease programs and coverage.

So, just with that, Mr. Speaker, it is an incredible thing that the Yukon has had this group kind of, I guess, grow out of necessity. So, the T1D Support Network has had some incredible influence in the past number of years as they have

been advocating for those with type 1 diabetes. I imagine that, once this strategy is completed and it is used and adopted, what we will see is that Yukon continues to lead. So, I look forward to the vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Kent: I thank the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Leader of the Third Party for their comments here this afternoon. As I mentioned during the 34th Legislative Assembly, and as was referenced by the Minister of Health and Social Services, we were able to cross party lines and get both sides of this House together to make a real difference in the lives of people and their families who are living with type 1 diabetes. This is an incredibly exciting way and an incredibly exciting opportunity for those individuals to kick off this year, moving into next fall.

As the Leader of the Third Party referenced — while she was being texted, I believe I was being texted at the same time by the same two individuals who are part of that organization, and they will be reaching out to the Minister of Health and Social Services to request a meeting very soon to kickstart this work.

This is something that's important to me, and it became important to me as an MLA. I have a number of constituents who have families with young children who have type 1 diabetes, and that piqued my interest in advocating and assisting them in the 2016 election campaign. Of course, that has been carried on through the 2021 campaign and now into the 35th Legislative Assembly.

I thank all members for their support of this motion today. I think we'll be able to accomplish some incredible work and continue to be a leader in supporting, advocating, and assisting those individuals and families who have to live day to day with type 1 diabetes.

I said it in the 34th Legislative Assembly, but it is still something that sticks with me, as a father — and in speaking to the father of a young boy who had type 1 diabetes who lives in my riding — I think he was two or three years old at the time when he was diagnosed. He told me that managing his son's diabetes was like trying to stand on a basketball and balance on that basketball 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I think for those of us who are parents or those of us who have nieces or nephews or family members, that certainly is something that will stick with you as well as it stuck with me.

As I mentioned, I am pleased that we are able to start the 35th Assembly off with a positive step like this and to assist those who are in need.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

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

Motion No. 30 agreed to

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

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Yukon Housing Corporation

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, as the new minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, it is truly an honour to rise today to present the 2021 capital and operation and maintenance budgets for the corporation. Before I begin my address, I would like to introduce our officials who are here with me today: Mary Cameron, president of Yukon Housing Corporation, as well as Marcel HolderRobinson, director of Finance and Risk Management at the Yukon Housing Corporation. I also would like to take an opportunity to thank the other folks at Yukon Housing Corporation whom I have had the opportunity to spend time with so far for their patience and commitment to the corporation and their work on giving me the proper material to brief up as quickly as possible. This is an extremely robust organization that has a tremendous amount of activity underway at a time when there is an immense focus on the conversation around housing.

I will start with some prepared remarks, which I think will help us maybe even answer some of those initial questions. Then, of course, I will hand it over to the opposition. Again, I will ask my colleagues here in opposition to be patient with me.

This is a new file, and I will do my best, Madam Chair, and I'll be working with the folks here, and with the COVID protocols, it might take a bit longer to gather answers, but we'll do our best to make sure that we're accountable here in the Assembly today.

I would also like to take this opportunity to show my appreciation and sincere thanks again to both the staff and the board at Yukon Housing Corporation for their hard work and dedication to making more affordable housing options available to Yukoners.

Over the past three years, the corporation has been successful in working toward their five-year strategic plan vision to deliver housing solutions that contribute to healthy, sustainable, and inclusive communities. The government understands that, to have healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities, Yukoners need to have homes that fit their needs and that they can afford.

This past year has not been easy for Yukoners. COVID-19 has impacted our social lives, our family dynamics, big projects that we might have embarked upon, and our jobs and leisure pursuits. As the vaccine rollout continues across the territory, hopefully facilitating a new normal for all of us, the days are getting longer, reminding us that summer is now on the way.

Over the last few years, our housing programs have now supported the development of over 600 homes in the territory. For the 2021-22 year, we are continuing with our funding programs that have successfully leveraged partnerships and have supported new, affordable housing projects and programs.

We are working toward supporting those in housing need and increasing both affordable and accessible homes for Yukon. We are guided by three goals of the Yukon Housing Corporation strategic plan: (1) We are a trusted housing partner; (2) we are renewing and rebalancing community housing; and (3) we are strengthening our corporate stewardship.

In addition to the corporation's strategic plan, we are working on the goals and objectives of the housing action plan for Yukon, the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness, the aging-in-place action plan, and the recommendations from *Putting People First*.

I'm excited about our transformative renewal projects that Yukon Housing Corporation is undertaking. In particular, we are transforming to a renewed and resilient community housing program to meet the housing needs of Yukoners. The community housing program will help us to achieve the objectives in various action plans. We are working toward goals in the Safe at Home plan and *Putting People First* to secure housing for those who have experienced homelessness or have other vulnerabilities.

We are working toward the housing action plan by rebalancing our role in communities to provide affordable rental housing and home ownership options through the private market incentives, or loans directly to Yukoners, as well as rent subsidy programs.

We are working toward the goals of the aging-in-place action plan by recognizing that the needs of seniors in our housing are unique and focusing on the client experience. This budget shows renewed efforts to implement our community housing program, alongside our continued support of several housing initiatives that are already underway. We launched the Canada-Yukon benefit in November 2020 and will continue to grow the program over the next six years, with funding from the National Housing Strategy that is cost-matched by the Government of Yukon.

This year, we are proud to report that this direct-to-household rent subsidy will continue with a budget of \$681,000. This program will provide support to over 190 Yukon households that joined the program since it started in November 2020, and it helps with housing affordability solutions. This is just one of the first steps toward a resilient community housing program.

We anticipate that the \$18-million, 47-unit community housing building at 4th Avenue and Jeckell Street in Whitehorse will be completed in early 2022 and will help Yukoners with housing options in Whitehorse. Through this new building, we will continue to grow and develop our community housing program by implementing our mixed-income and mixed-use model. Mixed-income and mixed-use housing is a complementary model aimed at addressing emerging community housing program needs and provides affordable housing in the context of a growing, diverse, and aging population.

As we move forward with building mixed-use buildings across the Yukon, we will be working with individual communities to ensure that the mixed-income or mixed-use allocation model works for their unique community needs.

This year, we are also excited to start and nurture new initiatives that will help Yukoners find the housing support they need and help achieve the goals of our strategic plan and our community housing program.

We have \$1.5 million budgeted to start the design and construction of a new supportive community housing project in

Watson Lake. This project will operate on Housing First principles. Based on a housing needs assessment recently completed in the community, we know that there is a significant need for supportive housing. We will continue to work with our community partners to help inform and provide input on this project.

We have \$3 million budgeted to support the construction of three new community housing triplexes in Mayo, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse. Yukon Housing Corporation's community housing triplex projects align with the key community needs, the corporation's capital asset management plan and housing needs assessment, and our community housing program.

In addition to these new builds, we have allocated \$200,000 to explore deployable mobile home options to ease immediate housing pressures for emergency housing situations.

Another exciting new initiative finalized this spring is the northern carve-out agreement. This \$40-million funding pot under the national housing co-investment fund will be allocated to new housing projects across the Yukon over the next five years.

Under the terms negotiated with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, \$20 million will support community housing projects directly managed by Yukon Housing Corporation. To access this funding, the Government of Yukon will provide cost-matching over the period of the fund, totalling \$6.67 million.

The additional \$20-million stream will be managed by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to support First Nation governments, organizations, community housing providers, and private sector projects. Now that this agreement is signed, we plan to complete the community needs assessments and community engagements so that we can move forward with new projects, and we will use the funding to support solutions to the housing needs of Yukoners.

Even though we were excited by the new initiatives that are appearing this spring, we have not forgotten about our previous commitments and initiatives. We will ensure that our existing housing is safe and accessible to Yukoners. Each year, we renovate and retrofit a number of the homes in our existing housing stock to make sure that they continue to be safe, adequate, and affordable homes for Yukoners. We know that it's important to build new housing, but another part of our government commitment is a sustainable future. It is also important to invest in repairs and upgrades. We have budgeted \$2.2 million for renovation and rehabilitation and \$1.6 million for unit conversions.

To ensure that our current stock meets Yukoners' needs, we have also allocated \$600,000 to replacing units that are too old to be economically repaired. We are not only working on our own units. We have also allocated \$1.19 million under the First Nation energy-efficiency program, funded through the Government of Canada's low carbon economy fund, to support energy-efficiency retrofits in First Nation housing around the territory.

In 2021-22, our refreshed loan programs will continue to bridge the gaps in Yukoners' housing needs, supporting them

to buy, build, or fix their homes. In particular, the \$3.2-million rural home ownership program continues to help Yukoners buy or build new homes through our first mortgage and owner-build mortgages in Yukon's communities outside Whitehorse, where we know that it can be difficult to secure financing from traditional lenders.

The home-repair program, with three streams of accessibility, emergency-repair, home-repair loan, has a budget of \$1.65 million — \$350,000 for the emergency-repair grant, \$600,000 for the accessibility grant, and \$700,000 for the home-repair loan and home-repair subsidy.

The home-repair program is available to all Yukoners, but I would like to bring to everyone's attention that this program can be used by seniors and Yukon households that need to make their homes more accessible as they age in place. We continue to offer the \$1.5-million developer-build loan to assist developers to build new housing where it is difficult to get loans from traditional lenders.

In addition to direct provision of housing, the Yukon Housing Corporation also cultivates strong partnerships to grow the number of housing options in Yukon communities. This year marks the fourth intake of the \$3.6-million housing initiatives fund, a community partnership program that provides increased affordable housing options to Yukoners across the housing continuum. To date, existing commitments from previous intakes will bring online 350 housing units in our different communities.

Working in partnership with First Nations, First Nation development corporations, non-profit organizations, and the private sector is the only way to address Yukon's unique housing needs.

Another partnership that we are pleased to continue is the \$2-million municipal matching rental construction program grant, which will increase rental housing. This is in the territory and provides more rental options for all Yukoners by supporting private developers in communities that offer a municipal incentive program. We are pleased to announce that, since 2015, this fund has supported capital grants that funded the new development of just over 340 new rental units, providing new homes for Yukoners.

Also, we are pleased to support the Challenge Disability Resource Group to ensure the successful construction of their Cornerstone Housing project, which will bring 53 new homes to Yukoners. We know that we are not working by ourselves, and we are stronger with our partners and can accomplish more housing solutions together.

This winter has been long. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have made it a new normal to wear a mask and to meet virtually when we would much rather be with each other in person, and it has increased the time that we have spent outdoors. In addition, a large amount of snow meant increased time spent shovelling, and we know that both this winter and last year will stick in our memories, but as we move forward into the spring, this budget supports housing solutions through the renewal and rebalancing of our community housing program.

We also continue to commit to being a trusted housing partner. Our 2021-22 capital and operation and maintenance budgets demonstrate the work that we will do with all of our community partners to implement the housing action plan for Yukon and the Safe at Home action plan to end and prevent homelessness.

The corporation staff are the key to the housing solutions across the territory, and we continue to strengthen our corporate stewardship as we deliver our client services and programs.

As an employer, we are proud of our employees and the work that they do for Yukoners. Our staff take pride in helping to find affordable options across the housing continuum as the Yukon population and the economy continue to grow. We are working toward delivering on new opportunities that will lead to housing solutions that contribute to healthy, sustainable, inclusive communities and maintaining and completing our previous projects to maximize benefits for Yukoners.

Our community housing program is focused on Yukoners' housing needs and successful tenant outcomes, with the core structured on client experience, fiscal resilience, and responsibility and renewing housing roles and responsibilities within Yukon's housing continuum.

With our partners, we will continue to work to make sure that we provide the housing solutions that Yukoners need. We are implementing, again, the housing action plan for Yukon, the Safe at Home plan to prevent and end homelessness, and the aging-in-place action plan in alignment with the recommendations from *Putting People First*. Together, we will build healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities in the Yukon.

I will now provide a detailed breakdown of Yukon Housing Corporation's expenditures and recoveries to highlight the ways that we are helping Yukoners to find solutions in 2020 and 2021.

\$19.9 million has been allocated in operation and maintenance expenditures to provide housing services to Yukon residents. \$38.4 million has been allocated for capital expenditures to assist Yukoners in meeting their housing needs.

For 2021-22, total rental revenue and operation and maintenance recoveries are estimated to be \$12.7 million, including recoveries from third parties and from the federal government. We estimate that the total capital recoveries will be \$9.3 million, including recoveries from third parties and from the Government of Canada, while recoveries from loan programs are estimated to be \$5.3 million.

Note that, although recoveries from loan programs are recognized in the current fiscal year, the cash flow will only recover over the life of the loan or earlier, upon discharge.

For 2021, the net grant receivable from the Government of Yukon is estimated to be \$31 million. For the operation and maintenance expenditures — under Executive, \$1.5 million has been allocated to the executive branch, which includes the president's and vice-president's offices and support services.

Under Corporate Services, \$4.9 million has been allocated to the Corporate Services division, which includes Finance and Risk Management, inclusive of loans and grants unit, Human Resources, Policy and Communications, and Information

Management and Technology branches. This amount includes \$568,000 for long-term debt mortgage payments.

Under Operational Services, \$5.6 million has been allocated for the Capital Development and Maintenance branch. This branch provides project management for construction and capital upgrades and maintains housing units. \$7.9 million has been allocated for the Tenant Management branch. This branch provides support for tenants in housing units.

The significant changes in the operation and maintenance budget in 2021-22, which reflect efficiencies within Yukon Housing Corporation, include a \$384,000 increase for personnel and market merit increases, and a \$92,000 increase to contribution agreements. For capital expenditures under Corporate Services, \$2 million has been allocated to support the Challenge Cornerstone Housing project to provide long-term and affordable housing to individuals with moderate disabilities and/or mental illness experiencing homelessness.

\$1.5 million has been allocated to developer-build loans to be used as short-term construction financing for eligible Yukon developers building modest rental units or homes. \$1.2 million has been allocated for First Nation residential energy retrofits to increase the efficiency of housing for First Nation members and decrease Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions. \$1.65 million has been allocated for home-repair loans and programs to assist eligible homeowners to make repairs to existing homes. Of that, \$700,000 is allocated for home-repair loans; \$350,000 for emergency repairs; and \$650,000 for accessibility grants to help Yukoners make their homes safe and accessible as they age in place.

\$3.6 million has been allocated for the housing initiatives fund to support qualified Yukon projects to build affordable housing, and \$2 million has been allocated to the municipal matching rental construction program, a supply-side incentive to increase the quantity of purpose-built rental housing for apartments and secondary suites. \$3.2 million has been allocated to the rural home ownership program, which will assist eligible Yukon residents to obtain home ownership through their first mortgage and owner-build mortgages.

Under Operational Services, \$2.1 million has been allocated for energy retrofits of existing community housing units. Expenditures are 75-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada's low carbon economy fund. \$2.2 million has been allocated for the renovation and rehabilitation of existing housing units.

\$1.6 million has been allocated to convert existing single-family housing units to duplexes to help reduce the corporation's wait-list and \$600,000 has been allocated for the replacement of aged-out units as part of renewal and rebalancing of aging infrastructure.

There is \$200,000 allocated to develop mobile home options and \$681,000 has been allocated to the Yukon Housing Corporation benefit for rent subsidy program to assist Yukoners with affordability.

Ms. Clarke: I would like also to take this opportunity to thank the Yukon Housing officials for the briefing this morning. Welcome to the House, Mary and Marcel.

Thank you, again, Madam Chair. It is my privilege to rise today to debate this important issue. I understand that Yukon Housing Corporation has been doing community housing needs assessments. I was hoping that when he speaks, the minister could please share what Yukon communities have had housing needs assessments completed in the past five years and if any communities are scheduled to have these assessments done in the next few years.

As well, could he explain how these are normally conducted and how they are used to prioritize Yukon Housing Corporation projects throughout the Yukon?

Finally, could the minister provide a bit of a breakdown of what projects are currently planned for Yukon communities outside of Whitehorse?

I think that is quite a lot of detail that I have requested, so I will let the minister respond.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, I just know that past practice has usually been that when the officials prepare written comments — in the past, we've usually had the opportunity to continue on. It's usually opposition's key. So, I do want to thank the officials for what they wrote today. I know we'll probably get to that in a question if we didn't have an opportunity to share it earlier.

Also, I'll start with the first question. I know that the opening comments answered, I believe, questions number 2 and number 3 — at least when we talked about what projects were happening within the communities, which we touched on. The opposition may still want that question. I know that we're all coming into this topic for the first time.

When we talk about needs assessment — the needs assessments that have been completed to date — the Whitehorse needs assessment in 2019 — but I think the question was specific to communities. So, the Watson Lake assessment and work was completed in 2020, Carcross in 2021, Mayo in 2021, and Dawson in 2021 as well.

We also, in those opening remarks, touched upon the fact that this work will again continue. I don't have the exact schedule to date. I know that, over the last year at least, one of the things — and folks will know here in the Assembly — there is a big difference between the comfort level from one community to another on folks coming. You can do a lot of this work virtually, but it's also important, when we have our contractor go out into those communities, that they really get a chance to sit with individuals — whether it be the municipality or NGOs or folks who are focused on this work. Key stakeholders in each and every one of those communities are the folks who we talk to.

I'll say to any member here that, when we're coming to a community, if there are specific groups that they believe are really important to sit and speak with, please let the Housing Corporation know. I'll pass that on for these other communities — because we still have, of course, a number of Yukon communities to sit with.

When it comes to community projects — I am sorry if I'm not going in the exact order of the questions. As we touched upon, we have the three housing units — the triplexes that were mentioned — but also the fact that we are going to be doing one

housing project, which is in your home community in Old Crow — and I think that's a 10-unit — and that continues on. We are defining the design and the work around the Housing First initiative in Watson Lake and early design work on a sixplex in Carcross.

I hope that gives you a little bit of sense of where we are when it comes to the process. Again, let me endeavour — if it's okay — on that particular question about prioritizing — I think I still owe that answer. If the member opposite is comfortable, I will again look to answer that question along with answers to the questions that are coming.

Ms. Clarke: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for his answers. I had some follow-up questions on a few of the projects planned in this budget. The rapid housing initiative is a project funded through CMHC. I understand it is providing triplexes in communities. I understand that they need to be shovel-ready, and Yukon Housing Corporation owns the land. Could the minister outline where those are being built and what Yukon Housing Corporation lots they might be on in communities?

As well, could the minister provide some detail on plans for community engagement and planning on the Housing First project in Watson Lake, including lessons learned from the Whitehorse Housing First project? How will input from Watson Lake residents be considered?

Finally, could the minister respond or provide some details on how the corporation is planning to determine the breakdown of the unit mix in the Whitehorse mixed-use housing project? How is the corporation deciding which units are social housing, senior housing, or market housing? I look forward to those details.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to answer the first series of questions. One of the questions was pertaining to how do we make that decision. How do you prioritize? It really comes to an analysis from our asset management team. Inevitably, you're going to be looking at the age of existing infrastructure, where you're at within the planning process — so, significant elements toward that. If there is further detail required, I can certainly do that.

I just want to get clarification before I answer those, I think, about 10 questions from the member opposite, just pertaining to what — if I could just get a little more context on the “what we heard” on the Whitehorse project so that I understand what's being referred to with that. Then I'll try to answer the series of 10 questions.

Ms. Clarke: Okay. I'll repeat that question. The community engagement and planning on the Housing First project in Watson Lake, including lessons learned from the Whitehorse Housing First project — how will input from Watson Lake residents be considered?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Sorry, Madam Chair, I was focusing on the “what we heard” for Whitehorse. I'm just trying to get a bit more understanding on what the member opposite means by the best — I think it was best practice for Whitehorse — not Watson Lake, but Whitehorse specifically. What's being pertained to there? Then I will have a better opportunity to answer that question.

Ms. Clarke: Well, the minister is trying to answer the question with a question. I am going to my question and move on, because I do have a few questions regarding wait-lists.

I'm hoping the minister is able to share a breakdown of the statistics. I realize that the minister may not have some of this information at his fingertips, as we only shared some of these questions with officials this morning.

Could the minister share the current wait-list number and the breakdown for Whitehorse versus rural Yukon? As well, could the minister share the average and median wait times for individuals on the list, including the differences between the different categories? For example, what is the average wait time of a standard client versus a senior versus a woman fleeing an abusive situation? As well, do the minister and department know what percentage of clients self-remove from the wait-list — those who simply give up on getting a social housing unit — and if the corporation follows up to see if they found some secure housing?

I'll provide an opportunity for the minister to respond.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just for the record, it is a standard practice in the Legislative Assembly, during budget debate — especially in this particular case, because there were almost 10 questions asked in a cluster — I am just asking to get clarification on a particular question so that I could best answer it, and then the member opposite has said to move on. I think that with respect to this series of questions — we will go back into Hansard and make sure that we provide answers to those questions, because I don't think the member opposite wanted me to move on and not answer them. We will endeavour to do our best to have those questions answered.

Again, this is the next one, which is wait-lists — I'm glad this question came up. We will do our best. There was a series of supplementary questions there really concerning the analytics of this information and understanding to dig into it. I think that those are all very valid questions. But as the member opposite would know well, when you are dealing with very significant, confidential data — whether that is housing data, health data, you name it — it is so key to be in a situation where you have to ensure that you respect the individuals who have submitted that data and that you ensure that, when you are looking at that data, you do that, of course, with the most appropriate approach.

I have spoken with the officials, and I think it's a great question. One of the things that I believe we have to do is ensure that we delve into that data. The reason is — and some of these questions, of course, pertain to that — looking at those subsets. I think it's important for the entire Assembly to understand that for a couple reasons.

I've listened to questions over the last number of years. It's always focused on increase or decrease of wait-lists, and I think that the Housing Corporation, when you look at the work that they've done over the last number of years, has done a tremendous job in ensuring that — all of these new units had been built, and all the folks over there are working extremely hard and are passionate about what they are doing. But our population continues to increase. We have to really identify, where appropriate and where possible, how many folks are

coming into the territory and potentially being put on the wait-list. We have to understand how long people have been on the wait-list. We have to understand those subsets, as well — as the member opposite has touched on. How do you look at those individuals — and whether they are seniors or they're folks in risk — all of those different pieces — because that's going to help us as well really understand how successful things are.

When we go back to 2009 and 2010, the projected population was looked at. The interesting part is that, when the official community plan for the City of Whitehorse, for instance, was coming to a conclusion and then we were looking at population growth, we've actually outpaced what the high watermark was and looked at by the planning department at the City of Whitehorse. Now we're in this position where we have a very strong economy over the last number of years and a continued strong economy with GDP growth. We're seeing a lot of Yukoners finishing post-secondary. They want to come home, which is fantastic. There are jobs here for them; there are many jobs available to folks. But at the same time, all of those pressures are coming in. We're going to do our very best to get into that data, but we have to be so careful in accessing it to understand what we're allowed to dig into.

Another point in time — so, just getting into that. We call it a "point in time" — it's a snapshot of where things are, a count of the number of people in the community who are experiencing homelessness on a particular day. Scheduled for 2020 — again, so this point-in-time count was held in April 2021, so just last month. Of course, we have some of that data that will be available very soon, but I'm going to go through these lists here.

In the communities — in Beaver Creek, right now, there is no one on the wait-list.

In Carcross, we have four seniors on the wait-list and three non-seniors on the wait-list, for a total of seven.

Questions concerning time periods and things such as that — these are some of the questions that we're asking. We don't have all of that detail, but we'll go back and share what we can in a written submission.

In Carmacks, we have zero seniors and zero non-seniors on the wait-list; in Dawson City, we have eight seniors on the wait-list and 14 non-seniors, for a total of 22 individuals; in Faro, we have zero in all categories; in Haines Junction, we have two seniors and six non-seniors, for a total of eight individuals; in Mayo, there is just one Yukon government employee on the wait-list, and no other categories; and for those other ones, we had zero for employees. In Ross River, there are two seniors on the wait-list, eight non-seniors, for a total of 10; in Teslin, there is nobody on the wait-list across the board; in Watson Lake, we have two seniors, 13 non-seniors, so 15 total, and one employee on the wait-list; and in Whitehorse, we have 128 seniors, 185 non-seniors, for a total of 313.

The total for both the communities and Whitehorse is 146 seniors and 229 non-seniors, for a total of 375 individuals, and there were the two who were Yukon government employees.

During Question Period today and in the opening preamble, we talked a bit about the rate subsidy that's available. I think there are about 190 folks who are eligible. We started in

November, and they're going to have that opportunity this summer, but it's also important to note that 39 individuals who are on our wait-list are actually also receiving the rent subsidy. So, we are in a position where we have some tools that we can help them with now, and that's working with the federal government and CMHC on that.

Concerning our housing stock, I think that might be an upcoming question, so I'll leave that for now. We will endeavour to get some of that detailed information on the subsets. There are also a number of reasons why the demand for Yukon Housing Corporation housing continues to exceed supply, including an increase in the aging population and population growth, which we just touched on, as well as the high cost and limited availability of options, especially private market rentals, in both Whitehorse and the communities.

It only takes one drive through the City of Whitehorse to take a look at the rental stock and most of the bigger buildings here. Most of the bigger buildings in Whitehorse are quite old, because we saw a period of time where a developer — especially in the private sector — looked at other options.

They were not building rental housing, and the reason why they were not building rental options is because the model, when you are looking at land development — a rental housing development is a long-term investment. When you look at, say, a condominium building with a strata title, you're in a position where you can invest in that development — whether you're a development corporation or a private sector entity — and you will see an ROI — you'll see that return on investment much, much quicker.

So, the model has been — of course, when you have shareholders and investors, they want to see a return. That patient money that, in many cases, used to be there for tax reasons — and some of the tax incentives that used to be available here really drove that. So, you saw people forming corporations and building these assets.

So, again, we had that period of time where there seemed to be quite a pivot toward people building condominiums. Now the Housing Corporation is doing a great job in working with the municipalities — not only in Whitehorse but outside — to make sure that these incentives are there. Now we're getting to see that growth.

But those things, of course, have all helped to put extra pressure on where we are now. We are addressing the demand by offering rent subsidies, adding units to our stock, and establishing partnerships to assist the most vulnerable who are in housing need. The Canada-Yukon housing benefit rental subsidy program — launched in November of 2020 — provides rental support for over 190 households in private market housing.

Our rent supplement program provides \$1.4 million per year to help over 90 Yukon individuals and families, including 30 households living in the Da Daghay Development Corporation's River Bend development. This work started in the 33rd Assembly under the previous government. It continued in the 34th, and we continue to work with Da Daghay Development Corporation as we move forward. We continue that partnership. Again, we're looking at the construction of an

additional 28 new homes in Whistle Bend with the newest work.

Through an agreement, we will utilize 20 of these homes to people on the Yukon Housing Corporation's wait-list. I know that this would be of particular interest to the member opposite, because this is in the community and riding that she represents.

Additional responses to this, I would say — the housing social wait-list is 375, which we touched on. Again, we touched on the employee piece — just a couple of individuals there as well. So, I'll stop there and cede the floor for another question.

Ms. Clarke: The Member for Kluane wrote to the former Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation on October 16 to make her aware that the gathering area of the St. Elias seniors facility was closed for renovations, and seniors were asked to leave. In her response, she said that the seniors would be in by the end of November 2020. The renovations are long done, but the seniors are still not able to gather in that space.

Can the minister please confirm why the seniors are not currently in their gathering space six months after the completed renovations?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just wanted to take this as an opportunity to commend Patty Moore on her work in Haines Junction. She was a long-time colleague of mine many years ago and has been fierce in her work in Haines Junction and has been supported by the Member for Kluane in this work. Within the last two weeks, I did receive correspondence from Ms. Moore, working to look at this and rectify the situation. I am just going to read a bit of background — I think that it's appropriate — into the record to give a reason why that has been a bit of a challenge. I'm committing right now to working to try to alleviate this problem.

So, the St. Elias Seniors Society has requested use of the common space in the corporation's Haines Junction seniors facility for gatherings and office space for the society. Although there has been an informal arrangement with the society for several years, Yukon Housing Corporation staff have recently upgraded the space to ensure that it meets code requirements for community gatherings and is currently working to develop options, including the potential of a formal memorandum of understanding with the St. Elias Seniors Society for use of the space. The changes to ensure that the room met the code for community gatherings were made, as the room was originally designed for residential use only. The changes to the room were completed by late January 2021. However, we are trying to ensure that we are working with the chief medical officer of health and to ensure the health and safety of our tenants.

Again, the Housing Corporation has not yet provided access and we are working to remedy that. Through March and April, the Yukon Housing Corporation began to work through the steps that could ultimately lead to this formal arrangement for the St. Elias Seniors Society to use the space and to develop a COVID-19 plan that respects the health and safety.

Of course, we have seen some flexibility with that as of late. I am going to leave it at that, but I am making a commitment today to work with folks at the Housing Corporation and with those leaders inside the organizations in

Haines Junction. I will make sure that I am in contact with the Member for Kluane to ensure that he is up to speed on what is happening as we try to fix this situation.

Ms. Clarke: Madam Chair, I would like to ask if the minister has a timeline for when the seniors will be back in that building.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Not yet — I think that I was pretty clear in the sense that we are working through the situation. There is a commitment here. The sooner the better, so I think that is what we will commit to, and I will make sure I get back to the member. I know that the Member for Kluane has worked on this issue. I have been on all sides of the table on housing and with seniors in conversations in Haines Junction along with the member. I know that he is passionate about it, and we will work to do our very best to make sure that those seniors — this is one of those situations, of course, that is frustrating, I think, for everybody. There are guidelines and regulations and insurance. We are always trying to keep people safe but, at the same time, you just want to get people in there to be able to recreate and to spend time and support each other. We understand that it is the ultimate goal, so we will focus on an output here and try to move through the process as quickly as possible.

Ms. Clarke: Madam Chair, I have a few questions about staff rental housing in Yukon communities. I understand that there is, or has been, a review of the staff rental housing in Yukon communities. Could the minister share how and when these changes are being implemented and how they are expected to affect the rental markets in Yukon communities?

As well, could the minister share any details on the corporation's work to determine if these are taxable benefits?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have taken significant steps in modernizing our approach to housing for Yukon government staff in rural Yukon communities.

The new approach aims to decrease rental housing cost disparities in our communities, incentivize private sector investment in rural housing, and prioritize housing for employees considered critical for community well-being. So, we have heard that in the 34th Legislative Assembly, where some of those critical staff — whether they are medical staff or others — folks in opposition — ensuring that we work to make sure that they have a place to be, but also our belief is that we really do have to modernize this. There are opportunities. I know that there are folks here in the Assembly who have taken that opportunity — multiple people, on all sides of the floor, who are in the communities — to build out rental units, and I think there are many out there who will do it, and I think that's fantastic. That's what we want to really ensure happens — that the private sector is filling this gap. In our earlier comments, we were not going to find the appropriate solutions without a hybrid model of private sector, corporations, NGOs, as well as the government, coming together.

In late May 2019, the government policy governing employee housing was revised as part of the modernization effort. The updated policy prioritizes housing for essential positions, such as health professionals and teachers. It limits tenancies to three years to encourage staff to consider other housing options in communities and realigns rental rates to be

more reflective of private market rates in each specific community.

We will continue to implement the policy and collaborate with our partners in communities as we strive to achieve our long-term goal of affordable housing options and private market opportunities in Yukon communities. Of note, we have seen a reduction in the wait-list for staff housing from 31 households in May 2019 to two, as we just reflected upon in one of the earlier questions.

Yukon Housing Corporation's loan and grant programs support the development of new rental and home ownership housing in all communities. In some situations, the three-year tenancy limit may be extended. That is a process for requesting an extension that has been collaboratively developed by the Public Service Commission and the Yukon Housing Corporation.

The Yukon Teachers' Association and the Yukon Employees' Union were provided the opportunity to comment on the extension request process while it was developed.

Concerning the question on taxable benefit, in nearly two years under our new staff housing policy, considerable work has been undertaken to implement it, with some work remaining yet to do.

Rental rates have been realigned to be more reflective of private market rates in each community. New Yukon Housing Corporation staff housing tenants pay market-value rent, and existing tenants will see gradual annual increases of their rents during their three-year tenancy.

In January 2021, Yukon government began reporting the taxable housing benefit received by those employees in Yukon Housing Corporation staff housing who are paying below market rents. These changes bring us into alignment with the Canada Revenue Agency requirements. The Canada Revenue Agency has established fair market-value rental rates that apply to all Yukon communities.

Ms. Clarke: I have a few questions about the Canada-Yukon housing benefit rent subsidy program that the government announced last November and began in December. I was hoping that the minister could share how many clients, or households, have qualified for the program, preferably broken down according to the unit size categories.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We touched on this a couple of times — once in the opening statement and then going through the numbers. We're at 190. This went live in November. We're at 190 households. Again, this is another one of those situations that we're going to endeavour to take look at — what the subsets are and what information that we can share for the breakdown of households and sizes, with as much detail as we can possibly provide appropriately here to the Assembly. We can get back in a written submission.

Ms. Clarke: I understand the northern carve-out is \$20 million over five years. Could the minister confirm how much of that is budgeted for this year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: \$1.1 million.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for his answers.

I had some follow-up questions on a partnership project outlined in this budget and one that is not in this budget. Could

the minister provide some detail on how the Normandy Manor project came to be a higher priority this year?

There were some changes to the supplementary budget. Could the minister provide an update on the Challenge Cornerstone project and specifics of the management of the facility, when completed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We'll start with the Normandy project. The opening question was: Why has it become a priority in the past year? Of course, I'm new to this post, but one of the key reasons is that there is an exceptional group of private sector individuals who have an extensive track record in the Yukon of success in the projects they have done. There are a number of groups that have come together to execute this, and it was shovel-ready. So, you're in a position where there is tons of pressure, which we spoke about, and there's a project that's shovel-ready, and you have a track record of success — whether it's in the manufacturing sector or in the development sector — and all those things come together. I think that the private sector would be encouraged by the fact that the Yukon Housing Corporation worked hard and fast to meet their needs. We always like to see a crane in the air, and that's what we have seen, and that project is underway.

In keeping with our aging-in-place philosophy and the direction of the *Putting People First* recommendations and the housing action plan for Yukon, Health and Social Services and Yukon Housing Corporation are working together with our partners to support seniors where they want to live.

Currently under construction, Normandy Manor will be a privately owned and operated 84-unit residence for seniors. Anticipated completion is in the fall of 2022. In support of this project, Yukon Housing Corporation is providing \$3.5 million to support 10 units in the building for Yukon government to use for 20 years, with \$500,000 from the housing initiative fund and \$500,000 from the municipal matching rental construction program.

Normandy is being built and will be operated through a partnership of local businesses, including Ketza Construction, Borud Enterprises, and Northern Vision Development. Once completed, this residence will meet the needs of seniors who want housing with supportive services, such as meals and hospital services, filling a gap in accommodation for seniors. Normandy Manor provides an essential housing option in Whitehorse between individuals living in their own homes and those living in long-term care homes.

Our government's support for Normandy Manor is very cost-effective compared to the cost of long-term care. Our government recognizes that adequate, suitable, and affordable housing is fundamental to building and maintaining strong Yukon communities and is a strong social determinant of an individual's wellness.

I think that the other question had to do with a bit of background. I did touch on the rapid housing — but again, a little more information. So, we are seeing many new and innovative opportunities to work in partnership and leverage funds toward providing housing solutions. The rapid housing initiative funding is a federal COVID-19 economic recovery tool to create fast housing solutions. The tight building timeline

for this initiative requires projects to be constructed over the 2021 year. We are pleased by the number of Yukon projects submitted to the federal rapid housing initiative to support affordable community housing options for Yukoners.

Yukon Housing Corporation was approved for federal funding to build three triplexes in Mayo, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse and we touched on that. Of course, the corporation had gone out and done an assessment with folks in those communities already. The new 2020-21 federal budget, again, looks to expand the rapid housing initiative with an additional investment of \$1.5 billion. We have already been in discussion with the federal minister and, of course, we are looking forward to that. These are all much-welcomed programs coming to the Yukon, so we are looking to see how that will roll out.

Yukon Housing Corporation's triplex projects align, again, with the community needs identified through housing needs assessments, the corporation's capital asset management plan, and our work to modernize our community housing program.

We are investing in housing across the continuum, including through increases to supportive housing and subsidized community housing — again, \$3 million in federal funds on that work, and 75 percent of that is recoverable.

I will see if I can provide some information — I know there were questions about the lots, and if we don't have that right now, we will make sure that we can get back — just concerning the lands that we are using for those particular projects.

On to Challenge — the successful construction of the Cornerstone Housing project by Challenge Disability Resource Group will bring 53 new homes to Yukoners. It is anticipated to be completed in early 2022.

In the Yukon Housing Corporation 2021-22 budget, we have provided \$4 million as a capital grant and \$1.5 million through the developer-build loan to support project construction based on Challenge Disability Resource Group's timeline, tender award, and construction start dates. Additional funding assistance for the fiscal year 2021-22 will be provided as a capital grant in the amount of \$1.77 million.

Between 2017 and 2019, we advanced \$1.9 million from the Yukon Housing Corporation program funds to the Challenge Disability Resource Group. These funds have been used to purchase the land and for the project design and tender-readiness based on the following breakdown: \$750,000 for the purchase of the land; \$500,000 under the municipal matching rental construction; \$500,000 under the housing initiatives fund; and \$150,000 under the victims of violence program.

Our people-centred approach to wellness helps Yukoners thrive. By making strategic investments, we can build healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities. We are proud to support our community partners with housing solutions.

Again, the breakdown, as requested, for what the Challenge Disability Resource Group is constructing is a mixed-use, 53-unit building. We are looking at 46 affordable rental units, seven market housing units and a commercial space on the ground floor. I think, for many folks here, we know that Challenge has been a leader on social enterprise work. They have done great social enterprise projects for many, many

years, and this gives them a new opportunity with this infrastructure.

I just want to answer that part of the question about the management of it. I believe it is the NGO that will be overseeing the building upon completion.

Ms. Clarke: Madam Chair, the Vimy Heritage project has been discussed in Whitehorse for a long time. Could the minister please share any thoughts or information he has on the potential future of the Vimy project?

I look forward to those details.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We much appreciate the Vimy Heritage Housing Society's work to develop its vision for independent housing with supports for seniors. Seniors housing is important to this government as well as exploring options to support Yukoners while keeping sound financial principles in mind.

We are working with the Vimy Heritage Housing Society to explore sources of funding that would support a financially viable project. Most recently, Vimy received federal seed funding, and we are providing support to assist the society with developing their application to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation co-investment fund, in addition to the funding that Vimy Heritage Housing Society has received from government for functional and design planning. We will continue to explore options for support for their project proposal from our existing programs and innovative partnerships. The Government of Yukon is holding a lot in Whistle Bend for the development, and that has just been extended again. It's just showing the true commitment to patiently work and support the organization. They have been extremely patient, as they have worked through a lot of different feasibility work on this particular project and are now really coming to a key spot as they look to leverage funding from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation co-investment fund.

There has been a tremendous amount of work done. The Yukon Housing Corporation has been a key supporter of the Vimy society, and it has been an all-government approach. I commend the new Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and their team, which has extended the lot in Whistle Bend, and also folks in Economic Development who have helped on some of the business planning. Everybody is just trying to make sure that they are leaning into this project, and, of course, Ranjit and Elaine have done an extraordinary job of just being so strong and persistent and community leaders as this moves forward. I look forward to the continued conversations from the Yukon Housing Corporation with the society, making sure that we can help them have the best possible chance of working with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation on leveraging some of those strategic funds so this dream of many can become a reality.

Ms. Clarke: This is my final question, and I thank the Yukon Housing Corporation officials for coming here to the House today. Thank you for your time, Mary and Marcel.

My final question to the minister is: How much of the Canada-Yukon housing benefit rent program has been spent to date?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We're going to provide that in a written response. I think we've given a sense of how many individuals, but again, we're just going to go back to Finance and we're going to provide that answer back. I thank the member opposite for the detailed and extensive questions today.

Ms. Tredger: I would also like to extend my thanks to the officials here today and for your great briefing this morning as well.

I actually have a question about the housing benefit as well. I was wondering if the program has been fully subscribed to.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The Yukon Housing Corporation — again, this was such a great undertaking, launching this program in November 2020. This is the new Canada-Yukon housing benefit. As of April 2021 — and we've touched on it a couple of times here — we've approved direct housing rental subsidy support to over 190 Yukoners in market rental housing. The Canada-Yukon housing benefit is a funding initiative. It's \$9.1 million, over eight years, under the national housing strategy, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation-Yukon Housing Corporation bilateral funding agreement.

So, this subsidy program, with \$681,000 available this 2020-21 fiscal year, will help Yukoners recover from the economic effects of COVID-19.

At this point, just to the member opposite, we are still accepting applications and we're still reviewing applications. There is still a bit of room within the year, but I think that we'll probably be coming back just with a written — we can certainly provide those responses today that are going to the Yukon Party, and to you as well, and you'll have a sense of where we are within the budget.

Ms. Tredger: As a follow-up, how is the information about this program being publicized so that people know they can access it?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: To date, the information concerning the program has been shared through social media platforms, local newspapers, and our seniors coordinator. Again, if there are folks with either opposition parties who are aware of other effective platforms that we should be considering, we are open to those ideas and suggestions.

Ms. Tredger: I thank the member opposite for that answer.

The member opposite spoke about Normandy earlier, and I apologize if I have missed this, but my understanding is that some of the units are to be affordable units. I was wondering how many of the units are affordable units and if the same fee structure will apply to them as to other Yukon Housing Corporation units and also who will be deciding who gets those affordable units?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There are 26 units total — 10 of those owned by the Yukon government with the 20-year lease that I have touched on, and rent geared to income, so 25 percent of income then gets allocated toward the rent. It is a combination of both the Yukon Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services that will be working together to determine the folks who will have access to those units.

Ms. Tredger: I thank the member opposite for that answer.

I also have a question about the triplexes that are being built in the three communities — I believe that it is Mayo, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse. Who are those units intended for — whether it's staff, general citizens, or seniors?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The criteria for these triplexes is defined through the transfer payment agreement, or the bilateral agreement, with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. This is the same model for all three communities. One is an accessible unit; one is for a First Nation member; and one is for a victim of violence.

Ms. Tredger: I appreciate that answer.

One of the issues I heard about in the election on seniors buildings has been security issues. I was wondering what measures are in place right now to protect seniors and the buildings they live in.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The overall wellness and safety of our tenants is a priority and something that we take very seriously. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we changed operations to ensure the safety and security of tenants. We increased our cleaning services in multi-unit buildings, posted up-to-date information from the chief medical officer of health, worked with the senior engagement specialist to ensure that social programming continued with both virtual and physically distanced activities, and contacted each tenant directly by phone to check with them, provide information, and answer questions or concerns.

For immediate tenant security and safety issues, we continue to provide a nighttime security service in our multi-unit buildings in Whitehorse. We always encourage tenants to call the RCMP if they feel their safety is at risk. We also encourage all tenants to raise any issues or concerns with Yukon Housing Corporation staff as soon as possible so that staff are aware of and can address these issues in a timely manner.

We continue to provide a number of related safety and security initiatives. For example, we are currently working toward the installation of security cameras in all our multi-unit buildings in Whitehorse, beginning with improvements that can be completed on the exterior of the buildings. We are circulating a quarterly seniors newsletter designed to increase the safety, security, and sense of community. Prior to April 2020, we held meetings in all of our seniors buildings to provide opportunities for our tenants to discuss their needs, concerns, and ideas.

Today, we navigate support for our seniors with a more one-on-one approach through phone calls and with visits from our senior engagement specialist — the individual who I touched on earlier who has been reaching out to ensure that folks know about our rent assist program. Again, we are working to provide effective security and wellness solutions for each multi-unit building for seniors.

If there are members — probably more pertinent to the riding for the member opposite in Whitehorse Centre — but if there are things that we need to know about that focus on the security of tenants, please share that information with us so that we can work to rectify that and make sure that those individuals

who have contributed so much to the Yukon have an opportunity to get the proper supports.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you for that answer. This is actually my final question. I really appreciate how efficiently we have been able to move through this.

I wanted to ask a question about Waterfront Place, the seniors building there. Currently, the parking lot is fairly difficult to access. There is a lack of sidewalks that go to bus stops. There isn't actually access directly to the Millennium Trail despite the fact that it runs right by the building; there are locked gates in the way and there are ditches. I was wondering if there were any plans to make access to and from this building easier for seniors, many of whom have mobility issues.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The conversations have begun on this challenge. Again, this is a new topic here for me so far and we'll look to come up with potential solutions, but I'll take an opportunity to — I'm going to be able to reflect on the conversations and understand in detail — of course, we can also have that conversation formally or offline here or casually, if you would like, for any members, on these topics.

I can understand what the challenge is, especially — this is an important time because, for all of us — we have just spent 30 days getting to know even better the communities that we represent. Those particular issues that were brought up at the door, for all members — if there are things pertaining to housing or seniors housing, please let us know and we'll follow up, especially on this particular one, for the infrastructure in the downtown area.

Ms. Tredger: I spoke too quickly. Thank you for that answer. I actually do have one additional question.

I wanted to ask about housing for teachers in the communities and what new work is being done there.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, to date, to report, based on this budget debate — when we went through those early statistics, there were only two government employees. Again, we try to prioritize based on health professionals or teachers.

The projects in this budget that we have touched on are the project in Old Crow — which has 10 units and is mixed use — as well as the six units in Carcross. To date, that is what we have.

We talked about the three triplexes, but we also dug into the fact that those are defined by whom we would see as clients, while also encouraging the private sector — whether it be in Whitehorse or in communities — to work with us to leverage the programs that we have so that they can fill those needs.

Again, to date, there are only the two folks on the wait-list who are government employees who are waiting — but we are going to have this opportunity, because we are hoping — whether there are medical professionals or educators who are in those communities — that they are in a position to have a three-year tenancy. It is a good opportunity for other developers with an entrepreneurial spirit in our communities to build one unit or a duplex and help the housing continuum. We need everybody at the table, and it seems like there are some really good economic opportunities there for Yukoners.

Ms. Tredger: Madam Chair, I want to follow up on one of my previous questions about security in seniors buildings.

Keypad entries in a lot of seniors buildings aren't currently working. Can the minister tell me what is being done about this issue?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We will confer with our maintenance team and report back on some of the undertakings concerning any deficiencies that might be there with keypads. To help us focus that response — not only our response to the Assembly but our response there — please feel free to share which particular buildings where there have been reports. I know our maintenance team is probably on it from reports from the individuals who are living in those buildings. But again, we are always happy to put some further emphasis on ensuring that the maintenance is undertaken.

Ms. Tredger: I do have another question about seniors housing, and that is about bedbugs. I understand that there is a policy in place for Yukon Housing Corporation about bedbugs and I do appreciate that it is not a simple or easy fix. But I hear so often from seniors who are struggling with this and have been living with bedbugs — really, really terrible bedbug infestations — for months on end. I am wondering what is being done to update the policy or what new measures are being brought into place, because the situation is really, really challenging for a lot of seniors right now.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, of course, the health and safety and comfort of our tenants is very important to us. Bedbugs are a nuisance and they can affect anyone. Bedbugs are occurring in Yukon Housing Corporation units. The team is there to support tenants with next steps and a mitigation process. Yukon Housing Corporation staff will arrange for an assessment and, if bedbugs are identified, the staff can move quickly to support a timely response and treatment, which can minimize the impact of bedbugs on both the tenant and also their neighbours.

We mitigate bedbugs by hiring a trained professional contractor to treat any unit where bedbugs have been identified and, at the same time, we also support tenants and share best practices on how to properly clean clothing and belongings to ensure that the treatment is effective. These practices can also discourage further incidents. We know that, from time to time, some of our tenants may be affected by bedbugs. We understand that this is a stressful situation and, when this happens, we work with tenants directly to explain our treatment and prevention process and to resolve the issue as quickly as possible.

The Housing Corporation has an annual contract in place to investigate and mitigate this nuisance.

Ms. Tredger: Just to jump backward a little bit with regard to teacher housing in communities — is Yukon Housing working with the YTA to try to identify future gaps in housing in communities for teachers?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Absolutely. We are working with both the YEU and the YTA — so both unions that are representing individuals out in the communities. We are having discussions with them. I think that the member opposite brought up another fantastic point in her question and I think it will be important to endeavour to understand what those tenancy time periods are. I think I would like to maybe put the Economic Development hat on and extract that information to understand what the time

period is and work to see if we can provide that out to communities and contractors so that they actually understand when those opportunities may occur.

Of course, folks can make decisions on their employment — where they're employed or what they're doing — but it may be a chance for us to give some better information out there so that individuals have the best possible set of facts when they're looking at making investments in their communities to provide private sector solutions for rental housing.

Ms. Tredger: That was actually my final question. Thank you.

Mr. Istchenko: I just want to go back to housing and teachers housing in rural communities. The community of Beaver Creek has a trailer that is sort of set aside for Highways and Public Works. They have a teacher coming back who has a family, and the Highways and Public Works — I don't know if they're saving that trailer for something, but they have staff who come up there once in a while, but they usually stay for a month or six weeks, and they can support the economy by staying in one of the local hotels, probably — which was the prior practice, many years ago.

I'm just wondering if Yukon Housing Corporation will work with Highways and Public Works and the Department of Education to make sure that this teacher actually has housing. Otherwise, they won't have a teacher in that community, if there isn't a permanent place for a family as opposed to the little place that is set aside for a single teacher.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There are a couple of different elements to that question that can maybe lead to some further information here, if it is for further information. One is that — just when we talk about conversion — understanding that there are units out there, and the corporation — when they were educating me on the business of the corporation last week, one of the things we talked about was the conversion piece. It was maybe one of the questions asked in the briefing.

It's just important to say that we're looking to try to optimize the use of the infrastructure that we have, because in some cases in the past — probably throughout the history of the corporation — there have been situations where we are over-housing, and probably individuals — there might be one person, and then there are two or three bedrooms. I know that's something that's underway — not specific to this.

What I'll say is that, without knowing all the background on this, I will work with the Housing Corporation and take a look at this. I know that sometimes some of these solutions are a very common-sense approach to ensuring that we can help in the communities. I know that the Minister of Highways and Public Works is here, and we can look into this situation and find out exactly what is happening. I may have to reach out just to get further background, if necessary.

Mr. Istchenko: I will forward a letter off with specifics there.

I just wanted to go back to something that my fellow colleague had brought up about the St. Elias seniors centre. The reason that seniors facility is in Haines Junction was because of the advocacy of the seniors way back in the day who worked with the previous MLA, Gary McRobb, who actually brought

that petition to the House, and we had a facility — and Premier Fentie, back in the day, had built that.

One of the things with that was that space in the basement that we talk about all the time which the seniors were asked to leave for renovations or upgrades or whatever — and we've talked about them still not being back in there. The agreement — at the very beginning with that — was a special agreement on what the seniors pay for their rent. It was an individual thing. I know there has been a lot of change in Yukon Housing Corporation, and I'm not sure, when you talk to the seniors advocate, if she had mentioned to you the background history on that building and how important it is. There are a lot of files I'll forward off to the minister on that so he can actually have a look at it, because I understand that Yukon Housing Corporation changes as they move forward in how they go about doing business. But this is something that a lot of the seniors who helped build this community that I was born and raised in had advocated for and got. We're advocating, as you see in the motion today, for phase 2 of seniors housing. I just wanted to put that on the floor of the House today and I will forward that information off to the minister.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Absolutely. I appreciate those comments, of course. I did have an opportunity to attend at least one presentation there in Haines Junction. I think there was also another one that was held with some of the folks in the community at the Da Kų Cultural Centre, probably back in 2015. There were folks there from Yukon Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services, as well as some of the individuals there in the community. I think that, over the last number of years, in discussions, there has been — I appreciate — in the role of Energy, Mines and Resources, understanding the uniqueness of that community — the same as any other community — really helped to educate me so I could make proper decisions and understanding that there is so much difference and uniqueness from one situation to the next. We'll look into that and understand and respect the fact that the folks who worked so hard to get that infrastructure there — of course, we need to figure out a way that they can use the infrastructure that they lobbied for so hard and that they deserve to have access to.

I'll cede the floor and see if there is another question before we ought to conclude.

Ms. McLeod: There was a CBC news story that I believe was posted in early March of this year, and it referred to the \$20-million fund to build affordable housing in the territory. I think the minister has referred to this as "the carve-out fund" — where \$1.1 million has been designated for this year.

In that article, the government — or, maybe more specifically, the corporation — had said that some of the projects under that money were to include a men's shelter in Watson Lake and a duplex in Destruction Bay. I wonder if the minister could please give us an update on that.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'm going to stick to the Watson Lake question, with respect for the Member for Watson Lake, and then I know that we'll provide some information on the Destruction Bay duplex.

The Yukon Housing Corporation contract for the housing needs assessment in Watson Lake was \$15,000. To collect data from the community of Watson Lake, the contractor, Vink Consulting, used interview and video consultation with stakeholders, the Watson Lake municipal government, and the Liard First Nation. The consultation included information from the Watson Lake-based employees of the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Society Yukon — FASSY — and Watson Lake regional home care and regional services, the chief administrative officer of the Town of Watson Lake, the mayor of the Town of Watson Lake, the housing officer from Liard First Nation, the executive director from the Help and Hope for Families, a representative from the Watson Lake elder society, Kate Mechan, an implementation manager with the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness, the Yukon Housing Corporation community housing manager in Watson Lake, and the director of community partnering and lending at the Yukon Housing Corporation.

Currently, the Yukon Housing Corporation is working closely with the Town of Watson Lake to identify land options in the community to build a Housing First supportive housing project. Future engagement with the community of Watson Lake will occur after the corporation identifies the final land site. The construction budget is currently allocated for 2021-22 and 2022-23 fiscal years, with \$1.5 million allocated for this year — as we get into the early parts.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by the Hon. 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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Seeing the time, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following documents were filed May 19, 2021:

35-1-4

Intervention in Yukon's rental market, letter re (dated May 13, 2021) from Marc Perreault, Yukon Real Estate Association President, to Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier (Dixon)

35-1-5

Implementation of rent control, letter re (dated May 17, 2021) from Marc Perreault, Yukon Real Estate Association President, to Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier (Dixon)

35-1-6

Type 1 diabetes, letter re (dated April 8, 2021) from Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier, to Marney Paradis, Board of Directors, Yukon T1D Support Network (McPhee)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 7

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, May 20, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin

DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

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

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New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, May 20, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 38, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, has been removed from the Order Paper as it is identical to Motion No. 30, which was adopted by the House yesterday, May 19, 2021.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to invite to the Assembly today for our tribute on Asian Heritage Month: first of all, Lillian Nakamura Maguire and Charlotte Hrenchuk from the Hidden Histories Societies Yukon; Alfred Au from the Chinese Canadian Society; as well as Jocelyn Curteanu, city councillor for the City of Whitehorse.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome special guests here today for the tabling of the Yukon Child Care Board annual report: Amy Ryder, who is the chair of the Yukon Child Care Board, and Sophie Partridge, the administrative assistant for the Yukon Child Care Board. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Asian Heritage Month

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Asian Heritage Month.

Since 2001, Canadians have celebrated the achievements and contributions of Asian Canadians during the month of May.

This year's theme, "Recognition, Resilience, and Resolve", recognizes the diverse experiences of Canadians of Asian descent and calls for an end to the discrimination that many still face.

I understand the social and legal discrimination that so many have faced, across Canada and here in the Yukon.

As a councillor with the City of Whitehorse, I had the honour of working with Lillian Nakamura Maguire, who is here with us today, and Heather MacFadgen, who developed the first anti-racism bylaw north of 60. I have to say that it was accomplished because of the guidance of Lillian and her persistence and years of work until that point. Credit is due to Lillian's work.

It is important that we speak out against anti-racial sentiment as it has no place here in the Yukon. That work was then carried on by Jocelyn Curteanu, who is here with us today. In the next term of city council, that work was taken on and was implemented by Jocelyn, and now we are seeing in the paper this week that there are calls. It was almost a decade ago, but it seems just like yesterday. Now that important work is coming back, and we are seeing the city looking to bring that work back.

I want to recognize the resilience of the Asian communities in Yukon today — strong families and strong connections.

I would like to read a powerful poem that was written by Asian Canadian artist Christopher Tse, titled the *PSA Eyes Open*, which was produced for Asian Heritage Month. This poem has really been spread across the country. My colleague from the NDP will finish it off.

We both prepared a bit on this, and so I'll read you the first part of the poem:

We have never been a loud people

Our elders always taught us that actions speak louder than words so we learn to keep our heads down, keep our grades up, keep our kin close, keep our mouths shut.

I wonder?

What is does to a people when they stay quiet for so long, do they forget their voice?

The sound of their stories? The resilience of language?

When you are no longer in your Mother Land, does your mother tongue still sing of home?

What work songs lifted our spirits as we built the railroad?

What prayers did we whisper as they sent us to camps in the mountains to meditate on all the ways we don't belong to this country?

So we stayed quiet.

As they burned our Chinatowns down and spit on our grandmas at bus stops, we stayed quiet.

As they laughed in our faces and told us, go back where we came from but they've mistaken our silence ... for compliance.

Looked on our meekness, as weakness.

See we are not the submissive stereotype that's been depicted on silence, on us.

They've gotten it twisted.

Silence is golden.

As are we.

A gradient of yellow to brown, every Korean Town and Little Saigon – an act of defiance.
 Every hunchback elder – a humble giant.
 Silence is grace in the triumph. Is peace in the riot?
 Silence is bold.
 A force.
 It is the brewing calm before the coming storm, and now the sky is splitting open and the rage is pouring forth.
 So this is for, every kid who's tried to pull their nose bridge to make it taller, everytime they mocked our eyes are smaller.
 This is for our elder — both alive and remembered.
 For their lessons – the tough and the tender.
 For our full names – past and present.
 May they be pronounced. May they be respected.
 For every chink in the national fabric, every nip in the winter wind of prairie towns and northern hamlets, coast to coast on stolen land.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: [Member spoke in Tagalog. Text unavailable.]

I am pleased and proud to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Asian Heritage Month. Let us recognize and celebrate the different cultures that make up Yukon's rich cultural fabric.

Asian Heritage Month is an opportunity for all Canadians to learn more about the many achievements and contributions of Canadians of Asian descent who, throughout our history, have done so much to make Canada the amazing country we share today.

I would like to thank the Japanese Canadian Association of Yukon for hosting a screening of the film *Tsumugu*, or *Weaving our Stories*, last night in honour of Asian Heritage Month. It was a collection of language and cultural stories meant to be passed along to the next generation, and it was absolutely beautiful. I encourage you to check out this short film, which is available on YouTube.

I was happy to take part in the panel discussions and to share some of the history of the Canadian Filipino Association — how we came to be and how we celebrate our culture here in the Yukon. We spoke about some very important topics that can be felt among all Asian cultures. We spoke about the importance of standing up to Asian racism and actively working to end discrimination. We spoke of challenges facing ethnocultural minorities in Yukon. One such challenge is the continuation of our languages.

[Member spoke in Tagalog. Text unavailable.]

We must make a point of speaking our native languages at home with our children, as many find that English may be easier. It is important to ensure that future generations can carry on the language, in addition to culture and tradition.

In past years, we have been able to hold large multicultural celebrations to share language, culture, and traditions with all Yukoners.

Zoom is not the same, and we look forward to the day when we can come together once again to celebrate in food, dancing, drumming, singing, and more. We look forward to once again being able to gather, eat, laugh, and dance and share the beauty of all of our cultures with one another again.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Asian Heritage Month. We, in Canada, are not immune to racism or hateful acts. In the last year, there has been an ugly rise in Asian hate.

Asian Heritage Month has never been more important than it is right now. This year's theme is "Recognition, Resilience, and Resolve". It speaks to the discrimination that people of Asian descent in Canada have experienced, ranging from subtle biases to overt violence. It honours their contributions, their diverse stories and experiences, and the ways they have persevered through adversity. It is also a call to action. It asks all Canadians to come together to fight anti-Asian racism and discrimination.

We need to learn more about the many triumphs and contributions of Canadians of Asian descent. We also need to learn more about our own biases and prejudices, and we need to turn that understanding into actions that celebrate and make our country safer for our Asian communities.

It was very exciting last week to watch the video that my colleague mentioned, *Eyes Open*, go viral. It's a powerful video, and I really encourage everyone to watch it.

I would like to finish off the end of it here:

We are here
 We've been here
 From take out joints and internment camps
 To internships and graduation caps, we are strong, we have pride, we fight, we fall, we rise and to the ones who say we don't belong? It's them who should open their eyes.

Applause

In recognition of Vadzaih Choo Drin, Caribou Days

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise to pay tribute to Vadzaih Choo Drin, which translates as "Big Caribou Days" — and I apologize for any mispronunciation that may have just occurred. This annual festival in Old Crow happens over the May long weekend, with festivities honouring the connection between the Vuntut Gwitchin people and the Porcupine caribou herd. This great creature is foundational to the culture and way of living for the Vuntut Gwitchin every day of the year, since time immemorial.

Caribou Days began just over 20 years ago to coincide with the herd's return to their summer calving grounds. Unfortunately, the early months of the pandemic last year forced the cancellation of the 20th anniversary festival. However, we are happy to see it back this year, even if it is with

a slightly reduced size and capacity. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it is open only to Old Crow residents, Vuntut Gwitchin citizens living in the Yukon, and invited guests, but even with the smaller community-focused gathering, I am certain that it will be a memorable weekend.

There are still lots of activities, like food preparation, feasts, a craft sale, an antler-decorating competition, jigging, and, I am quite sure, a lot of fiddle music. That sounds indeed like a great time.

It is my sincere hope that others will be able to attend, once again, next year to celebrate this majestic herd and its unbreakable connection with the Vuntut Gwitchin people.

I would also like to take this special opportunity to confirm our government's commitment to the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd's sacred and sensitive calving ground on the Alaskan coastal plain. To the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation community, but particularly the elders, my sincere gratitude for sharing your priceless traditional knowledge and wisdom.

Mr. Speaker, I — as so many others in Yukon — admire their timeless relationship with the Porcupine caribou herd. Indeed, I look forward to the opportunity to travel to Old Crow in the future.

I would like to end with a comment that I recently noted from an Old Crow youth: "Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation people live in the northern part of the Yukon. We live our lives much like the caribou. Caribou is our main source of food. Therefore, if we need healthy caribou, we need to take care of the land. We take care of the land. Caribou takes care of us."

As the Minister of Environment, this quote serves to remind me of my duties and responsibilities, not only toward Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation persons but also to all Yukoners.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party to pay tribute to Vuntut Gwitchin's 20th annual May long weekend Vadzaih Choo Drin celebration, which translates into "Big Caribou Days".

This community celebration began in the year 2000 to honour the annual spring migration of the Porcupine caribou herd and the culture of Vuntut Gwitchin. Each spring the Porcupine caribou herd journeys to their calving grounds in the coastal plains of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which is also recognized by the Gwich'in Nation as "Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit" which translates into "the sacred place where life begins".

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge provides pristine wilderness, rich with the freshest waters, the greenest pastures, and vast open lands for animals and birds from all over the world to come and have their young. Since time immemorial, the Gwitchin have relied on the Porcupine caribou herd to sustain our culture and traditional way of life, which shapes our spiritual connection to our homelands and our existence in the world.

The migratory route of the Porcupine caribou herd continues to be deeply embedded across the traditional

territories of the Gwich'in Nation, which spans from the Northwest Territories, Yukon to Alaska.

The Porcupine caribou herd also carries a vital role in the rights of passage for the Gwitchin. It is from the caribou that young girls are taught how to be caretakers, raise their children, and provide for their families as they learn, from a very young age, how to prepare a variety of food and clothing. It is also from the Porcupine caribou that young boys are taught how to provide for the community and to be land stewards as they form their lifelong relationship with the Porcupine caribou herd.

The Porcupine caribou are a part of our lifeline from the time we are in our mother's womb until long after we are gone. Caribou Days also brings attention to history, advocacy, and educational efforts of the Gwich'in Nation as we continue to be a global voice for permanent protection of the coastal plains of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas development.

In 1988, the Gwich'in gathered in Arctic Village, Alaska, where we were mandated by our elders to be a united voice in opposing any threats of oil and gas development in the coastal plains of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This responsibility continues to be passed on from the very elderly to the very young. The Gwich'in people continue to stand united to see permanent protection of the birthing grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd to ensure sustainability of our culture and our way of life. The Porcupine caribou herd holds a strong presence in every aspect of the Gwich'in people's existence.

Each spring, the Vuntut Gwitchin remind everyone of the importance of connection and belonging as we celebrate who we are as a people. We wish the community of Old Crow success as they prepare for the celebration happening this weekend.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling the Yukon Child Care Board annual report 2020-21, which is required under section 4(11) of the *Child Care Act*.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Dixon: I rise to give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of a detailed list showing all projects and government initiatives that were delayed as a result of the unnecessary snap election.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Yukon Montessori School and the Yukon Teachers' Association to establish a pilot project for a publicly funded Montessori program in a Yukon elementary school.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse to address traffic issues in Whistle Bend and along Mountainview Drive in light of the upcoming construction of the new Whistle Bend school.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to recognize that democracy matters, and a pandemic should not be used as an excuse to avoid public consultation or democratic oversight.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to appoint a bid committee to begin planning to host the 2027 Canada Winter Games and start planning for the development of necessary infrastructure to accommodate hosting.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to enhance traffic safety along the Alaska Highway in Porter Creek by installing a turning lane in front of Super A and installing pedestrian-activated crosswalks.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with appropriate levels of government to lobby for the Yukon's required access to tidewater via Skagway and Haines, Alaska and Stewart, BC.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support local initiatives and events that promote and recognize one of Yukon's oldest industries — trapping — including but not limited to:

(1) UnFURled, organized by the Yukon Trappers Association and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council;

(2) the Alsek moose recovery program administered by the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Alsek Renewable Resources Council; and

(3) the Dawson Fur Show, organized by the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize the importance of ensuring that community libraries have the necessary resources to operate and pay staff a fair wage by working with community library boards to determine an appropriate increase to their funding.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a Yukon forestry strategy in consultation with Yukon First Nations and appropriate stakeholders to support value-added products for Yukon timber, including biomass energy production.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work together with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Yukon Energy Corporation on the protocol agreement regarding relicensing of the Äshèyi Mān (Aishihik Lake) generating facility and attempt to reach a mutually agreeable consensus on the proposed future operation of the dam.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to include in-centre hemodialysis when implementing the *Putting People First* recommendations.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to direct the Yukon Housing Corporation to immediately address the issue of bedbug infestations in seniors units that are impacting the health and mental well-being of tenants.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MOTION OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY NO. 3

(Standing Order 28)

COVID-19 vaccination verification measures — protection of privacy

Mr. Cathers: I rise to request unanimous consent of the House to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity pursuant to Standing Order 28:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services, Minister of Justice, and the Auditor General to ensure that any measures used to verify the vaccination status of people crossing the Yukon border, beginning on May 25, 2021, protect the privacy of individuals and inform the public of how individuals' legal rights are protected by:

(1) immediately consulting with Yukon's Information and Privacy Commissioner on the details of the proposed measures;

(2) publicly releasing the legal and privacy analysis of the proposed measures conducted by the government and an implementation plan that demonstrates how individuals' confidential health information will be protected;

(3) providing information on what training on the protection of personal privacy has been provided to the private contractors staffing the territory's southern border;

(4) providing a detailed plan regarding the management and disposal of any records containing confidential health information; and

(5) providing information on how personal health information will be shared with or received from provinces, territories, and the federal government.

In speaking briefly to why this is a matter of urgency: The government announced new border control measures that are coming into force five days from now on May 25, 2021. We believe this matter is urgent and pressing because it is just days away, yet the government has not released details nor have they properly consulted with privacy experts.

Those measures relate to verifying the vaccination status of Yukoners and other Canadian citizens seeking to enter our territory. While the government has not called this a "vaccine passport", the intention of their proposal is substantively the same as that.

Yesterday, the Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner, Diane McLeod-McKay, joined other privacy commissioners from across Canada to issue a statement on vaccine passports.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: The Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Lake Laberge has brought a motion that he has introduced to the floor of the House, but he has clearly wandered into reasons for support of the motion and not for the reason that it is a pressing and urgent motion. He is to submit to you initially why it is urgent and pressing and you should make a ruling on that. Only then would he be permitted to go into the substance of the matter, which he has clearly wandered into in defence of this motion.

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

Mr. Cathers: I would suggest that the Government House Leader should actually read Standing Order 28. I believe I am fully within the range of that in briefly introducing the substance of the motion and the urgency thereof.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is no point of order, but the Member for Lake Laberge must keep his remarks brief.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I will, of course, keep my remarks brief, as you've instructed. The joint statement that was issued yesterday by the Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner along with privacy commissioners across the country emphasized that, if a government is proceeding with such an initiative, passports or other similar documents must meet the highest level of privacy protection. That joint statement from privacy commissioners also outlines key issues

that need to be considered and principles that should be followed prior to implementation. It goes on to say, about vaccine passports and similar measures, that they: "... must be developed and implemented in compliance with applicable privacy laws."

The joint statement from Canadian privacy commissioners also specifically mentions the importance of consulting with privacy commissioners on the details of any such proposal prior to implementation. Despite this, the minister did not consult with the privacy commissioner, and yesterday, both she and the Premier were dismissive of the very idea of consulting with that official of this Assembly.

On top of the lack of public consultation, this government is now ignoring the importance of even consulting with privacy experts. May 25 is just five days away, and the government's announcement remains short on details. This has become common with the Liberal-NDP coalition by another name, including their haphazard plan for rent control where details were not announced until less than 24 hours before implementation. Now we are seeing it with respect to this plan to provide access to the private health information of Yukoners.

Speaker: Order, please. I asked the member to keep it short. I will now put the question.

The Member for Lake Laberge, pursuant to Standing Order 28, is requesting unanimous consent to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has not been granted.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Mining legislation

Mr. Kent: Yesterday, the Premier told this House that the government will table rewrites of the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act* within 16 months. According to the confidence and supply agreement with the NDP, they will also hold the pen on writing these pieces of legislation. Such massive changes in 16 months seem unrealistic.

So, can the minister tell us what consultation has already taken place on the development of these two pieces of legislation?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, our Liberal government is committed to responsible development and management of Yukon's mineral resources in a way that protects the environment, respects the rights and traditions of First Nations, and benefits all Yukoners. Mining and mineral exploration remain of central importance to the Yukon's economy and have contributed significantly to the territory's economic performance throughout the pandemic. We are committed to working with governments and industry to develop successor legislation.

What I can say, Mr. Speaker, is that the mineral development strategy came out last month and we will work through the development of that strategy, which will lead us toward successor legislation. We are looking forward to

working with the Yukon, with industry, with other governments, and with Yukoners in how we move from that strategy toward successor legislation.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, the confidence and supply agreement that the Liberals have signed with the NDP, in this specific instance, doesn't mention the mineral development strategy. It only mentions that both of these pieces of legislation will be rewritten during the term of this agreement, which of course as we have mentioned will be 16 months.

At the briefing with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, we asked them about the government's commitment to table these pieces of legislation. In that briefing, officials told us that there are no new resources in this year's budget to support the development of these pieces of legislation.

So, can the minister tell us: If there are no resources in this year's budget to begin this work, then how can the Liberals be confident that they will have this legislation tabled within 16 months?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I will check back with the department. However, what I just heard was that there were no "new" dollars. We tabled the budget in March. In that budget, we had already put dollars in there in which to work toward successor legislation to follow up from the mineral development strategy and we are looking forward to that work. That work was there in the budget that was tabled originally, and it is there now.

Mr. Speaker, there are many things that are not listed in the agreement with the NDP. For example, type 1 diabetes is not listed, and yet, in this House yesterday, we worked together to come up with saying, "Let's get a strategy." So, there is lots of work that we will do all the time in government and here in the Yukon. One of those pieces is the mineral development strategy, which clearly leads. It begins with a mining MOU with First Nations; it moves on to the mineral development strategy; and then it moves to successor legislation. I'm really happy with that work that's ongoing.

I had a great first meeting with the Yukon Chamber of Mines. Tomorrow, I believe, the Premier and I are heading to the Klondike Placer Miners' Association in Dawson, and we'll continue to work with industry because we believe they are an important partner on this path.

Mr. Kent: Yet the CASA that deals with rewriting these two pieces of legislation does not reference industry whatsoever. It also, as I mentioned, does not reference the mineral development strategy, but clearly there are amendments to the CASA that the minister has in mind already.

I would be curious how much is in this year's budget to rewrite these two pieces of legislation — in the budget that was tabled early in March before the early election was called.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to move on to an industry-specific question, though, which is that the Yukon Chamber of Mines has requested to be at the legislative drafting table for both of these acts. Will the minister grant this request?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, during the election, I heard the members opposite say that they supported successor

legislation, so now I'm curious whether they do or they don't. I look forward to hearing from them whether they do.

What I will say is that we clearly do support successor legislation, and we believe that mining is critical to the Yukon, and it's critical that we get mining right here in the Yukon. That means being environmentally responsible, protecting our social values, working with governments, and building our communities, and that's exactly what successor legislation will lead to.

I would be happy to get the dollar figure for the member opposite about how much has been budgeted. I don't have it here with me today.

What I will say is that we intend to work constructively toward this with industry. I don't believe that they will be at the drafting table — that's not usually the way this works — but what I will say is that we want to hear their concerns, their issues, and their input on how we can develop good successor legislation.

That's what we will do. We will work with them. I don't think that's stepping outside of the agreement that's in place, because I think the agreement is how to work together to build a better Yukon for Yukoners.

Question re: Mineral staking

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we asked the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources a very simple question, and that was whether or not he supports free-entry staking. Yesterday he didn't have the chance to answer, so I would like to ask him again. Does the new Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources support free-entry staking?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just a moment ago, I said that the path is through the mineral development strategy.

I re-read the mineral development strategy this morning, looking at references to free-entry staking, and it says great things in there, and that is where we will work — through the mineral development strategy. We are not trying today — for me to sit there and preclude the work that is coming up with the public — engaging with industry, engaging with governments — about how to get from the mineral development strategy to successor legislation —

I am a little surprised that the members opposite have already grabbed a position from the past and are holding on to it. I look forward to hearing what they think about free-entry staking. What I believe is important is to use the mineral development strategy and to work with Yukoners toward successor legislation.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the opposition has been clear. We support free-entry staking. The question that I am asking the minister is: Does he support free-entry staking?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, sometimes here in this Legislature, the question is coming as though it is whether I, as a minister — my job as minister, Mr. Speaker, is to help shepherd this process. It is not about my opinion directly; it is about what I will do. So, let me state, directly, that I will support the work from the mineral development strategy, how we will work with industry and other governments, and how we will then develop successor legislation.

As I said today, I read through that strategy to look at what it said about free-entry staking. It talked about making it consistent with our treaties and case law. It talked about using land use planning and about where and where not to have free entry. It talked about the importance of free entry and that a modified free entry would still be important. Those are the things that are in the mineral development strategy.

What I am committing to on the floor of the Legislature is to work with Yukoners to go from the mineral development strategy to successor legislation. I think that is the path that we should take as this territory.

Mr. Dixon: The minister's refusal to answer that question, I think, seems to indicate that he does not support the free-entry staking system. If I am wrong there, I will offer the opportunity for him to clarify.

It's a simple question, Mr. Speaker. Yes or no — does the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources support free-entry staking?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I did answer the question, and what I answered was: I believe that we have this great thing, the mineral development strategy. I would like to thank the panel for all the work that they did to engage with Yukoners. One aspect of that is around free-entry staking. There are elements of it that are important, and I will acknowledge that. I think that we need to work together, as a territory, with our First Nation partners, with industry, and with the public to talk about how we modernize our *Quartz Mining Act*, our *Placer Mining Act*, and our *Lands Act*, and I think that this is the correct path.

I'm not here today to sit and predetermine which way it's going to go because I have an opinion. What I'm telling everybody here — what I'm telling the Yukon and the members opposite — is that I will work with the Yukon to help develop that new legislation, successor legislation, because it's time that we modernize our acts here. It's critical for the mining industry that they get clarity and certainty through successor legislation. I think that's the only way for the future here in the territory.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: With the rambling in the background, it's pretty distracting to me — on both sides — so if we could just keep it on the low. I'm trying to pay attention to the members who have the floor and are speaking, so let's keep it on the low there. It's really distracting me from paying attention to the member who has the floor and is speaking.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic — support for vulnerable communities

Ms. Blake: The chief medical officer of health has recently eased restrictions for restaurants and bars, allowing for full capacity with minimum restrictions. Much of this is due to the Yukon's high vaccination rates and low active COVID cases. This is welcome news for all Yukoners.

At the same time, we know that, over the last year, many support services for Yukoners have had COVID restrictions placed on them. For example, capacity in the residential addictions treatment program was reduced to allow for COVID

protocols. We haven't heard of an easing of these restrictions yet.

In light of the current COVID situation in the territory, has the minister taken any steps to safely expand the capacity in the residential addictions treatment program and the detox centre?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member opposite for the question; it is an excellent one.

I have been working diligently with the chief medical officer of health over the last eight, nine days — however long I have had the honour of this position — and certainly before that period of time, with him and his office and team in other capacities. The chief medical officer of health spoke publicly with the Premier on Wednesday — so I guess that was only yesterday — and spoke about the coming recommendations, or the ones that he has made so far, and how they might be operationalized. He did say that there was further guidance coming from his office and that would affect other kinds of services.

Not to speak for him, but I will say that situations like the one mentioned in the question where individuals are living in close quarters together might well be later on the list of changes that can be safely made, but that is, of course, in the hands of the chief medical officer of health. There is more information to come about those kinds of services on behalf of Yukoners.

Ms. Blake: With the lifting of restrictions by the chief medical officer of health, other areas that continue to be more restrictive include the meals at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and the number of emergency beds available. We know that people not staying at the shelter still need to pick up bagged meals for their supper. We also know that there are still others who are homeless and couch surfing.

Has the minister taken steps to safely expand services available at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter in light of the current COVID situation in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, that is a very good question on behalf of Yukoners. The services provided at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter have in fact been affected by COVID, as have many services — long-term care facilities, visitation by families at those kinds of locations and others. The meal program is continuing.

With respect to the adjustments that were made last year during COVID, to provide meals outside of the Emergency Shelter for individuals who are not staying at the shelter but who need access to warm and nutritious food, that is continuing throughout May and continuing throughout the summer at least and probably into the fall. I will look at the end date for that, but certainly we will provide that service as long as it is necessary for Yukoners and our vulnerable population to provide them with safe and nutritious meals.

Again, on behalf of the conversations that we've been having with respect to the chief medical officer of health, these services and the lightening of the restrictions will — I think the chief medical officer of health has referred to them like an onion — be peeled back, layer by layer, on behalf of the safety of Yukoners.

Ms. Blake: Yukoners receiving home care services have also been impacted by restrictions during this pandemic. This

is understandable, given the health and activities of daily living supports provided by home care staff. Transporting clients in vehicles to appointments or shopping has been restricted, as well as other supports offered.

When is the minister expecting home care services to be safely expanded in light of the current COVID situation in the territory?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think this is an opportune time to remind Yukoners that the kind of advice — the guidance and the recommendations with respect to the restrictions on those services and when they may change — come from the chief medical officer of health. Once those recommendations are issued by the chief medical officer of health, and he and his team have issued guidance that is updated, then it becomes the responsibility of government to consider those and determine, if they are to be operationalized, how that would happen.

As a result, I can go back to the first answer that I had. I think that the services at home care have in fact been restricted in some ways for the safety and health of Yukoners. It is one of the services that the chief medical officer of health is currently looking at for the purposes of making changes if — and I say “if” — things go well as the changes being made on May 25 are, in fact, successful and that Yukoners abide by continuing to wear masks and continuing to self-isolate, if necessary, and continuing to be separated by two caribou, in light of Caribou Days, or six feet, for the safety of Yukoners going forward.

Question re: Dawson City capital projects

Ms. Van Bibber: I have a number of questions about projects in the community of Dawson. First, I understand that the Department of Education has money budgeted for a new portable for Robert Service School. Can the minister tell us what the plan is for providing a new portable for the school and when that project is expected to be tendered? Will it be ready for next year's school year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. This is, in fact, one of the projects that we have underway, and we're working closely with the community to ensure that we are hearing all of the opinions. I am actually going to be in Dawson City tomorrow to meet with the school, to meet with the First Nation, and to meet with the partners involved in education in the community. I am very much looking forward to this discussion.

We certainly will be talking about all needs for education in the City of Dawson, and I am looking forward to those discussions. This is definitely one of the projects that we have within our five-year capital plan.

Ms. Van Bibber: The Minister of Education has indicated that there is a lengthy wait-list for childcare in Dawson. Back in 2015, the Premier committed that a Liberal government would fund a new building for the Little Blue Daycare. Are there plans in place to live up to that commitment?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am well aware of the needs in terms of childcare space in Yukon. As I just mentioned, I'm going to be in Dawson tomorrow, and one of the meetings that is planned is with the Little Blue Daycare. Accessibility of early

childcare programs is a high priority for our government. We're working with all of our partners, and it is essential that we work with our rural communities to ensure that we have enough spaces. This is part of our universal childcare and work toward accessibility of early learning opportunities for our children. I'm looking forward to direct discussions with all of those involved.

I am happy to bring back more information as it becomes available.

Ms. Van Bibber: Earlier this week, the Minister of Community Services said that site selection for the new recreation centre in Dawson is underway this year. Can the minister tell us which locations are being considered?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I do know that my department and my predecessor have been working very closely with the town of Dawson on the site selection for the new recreation centre in that community. We will be having an announcement on that site and everything else in due course.

Question re: Camping fees

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the upcoming long weekend is a popular weekend for campers in the Yukon. The previous minister brought forward a new parks strategy that contemplated increasing camping fees for Yukoners.

Does the new minister plan on carrying forward with those increases next year, and how much will he be increasing the nightly and annual camping fees for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the member for the question concerning our wonderful campgrounds. The Member for Watson Lake will know that the camping fees for both Yukon residents and Yukon resident seniors have remained the same for this year and that there is no plan to increase fees for this summer.

I will be briefed by the Department of Environment on the policies going forward, but I can confirm that, in the campground planning going forward, there are plans to increase fees, but I can return to the House as required.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, another aspect of the new strategy that the former minister brought forward was ending the seniors discount for camping. Does the new minister plan on increasing camping fees for Yukon seniors as well?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the question from the Member for Watson Lake. As I indicated in my prior response, I will return, as required, to the House with her query, which was essentially the same as her first query.

I can advise — some exciting news with respect to campground planning — that work is already underway to develop a new campground. Six Yukon First Nations whose traditional territory lies within two hours' drive of Whitehorse have begun discussions with Yukon Parks on campground location possibilities and potential partnership opportunities. Once a location has been selected, there will be opportunities for the public to provide feedback on specific features that Yukoners would like to see in the new campground.

More details on public engagement will be provided on engageyukon.ca before campground design and construction

begins. We are aiming to have a location chosen by the end of 2021 and to have the new campground up and running by 2025.

First Nations and the private sector will have opportunities to bid on tenders for several project components at various stages of the project. The new First Nation procurement policy will also be followed.

The *Yukon Parks Strategy* outlines a number —

Speaker: 10 seconds.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: More to come, and I will defer my final response.

Question re: Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder action plan

Ms. White: In 2019, community members worked with this government to develop the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder action plan. This plan included the commitment from all partners to improve the lives of Yukoners with FASD. The authors of this plan were clear from the outset, stating — and I quote: “For us, the key to success is in the name of the plan — Action.”

However, it seems that this government has gone back on their commitment. Decision-making power has been taken out of the hands of the people doing the work. Instead of implementing the plan as it was designed, community partners have been made to submit application after application to the government to justify what can only be called “piecemeal funding”.

Will this government commit to more consistent and reliable funding for the remainder of the action plan’s 10-year timeline?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question and the information that is contained there.

What I will commit to doing is to determine what the current state of affairs is and where we are with the implementation of the action plan. What I will also commit to, in response to this question, is the recognition of the importance of the fetal alcohol action plan and the services that are provided to Yukoners who are subject to the related concerns in that particular area of concern.

What I can say is that I have experienced in the past — and the department has much experience with respect to making services better for Yukoners. Our client-centered approach is key. It is something that we will continue to do. *Putting People First* is a great example — not only by its title but by the many important recommendations made going forward, and fitting those two strategies together will be important work going forward. *Putting People First*, by its very title, is a patient-centred, people-centred approach here in the Yukon for health care and the services that wrap around individuals, and we will continue with that important work.

Ms. White: It’s important to know that the current state of affairs is poor when it comes to the *Yukon FASD Action Plan*. Those who worked so hard to develop it are afraid that it has been shelved and is gathering dust.

Right now, many adults and children with FASD in the Yukon live with their parents or older family members. As this caregiving population begins to age, many will lose the ability

to continue supporting their children. With the Yukon’s housing crisis, caregivers who are aging out of their roles are rightfully concerned.

Has this government developed a plan for adults and children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder who have senior caregivers who are aging out of their roles?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. As I indicated in my answer to the first question, I certainly will be looking to determine — it’s quite a specific question, and I appreciate those, but I don’t have a specific answer with respect to the comments made by the member opposite. The approach I have taken with respect to learning these files in this particular area is to determine what the current state of affairs is and what the plans are from the former minister, as well as how we are going to implement changes going forward in working with our partners across the territory.

I will take the opportunity to reiterate again the importance of *Putting People First*, which is a client-centred, people-centred approach. It has drastically new policy-making potential for us here in the territory. It is considered groundbreaking in its work and I am pleased to be tasked with the responsibility of working with Yukoners going forward, making sure that all decisions in Health and Social Services are made to the benefit of our Yukon people and to their health priorities and to their well-being.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it’s important to note that those behind the *Putting People First* document made clear that they had no intention of replicating work already done — for example, the *Yukon FASD Action Plan*. So, for many people, an assessment and diagnosis of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder means a door opened to better support in accessing the right services. This is especially true for folks at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. When someone who is incarcerated gets assessed and diagnosed with FASD, they can access the Community Wellness Court, individualized support plans, and more.

I would hope that this House can agree that the justice system in the Yukon must be a restorative one. The first step in that direction is to offer support to offenders and understand their needs so that no one is punished for behaviour beyond their control.

Is this government still assessing adult Yukoners for FASD at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre? If so, how many people have been assessed in this last calendar year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question — quite a specific one. Again, I don’t have the details of those assessments and how many might have been done recently or whether they’re being carried out at all, quite frankly, but I will get that information.

What I think it’s important for Yukoners to know is that our people-centred approach to Health and Social Services — and I’m very pleased to have had this crossover into the concept of justice and those initiatives, because we have a new restorative justice unit in the Department of Justice — something that has never been done before. It is properly staffed — or will be. It is properly financed for the purpose of making sure that a focus of our work, through the Justice

department, through Corrections — which of course comes under Justice — will, in fact, be the people-centred approach that we need to take here in the territory.

It is critical that we have the right services to meet Yukoners where they are, whether they be health or justice. It is critical that we have the right services to meet the needs of those Yukoners, and we are working as one government to make sure that happens in every area to the benefit of Yukon 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: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*.

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. 2: *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise to speak about the *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*. I'm pleased to be joined by Kelli Taylor, assistant deputy minister of policy and partnerships, and Michael McBride, director of policy and planning, from the Department of Education.

I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone who worked to move this forward. It really is doing the right work for the right reasons. As I have mentioned previously, these amendments focus on finalizing the transfer of the mandate for early learning and childcare from the Department of Health and Social Services to the Department of Education.

We are taking this opportunity to respond to the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report to coordinate the government's early learning services with its

other education services by moving early learning to the Department of Education. This will allow for improved planning and decision-making while ensuring that we keep our children at the centre of those decisions.

While we were engaging with Yukon First Nations, our partners, and stakeholders on the development of our recently implemented universal early learning and childcare program, we heard a great deal of excitement and support for the transfer of the early learning mandate to Education. This includes engagement with: the Yukon Child Care Board; the Yukon Childcare Association; Yukon University; childcare centre and day home operators from across the Yukon; the network for healthy early human development partnerships for children; the Child Development Centre; the early childhood educators of Yukon Territory; the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate; the Yukon First Nations Education Commission; and the Yukon First Nations health commission.

I would like to, once again, acknowledge that Amy Ryder, chair of the Yukon Child Care Board, has joined us in the Legislature today. We tabled the annual report for 2020-21 in the Assembly just an hour ago. I want to also acknowledge Ms. Ryder for meeting with me. I have had a lot of meetings in the last couple of weeks, but one of them was with Ms. Ryder. I very much enjoyed that, and it brought insights into the work that we are doing. I certainly recognize the excitement from this board and how critical and instrumental they are.

Once you have had a chance to review the report, Madam Chair, you will see that the board has acknowledged that the *Putting People First* report will greatly benefit early learning and childcare in Yukon. The transfer of the mandate for early learning to the Department of Education is a move that will positively influence many generations of Yukoners to come. The collaboration, sharing of knowledge, and the positive and productive relationships that we have built will make early learning and childcare an example for other jurisdictions to look to. As I said, this is the right work for the right reasons, and this was fully confirmed during the engagement process.

I would now like to move to talk about the details of the bill. In part 1 of the bill, under paragraph 2, the definition of "director" will change to the person designated in Education. Currently, the director is designated as the director of Family and Children's Services. Paragraph 3 of the bill will allow the Minister of Education to designate a person who will be the director of early learning and childcare in Education as a member of the public service with responsibilities under the *Child Care Act*.

Paragraph 4 will amend section 37 of the *Child Care Act* to make clear that reports of children suspected to be in need of protection will continue to be made to the director of Family and Children's Services, who has the responsibility to carry out those investigations under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

The current definition of "director" in all of the regulations attached to the *Child Care Act* will be repealed and replaced with the new definition set out in 3.01. This ensures that the definition of "director" in the act and the regulations is the same and that the director is the member of the public service designated by the Minister of Education, which, as I have

indicated, will be the director of early learning and childcare in Education.

Lastly, we will be doing a housekeeping amendment to section 4(1) of the *Health Act* to remove the list of legislation that the Minister of Health and Social Services is responsible for. The list is now redundant because it is found in OIC 2014/174, enacted pursuant to the *Government Organisation Act*.

I want to reiterate that we have heard clearly, during the engagement, that the act needs to be modernized, and we will do that in collaboration with First Nation governments, the Yukon Child Care Board, stakeholders, and interested Yukoners in a thoughtful way where all views will be considered.

We are very pleased with how engaged everyone has been since we started on the journey to affordable universal childcare. As we can see in the annual report, the Yukon Child Care Board has acknowledged the collaboration, sharing of knowledge, and the positive and productive relationships that have been built with our officials. Madam Chair, we look forward to continuing on that journey with them.

As I said earlier, high-quality early learning opportunities support improved long-term outcomes for children in all aspects of their education and development. The transfer from Health and Social Services to Education helps ensure that early learning services are coordinated at all levels, including the transition into kindergarten and school years. The integration of the early childhood and the education system creates a learning continuum that begins at birth and has a positive long-term impact.

This is the start of our journey and not the ending. We have committed to continuing our collaboration with First Nation governments, the Yukon Child Care Board, stakeholders, and Yukoners in order to improve outcomes for Yukon children and families.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you to the minister for those opening comments. I appreciate her opening information. In her opening comments, she actually has answered a few of the questions that I had, but I will still ask a few questions of her.

The minister listed a number of organizations that were consulted through the consultation for this bill. I want to double-check. I believe she indicated that Partners for Children, or the network for early human development — I may have the acronym wrong, but I believe that is what it is.

Can she just confirm that was the group that was consulted in the process for this?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I thank the member for the question. Yes, the Network for Healthy Early Human Development, Partners for Children, was consulted.

Mr. Dixon: Excellent. The Network for Healthy Early Human Development previously interacted with a few different branches in Health and Social Services, predominantly in the Family Resource Unit. I know that the interaction of the Family Resource Unit with that group of folks provided opportunities to engage in a few different aspects of social services. I am certainly in agreement with the shift from Health and Social Services into Education for the reasons that the minister

outlined, but I wonder how the links between the unit now being in Education will be maintained with the Family Resource Unit in the Department of Health and Social Services because of the work that they do with a number of overlapping issues that the unit in Education now will deal with.

Perhaps the minister can just comment on the ways in which organizations can continue to expect ongoing engagement between those employees and staff who remain in Health and Social Services with the staff and work being done with switching over to Education.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I thank the member for the question, and it is a good question in terms of how things will work going forward. I did indicate that there are aspects of the need for protection and services. Some will be retained through the director of Family and Children's Services. That being said, we do have a memorandum of understanding with Health and Social Services currently to work together in a one-government approach, and that will continue going forward.

I do respect the question from the member opposite, and I know that there will be a lot more information to come. Our partners and folks will be made aware of how those relationships will be maintained and how they will continue for the betterment and well-being of our children.

Mr. Dixon: Can the minister provide us with the information regarding the number of staff who will physically be moving to a different department as a result of this change? If there are any budget implications as a result of the change, could she outline those as well?

Do employees physically move? Are they physically switching offices and moving to a new building, or are they just switching their reporting authorities?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will maybe start with some of the budgetary considerations here. We have allowed for \$25.202 million. The budget transfer from Health and Social Services includes \$10.383 million. The additional budget for the universal childcare is \$14.819 million.

In terms of the staff that this represents, we have 7.8 full-time staff from Health and Social Services who will be transferring over to Education, and we have 8.2 new positions, so this mean 16 positions altogether.

The physical location of the staff — currently, the staff remain at Health and Social Services. Renovation at the Department of Education is underway. I am told that there is a lot of excitement around this — that the transfer, physically, into that space will happen in approximately June, and this will include a separate entrance for parents and separate parking. Folks are very excited about this transition to bring everyone into one space.

Mr. Dixon: During the course of consultation with a number of organizations, were there any groups that expressed concern about the switch from Health and Social Services to Education?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I am new into the file. I was not personally part of all of the consultations, but my understanding of how the consultation unfolded was that they mostly received positive feedback. Of course, there were a lot

of questions on how this would work, and our department has done a fine job, I think, in ensuring and answering the questions as they have come out. I think that there is a clear indication from the Yukon Child Care Board annual report that there is a lot of positivity around this move and that it is widely supported.

If there is other information that we need to come back to the Legislative Assembly with, specifically — if there is something very specific that the member has a question around — I would appreciate that either today on the floor of the Legislative Assembly or in writing. That would be helpful to us, just to ensure that if there is something that the member thinks we are maybe unaware of, that he please bring that forward to me, as a new Minister of Education.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you very much to the minister for that answer. I realized, as soon as I sat down, that, of course, she wasn't the minister who conducted this consultation, so that was perhaps a bit of an unfair question on my end. I apologize, but I appreciate her providing that information. I haven't heard of any specific concerns. I just was curious if there was any feedback from groups that had provided any.

My last question, Madam Chair, relates to the next steps for the rest of the *Child Care Act* review. Obviously, we debated a motion yesterday that was ultimately defeated and related to the review of the *Child Care Act* — a more comprehensive review of the *Child Care Act*. As the member has noted, the Child Care Board has called for the comprehensive review of the *Child Care Act* for a number of years. I was wondering if the minister could provide us with some sense of a timeline for next steps for the comprehensive review of the *Child Care Act* and if we can expect to see a consultation launched relatively soon — what that process may look like, and with what sort of time frame we should be expecting to see an overhauled *Child Care Act* come back to the Legislature.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. Yesterday I listened very intently to the debate. Although I wasn't one of the speakers on the debate — and I have to take some issue with how this has been framed — we did commit to doing a full review of the *Child Care Act*. We committed to that during the most recent election; we committed to it again yesterday; we just did not commit to doing it within a committee process within the Legislative Assembly.

We have a Cabinet Committee on Legislation that sets the agenda for legislative matters. We are working with our Executive Council Office to set and work toward the new agenda for legislation for this particular mandate. As we stated yesterday, we are committed to doing this review of the legislation, and I think it's very timely.

I know our previous minister spoke clearly about our intent, not only during the election but yesterday in the Legislature, and fully confirmed that we will be doing this work.

Once that agenda is set, I will be happy to bring that information back to the Legislative Assembly to inform folks of this important review, rewrite, and modernization of the *Child Care Act*.

Mr. Dixon: One of the reasons why we advocated for the review to be conducted by a legislative committee was the openness and transparency of that process, the ability for the public to understand the steps being taken in the process, and for all affected stakeholders to have an opportunity to review the submissions of their colleagues.

I appreciate that a different decision was taken, and I certainly respect that the minister has made that commitment today — that they will be moving forward with the act review. My only ongoing question is just around the timeline. I know that the minister has indicated that the legislative timeline hasn't been set yet. One of my concerns is that, under the confidence and supply agreement between the Liberals and the NDP, the government has a very ambitious legislative agenda, and my concern is that the *Child Care Act* may get bumped, as it's not cited in that agreement.

So, I was just looking for some assurances from the minister around the timeline for the act review. We just don't want to see it get bumped as a result of other legislative priorities, and we certainly believe that it ought to be a pressing priority for the government. I want to encourage the minister to press with her colleagues for this to be on the priority list to be dealt with very soon.

I'll just give an opportunity for the minister to perhaps respond to that and to offer some further detail around when she thinks it will be slotted into the legislative agenda.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. It's an important one. It's certainly a high priority and a commitment that we have made, as the Yukon Liberal government, to review this act. I look forward to working with our First Nation partners, other partners, and stakeholders going forward, including experts in the field. I am anticipating that we will be receiving our mandate letters soon, which will clearly outline what priority areas that the Premier will be asking us to work on. I anticipate that this will be one of them in my particular mandate letter.

We have made this a high priority for our government. We campaigned on this commitment to early learning and childcare in the Yukon, including universal childcare, and it will remain a high priority for us. As soon as that legislative agenda is set, Madam Chair, I will endeavour to bring that information back and to ensure that folks are well aware of the plan, going forward, for this important review and redraft of this act.

Ms. White: I thank the officials for being here, and thank you for the great briefing. I realize it's something that is very small but means a lot — and I appreciate that we do have the chair of the Child Care Board here because it's timely that it was tabled today in time for this conversation. I do appreciate that there has been an endorsement and support put behind the plan that the government has put forward, including today's legislation — small but mighty, moving it to the Department of Education.

Based on what is actually here for us in legislation, I'll ask a lot of my questions in the Department of Education. Just one more positive for the Yukon Child Care Board is that they did a really fantastic job of going through the universal childcare and what it meant and how it would affect Yukoners. I thank

them for the work that they have done. It's exciting that some of the things that we have talked about for so long, and over so many years, are now in the forefront.

Just as a point, it is here that the Yukon Child Care Board is asking that government do modernize that *Child Care Act* and have the regulations and all that tabled within the next two years. There's a timeline for it. With that, Madam Chair, I just look forward to line-by-line.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed clause-by-clause.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Clause 5

Clause 5 agreed to

On Clause 6

Clause 6 agreed to

On Clause 7

Clause 7 agreed to

On Clause 8

Clause 8 agreed to

On Clause 9

Clause 9 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Hon. Ms. McLean that the Chair report Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 201: First Appropriation Act 2021-22

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing

Corporation, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Hearing none, we will now proceed line by line.

Mr. Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, 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 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, 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 Expenditures in the amount of \$19,907,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$38,355,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$58,262,000

Yukon Housing Corporation agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agree.

Some Hon. Members: Disagree.

Chair: Due to COVID-19 protocols, there will be a mandatory five-minute break to ensure that the staff can have time to properly clean the desks and chairs.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I believe, Madam Chair, in anticipation of the prior department being cleared expeditiously, the COVID protocols have been followed and that the officials are now able to take their seats immediately.

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Economic Development

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, I would like to thank the officials for joining us today and the Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Mr. Justin Ferbey, and the director of finance, Beth Fricke, here with us today. I thank them for the preparation for today's budget debate.

Madam Speaker, honourable members, and visitors, I am pleased to rise today to table the Department of Economic Development's operation and maintenance and capital budgets for the 2021-22 fiscal year. At the Department of Economic Development, our mandate is to develop a thriving, prosperous,

and diversified Yukon economy to enrich the quality of life of all Yukoners.

We achieve this by working with business and industry partners and the federal, municipal, and First Nation governments to broaden our economic base, build local capacity, and encourage the competitiveness of businesses and services.

The programs delivered by Economic Development provide resources to support sustainable job creation for Yukoners, innovative approaches to existing and new industries, and business and industry growth — trade fund and the regional economic development fund into a streamlined economic development fund —

Sorry, Madam Chair, we were ensuring that we were environmentally conscious, and my speaking notes are double-sided.

In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the department acted swiftly to launch programs to support businesses and employees, and these efforts continue, as we move our focus toward recovery. We remain focused on growing and diversifying the Yukon economy while keeping our methods sustainable and environmentally responsible. We provide economic opportunity to all of Yukon by working with First Nation governments and communities to support their chosen goals and needs.

The last fiscal year has been notable for the Department of Economic Development. We have: introduced a variety of pandemic response programs to support Yukon businesses and their employees through that pandemic; conducted multiple public engagement campaigns to inform the future of immigration in Yukon and how our government supports innovation; improved our funding programs by combining the strategic industries development fund, the enterprise trade fund, and the regional economic development fund into a streamlined economic development fund; and released Yukon's economic resilience plan that maps out our approach to support people and businesses impacted by COVID-19. The goal of the plan is to guide Yukon's economy back to pre-pandemic levels and chart a path beyond.

The Department of Economic Development is taking action on platform commitments that focus on supporting local jobs and our economy. These initiatives will create opportunities for innovation and expansion in Yukon and support economic development and diversification.

These priority initiatives include extending the Yukon paid sick-leave rebate program to September 30, 2022, as committed under the confidence and supply agreement, a new immigration strategy, an innovation strategy, an innovation commission, and growing Yukon's film industry. These commitments focus on supporting local entrepreneurs and getting Yukon businesses the assistance that they need now and in the future. These commitments will meet Yukon's changing needs from immediate relief to adaptation, investment, and growth. To meet these expectations, our operation and maintenance budget for 2021-22 fiscal year is \$22.292 million, with a capital budget of \$1.111 million.

Just over \$4 million has been allotted to Corporate Services to keep the department's programs running successfully. This funding includes the deputy minister's office, finance, information management, and human resources.

I am going to outline some of the Department of Economic Development's plans for the coming year and updates related to ongoing initiatives. The Department of Economic Development has begun work on an innovation plan that will create opportunities for local entrepreneurs and establish an innovation commission to attract new start-ups and grow Yukon's digital ecosystem.

The Department of Economic Development is in the process of developing an immigration strategy to ensure that our immigration programs are modernized and responsive to the needs of Yukon businesses seeking employees and foreign nationals moving here for work.

The Policy, Planning, and Communications branch represents Yukon in a number of trade negotiations and discussions with other jurisdictions. Among these is the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* to address barriers to the free movement of goods, services, and workers and investment in our country. By participating in the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*, we guarantee that Yukon businesses have the access to other markets in Canada, making it easier for them to grow and expand. We are now working to expand the scope of the agreement to cover the financial services and cannabis for non-medical purposes industries.

The branch has been actively involved with reducing red tape and will continue building on the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* to remove further barriers hindering the expansion of Yukon enterprise into the rest of Canada.

Between the *United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement* and further development of trade within Canada, Yukon businesses can expect a greater degree of certainty when they sell their goods, services, and expertise outside of Yukon.

To support the work of the department's operations, there is a budget of \$13.225 million. This funds program areas such as business and industry development, immigration, media development, regional economic development, and technology and innovation.

The Business and Industry Development branch supports the growth of the private sector. The department is making \$2.1 million available to the Business and Industry Development branch this fiscal year. The branch supports industry advancement in Yukon through a variety of methods and funds that directly assist entrepreneurs to improve their products and services.

The immigration unit primarily administers the Yukon nominee program and provides support and advice to nominees and the businesses that employ them. A budget allocation of \$739,000 for 2021-22 will allow the immigration unit to continue its work. A public engagement period was conducted to inform Yukon's new 10-year immigration strategy. Collecting input on labour challenges facing Yukon businesses and communities, as well as on Yukon employers' experiences with existing immigration programs, will help ensure that a new

immigration strategy incorporates the needs and priorities of our businesses and communities as we move through recovery.

The Business and Industry Development branch also provides specific advice and expertise to Yukon businesses through the Yukon business development program. This is a joint effort with the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, which absorbs 50 percent of the program costs.

To finish the Business and Industry Development branch, the capital budget of just over \$1 million is accounted for by the business incentive program. The business incentive program provides rebates on eligible Government of Yukon contracts promoting Yukon hires and Yukon-made goods and services.

The Technology and Innovation branch of Economic Development plays a key enabler role in promoting an entrepreneurial culture that attracts and supports start-ups. The department has committed \$2.163 million to technology and innovation programs in 2021-22. Our government remains committed to expanding the knowledge economy by working with businesses, industry partners, and First Nation development corporations to identify opportunities and make strategic investments.

The department is currently working on an innovation plan that will guide how the Government of Yukon supports innovative practices and builds Yukon's technology sector. The plan responds to extensive public engagement and will reflect the needs of the innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship community.

Another way that the Government of Yukon has continued to support the knowledge sector is through NorthLight Innovation. NorthLight hosts many workshops that help entrepreneurs build on their skills, including the well-known start-up boot camp. This program leads entrepreneurs through a rigorous process to assess, adjust, and validate their business ideas, helping them to achieve their goals.

The Technology and Innovation branch also funds the Yukon Innovation Prize through innovation and entrepreneurship at Yukon University. The Yukon Innovation Prize encourages the local development and delivery of innovative products and services. The most recent Yukon Innovation Prize intake was focused on creative solutions that address new challenges created by the global pandemic.

In 2020, we launched the Hall of Innovators Awards to celebrate Yukoners who shaped their industry sector, or social or cultural landscape, creating a brighter future. The Government of Yukon will remain focused on developing our local entrepreneurs and their ideas, keeping Yukon modern and relevant in a constantly evolving society that emphasizes innovation more than ever.

Investment attraction includes Yukon's participation in the annual Vancouver Resource Investment Conference, a Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference, and a focus of attracting investment to Yukon in the mining sector.

The Business and Industry Development branch organizes Yukon Mining Days, increasing awareness in our communities

of opportunities in mining. A recent introduction of Invest Canada North is significant. This is a pan-territorial initiative that will help drive investment to the north and promote Yukon mining projects. Mining activities remain a prominent part of Yukon's economy, largely driven by Victoria Gold's Eagle gold mine. Several other mining operations are also underway in the territory, which are anticipated to be significant economic contributors for years to come.

The Minto mine, under the ownership of Pemberton Resources, resumed producing copper concentrate in late 2019, with plans to reach full production in 2021. Production in Q1 2021 is up by 36 percent over Q4, and the company just announced that the expected mine life has been extended from 2023 to 2028.

The Department of Economic Development also supports market-driven media production in Yukon. Media development is a valued contributor to our economy and plays a significant role in showcasing Yukon on a larger stage. This fiscal year, the Economic Development department has identified \$1.503 million for the media development unit. The media development unit provides funding to help Yukon content creators make their sound and media production a reality.

This budget allocation will allow the unit to continue with this work. The unit also provides funding to projects from outside the territory that produce their film, television, and digital media content in the Yukon. Additionally, these media producers provide employment opportunities to locals and showcase Yukon to other parts of the world.

Several projects related to the media development unit were recently completed or are under final assessment, including a film fund review with final recommendations pending a strategic planning exercise conducted by Music Yukon, which will influence how we approach the music industry, and the first stage of a gap analysis where Screen Production Yukon Association is assessing the resources available to filmmakers within the territory to determine where our services are lacking and what more we can provide in the future.

This past year was different due to the state of emergency, but usually the media development unit provides funding to marquee industry events such as BreakOut West, as well the Available Light Film Festival. Events such as these bring valuable outside dollars that our territory wouldn't otherwise receive.

The final branch I will discuss is Regional Economic Development. The Regional Economic Development branch has a budget of \$4.377 million. Of that, \$2.95 million will be directed toward the community development fund. Throughout the last fiscal year, a total of 62 projects received support through the community development fund.

Changes made to intake deadlines and eligibility criteria have contributed to the fund being more flexible and suited to the evolving needs of Yukoners. The key change was to enable First Nation development corporations to access funding to support their investments in economic growth and community-led initiatives.

The community development fund assists projects that provide long-term economic and social benefits to Yukon communities — projects such as: the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce research toward the safe, affordable, and reliable rural transportation service; the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun's greenhouse retrofit at the farm north of Mayo that will increase local food production and self-sufficiency; and the Industrial, Arts and Technology Society of Yukon's work developing a model for makerspace in Dawson City where people can share resources to learn, experiment, and build and bring new ideas to life. Along with the Regional Economic Development branch, Business and Industry Development assesses economic development fund applications that promote the advancement of entrepreneurs and development corporations.

The new program replaces the regional economic development fund, the strategic industries development fund, and the enterprise trade fund. The amalgamation of funds follows public engagement in 2019 on how to modernize and improve these programs.

The streamlined approach for funding will allow the department to reduce red tape by implementing a standardized application process. It will allow for greater funding flexibility so clients can undertake a wider range of projects while still ensuring that all activities that the clients could access before remain in the program.

The department will be able to emphasize local spending and employment opportunities for Yukoners. The programming, managed and delivered by the Department of Economic Development, provides clear and tangible benefits to Yukon and its industries. The Department of Economic Development remains focused on economic diversification and support for an economic ecosystem that offers opportunities to all Yukoners.

Our operation and maintenance budget of \$22.292 million and capital budget of \$1.111 million reflects this task. The work that the department undertakes using these funds will continue to deliver meaningful long-term benefits to all Yukoners.

In closing, to individuals from the Department of Economic Development, I just want to again take this opportunity, on behalf of all Yukoners, to thank you for your exceptional work over the last fiscal year and your work on a recovery strategy as we move forward. Certainly, all government employees came together, but as I speak to this specific department today, I hope that individuals are proud of themselves for what they did and the foundation they built; it shows. Not only are we in a position where, when you look at North America, we are leading on a vaccination strategy but also on an economy that had an opportunity to grow even though we were under immense pressure in very difficult circumstances.

Ms. Van Bibber: Madam Chair, I too would like to welcome the officials to the Chamber and thank the minister for that extensive wrap of his department.

The new fund that you spoke of — the economic resilience plan — was announced in March to maximize current projects

and programs, plus add new initiatives due to the pandemic response.

Can the minister explain the rationale for the creation of this new fund? When did the fund go live and have there been many applications to the fund to date?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Throughout the pandemic, we have monitored and adapted our supports to meet Yukoners' changing needs, from immediate relief to adaptation and investment. The economic resilience plan described the Government of Yukon's plan for long-term resilience, growth, and prosperity across all sectors of Yukon's economy was released on March 10, 2021.

Yukon's plan demonstrates our comprehensive, transparent approach for minimizing COVID-19 damage now, in building a foundation for the future. The economic resilience plan also coordinates our 40 programs and initiatives that demonstrate our commitment to Yukon's people, jobs, business supports, infrastructure development, and economic diversification, and we will continue to work closely with our partners.

The strategic industries development fund, regional economic development fund, and enterprise trade fund have been core tools for the department for over 15 years. To maximize the impact of our department's funding allocation and to simplify access for our clients, we have combined these programs into a single program: the economic development fund.

The new program retains the previous programs' focus on business and capacity development, diversification, and market expansion while expanding the range of eligible activities, supporting capital expenditures, and levelling the available funding across all client groups. The new program does not limit any existing client's access to funding or the types of projects the department will fund.

The department accepted applications to the existing three programs up until the launch date for the economic development fund. Applications received under the three older funds — strategic and regional, as well as enterprise — will be administered under the terms and conditions of those funds until the projects are completed. For example, a project underway prior to April 1, when the new fund went live, will continue to be assessed and administered under one of the three former program guidelines and not the new fund. By creating our new fund, we are meeting our commitment to make our program more responsive with less red tape.

I just want to check to see if I have some information concerning the number of applications to date on our new one. There have been 13 tier-2 applications received by the May 17 intake date for our new fund.

I will just quickly speak now to the piece around the launch. The new funding program, which we touched on, gives us a bit more flexibility but also removes a bit of red tape. I'm going to give a bit of background. The new program is reflected in our budget today, and the new program launched on April 1, 2021, with an advertising campaign for the next intake, tier 2, for May 17, commencing the week of April 26. The new program operates with the following tiers: Tier 1 is a rolling

intake for applications below \$30,000. We are constantly taking those applications. Tier 2, which I just spoke about, are applications between \$30,000 and \$100,000, with intakes in February, May, August, and November, always on the 15th of every month. Tier-3 applications are over \$100,000, with a \$500,000 per project cap, with intakes on January 15 and June 15.

Again, we are going to continue to monitor the success and effectiveness of our new fund and we will, if needed — whether feedback from clients or what we are seeing within the department — have an opportunity to potentially tweak some of the policy around it if it is not meeting the expectations of our clients.

Ms. Van Bibber: During the throne speech, there was mention of a new innovation commission. It read that this was to be established to attract new technology start-ups and grow Yukon's digital ecosystem.

Can the minister give us an outline and/or an update on the vision for this new innovation program or secretariat? When will it be established and what is the budget for the innovation commission?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Truly, the vision for the innovation commission — it's really about ensuring that the private sector expertise is brought into a process of identifying the good opportunities that are here for Yukoners and the Government of Yukon.

Simply stated, over the last year, and primarily over the last six months, there has been a very significant number of proposals that have been brought to my office. During that process, there were immense opportunities identified. My sense in that work, and with the department, is that there have been so many different proposals put forward. Many of them are exciting. We had a proposal from one local technology company that wants to scale up to 300 employees. Those employees, as we have been informed, would make an average salary between \$75,000 and \$100,000. But, as we spoke about yesterday, we are in a challenging time as we look to meet our housing needs. We also have a finite amount of resources that we can put toward supporting these different undertakings.

We have also had a group come to us that has looked at our early work around an angel network, which is essentially bringing money from local individuals together in order to employ small amounts of capital into fledgling start-ups.

There are some very talented folks who have a great track record of success in the Yukon, and they have come to the department and asked for some support. We have had another group of local entrepreneurs who have come to us and have said that they think there could be between 300 to 500 start-ups that could be brought to the Yukon over a decade. That's based on quality of life and the great opportunities that are here and the support from government and the ecosystem that supports start-ups.

The sense was to really look at these opportunities, but it's important to have expertise that works in these fields all the time. The department quickly — after I had the opportunity to come back into this role, they met with me and they laid out a series of options. What we have looked at is a small group of

individuals, primarily Yukoners who have expertise in this field, maybe bringing expertise from one or two other individuals who we are looking at and who are known in the tech sector across Canada and having a period of time — not prolonged, respecting the way that the sector works — and trying to use those same values of working hard, compressing, and moving to get some decisions.

We haven't announced the start date yet, but we're looking at probably a period of about three months for these folks to analyze.

I will come back with a budget. I don't know if I can speak to that today, but we would be looking at, likely, some per diems to those individuals to offset their cost — but really, just bringing a small group of people together to analyze the proposals that have been put in front of us and to take a look at our innovation plan, which is almost complete. Then we can figure out if the findings from the commission can be added to the innovation plan and if some of the work on the innovation plan, particularly as it focuses on the tech sector — if these individuals think that we're hitting the right tone and the right mark.

That's the concept behind it — priority initiatives, including the other items that we have touched on — the sick leave and the immigration strategy. But this is quite high up on our list of things to get accomplished. We want to get this moving quickly and are hoping to have this work underway throughout the summer, being able to come back and see what their thoughts are on where the Yukon could go.

This is something, I think, that will not just be able to guide us through this mandate but is for future governments to take a look at, and it gives a bit of a track that you can follow to really enhance the growth and to maximize the use of the tools that we have here, whether it is funding, mentorship, or boot camps or all of those different tools that have been put in place to help that industry grow.

Ms. Van Bibber: I thank the minister for that answer, and we look forward to hearing the final set-up of the commission and how much it is going to cost.

Can the minister give us the status of the new immigration strategy? Is it currently being worked on, and is it contracted out or being done in-house?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The immigration strategy — a tremendous amount of work has been completed on it. Just a bit of information concerning the mindset of the government as we move into the completion of this work.

Yukon is positioning itself as a destination for the settlement of newcomers, and we are strategically targeting newcomers to strengthen our economy, to diversify, and to add to our social fabric.

Economic immigration is an essential tool for attracting skilled workers and developing a labour force that supports investment, economic growth, and diversification. This is very much in line with the federal mandate as well — a large portion of the federal mandate that really looks at economic immigration. We are in the process of updating the 2010 Yukon immigration strategy to ensure that it meets the evolving needs of Yukon's employers and communities. We are engaging

directly with program users and stakeholders with their immigration priorities and experiences.

I will just go back through the public engagement portion on engageyukon.ca for the immigration strategy that concluded in December 2020. Further input-gathering is being compiled into a “what we heard” report and will be released very soon — in the coming weeks. The insights received will contribute to the development of our new 10-year strategy.

The work, as I understand it, has been primarily worked on in-house by our team. I think that there might be one local individual who has been working with them — a local resident who has expertise and strategies and did, I think, a little bit of work with the public service — so a public servant from outside the department, but other than that, that’s the team that has been completing that work.

Again, it’s important to put on the record that there is a connection between — even our innovation plan, because when we think about our innovation plan, we know that we have particular tools that we can use within the immigration strategy, in some cases, to fast-track certain expertise in the innovation sector. It was something that was done at the federal level. We haven’t used some of those programs as much as other areas within the country, but when you think about adding expertise to start-ups or to other organizations — some of our bigger telecommunication entities here — these are key.

We see a lot of synergy between the innovation plan as well as new parts of our economy and how they interact with the immigration strategy. We believe that there might be some outputs and some advisement from the innovation commission that we should also take into consideration as we look to complete these important pieces of work.

Ms. Van Bibber: Due to the expedition of time, as we are limited in the number of days in the Sitting, I will now thank the staff for coming again and turn it over to the Third Party.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for that. Last year, there was an essential worker top-up program that was introduced to top up the wages of people who earn less than \$20 an hour. We talked about it last year, and there were concerns that sometimes it was employer-accessed for employees. I had highlighted that there were employees who had reached out and hadn’t been contacted. I just wanted to know if that had ever been resolved for the employees who did reach out, and I did forward the information on to the minister.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: To just expedite this, I can go through the program, but I know that the member opposite knows the program well. We have had lots of conversations concerning the program, so, just quickly, I’ll add that, for the record today, we’re talking about the Yukon essential workers income support program, and it was part of the Yukon government’s response to COVID-19. It was to provide temporary financial support for lower income workers who deliver essential services.

The wage top-up ran until February 15, 2021, and was an acknowledgment of the important role that essential service workers played during the height of the pandemic, as they continued to offer the services and goods relied upon.

At the close of the program, the program had processed over \$5.4 million in claims, for more than 160 businesses supporting more than 2,000 employees.

I am going to leave the details at that. I will get back to the member opposite. It is a priority for us to just respond. There was lots of vigorous debate in the last Sitting. The member opposite and I have had a couple of discussions about that, and the Leader of the Third Party has done a great job of being an advocate for a number of individuals and, in some cases — even though it was through debate versus other ways that we collaborate now — the work of the Leader of the Third Party did lead us to being able to reach out and fix some of the situations that occurred, but I don’t believe all of them.

I will get back to the Leader of the Third Party with some information so we can conclude some of those discussions from the 34th Legislature.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, the paid sick-leave program that was announced last year, has it been carried through for this budget year, 2021-22?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The program, right now, is extended until the end of September, I believe. Of course, it is still in place, and it has not been utilized as much as it previously was, I don’t believe. Part of the budgeting for this is — the Public Service Commission, I believe, has about \$500,000 in the budget. That is part of our commitment to our work with the Third Party.

The one thing I would like to share with the Assembly today is, over the last year — and this speaks volumes to the individuals, to Yukoners, and to the good work of Yukoners, specifically inside the public service — if folks remember, this was a program that was worked on. There is always, as we know — especially when you take on some of these innovative programs under a short timeline, you roll it out, and the culture of the Assembly is that any type of failure, when you’re trying to pursue innovation, is not handled lightly. It’s pretty unforgiving, by the time you get to the Assembly. Sometimes, that precludes the ability for public servants to undertake ideas on innovation, because they want to ensure that they always get it right.

In this case, in the spring of last year, there were a number of programs that were developed very quickly. What we saw was absolute leadership, when you take into consideration the rest of the country. That’s where I just want to thank the public servants who did that work. The sick leave program was launched very quickly.

Over the last year, we’ve had provinces in western Canada reach out — in the fall of last year — reaching out to us, asking if we could share information and details about how we built that program. Just in the last 30 days — it might be a little bit longer — we watched — as some folks would joke, as they believe the epicentre of Canada — Ontario was still trying to get it right and rolling out, I think, what inevitably was a three-day program.

I just commend the Yukon on how they rolled that out. It was done quickly, the program was capitalized, and it was in place. Now we’re seeing big provinces that have a tremendous amount of resources available to them trying to follow the

footsteps of the Yukon, right from the standpoint of policy development to the innovation that was done.

The paid leave to date, just in closing — \$661,000 was provided for 3,302 sick days for 450 Yukon employees.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I guess the answer is yes. So, my question is: Can people re-access the program? If they accessed the program the last go-round, are they able to access paid sick leave today?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, Madam Chair.

Ms. White: One of the concerns that we've heard is that auxiliary-on-call employees for Yukon government aren't able to access sick leave. They get called into work, and they work, and if they are sick, they aren't able to do that.

Has there been any thought to expanding this program, for example, to cover auxiliary-on-call government employees or teachers on call, so, substitute teachers?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: That is a new topic and challenge concerning this program that I wasn't aware of. I will work with our department to ensure that we will have that opportunity to have a dialogue with the Public Service Commission, as well, and maybe work through them to understand what the reality is for YTA members as well.

Ms. White: I would suggest that one of the challenges is that it is "employer-applied". An employer has to make the application, so the Yukon government would apply to Yukon government to cover Yukon government employees who don't have access to sick leave; so, I can see that as being one of the problems.

But I will highlight it there as one of the things, you know — as we're leading the country in program design, this is maybe one way that we can also improve it.

In 2019, there was a letter of intent signed by the minister with the Philippine secretary of labour to negotiate an agreement. Last fall — it just so happens that it's the same minister — noted that the agreement still had not been signed, but there was an anticipation that something would be signed in early 2020-21. I know that we have had an election, but here we are again. Has this agreement been signed, and can the minister explain for Yukoners what the agreement actually entails?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The work on the agreement has been ongoing. Actually, I think that we are in a position that we are getting very close to being able to sign off on that. Really, the delay has been a situation where there was an opportunity to hopefully have officials either from here sign there, or vice versa, and of course, because of COVID, that has all been put aside.

The agreement had to do with — and I will do my very best here to touch upon it. There continue to be costs that were applied, in this particular case, in the Philippines, and it originated with government officials in the Philippines. That cost was getting passed on to folks here. I can respond with our unit providing a written response in very significant detail, to talk about how the costs that were being applied were missing the actual purpose of why they were supposed to be put in place.

It really had to do with folks who were coming and making that move to the Yukon, and then this fee was applied. In many

cases, these were individuals who were coming through our nominee program and then were moving on, over time, to becoming citizens of the Yukon and Canada.

Those fees, I believe, were really contemplating the individuals potentially returning to the Philippines. So, we had a conversation — we were the first jurisdiction in the country to move on that particular topic — and very positive and cordial conversations back and forth between our officials and the officials there. We have continued to have great support from the consulate in Vancouver and continue to have very strong conversations.

I think what inevitably might have to happen is that we might have to do this virtually, once the final details have been solidified. At this point, most of the work has been done. It is groundbreaking for the Yukon to be leading that, and I am quite proud of the work that has been accomplished to date.

What folks within the Filipino community can share with you — and one of our newest members of the Assembly — it is very significant to have the Minister of Labour here at the Transportation Museum, the federal Minister of Labour in the Yukon. Inviting him to be here, and to do that work, was something that was a first for Canada's north.

Ms. White: Previously, there was a lot of conversation between me and the previous Minister of Education, but whether it was economic or whether it was immigration — in my mind, when someone who comes from another country applies to come to Yukon as a nominee, we in Yukon may look at it as an economic opportunity, but a person coming to the territory definitely looks at it as an immigration opportunity. We sometimes see the lack of balance between what someone is trained to do and what they're doing when they come, because it is an opportunity for folks to immigrate.

When that program moved to the Department of Economic Development — and previously, this was not my area, so it's exciting to be back. Currently, how many nominees do we have registered as employees in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: If the member opposite can give me a little flexibility, I'll just go through and try to summarize just a bit about the program. We are utilizing this immigration program to meet our identified needs in Yukon businesses, both urban and rural. In 2020, the Yukon nominee program utilized its entire base allocation. So, the number of individuals on an annual basis is 190 nominations, and that's the second year in a row that we have used that.

In the earlier part of the 34th Sitting, I know that we had not, at those times, used our full allotment, but in the last two years, we have. Yukon's allocation from the federal government for the Yukon nominee program in 2021 will be 300 people, an increase in our base from 190 to 220. The Government of Yukon administers the two immigration programs in partnership with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada — the Yukon business nominee program and the Yukon nominee program.

To give a bit of background on some of the numbers — I should have most of these, and if there's more detail required, I will provide that. In 2020, the Yukon nominee program approved nominations for 229 nominees. This consists of:

Under the critical impact workers, we had 177; skilled workers, 43; and express entry, nine. The top five countries of origin for the Yukon nominee program in 2020 were: India with 90; the Philippines, 58; Japan, 14; China, 11; and France, seven.

The top five occupations filled by nominees in 2020 were food-counter attendants, kitchen helpers, and related occupations, which was 69; early childhood educator, 23; light-duty cleaner and related occupations, 20; cashiers, 16; and retail salespersons and sales clerks, 16.

Since 2007, the Yukon nominee program has received applications from over 450 employers to address labour shortages, approving 1,751 principal nominees to date.

The average application processing time in 2020 was 93.2 days, or 13 weeks. In 2018, the immigration unit, as we just touched on, was transferred over.

It gives a bit of a broader macro answer to how many people have gone through and what we had last year, but I think the question really focused on the total number of people now in the program. I can endeavour to get that answer and bring back where we are at this particular moment with nominees over the last number of years.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. One of the reasons I was asking about the total number is that, when a nominee is accepted into the program and comes to Yukon, within the first six months, typically, people apply for permanent residency. Then, there is sometimes up to an 18-month, or almost two-year, process. Once they are a permanent resident, it is very exciting, because it means they have the ability to move freely throughout the country.

The one reason I was also asking about the number of nominees — we have seen in the past, for example, unfortunately, where employees are vulnerable. They are here at the behest of employers, and there can be troubles. I had asked previously, when it was under the Department of Education, about whether or not there were random site tours and checks, making sure that folks were doing well. One of the challenges — and I think the system changed — was that people were being interviewed with their employers in the same space. One could understand that, if things were not going well, it would be really hard to speak freely.

Can the minister just confirm that there are still site visits making sure that nominees are safe and happy in their positions?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, absolutely, there is monitoring of the individuals who are in the nominee program. There are, to my understanding, site visits still conducted. It has been a learning experience here with this responsibility. Of course, even the questions, and particularly the questions from the previous Leader of the Third Party, gave a sort of passive education about what some of the challenges were in this particular area.

I would say that what we are trying to do is just have accountability throughout the immigration ecosystem, whether it is understanding how folks and individuals are being treated in the workplace — I will get some clarity around whether or not the employers are still there from time to time. As part of our immigration strategy, we were also going out to individuals

who had gone through the nominee program and then became permanent residents.

They had already used the program, so then asking them to come back and reflect on their experience about how the department did — if we were getting it right, what was their experience from a client-centred perspective, but also, if they felt supported in the work that they were doing at that time. Of course, to speak bluntly, we were doing it in a way that — the relationship between the unit and that individual had lapsed, and so there was hope that with those questions, they could feel very comfortable in reflecting on what their experiences were.

That is the approach we have tried to take and that we continue to ensure that the individuals who are here — as our communities become extremely multicultural, not that it hasn't always been — but when we look at the number of individuals, and when I look at the data of people coming from so many different places, we continue to be focused on ensuring that individuals are treated with the appropriate respect and properly, as per the agreement — the trilateral agreement that is in place. For us in the department, there is a mandated obligation within the trilateral agreement that those responsibilities are undertaken.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that the minister mentioned the trilateral agreement, because I was going to ask if that was still a thing. The reason that is important is that it is an agreement signed by the Yukon government, the employer, and the employee, and it talks about the relationship — also making sure that protection is put in place for the employee.

One of the challenges we have seen, kind of ongoing, in the last year with COVID, of course, was that people's applications to the Government of Canada — so, the federal government — for permanent residency were being halted. We saw some real barriers put in place with the inability to access language classes, and more than just the classes themselves, to access the exams that you needed in order to complete your application process.

Can the minister let me know if that backlog has been cleared up, especially making sure that people who were trying to apply through this process weren't punished — that it wasn't a punitive process — if they were unable to access what they needed at the time, to make sure that they were able to stay in Yukon and to not be deported?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: My understanding is that, during this COVID period, there has been flexibility, both at the federal level and at the territorial level, to ensure that these unique circumstances were taken into consideration, especially when there were documents or a process that was required and, because of COVID, that process couldn't be done at the same pace as it was before.

There still continue to be different scenarios. I know that the unit just had — and the deputy minister just provided me with information this week — I believe the Canadian embassy in New Delhi has been closed since April 5. Because it's closed, there's a hindrance there for individuals who are Yukon nominees who are moving to the Yukon, because they can't get their paperwork concluded. There have been impacts here, and there are impacts to people who were waiting to move here.

I don't know of situations where that flexibility wasn't granted. I can try to get a better, broader sense of some of the bigger delays, but I think that both Canada and the Yukon have done a really good job of ensuring that we supported those individuals and we understood the uniqueness of this particular situation, and we gave flexibility, in many cases, to ensure that folks felt supported and safe and respected.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just in closing, if we're not going to have any more questions, it's appropriate again to thank the officials who have been here the last number of days, waiting to have an opportunity to come in and support the deputy minister, Mr. Justin Ferbey. A real pleasure, as well, having an opportunity to work with our director of Finance and using her extensive expertise to advise and her passion for the department, with Beth Fricke here.

As well, I just want to take a moment to thank Mr. Steve Rose who has been here and who has spent time supporting many members of the Legislative Assembly — truly committed to ensuring that he still understands what's going on in the world of economic development here in Yukon.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*?

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

Ms. White: 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

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 7, Department of Economic Development, 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 \$22,292,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$1,111,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$23,403,000 agreed to

Department of Economic Development agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Department of Education

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would first like to invite our officials to the Legislature today. We have our deputy minister, Nicole Morgan. Welcome and thank you so much for being here. We have Andrea McIntyre, acting director of Finance for the Department of Education. I would also like to acknowledge Jackie McBride-Dickson who is retiring after 30 years of service to our Government of Yukon.

She has done a tremendous job, and I know that she is going to be missed by the department. I'm really wishing her well in her well-earned retirement. I am sure that she is going to enjoy herself, working on their family business, and really wish her well.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to present the Department of Education's 2021-22 mains budget. 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 adjust resources to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff while maintaining continuity of learning.

While the past year has been difficult for all of us, through it all, Yukoners have demonstrated incredible resilience. 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.

This budget will allow us to achieve a number of educational priorities, including: supporting early childhood learning and development efforts so that children can make an effective transition into their school years; responding to the Auditor General's recommendations to improve educational programs, services, and outcomes for Yukon students in collaboration with First Nations and educational partners; ensuring that our school curriculum reflects the diverse needs of Yukoners, including First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being; continuing work on a number of capital projects to ensure that our schools meet community needs; supporting the transition of Yukon College to Yukon University; and utilizing increasing funding to support Yukon's changing labour market needs.

The health and safety of our students and staff remains our top priority. With COVID-19 still impacting our day-to-day lives, we have developed a budget that will provide the resources needed to manage emerging needs resulting from the pandemic while building a bright future for Yukon families.

In 2021-22, the department has a total budget request of \$244,891,000. Of this, \$220,118,000 is requested for operation and maintenance. This represents a \$16,875,000 increase over last year's budget, primarily for the important implementation of the universal childcare and collective agreement obligations.

The remaining \$24,773,000 is for critical capital projects. This represents an increase of \$49,000 for the 2020-21 capital budget. The department has carefully considered the resources that it needs to adapt and improve supports for learners and how those funds can be strategically allocated to achieve the greatest impact.

I will now go over some key initiatives — certainly not all — in more detail.

The Policy and Partnerships branch provides leadership for support for activities that enhance Yukon's partnerships and policy initiatives. The branch includes strategic support, curriculum and assessment, French programs, training programs and post-secondary education, and the labour market, as well as early learning and childcare.

The branch participates in local, national, international, and internal Yukon government management discussions about post-secondary education and labour market activities. We are requesting \$50,401,000 for operation and maintenance funding for these program areas. This is an increase of \$15,041,000 over last year, which is largely due to the implementation of the universal childcare.

Investing in children is a priority for our government. We know that investing in high-quality early learning and childcare in the earliest stages of a child's development is key to later success in school, which contributes to productive and healthy adults, families, and communities. We also know that families are struggling to afford the costs of childcare, and we are taking action to make life more affordable.

On April 1, to support early learning initiatives and coordinate services, the childcare services unit transferred to the Department of Education from Health and Social Services. This is part of our ongoing work to provide more integrated, collaborative programs and services that will better meet the needs of Yukoners and Yukon families.

With this in mind, one of the most significant increases in our budget this year is the introduction of a universal childcare model. As per recommendations outlined in the 2020 *Putting People First* report, the department started implementing a fully funded, universal childcare model that is available to Yukon families who attend childcare with participating licensed operators.

The early learning and childcare unit has been allocated \$25,202,000, and \$12,751,000 will support the implementation of a universal childcare system that will provide families with more options to improve children's learning outcomes.

There is \$1,148,000 requested for increased staffing, materials, and engagement to implement early learning and universal childcare. A \$920,000 increase is also proposed to increase childcare operational funding for the rural sustainability project and to support early learning programs for First Nations.

Moving to this universal childcare system will: put more disposable income in the hands of families; provide parents with more choices if they want to work outside the home; ensure that families can access high-quality, affordable childcare options for their children; and increase accessible training opportunities for day home and daycare providers to support continued integration of preventive and early learning supports.

On early kindergarten, to complement universal childcare and ensure consistent and equal early learning opportunities across our rural communities, we are working toward a full-time early kindergarten and kindergarten programs in all rural Yukon schools.

We are working with Yukon First Nations, school councils, schools, and their communities to ensure that this program meets their specific needs. We will move forward together when they are ready. We have budgeted \$817,000 to enhance these early kindergarten programs. Early kindergarten programming is being designed for children who are four years of age and provides a literacy-rich, play-based learning environment to support their transition to kindergarten. Increasing access to quality early learning opportunities will allow families to take advantage of work opportunities, ease the financial burden for Yukon families and caregivers, and help close the gap to early developmental opportunities between Yukon's rural and urban children.

Implementing early kindergarten programs in the Whitehorse-area schools will be explored in the longer term.

We are very excited to be moving forward on these early learning initiatives, both universal childcare and enhanced early kindergarten, which will support and improve our long-term health and education outcomes for Yukon children, families, and communities.

Another major initiative under the Policy and Partnerships branch is support for curriculum implementation. We are requesting \$470,000 for ongoing curriculum implementation with \$150,000 specifically used to support the expansion of early kindergarten and rural communities. All grades in Yukon schools are now following Yukon's modernized K to 12 curriculum, which is designed to incorporate future skills, Yukon's context, and Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being.

The new curriculum is designed to be student-centred with more hands-on learning opportunities, more career and finance education, and reflective of the needs of communities and Yukon First Nations. We will continue to develop and distribute guidelines, materials, and professional development to educators, including working with Yukon First Nations on additional materials and supports for teachers to enrich student learning about Yukon First Nations.

The Policy and Partnerships branch continues to administer a variety of programs to support post-secondary education, including the Yukon grant, student training allowance, Yukon excellence awards, Canada student loans, and a variety of scholarships. This budget allocation of \$6,811,000 is for training programs. We recognize that adult education has been significantly impacted by COVID-19.

Department officials are working with other jurisdictions to monitor how adult learners are impacted by COVID-19 and, where possible, we continue to mitigate financial impacts and address specific needs toward access to learning.

The Policy and Partnerships branch also provides important programs for the training and certification of apprentices and trades workers in Yukon and administers the student training and employment program, also known as STEP, and the Yukon summer program. Apprenticeship training at Yukon University and Alberta institutions are currently being offered in a new blended format, incorporating online and in-person learning. This is similar to other jurisdictions across Canada.

The Policy and Partnerships branch leads kindergarten to grade 12 French and second-language curriculum assessment and cultural support through the following programs: French immersion, intensive French, core French, and option-plus. A total of \$1,398,000 is being requested to support this work.

We are requesting \$10,161,000 to support labour market funding programs, including the labour market development agreement, the workforce development agreement, and the community training funds that support training and enable Yukon workers to find and maintain employment.

Labour market transfer agreements from the federal government provide \$7,435,000 annually to strengthen Yukon's labour market. This funding is delivered through three programs: building up support for organizations, staffing up support for employers, and working up support for individuals.

Education continues to work with First Nations, employers, service providers, and other colleagues at Economic Development, Tourism and Culture, and the Agriculture branch of Energy, Mines and Resources in developing initiatives to support Yukon's economic recovery.

The Schools and Student Services branch delivers public school education for more than 5,700 kindergarten to grade 12 students across 30 schools and alternate program sites in Yukon.

This includes French immersion, distance and home education through the Aurora Virtual School, and flexible learning options through the Individual Learning Centre. The branch includes kindergarten to grade 12 programs, student support services, technology and student information, and facilities and operations, as well as working collaboratively with CSFY.

A total of \$103,563,000 is requested to support kindergarten to grade 12, with \$94,902,000 of funding allocated to approximately 873 FTEs. This represents a \$1,226,000 increase for K to 12, due to the YTA and YEU collective agreement increases offset by two-percent YEU vacancies and one-percent YTA vacancy factors.

Based on increased enrolment, we are also requesting a \$728,000 increase for six FTEs for teachers.

We have also allocated \$667,000 to support an increase of 5.5 FTEs for early kindergarten in rural communities. The second learning during COVID-19 survey completed in November 2020 identified the need for more academic supports.

Additional supports for 23 educators and \$150,000 for tutoring programs were allocated in 2020-21 based on what we heard through the continued work with school administrators to monitor student learning across the school year.

The cost associated with these time-limited educator positions are covered under Canada's safe return to class fund.

The Schools and Student Services branch supports educators in identifying and developing supports for students to learn skills and outcomes identified in the curriculum, as well as special education programs to support their learning needs. A total of \$3,026,000 is requested for Student Support Services, which covers areas such as psychological services, speech language programs, occupational therapy, sensory impairment, social and emotional supports, and safe and caring school policy support.

We are committed to providing effective learning supports to Yukon students and continuously work to improve these services. As members are aware, a review of how inclusive and special education programs are provided in Yukon is underway. I will speak more about the review shortly.

A total of \$1,870,000 is requested to support Technology and Student Information. This unit manages the student information system privacy management and is also responsible for resource services and digital tools and content for school. This team plays an important role in our response and recovery to COVID-19 as we continue to modernize our curriculum and engage in blended learning.

A total of \$8,714,000 is requested to support the work of the CSFY. They are responsible for providing French language programming to eligible students in the schools in the Yukon and oversee three schools: École Émilie Tremblay, which is K4 to 6; and CSSC Mercier, which is grades 7 to 12; and École Nomade offers supports for distant learning and families doing home-schooling.

As part of the settlement with CSFY, the government and CSFY agreed to establish a funding formula for determining the school board's annual budget. This includes a change in accounting practice regarding the transfer and recovery for certain CSFY staff salaries. This change in accounting practice created a significant decrease in the CSFY's transfer payment agreement and ultimately to the department's first supplementary budget in 2020-21.

For 2021-22, the funding for CSFY is as follows: \$7,187,000 for CFSY staff salaries and utilities paid by the department, and \$1,527,000 for operational funding through CFSY's transfer payment agreement. A total of \$8,167,000 is requested to support facilities, planning and maintenance, health and safety, student transportation, and custodial services in Whitehorse schools.

Madam Deputy Chair, I am halfway through my opening comments. I recognize that I have one minute. There are areas in capital that I would have moved into, with some detail around each project. I will move into those as they come up, I suppose, during general debate today. I look forward to engaging with the members opposite.

Mr. Kent: Madam Deputy Chair, I thank the minister for her opening remarks and welcome the officials who are

supporting her today. I also thank those officials for the briefing that we received on the budget and on the supplementary budget from last fiscal year.

I will just start with a couple of questions. Normally, the Spring Sitting is when the annual report would be tabled for the Department of Education. I am curious if we can expect that before the Sitting is completed on May 31 or if that will come in the fall.

I have just one further question here. Going through the documents provided by the department at the briefing, it looks like there are going to be 53.74 additional full-time equivalents. I am hoping that the minister can confirm that number for me, and then I will have just a couple of questions around the number of FTEs. How many are on term versus permanent? How many will be in the schools, such as teachers or custodians, versus working centrally in the department? Those were the questions that I had around the FTE count and the annual report.

Just while the minister is speaking to officials, I remember the other question that I had around FTEs, and that is: How many are existing FTEs? How many are being transferred in from, say, Health and Social Services as part of the early learning and childcare initiatives?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In terms of the first question around the annual report, yes, we will be tabling that before the end of this Sitting. That's very near completion, and I look forward to tabling that soon.

In terms of the FTEs, in the O&M mains, the variance that we had was — sorry, we had a full count of 43.93 under the 2021 FTE summary. There are also an additional two for capital positions, and we have 7.8 transferring from Health and Social Services. That brings us up to the 53.74 FTEs.

Perhaps, if there is anything I have missed on that — I think you were also asking potentially about term and permanent, and how many are central and with the department. Is that correct?

Mr. Kent: Yes, that's correct. I think the minister did answer that. It was 7.8, I think she mentioned, coming in from Health and Social Services. So, of the total of 53.74, how many are term? How many are permanent? How many are centralized in the department versus in the schools, including, I think, there are some custodians who are on the list as well?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We will get back to the member opposite with those precise details that you are requesting today. I thank him very much for the question.

Mr. Kent: I wanted to touch on the individualized education plans, or the IEPs. Obviously, there was a lot of discussion in the abbreviated Spring Sitting before the election was called. Those conversations picked up after we reconvened after the election. I am kind of curious, with respect to the confidence and supply agreement that has been signed between the Liberals and New Democrats — there is a reference in there to reverse the changes to the IEPs. I know that we touched on this in Question Period a couple of times, so I hope, with the support of officials, the minister will be able to tell us how many students have been moved off of the IEPs since this started, I believe, in the fall of 2019. I am assuming that will be

the total that need to be moved back onto IEPs. Could the minister give us a status report, as well, on where we are at? My understanding from reading the confidence and supply agreement is that these changes need to be reversed by a week from tomorrow, May 28 — on the one-month anniversary of the signing of the agreement.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to stand today to speak to this question. I know that it has been spoken about a number of times in Question Period, and I'm happy to have the officials here today to work with us on talking about where we're at with the individualized education plans.

I just want to start by saying that we are working closely with our partners, with the New Democratic Party, and absolutely recognize the importance of these plans for our students. I am happy to stand today and talk about the actual numbers that we are dealing with.

The individualized education plans are, and will continue to be, a legislated support for students in need of special education programs. Based on the data set in the active Aspen system, there were 477 individualized education plans at the start of the 2019-20 school year; 62 plans were transitioned to student learning plans, with 38 in 2019-20, and 24 in 2020-21. No individualized education plans were transitioned to behavioural support plans.

There were 400 students with individualized education plans as of May 31, 2020, and individualized education plans are typically discontinued when the following occurs: the student completes their educational program; they leave the territory; or at the request of a parent or guardian.

I'll just go into a little bit more, in terms of how we're working with families and timelines. School staff are reaching out by letter and/or phone to parents and children who were transitioned to a student learning plan to review their child's learning plan and provide them with the opportunity to return to an individualized education plan and to address any outstanding concerns.

A family who wishes to continue with the student learning plan will not be required to reinitiate an individualized education plan. Initial contact and conversations with families will occur before May 28 with the expectation that all individualized education plans and student learning plans will begin implementation for the start of the 2021-22 school year.

With the end of the school year fast approaching, staff, students, and families are not expected to meet during the summer break.

Mr. Kent: Given the lateness in the day and a conversation that I had with the Leader of the Third Party, I'm going to ask one more series of questions and then I'll cede the floor to her for the rest of the day. I'm hoping that Education comes back to the floor in our last four days just so we can get a few more questions in that we have.

The last question is a capital question with respect to portable classrooms. We know that, in this budget, there is \$4 million identified for portables at Robert Service School and \$1.7 million identified for other portables. At the briefing, I think we were told that those two other portables are destined for Selkirk Elementary School and Hidden Valley elementary

school. If the minister could confirm that for us and give us an update, as well, on when the construction will begin or when tenders will go out for these portable classrooms so that hopefully they can be in service for the fall when school returns.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will start with the Robert Service School module. \$4 million has been allocated in this budget toward the module project, which is 100-percent recoverable from the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. The project to replace old modular classrooms has advanced past the design phase, and we are working toward a tender. Demolition of the old portables is expected this summer. We continue, of course, to work with the Dawson school community and, as I said earlier today in Question Period, I am planning a trip to Dawson tomorrow. I will meet with the school community and with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other partners involved in this overall project and with other priorities for the community.

In terms of other modular schools, Selkirk No. 2 will happen this fall. I know the member was also asking about Hidden Valley. We are still at the site-selection phase for that particular module, but it is a high-priority module, as enrolment at Hidden Valley School is at, or near, capacity. Government is working with the Hidden Valley School community on ways to optimize the space utilization at the school. As I said, we are still at site selection for placing the modular school classroom at the school, and we continually work with our school communities to explore ways to ensure that each school facility continues to meet educational programming needs, as well as the needs of students, staff, and the community.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for sharing the time today. I greatly appreciate it.

I have quite a few questions about early learning and actually a lot around the direct operating grant. So, the DOG, or direct operating grant, is something that is calculated, and it is awarded to, or transferred to, childcare facilities depending, from the outside anyway, on a complicated series of calculations. I wanted to know if the minister could walk me through the process of a direct operating grant application and how it is calculated for individual centres.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I hope the member opposite affords me a little bit of flexibility. I'm not as intimate with each program as the previous minister was, and these are very detailed questions that I really want to be able to provide a good answer to. The new funding model that became effective on April 1, 2021 — the government budgeted \$25,202,000 in 2021-22 to support the new program. All licensed operators had the choice to opt into the new program within two years by signing the transfer payment agreement. As of April 1, 2021, every licensed operator in the Yukon, except for Watson Lake and Mayo, had opted into the new program. So, we are still working with those communities.

I recognize that your question is around the application process, and I will bring that back in a written legislative return — in terms of that entire process that operators are going through at this point. I'll stop there for now.

Ms. White: This possibly highlights a good reason why I asked for a briefing of the new childcare programming from

the officials — only because it could probably save a lot of questions.

So, I'm just going to ask a follow-up question for clarification. Under the new programming, starting in April this year, does it mean that centres no longer have to apply monthly for the direct operating grants?

Hon. Ms. McLean: That is correct; they do not have to apply monthly. There is a transfer payment agreement in place and that alleviates that need.

Ms. White: I appreciate that, and that's possibly why the links no longer open anything on the yukon.ca website — maybe because they're no longer needed, which is great news.

Under those transfer payments, is there ever any conversation or discussion about what a full-time program looks like?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Can you ask that again? I didn't quite hear the last part of it. Thank you.

Ms. White: One of the reasons why I was bringing this up was, after lots of conversations with childcare providers previously, one of the concerns they had was around the definition of what "full time" was and the complication that, when a provider was trying to figure out where they fell, you couldn't find policies online — you couldn't find printed policies or an understanding of where things came from.

One of the questions that folks had was: What is "full time"? What does a centre need to do to be operating full time? Is it five days a week? Is it 38 hours? Is it 38 hours spread out over multiple — it's a question of what is required to be a full-time operating childcare centre.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Deputy Chair, it really depends on the agreement that the centre enters into with the department. There could be variations; i.e., there could be a centre that operates in the early morning or has varied hours. It is according to circumstances for each centre. I would like to just point out that these agreements are renewed, or looked at, yearly, in terms of adjusting to ensure that the department is flexible with the centre that is providing the service.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

This week — and it is something I have asked on more than one occasion: What is Yukon government doing to support those individuals, or those families, who do not work the standard Monday-through-Friday job? We know that, for example, a fair number of Yukon government facilities — whether we are talking about continuing care or group homes and others — have shift work, where it means the centres are staffed 24 hours a day. Of course, there is the same challenge on weekends. What is the government doing to support the creation of those sorts of spaces for Yukon families who do not work standard work hours?

Hon. Ms. McLean: There are dollars being provided to centres to provide childcare outside of those kinds of standard hours. We pay for flexible spaces with various centres — and there are a number of them that are actually doing this now — so that we can provide the flexibility for parents who are working different types of hours or need childcare outside of their regular nine to five. This is to the licensed operators.

Ms. White: One of the challenges that we also highlighted — for example, the unfortunate reality that Pelly Crossing's daycare facility burned down in a fire last year, and they're working to hopefully get another centre up and running in one of the new house builds that's happening. But currently, Pelly Crossing and Ross River both don't have licensed daycares. So, what is a family, a parent, or a child supposed to do in either of those two communities right now?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We continue to work with our partners to determine the best way to enhance early learning programming in rural communities.

I know that I have stood in the Legislature just in this Sitting talking about the gaps that we do have in a number of our rural communities. The conversations are actively happening with these communities and with others that were mentioned today. Our goal is to ensure that all rural communities have the resources and training that they need to provide early learning programs that meet the needs of their learners in their community. This is, of course, part of the whole goal of providing the best early learning opportunities for children in all of our communities and this is something that we will continue to have as a priority for our department. As the early learning and universal childcare programs are evolving, we will be working with all of our partners, and for sure our rural partners.

Ms. White: I will just highlight to the minister and her officials that I am going to jump around as we have 15 minutes before the end of it.

Is the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate and the Chiefs Committee on Education being included in the reporting of the Auditor General of Canada's report on the audit of Education in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We are, of course, working with Yukon First Nations to ensure that schools meet the needs of Yukon First Nation students and to offer all students opportunities to learn about Yukon First Nation histories, cultures, languages, and ways of knowing, doing, and being in all schools. We, of course, will continue to work with partners, with First Nation governments, to improve education outcomes for students on a government-to-government basis, as well as at the community level and by collaboratively making broader changes to the Yukon education system.

We recognize the value of the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate and what it adds in supporting this work, and we're working collaboratively with them to increase these opportunities, including connecting their education advocates with our schools and other opportunities to collaborate and work together. In terms of other specifics that have come from the Auditor General's report — and I have spoken about this a couple of times now, during Question Period — some of our actions, since the release of the audit report, include education agreements with all Yukon First Nations, a student-data sharing MOU, and a data working group with Yukon First Nations. We have invested \$1.8 million in new funding to support the joint education priorities with Yukon First Nations at both the collective and community levels. We're working with Yukon First Nations on a new teacher resource and professional

learning tool for Yukon First Nation languages, culture, history, and ways of knowing, doing, and being in all grade levels and subject areas.

We're engaging with Yukon First Nations on a collaborative framework and student outcome strategy. We're working toward a First Nation school board, and we have launched a review of inclusive and special education. I am anticipating that I will be in receipt of that report soon and that there will be very tangible and immediate steps to begin addressing the outcomes and the findings of that report. It's going to be instrumental in helping to guide us, as we go forward together, in a collective way.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. I recently had the great pleasure and honour of meeting with the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education and the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate. One of the things that was pointed out to me as being a symbol of success, and something that they suggested I read — and I have, and I appreciated it — is the Mi'kmaq education agreement between the Mi'kmaq Nation and the Government of Nova Scotia.

The really incredible thing about it is that it was a clear demonstration that self-determination led to better outcomes. It is really interesting. When I'm reading it, you would almost think that it could be applicable right now to where we are, with a 30-percent less graduation rate and things like that. One of the things they had pointed to was to look at that, among many other things.

One of the questions that I had was, knowing that the First Nation initiatives — so the ADM position was created a number of years ago, and the minister can correct me about when that was. But, at any point in time, has that been reviewed to make sure that it's meeting what the original intent was that was set out between First Nations and the Department of Education?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Chair. I'll try to give a quick answer because I know that we're running out of time today, but our government took action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action 62, which calls upon government to establish positions at the assistant deputy minister level, or higher, dedicated to indigenous content in education. Over this past year, the ADM and First Nation Initiatives branch have worked to clarify their mandate, which included consideration of the joint education priorities and services that it provides.

I will give an example. The branch has established a position focused solely on Yukon First Nation language education. The ADM and the branch have also supported ongoing collaboration and discussion with Yukon First Nations on pandemic response, for instance, and recovery for Yukon schools and support for students during the pandemic. We are going to continue to work with the Chiefs Committee on Education. In fact, I have a meeting with them very shortly today. We are continuing to work in partnership with them.

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McLean that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Madam Deputy Chair, 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

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, and directed me to report it without amendment.

Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Seeing the time, 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. Tuesday.

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled May 20, 2021:

35-1-5

Yukon Child Care Board Annual Report 2020-21
(McLean)

Written notice was given of the following motion May 20, 2021:

Motion No. 61

Re: establishing a Special Committee on Electoral Reform
(McPhee)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 8

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, May 25, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, May 25, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 51, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge, was not placed on the Notice Paper as it was out of order.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the members of the Assembly to help me welcome a number of individuals who are here today to celebrate National Tourism Week — industry leaders. I would like to introduce: Mr. Neil Hartling, the chair of TIAY, the Tourism Industry Association; Sandy Legge, the general manager of the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon; Kalin Pallett, president of the board of directors of the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon; Denny Kobayashi, the chair of the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board; as well as Alida Munro, the managing director of the Yukon Convention Bureau.

As well, there are members from the Department of Tourism and Culture. I would like to welcome Jonathan Parker, as well as Sarah Marsh and Deb Greenlaw.

I also want to take a moment because one of the first opportunities that I had was to attend a roast to the other individual who is here. The rest of us didn't have that opportunity, but I think it is really important today. Pierre Germain is here with us. I do not know if we will get another chance to recognize him in the Assembly. He has spent his professional life, in the private sector and within the department, dedicated to tourism in the Yukon. I think a big hand for everybody, but an awful big hand for Mr. Germain who is with us here today as well.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in welcoming two individuals to the Chamber. Saba Javed first came to us as a summer student a number of years ago and never had the opportunity to be here to be introduced. It is a pleasure to say that she is now a staff member — from STEP student to staff. Today for the very first time from our office is Matthias Hoenisch. He has come to us straight from McGill University where he is taking political science and international development. It is a pleasure, Matthias, to have you here for the summer. You have great

shoes to fill with Saba sitting right there next to you. Thank you for joining us.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Tourism Week

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to National Tourism Week.

Tourism Week recognizes the impact that Canada's tourism industry has on every community from coast to coast to coast. After the events of the past year, the 2021 National Tourism Week specifically recognizes the resilience of a sector immobilized by the restrictions enacted to keep us all safe.

Rather than looking at tourism as an industry, I would like to reflect on tourism as a large team of dedicated, caring Yukoners who make our territory a better place, for tourism truly is an enterprise of people and their pride in the sites, experiences, heritage, and events that make our community unique. To call Yukon home is a truly exceptional privilege, and for our friends and neighbours in the tourism industry, this feeling has become their calling. Their pride and skill are part of what makes Yukon a larger-than-life destination. During this 2021 National Tourism Week, I look forward with optimism and a strong sense of renewal.

With our vaccination rates leading the nation and our safety guidelines proven and well established, I invite Yukoners and fully vaccinated visitors to celebrate these first steps toward a restart of our dynamic tourism sector by showing support for the local businesses and communities that make our territory a world-class destination. Whether it's that river trip that you've been dreaming of or those local attractions just down the road, we can get out there and we can do it safely.

Yukoners deserve the credit of our inevitable epidemiological position, but the diligence and composure shown by Yukon's tourism organizations and operators have certainly helped deliver us to this pivotal moment. The leadership that we have seen from Yukon's tourism sector has been incredible. The ingenuity and enthusiasm are as much a part of what draws visitors as our incredible wilderness, vibrant culture, and captivating heritage.

From the outset, our tourism operators understood that maintaining a healthy tourism sector must not come at the cost of the health and safety of Yukoners. Rather than staying on the sidelines, they became a community of partners contributing their creativity and enthusiasm to the development and adoption of industry-wide health and safety protocols to ensure residents and travellers have confidence that the necessary precautions are being taken. They are active partners in researching overall resident and community sentiment toward tourism to inform our path to recovery.

As we navigate what we hope are the final throes of this pandemic, celebrating the value of Yukon's tourism industry is more important than ever. This National Tourism Week and all summer long, let's celebrate the people, experiences, and

events that make our corner of the world such an incredible place.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Tourism Week, May 23 to 30. There are a lot of stats to recite about our tourism downturn as we pass through this second year of Tourism Week during a pandemic.

We constantly hear: “Shop and visit local.” Last week, I gave a tribute to museums and encouraged folks to visit attractions in their own backyard.

We are so blessed in Yukon as we are road-linked, other than the Village of Old Crow, so I am going to take you on a road trip. The Alaska Highway travels from Dawson Creek, BC through to Fairbanks, Alaska and all the points along the way. They share in a history related to the building of the highway and the stories that have been created since it opened in 1942. As one travels north, the scenery is outstanding — lakes, rivers, mountains, hills, and forests. Wildlife is never guaranteed, but any animal or bird, large or small, is cause to slow down and stop for photos.

Through the capital, Whitehorse, still on the Alaska Highway to the Kluane region — Haines Junction, Destruction Bay, Burwash, and Beaver Creek — words will never describe it adequately. One must go and see the outstanding landscape, colours, and the terrain.

Another option — the Campbell Highway loops through Watson Lake, through Ross River and Faro and links to the Klondike Highway at Carmacks. It is remote, and when you are just feeling like you are the only one on Earth, you meet a vehicle. Each little leg, a spot to stop — you’ll find that you do just that.

A day trip — do the loop from Whitehorse to Carcross and Tagish — well worth the drive, especially those in the populated Whitehorse area who don’t usually camp or are looking for something different. The north Klondike Highway has its own magic, as it touches the Yukon River several times at Carmacks and then again at Minto — on to Pelly Crossing, Stewart Crossing, and crosses both of those rivers of Pelly and Stewart. At the Stewart junction, you turn right and it takes you to the silver mining region, to Mayo, the old-time mine site of Elsa, and then Keno City.

A turn to the left and on to Dawson City — the town that has captured the hearts and thoughts of many, due to the history of the Klondike stampede — so many wonderful businesses and eateries, as well as Gertie’s, to keep one busy. A day trip to the Tombstones on the Dempster is possible and, again, breathtaking.

As a Yukoner, I marvel at my part of Canada. Having travelled extensively through Canada as vice-chair of Aboriginal Tourism Canada and as a board member of the Canadian Tourism Commission, I know that we are special. Canada is so large and sparsely populated that most people who live along the border with the United States don’t realize the magnitude of our land and the amazing people who live here.

My senses come alive in Yukon: the deep magenta colour of our fireweed as it renews the hills and valleys after a forest fire; the sound of the cranes in the fall as they fly overhead, heading south; the smell of a campfire with perked coffee wafting in the air; the taste of freshly caught salmon with local greens; and the touch of the nip of frost as the cold bites your nose — it’s magic.

Tourism Canada is asking people to take a pledge this week, stating, “I pledge to travel in Canada.” So, Yukoners, do your part. Travel in Canada, or travel in Yukon, at least. Wave at everyone you see, and bon voyage.

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to pay tribute to National Tourism Week. Tourism Week is a seven-day event celebrated across Canada to recognize the impact that the tourism sector has on every community across the country. We know that this pandemic has taken a real toll on Yukon businesses that rely on visitors to the Yukon. The Tourism Industry Association of Yukon has made great efforts to be the voice of Yukon tourism businesses, large and small. They are strong advocates who work to promote the Yukon as a place to explore, not just for visitors but for all Yukoners.

National Tourism Week encourages us to support local tourism businesses through eating at a local restaurant, booking an adventure at a local resort, visiting local museums or culture centres, visiting a territorial park, or even renting a canoe or kayak for a river adventure. All of these are ways to actively support our tourism industry in the Yukon.

It is great that we can still explore our Yukon while safely keeping within the chief medical officer of health’s recommendations to keep our communities safe. As we see tourists return to Yukon, it is important that we continue to welcome them and be respectful. They ventured far distances to see this great territory that we call home.

We would also like to recognize Gurdeep Pandher, who is an ambassador of joy, hope, and positivity in sharing Bhangra dance with us and others around the world. Gurdeep has received recognition across Canada for the joy he brings on social media and encourages Yukoners to get out and experience the Yukon.

We encourage all Yukoners to explore our great territory and support our local tourism businesses.

Applause

In recognition of National Public Service Week

Hon. Mr. Streicker: On behalf of the Yukon Liberal government, I’m honoured to rise to pay tribute to all of the hard-working people of the public service. National Public Service Week takes place in June, and we have celebrated it here in the Yukon for many, many years. It is a week where we go above and beyond to say thank you to all public service employees, including employees from the Government of Yukon.

It also offers us a chance to reflect on the contributions and impacts of the public service, both big and small. Behind every program and service that the Yukon government delivers, there are many tireless and passionate individuals working to make

them happen. Over a year ago, as we were navigating the first phase of the pandemic, I was working late here in the Legislature. When I went to leave, I got into a great conversation with Ms. Cristy Apostol, one of the people working to keep this building clean and safe for the public. I thanked her for the work that she was doing for all of us.

Whether you are enjoying a campfire in one of our beautiful campgrounds this summer, doing a scenic drive on the highway to a Yukon community, stopping in your local, amazing library, or receiving a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at one of our clinics, it's all a direct result of many public servants. Some of these public servants may be our family members; they certainly are our friends and our neighbours.

This year, in particular, I'm extremely proud and humbled to be part of the public service after what has been a very challenging year where many have risen to the occasion to help the Yukon weather the storm of the pandemic. There have been long days and sleepless nights for many public servants because of the concern for the health and safety of the public that we all serve. Public servants have been working on the front lines and behind the scenes with a genuine level of care and attention to respond to this crisis and deliver government services and programs to Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members of this House, I want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every public service employee for the work that they do and the ways in which they make a positive impact on the lives of Yukoners.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to all public service employees ahead of National Public Service Week, which takes place this year between June 13 and 19.

We understand and respect the indispensable role that public servants play in designing and delivering services to Canadians and Yukoners. My colleagues and I certainly recognize the importance of fostering an overall climate of collaboration and respect and respecting the independence and neutrality of the public service.

The invaluable advice and expertise of public servants are essential to the successful delivery of territorial and federal commitments. Many public service employees have been tasked with serving Canadians through different and innovative ways throughout the pandemic. Across all jurisdictions, branches of the public service have moved to online service delivery and often do so when balancing home, schooling, quarantine measures, and additional workload. This is not unlike millions of other Canadians who have been forced into new ways of doing their jobs.

We do recognize that many public service employees have the additional task of administering a wide range of pandemic-related services and benefits as well. They were tasked with developing and delivering these services and benefits in somewhat short order to assist people across the country in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting restrictions.

So, we would like to thank those who work to provide expert advice and exceptional service delivery to our

governments today and would like to recognize those who have served careers with the public service and who have since retired. We appreciate your dedication, experience, and expertise.

Applause

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to recognize the important work done by those individuals who work within the public service, ahead of National Public Service Week.

Every day, public servants make a difference in the lives of Canadians and Yukoners. These folks have chosen to work in fields that affect our lives first-hand, and the work that they do is important for many, many reasons.

Thank you to all of you who have chosen to commit yourselves to the service of others through the public service. We thank you for your ongoing desire to make the lives of those around you better, and that commitment to supporting others is worth honouring today.

Applause

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

TABLEING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Cathers: I have written questions for the Minister of Justice regarding legal costs and litigation directed at the government.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 300: Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act — Introduction and First Reading

Mr. Cathers: I move that a bill entitled *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge that a bill entitled *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for the introduction and first reading of Bill No. 300 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Dixon: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the chief medical officer of health to develop a clear path forward for safe reopening that includes timelines and benchmarks to ensure that decisions are open and transparent.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that spending millions of dollars on fencing agriculture land is not the right solution to prevent ongoing damage to farmland, which has been caused by introduced elk.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to revise the elk management plan to provide hunting opportunities and improved protection of farmland, including designating all of the Takhini River valley as an elk-exclusion zone.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Liberal government to repeal the changes to agricultural development and subdivision rules that it autocratically imposed on April 1, 2021, without any public consultation.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to adhere to the 1998 *National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk*, to which Yukon is a signatory, and introduce complementary legislation to provide for effective protection of species at risk in the Yukon.

Speaker: Are there any statements by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State of emergency in Yukon

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Since the COVID-19 pandemic began last year, our government has focused on keeping Yukoners safe. On March 27, 2020, a state of emergency was declared under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* in response to the pandemic. Since then, a state of emergency has been extended four times to ensure the continuity of the tools, flexibility, and capacity needed to keep Yukoners safe. The latest extension took place on March 3, 2021, and is slated to expire at the end of the day on May 31, 2021.

When the state of emergency ends, the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and ministerial orders enabling pandemic response management under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* will expire. In some cases, this may result in consequences that will have a negative effect on Yukoners during the pandemic period. The state of emergency will soon be extended for a fifth time. The extension may be in place for up to 90 days.

Of course, the state of emergency can be cancelled at any time, or it may, if it continues to be necessary, be extended. As we have recently demonstrated when we removed the requirement to self-isolate for fully vaccinated individuals, our government regularly evaluates the ministerial orders issued under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and repeals any that are no longer necessary to keep Yukoners safe from COVID-19.

By extending the state of emergency for a fifth time, our government remains nimble and able to adapt to potential rapid

changes in the COVID-19 situation, including monitoring the third wave in Canada and reviewing emerging data on variant spread to inform our decisions.

All jurisdictions in Canada have either created legislation to support the response to COVID-19 or extended their states of emergency. With the health and well-being of Yukoners top of mind, the Government of Yukon is working to transition out of the state of emergency in a measured and strategic way that will involve updates to existing non-emergency legislation.

Canada's chief public health officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, recently said that Yukon is a model that we're all looking toward for success. That is high praise, but we also must take that responsibility seriously. Keeping protections and supports in place to help Yukoners through these challenging times remains critical to our ongoing management of this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the members opposite have expressed an interest in discussing the state of emergency here in the Legislature, and I'm sure that Yukoners are keen to hear whether the Official Opposition will be supporting this extension.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks for the opportunity to speak to this. During the last election, the Yukon Party was the only party that committed to providing Yukoners with a clear path forward toward a safe reopening that included benchmarks and timelines. We promised this because we heard loud and clear from Yukoners who were frustrated by the poor communication and lack of decisiveness from this Liberal government. We heard from thousands of Yukoners about how this uncertainty was making life more difficult and harming the private sector. We heard from thousands of Yukoners that all they really wanted was clarity. They wanted to know why decisions were being made and how decisions were being made. Unfortunately, the Liberals were, and continue to be, unable to provide this information.

Take, for example, the return to full-time, in-person classes at Whitehorse high schools. Seven days before the Liberals called an unnecessary snap election, they issued a statement saying that schools would not be able to return to in-person classes until children were vaccinated. A couple of days later, right before they called the snap election, they changed that guidance and said that they could return, and they were unable to explain what had changed in just a few days.

For many Yukoners, it was clear that the only thing that had changed was that the Liberals had decided they were going to call a snap election, and they were trying to reduce the political damage of their unpopular decision with respect to schools. Now, with respect to the state of emergency — that is another interesting one — just nine days before they called the unnecessary snap election, the Liberals extended the state of emergency for 90 days. So, we're in a state of emergency, but we'll force the territory into an election that they don't want or need.

This inconsistent and mixed messaging has unfortunately become par for the course for the Liberals, and it was roundly rejected by Yukon voters just a month ago. You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that the Liberals campaigned on a platform based

entirely on the status quo. Their tagline was even “Let’s keep going”. Well, Yukon voters spoke, and they resoundingly rejected the idea of “Let’s keep going”. The Liberals lost a significant number of votes, and the Liberals lost seats. The former Health and Social Services minister even lost her seat — the very minister in charge of the Liberals’ response to the pandemic lost her own seat.

I think it’s important to note that, of all the Canadian elections held during the pandemic, this Yukon Liberal government is the only one that got so clearly rejected by voters. Unlike this Liberal government, every other premier who had an election during the pandemic gained seats and gained votes. This is in large part due to the secrecy and lack of transparency in how the Yukon Liberals have approached this issue.

In fact, it’s notable that the only party that promised a clear plan for reopening resoundingly won the popular vote in the last election. All along, we have said that an extension of the state of emergency should be debated and voted upon in the House. A ministerial statement is not a debate, nor is it a vote. So, as much as the minister believes that he’s being clever and checking off a box with the statement today, it’s merely window dressing.

Further, as the Liberals have not provided us briefings with officials on the state of emergency or with the chief medical officer of health in over six months, we have no information to make an informed opinion on this. So, we challenge the Liberals: If you truly respect democracy, then bring forward a motion for debate this week to publicly share information with Yukoners on the extension of the state of emergency and allow for a vote in the Legislature. Provide us the necessary briefings beforehand, and let’s truly provide debate for democratic oversight.

However, with the Liberals’ record of disrespecting our democratic institutions over the last year, I doubt that they will, but we remain hopeful that we will be allowed briefings, debates, and the ability for a democratic vote in this elected Assembly.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon NDP recognizes the importance of the pandemic response under the *Civil Emergencies Measures Act* and fully expects the state of emergency to be maintained so we can keep measures like self-isolation for unvaccinated folks in place.

We also believe in the importance of clarity and the timely sharing of information. If there should be any lesson learned by any level of government since March 2020, it is the importance of clear and concise communication. People want to know and understand the rules and regulations that affect them, and they want to understand what they need to do to meet those rules. Unfortunately, communication around rules and regulations has not always been clear. A recent example is the May 21 press release that contained next to no information about next steps for restaurants and bars. These businesses were left wondering about what they would be able to do today as restrictions changed, because the same press release does say that, for indoor and outdoor gatherings, funerals, weddings, faith-based

services, gyms, and recreation centres, physical distancing would still be required. But — great news — after looking online all weekend, new guidelines were posted on the yukon.ca website on May 24.

Last year, the road borders were staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Folks travelling through were given a sticker for their vehicles that was easily visible or a pass to let Yukoners know that vehicles and their occupants were allowed safely within our borders. Changes were made in late fall last year and the hours were cut as Yukoners were told that there were fewer crossings as the days grew colder. That has people wondering what happens now as the temperature climbs. The light extends, and more folks are once again on their way to Alaska. When will this information be shared with the Yukon public?

As another example of this lack of clarity, today I was asked by an individual: Why can people participate in both indoor and outdoor sports, but dancing, even with physical distancing, still is not allowed?

With the health and well-being of Yukoners top of mind, what is this government doing to ensure that information that is critical to understanding the rules and regulations of the pandemic response are shared in a more timely and clear manner?

On another note, while we all welcome the loosening of some restrictions facing bars and restaurants, as well as gathering limits, we must also remember that many services that people rely on have also been affected by the pandemic: addiction services, home care, and the shelter are just a few examples. We must ensure that government puts the same effort and consideration into evaluating these restrictions in the light of current science as they do for commercial establishments.

Lastly, I know that managing COVID restrictions requires a tremendous amount of work from our public health team, and I want to salute the hard work that goes into this and to thank all of those who play an important role in keeping us safe.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am really happy to hear the thoughts of the opposition parties today on the floor of the House regarding CEMA. We need steady leadership to get us on the path to recovery. Our government is providing that leadership and has been for the last year plus.

It started with the cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games — a very, very difficult decision. We are not afraid of taking the difficult decisions to keep Yukoners safe, and we have continued that approach throughout the pandemic for Yukoners. We have put Yukoners — people — first. We have put the health of Yukoners first, and from that has flowed one of the strongest economies in the country — a place where kids are in school, a place where people are playing hockey. That is hard to say in any other jurisdiction in the country, but we can say it here and we can say it with pride because of the sacrifices, the diligence, and the kindness that Yukoners have shown throughout this pandemic. They got behind our government when we made those tough decisions, and they followed us along. They have to be commended for the sacrifices and the measures that they have taken.

We have seen other jurisdictions where this hasn't happened. The Leader of the Official Opposition and I are going to have to disagree a little bit again today — agree to disagree. The approaches that they are outlining have been followed in other conservative jurisdictions, and those results have not been particularly good, Mr. Speaker. They stand in sharp contrast to what Yukoners have accomplished, which are being acknowledged across Canada and beyond. We have kept our eyes firmly on the science and have tried to avoid the trappings of emotion. We have put people first; we have put health first. The path that we have chosen is measured and incremental, and it has been successful.

The member opposite has no understanding, seemingly — the Leader of the Official Opposition — about the amount of work that this has taken. It has been a titanic effort on behalf of every single department within this government — the same civil servants whom the member opposite was praising not more than five minutes ago. That effort is what is coming under criticism today. The fact is that the member opposite suggests that no work or no planning has happened, but what we have accomplished so far hasn't happened by accident, Mr. Speaker. It has happened through hard work and planning, and that is what has kept Yukon and Yukoners safe. From enforcement to education to health matters to vaccination efforts, which are leading — if not all of Canada, all of the continent, perhaps many places in the world. The member opposite does not acknowledge any of that work. He doesn't want to acknowledge those tremendous successes.

When you do it well and you do it right, it looks easy, Mr. Speaker. That is the trick — making it look easy. It hasn't been easy. It has taken immense planning, immense execution, a lot of honing — late nights, weekends, as my colleague, the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, mentioned earlier today — a tremendous effort.

And you know what? We can hold our heads high because of what we have accomplished here, which is being praised nationally and frankly around the world — elsewhere — because we have done it right. We have done it consciously, we've done it measuredly, and we have all of the results to show how successful it has been.

Speaker: This now brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Tourism development strategy

Mr. Dixon: The Speech from the Throne announced the creation of what the government is calling the "Great Yukon Summer" campaign. According to the government, it will help Yukon businesses build marketing campaigns to maximize tourism this summer. The May long weekend is the unofficial start of summer. It has come and gone, and the Liberals have still released no details on its plan. Once again, we see the Liberals waiting, not just until the last minute to announce a plan, but the last minute has come and gone. We are now in summer and we still have no details on the flagship tourism support program.

Can the minister tell us why this program is so delayed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The Great Yukon Summer is really focused on encouraging and inspiring Yukoners to travel in Yukon — to revisit and discover for the first time the endless world-class cultural and outdoor experiences that our territory has to offer.

In quick response to this, we came back into the Assembly about three weeks ago. The folks who were here today and came to visit us have worked tirelessly. There is going to be a lot of information this week that we will be providing to folks. We've met with industry individuals already. We've been speaking to the marketing firms. The team has done a fantastic job of looking at all elements of this. I think that it's going to be something that's going to be a premier program for all jurisdictions in the country.

I just want to thank the folks at Tourism and Culture for all the work and some of the assistance from Economic Development. We're really excited about what's going to be rolling out this week and the hard work — and really for turning it around in such a short period of time. I don't believe that it's delayed at all. When you are looking at 21 days to build a program that's probably going to be leading for domestic spending, I think that's good timing and really hard work.

Mr. Dixon: Well, summer has already started over the weekend, and even as recently as this morning, we've heard directly from several major tourism operators who have received zero details on this program so far.

Hotels are getting calls from Yukoners asking to make bookings using this program, and unfortunately, the hotels are forced to say that they have no details and no information on what the customer is talking about.

As a result of the lack of information-sharing from the Liberals, customers are taking out their frustrations on the people whom this program is actually meant to help.

If the Liberals don't get their act together, Mr. Speaker, they could quickly turn this campaign from the great Yukon summer into the great Yukon bummer, so when will Yukoners actually get to access this program?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It will be so important for Yukoners to step up and support our local tourism operators, many who were represented here today. When you take a look at the overall economy, we have had a really strong economy over the last year — when you focus on construction, when you focus on the mining sector, and when you focus on the knowledge-based economy sector. So, again, I ask all Yukoners — and I hope that all members of the Assembly will take an opportunity to make sure that we spend, our neighbours spend, our friends spend here — anyone who is in a position and can afford to do that — because the folks who have been in the most difficult situation are our tourism operators.

I would offer to the Leader of the Official Opposition: Please, when we complete here today, let me know who those folks are. I'll reach out to those operators. That's news to me; I have not heard information such as this. I would be happy to follow up with the exact company, speak with them, and then help them out with any of those clients.

We're excited about what's going to happen this week. I don't want to get ahead of some of our internal decisions that

have to be made, but we are very excited to see some of the things that are going to be rolling out this week.

Mr. Dixon: The operators whom I'm talking about are just looking for details from this government. So, if the government is willing to provide the details, then great — I would love to hear them. Next time the minister is on his feet, he can provide that information directly to those operators via this Legislature.

I know that Yukoners, in general, agree with the minister. They want to support local businesses, and they want to access this program, but they can't. It has been announced by the government, but it hasn't been implemented yet and there are no details at all.

One of the complaints that industry had about the domestic tourism marketing campaign last year was that it was slow to get started. These types of marketing campaigns take time to develop, implement, and they need time to have the desired effect on their target audiences. Summer is now well underway, and Yukoners haven't seen any formal advertising on this new program yet.

So, can the minister tell us when this program will be up and running, and when will they start advertising it?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It's key to understand that, first of all, when you look at our budget for this year, it does set a clear path to recovery, not just for our local tourism market but as we go through what we're going to see for the rest of the year. I think it's important to know that there's a sustainable long-term approach to it.

Quite simply, there are a number of elements to this program — the incentive for travel domestically — the support on the marketing side. But also, it is very important to understand that, over the last number of weeks, we also have to make sure that our communities are comfortable with this travel happening, which is one of the other elements of this. So, whether you are doing resource development in those communities or tourism, it is important to make sure that there is a comfort level. That is part of the work.

The other part of the work is — when you take a look at the incentive, of course, you want to make sure that, when you cost it out and when you look at the methodology and you disseminate what you believe the impact is, you have the proper numbers together, and that work has also been done — whether it has been on the marketing side, whether it has been on the event piece, or whether it has been on the work looking at the incentives.

I think that they have done absolutely great work. I think that the department should be extremely proud of itself. I think that Yukoners are going to be very excited. I appreciate the fact that we get to talk about this today, because I think that there is going to be some great news and Yukoners should listen this week.

Question re: Mineral development strategy

Ms. McLeod: The mineral development strategy proposes the creation of an industrial water tax on the mining industry. Is the Liberal government planning on bringing in an industrial water tax?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The Yukon mineral development strategy presents an important conversation, and mineral development and management in the territory affects all Yukoners. We will continue to follow and respect the process in place as we work toward successor legislation. We will not predetermine the outcomes of that process. I stood on my feet last week and I said, "Hey, we got the mineral development strategy." It came out last month — I think in the middle of April — and we are looking forward. I have started conversations with industry. I have started conversations with governments about it, and we will work toward how that strategy will evolve into successor legislation. We are really happy with the breadth of the work that is there. I am not going to stand here today and talk about specific elements within the strategy. What I will say is that it is a great starting place to move us forward — and making sure that mining will be sustainable here in the territory for decades to come.

Ms. McLeod: The mineral development strategy proposes the implementation of online map staking for claims. Is the Liberal government planning to bring in map staking?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am just trying to answer this question broadly to say that we have a process. That process is to take the mineral development strategy as it is proposed and now work with industry, the public, and governments and work through toward successor legislation, and that is terrific.

I have just said that I would not answer on specific pieces, but I will say that this past Friday, when I was in Dawson for the Klondike Placer Miners' Association meetings — great conversations that we had with them. I also stopped in at the mining recorder's office and talked to them about their realities, and we discussed the whole issue about how claims are mapped. We got into a conversation. That is what is going to happen, Mr. Speaker. It is a conversation with Yukoners, with industry, and with governments about the mineral development strategy and the great starting suggestions that they have proposed to help us get to successor legislation and a sustainable mining future here in the territory — one that respects environmental values, social responsibility, government-to-government relationships, and how we can have mining here in a modern way that is going to be able to have certainty and sustainability for the long term.

Ms. McLeod: The mineral development strategy proposes the creation of a payroll tax for workers from out of the territory who work at Yukon mines. The NDP also promised this during the election as a way to pay for their massive amount of platform commitments. As part of the Liberal-NDP coalition agreement, the Liberals have agreed to bring in many of these massive platform commitments. So, are the Liberals also planning on bringing in a payroll tax, or will they resist this call from their NDP coalition partners?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I am really happy to get to my feet to talk about our commitments. We are committed to responsible development and management of Yukon's mineral resources in a way that protects the environment, respects the rights and traditions of Yukon First Nations, and benefits all Yukoners.

Mining and mineral exploration remain of central importance to the Yukon's economy and have contributed significantly to the territory's economic performance throughout the pandemic. We are committed to working with our partners to develop successor legislation. That includes the industry, governments, and the public. We believe that this legislation is centrally important to the whole of the territory. We see this as a really important path. I am really happy with the work of the mineral development strategy. I would like to thank them for their work. I think that there is a lot to go through there, and I am looking forward to talking with Yukoners about it.

Question re: Elk-agriculture conflict

Ms. White: A few weeks ago, we met with the agriculture association, where they shared major concerns from their members about elk damage. Many of these farmers live in exclusion zones, such as the Takhini valley, where elk are protected from being hunted or deterred. Each year, crops continue to be damaged by the elk, and the farmers continue to lose products and income.

When a farmer facing elk damage asks for support, they get a small subsidy to install expensive game fencing on their property. This subsidy doesn't even begin to cover the installation, let alone the ongoing expenses and the time it takes to maintain the fencing.

What else is this government doing right now to help Yukon farmers with protecting their crops from further elk damage?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you to the Third Party for the question. The different values of elk and agriculture in the Takhini valley are challenging to reconcile. For many Yukoners, including hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts, it is important to have a sustainable elk population. For many farmers, there's a need for population management and property protection.

The elk agriculture working group met with farmers in 2019 and 2020 to discuss concerns. As a result of these discussions, we have moved forward with a multi-pronged approach to maintain but more closely manage elk in the Yukon. This includes reducing the population in the Takhini valley by up to 40 percent over two years and providing financial support to farmers to build elk barrier fences in the eastern buffer zone.

We continue to work with affected land owners, farmers, interest groups, and Yukon First Nations to address elk-agriculture conflicts.

Ms. White: I'm sure that brings lots of confidence to the Takhini valley farmers.

In the Liberal Party platform from this past election, this government committed to — and I quote: "Support the increased production of high quality, local ingredients."

When we talk about food security, we need to think about how our farmers are able to meet the growing demand for local food. Elk cause intense damage, and farmers have to deal with loss of product and income as a result. This is especially the case for farmers living in exclusion zones like the Takhini

valley. The solution currently suggested by government is costly and ultimately ineffective. Many farmers are deterred from even getting an estimate on game fencing because of how expensive it is.

What is this government doing to follow through on its commitments to food security while protecting agriculture in the Yukon from further elk damage?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just a few points that I want to raise — first of all, that two-year plan that the Minister of Environment just referenced has had some success. The first briefing that I got on this subject said that there had been — I think there were 43 elk harvested as of April 30, 2021. Given that the population is a couple hundred or so — I know that the number is never exact, but that indicates that the harvest is starting to work and that we're on track to try to reach the target of 40-percent reduction. So, that's a good piece.

I know that the department is working with different fencing options. I think that they're working with the Department of Environment on another option around an electrical type of fence. We will work on other options and we will continue to work with the farmers in the area.

This was a solution that was arrived at by talking to the people in the community, by talking to those farmers about what might work as a good solution. It's a two-year plan. It's partway through. I'm sure that we will adjust as we go and continue to monitor, and we will work together with farmers to try to come up with a good solution for elk and how it's affecting agriculture. Overall, what we can say is that agriculture is increasing here in territory, and I look forward to talking more about the importance of agriculture in the Yukon.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, this is such a large concern to farmers that leaders of the three political parties have been invited for a farm tour to see that elk damage this coming Friday.

When a farmer finds elk damage, they have to rely on conflict hunters to deter the elk. A farmer has to call the department, which notifies a conflict hunter to arrive in the area. It can sometimes take several days for a hunter to show up, and by then, the elk are long gone. The Takhini valley farmers have been burdened with the cost of installing and maintaining expensive game fencing, which also increases their capital gains tax. It is clear that conflict hunting in its current form does not work, and fencing is an expensive band-aid solution to the growing elk herd.

Will the minister commit to reviewing the exclusion zone in the Takhini valley?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is yes; we will always work to review this. This was a two-year plan, and the whole point was to see how it worked and to review it. I am happy to work with the Minister of Environment. I'm happy to work with farmers in the area to talk about whether it is a strong solution or how it can be improved. One of the things I will say is that — and when I stand later today, hopefully, to speak about the budget, I will take that opportunity to talk about dollars that we've put forward under the Agriculture branch to go toward fencing so that we can

subsidize the cost to those farmers, noting that this is a cost for them. I'm happy to talk about that.

What I will say is that yes, when someone is called, it takes some time to get out there, but what I understand is that they are actually working very hard to support farmers in the area and to respond as quickly as possible.

As we acknowledged the public service earlier today, I would like to say thanks to the branch, because I think they have been doing a really good job to try to address this problem overall.

Question re: Mineral development strategy

Mr. Kent: Last week, we asked the new Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about successor resource legislation and free-entry staking. When responding to both topics, the minister referenced how he would work with them through the mineral development strategy. This, and his answers earlier today, leads us to believe that the Liberal government will be endorsing, adopting, and implementing the MDS.

Can the minister confirm for us that this is the case? If so, when will it be announced publicly?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If I've given the impression that we're adopting the whole of the mineral development strategy, then I have not done my job here. What I have said is that we'll work from that as a starting point.

I have really appreciated the work that went into the mineral development strategy. I've gone through it a couple of times now, but what I'm looking forward to is talking with industry, with governments, and with Yukoners about how we take that strategy and move toward successor legislation. I'm not suggesting that it be adopted as a whole, in any way. I think that there are a lot of conversations coming up. What I'm excited about is that we're moving toward successor legislation, and I appreciate the mineral development strategy as a starting point.

Mr. Kent: So, when it comes to rewrites of the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act*, the mineral development strategy states — and I quote: "Drafting and bringing into force the new mineral resource legislation and regulations within the next four years (by the end of 2025). Achieving such an aggressive timeline will require all involved to declare the work a priority and to dedicate the necessary resources." Yet the NDP-Liberal coalition agreement commits them to tabling updated pieces of this legislation in the fall of 2022.

If the MDS believes that four years is an aggressive timeline for this work to be completed, how do the Liberals plan on having it done in just 16 months?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, when I sat down with the Chamber of Mines, this was one of our first conversations. What I talked to them about was working earnestly, because it is so important — successor legislation. I hope I've made that point abundantly clear here — that we support sustainable mining in the territory. The only way to have sustainable mining is if we move to successor legislation where we respect

environmental rights, where we respect social values, and where we respect government and planning processes.

One of the things that I can say is that the department has been working on the development of the *Lands Act* as part of the successor resource legislation. That work is underway.

So, that is one of the ways where we will be able to move a little sooner, and I respect that there is lots of work in front of us. I appreciate the member opposite talking about the importance of it. I echo his remarks. It is incredibly important — successor legislation.

Mr. Kent: I am not sure if the minister heard the question, but I am curious how he believes that they are going to be able to get that successor resource legislation — the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act* — done and tabled in 16 months.

However, the mineral development strategy also references the collaborative framework to improve the environmental assessment system that the Premier announced in 2017 but was unable to deliver on. A news release with quotes from the Premier, CYFN, and the Chamber of Mines at that time stated — and I quote: "The three parties have also committed to address industry concerns around timelines and re-assessments through a collaborative framework."

So, can the new minister update us on when the last meeting took place on the collaborative framework and when it is expected to be completed, or have the Liberals abandoned this promise that the Premier made to industry over four years ago?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly disconcerting to hear the narrative from the members opposite. I also heard the chair of the mineral development strategy talk about a four-year time frame to be able to implement all 81 recommendations of the mineral development strategy. I believe that to be very ambitious, but to make it sound like successor legislation is those 81 of those recommendations — that is a big leap.

If the member opposite would take a look, we responded to the mineral development strategy and we had concerns about some of these recommendations. The legal ability to do some of these was one of the concerns as well. But again, to say that a commitment to successor legislation, which the Yukon Party also committed to, means that all 81 of those recommendations would be implemented — are they saying that this is what they interpreted when they went door to door to Yukoners this year and said that they would implement successor legislation — that they would implement all 81? Because they are making it seem like that is what we have to do now because this government committed to successor legislation.

Question re: Mining within municipal boundaries

Mr. Kent: I can see why the Premier is uncomfortable talking about the collaborative framework, because it was a commitment that he made to industry four years ago — a commitment that has gone unfulfilled to this point.

A major issue for the placer mining industry is the issue of mining within municipal boundaries. In the December 16, 2016, CBC web story, the former Minister of Energy, Mines

and Resources said that he would be meeting in early 2017 with First Nations, the Association of Yukon Communities, and other stakeholders to discuss mining within municipal boundaries and develop an action plan.

That was four and a half years ago and we still have seen no action from the Liberals on this issue. Understandably, the mining industry is nervous about what this new minister will mean for the future of their livelihoods.

Can the minister tell us when the Liberals will live up to their promise to develop an action plan for mining within municipal boundaries?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I attended many of those meetings where we spoke with communities about mineral staking and development policy for planned and zoned communities. We are still working on the options to reduce conflicts related to mineral staking and development in our communities.

We did an initial engagement and provided a report on what we heard to key stakeholders. I know that things were slowed down because of COVID. I have been talking to the department about how that will get back on track. We learned that mining creates challenges in some communities, such as limiting residential development. We also learned that many Yukoners want to resolve these issues and preserve the economic and cultural values of the industry.

We will use the results of this initial engagement to develop a policy, which we will present to the public for review. Any proposed policy will complement other ongoing mineral sector initiatives such as the development of new mining legislation that we have just been speaking about on the floor of the Legislature.

Mr. Kent: Just for the minister, this commitment was made four and a half years ago, and the COVID pandemic started a year ago. There were three and a half years prior to the COVID pandemic, so to blame it on COVID is quite something; it is a bit of a stretch at the least.

Yukon's demographics, of course, have evolved over the years, as have Yukoners' land use requirements, which are impacting access to many long-standing mining claims — claims that predate the expansion of municipal boundaries. We have seen an increasing number of cases of municipalities denying development permits to operators. Regardless of whom the Liberals would choose to blame, they committed to fixing this problem back in December 2016, and here we are, four and a half years later, and we have seen no action from the Liberals and no resolution to this problem.

Will the minister agree to sit down with the Association of Yukon Communities and the Klondike Placer Miners' Association to resolve this issue this summer?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, just to make it clear: As I just pointed out, the department, under the leadership of the previous minister, did go and talk about mining in municipalities. I myself attended several of those meetings to listen to those conversations — not how the department was doing those conversations but rather what citizens from around the territory were saying. I listened to that first-hand. That is actual work which has been underway.

I would be very happy to meet with the Association of Yukon Communities and with the Klondike Placer Miners' Association. In fact, when I met with the Klondike Placer Miners' Association this past Friday, we talked about the importance of having regular meetings. There were several items on the agenda, including mining in municipalities. I would really enjoy talking with them. Maybe the suggestion is for a joint meeting. I'll look for that opportunity. I'll reach out to the Association of Yukon Communities and the Klondike Placer Miners' Association to see whether a joint meeting would be what they want, but I would be happy to meet with both groups jointly or separately.

Mr. Kent: As I mentioned, many of these mineral claims predate the subsequent expansion of municipality boundaries, and therefore, the claim holders' legal rights must be respected and upheld, especially considering the significant financial resources that are often invested in keeping the claims in good standing year after year.

The claim to exclusive mineral rights is of little use without the ability to access those minerals. While we are not in favour of expropriation, we recognize that, in some cases, a claim may ultimately have to be expropriated.

Will the minister commit to this House that the government will provide fair compensation value for holders of claims that have to be expropriated?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that we plan to develop a draft policy informed by community governments, as well as representatives of the mineral industry. This draft would be presented to Yukon First Nations through formal consultation and to all Yukoners through public engagement. Until a policy is established, we continue to suggest that claim holders contact municipal governments if their claims are within a municipality. We continue to work with municipal governments and affected First Nations to review and permit any proposed mining projects within community boundaries.

We've seen some of these same questions when we've had parks created in the past, when we've had land use planning processes, and we've been learning how to navigate all of those over time. I think that those same practices will be held here because it's a similar sort of situation. We want to make sure that those claim holders are treated fairly and we've been developing those processes all along.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Bill No. 200: *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21 — Third Reading*

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 200, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Just a small recap. The *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21* forecasted an increase of \$33.4 million in gross operation and maintenance and capital spending. This is made up of \$24.9 million in O&M and \$8.5 million in capital. This is also offset by an increase of \$28.7 million in O&M recoveries and \$9.6 million in capital recoveries. As well, revenues are forecasted to increase by \$8.5 million due to an increase in own-source tax revenue from continued economic growth. These changes are forecasted to result in a revised deficit of \$7 million, which reflects an improvement in the government's fiscal picture from the first supplementary estimates.

I will now open the floor to comments and critiques from my colleagues.

Mr. Cathers: I would note, in speaking to this, that unfortunately, due to the fact that the Liberals, along with their NDP coalition partners, pushed through a motion shortening the length of this Sitting to a third or less of what a normal Spring Sitting is, we simply don't have the time to debate everything that we would like to and have chosen to prioritize debate on the budget, going forward, instead of on the money that has already been spent.

I would note that it's a bit rich for the Liberals to do as they did — to shorten this Sitting and then criticize us for not asking more questions about their past spending when they have deprived us of the time to do so.

I also have to note that, when supplementary estimates for closing off the previous fiscal year were tabled on March 4, just eight days later, the government issued a special warrant with millions of dollars in increased spending — also, including the situation that, in the space of eight days, we learned that the financial situation was worse than the government had claimed just over a week before.

In closing off my remarks on this budget, I would note that we simply do not have the time that we would like, or that we should have, to debate spending, including this budget bill. I would also note, Mr. Speaker, that the Yukon Party, in the last election, committed to increased public debate and democratic oversight, and we won the popular vote on that basis. In contrast, the Premier should be reminded that his government lost the popular vote, lost seats, and barely held on to government.

Mr. Speaker, democracy matters, public spending matters, and democratic oversight of public spending does matter. Unfortunately, in this Sitting, we simply do not have the time that we should have to debate the spending of the Liberal government.

Ms. White: In rising today to speak about the third supplementary, I guess there is part of me that is relieved to know that we won't spend a multitude of days with one specific member asking questions about money that has already been

spent, as that has been the previous practice for numerous years. Like many, I appreciate seeing where that money has been spent as it comes to us in a reconciled way. It has been spent, and we look forward to having a conversation about the money that will be spent.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to a vote.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the members opposite for their comments. You know, Bill No. 200, second supplementary estimates for 2020-21, for that fiscal year — it is an extremely important piece of spending in that supplementary spending.

While the 2020-21 year was definitely an uncertain year by all accounts, many of the items in the supplementary estimates should not be a surprise to the members. Given the level of uncertainty in the last year, this government anticipated early on that a second supplementary estimate would be required. While this was largely an inevitable activity, the government took every necessary step to ensure that the funding included in the bill was appropriate and that it was effective and efficient and fell within the priorities of the government. Those priorities are to maintain our commitment to fiscal responsibility, to provide Yukoners with the services that they have come to know and that they need and expect. Perhaps the most important was to support those who needed it the most — especially last year with the pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to taking the always important step to make sure that the money was spent wisely, the government was also working very, very closely with federal partners to ensure that Yukon would be able to make strategic use of the federal dollars wherever possible and to find flexibility therein as well.

Mr. Speaker, there is no denying that our world has changed considerably since March 2020 when our main estimates for that year were tabled. At that time, the territory was busily preparing for the arrival of friends, family, and athletes from all around the world to kick off the Arctic Winter Games. While we started the year looking forward to large crowds and huge events and celebrations with our international community, we ended up with Yukoners staying closer to home and limiting social interactions — quite the year.

Just as we had to make adjustments to our social practices, we also had to adjust our budgeting as well. In one short year, our focus shifted from getting events and organizations off the ground to helping these organizations to stay afloat. The support for Yukoners has continued to this day. For more than a year, the government has had daily conversations about how to get the necessary health resources, economic supports, border controls, and other programs in place. This has ensured that Yukoners and Yukon businesses, front-line workers, and health professionals all have the tools and supports that they need for the territory to get us, all together, through these truly challenging times.

Mr. Speaker, compared to many jurisdictions around the country and around the world, the Yukon has fared relatively well in the face of COVID-19. Credit must be given to staff in all departments as they demonstrate this government's ability to adapt and respond to the changing needs of Yukoners — programs like the paid sick-leave rebate. They have supported Yukon businesses, workers, and self-employed people affected by COVID-19 for the whole past year.

Under this program, workers were able to receive up to 10 days' wages without a doctor's note if they were sick, self-isolating, or caring for other household members. As the rest of Canada has wrestled with the challenges around creating this type of program, this rebate was supporting Yukoners from the very beginning of our COVID relief last year. It has allowed citizens to continue to make a living while reducing the concerns around taking the time off from work that they need. It was a game changer, Mr. Speaker. Yukon's sick-leave program has been a model across the country. It has received national attention for how to support workers. I am very proud of that work, and I think that the public servants should be very proud of their work.

The success we have seen in the last year has not been without the tremendous efforts of all of the territory's residents. It has required sacrifices from every single person I know, whether this involves staying apart from friends and family over the Christmas holidays, cancelling winter getaway traditions, or even limiting social gatherings and social circles.

For many, this has meant a loss of hours at work or requirements to self-isolate as needed. This government feels a great deal of empathy for everybody who is affected by COVID-19. Making sure that we all can make it through the pandemic together, as a territory, has been one of our key motivating factors during these times.

While 2020 introduced significant challenges for all Yukoners, we have been very optimistic, and we should be, about what 2021 has to offer.

We have seen how our communities can pull together in a time of crisis, how our neighbours check in on one another, how our front-line workers keep the shelves stocked, and how Yukoners have found new ways to offer services safely and effectively.

We have also seen the success of Yukon's largest vaccination campaign in its history, which gives us hope for a return to normalcy in the months and the years ahead.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I can't talk about this supplementary estimate without also recognizing the great help that we have received along the way. We have received help from our First Nation partners, from our municipality partners, as well as from the private sector. We must acknowledge the cooperation that we have enjoyed with the federal government as well. As a result of this relationship, Yukon will see a significant number of costs recovered for the delivery of its programs and services, and you see that reflected in the *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, Bill No. 200.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

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

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

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 200 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 200 has passed this House.

Bill No. 2: *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021) — Third Reading*

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 2, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McLean.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I move that Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I want to start today by once again thanking our hard-working public servants. In light of our great tribute that we had today, I really want to hold them up and thank them not only for all of their hard work on this small act amendment, but all of the work that has gone into rethinking, revisioning, and reimaging what childcare can look like in the territory. I specifically want to thank our director of Policy and Planning, Michael McBride, and wish him very well in his upcoming retirement and all of his hard work that he has put into the Department of Education over the years. I also want to thank the assistant deputy minister of Policy and Planning for the Department of Education, Kelli Taylor, and, of course, all of the staff who work hard behind the scenes.

I want to start by acknowledging all of the hard-working childcare providers throughout the Yukon and those making

quality early learning and childcare a high priority. An excellent example of this is — I was happy to meet with folks from the Little Blue Daycare over the weekend. They spoke to me with such passion about their desire to expand operations to better meet the current and growing needs of Dawson City. I really am thankful that we have folks like that in the territory who are working hard to reimagine and think about the possibilities and really put their time and effort into the upstream of childcare in our territory. This, again, is one small step, but it's a big one.

As per our recommendation in *Putting People First — the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services*, we are aligning all of our early learning programs and services under the Department of Education to allow for improved planning and decision-making.

As I have said previously, these amendments will finalize the transfer of responsibility for the *Child Care Act* to the Minister of Education and will allow the minister to designate a director from Education to be responsible for carrying out the responsibilities under the act. These amendments are therefore essential to bring clarity and to allow for the effective delivery of government's early learning and childcare mandate. The transfer of the early learning mandate from Health and Social Services to Education ensures that all decisions relating to early learning are aligned under one department and that children are at the centre of all decisions.

Across Canada, eight jurisdictions have integrated early learning and childcare with Education — that being the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Increasing access to affordable high-quality early learning opportunities will allow families to take advantage of work opportunities, ease the financial burden for Yukon families and other caregivers, and, most importantly, help to give Yukon children the best possible start in their lives.

In addition to aligning the mandate for early learning under one department, as recommended in *Putting People First*, we implemented another recommendation from *Putting People First* on April 1 by introducing affordable early learning and childcare programs.

I want to reiterate that we heard clearly during the engagement for universal childcare that the *Child Care Act* needs to be modernized, and we will do that in collaboration with First Nation governments, stakeholders, and interested Yukoners in a thoughtful way where all views will be considered. This government welcomes the values, views, and opinions of all Yukoners. We will continue to move forward with our strong commitment to seek input from, and foster respectful relationships with, citizens, stakeholders, communities, First Nation governments, municipalities, and other governments. This input and engagement will continue to inform the actions that we take as a government in order to build thriving Yukon communities and help Yukon families lead healthy, happy lives. Again, we want to thank those who worked so diligently on this bill and on the implementation of affordable early learning and childcare programs in Yukon.

I want to thank the members for their support of this bill so far, and I look forward to the passing of it today.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you to the minister for her comments here at third reading, as well as the debate that we had earlier in Committee of the Whole. I would like to echo her comments and thank the officials for not only the briefing they provided, but the support that they provided to the minister in Committee debate which facilitated good discussion between members at that time, when we were in Committee.

As I have indicated before, we support the transition of the branch to the Education department from Health and Social Services, which this bill seeks to facilitate and to provide the legislative framework for.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we do remain interested in the ongoing and future comprehensive review of the *Child Care Act*, which is yet to come. I note that the minister did make that clear commitment in Committee of the Whole — that the *Child Care Act* would be reviewed in a more comprehensive way in the future. However, it's worth noting that no one on the other side of the House has yet given us a timeline as to when that *Child Care Act* review will occur.

We await that information and look forward to seeing that comprehensive review being undertaken. As we note, this was a recommendation of the Yukon Child Care Board in several of its annual reports but, most notably, the most recent one, which was tabled in the Legislature last week.

Mr. Speaker, we support this bill and look forward to seeing it come to a vote.

Ms. White: Just to echo the comments of my colleagues, the Yukon NDP will be supporting this bill today. We look forward to seeing childcare become a fully accessible and available service to all Yukon families. We know that there have been some barriers in some communities so far. More than that, again, I'll put out the request that, as opposition, we would really appreciate knowing how the program has worked so far and how it will continue to work.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you to the members opposite for your comments and support today for this small and yet very important amendment to the *Child Care Act*. I welcome and embrace the responsibility from Health and Social Services to Education. This is an important step toward modernization of childcare in our Yukon Territory. I take the comments from the members opposite — specifically regarding a full briefing around next steps and how the program has been developed. As we move forward, I will endeavour to work toward that.

On that note, thank you again to the members opposite and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

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

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 2 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 2 has passed this House.

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 (Ms. Blake): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 201: First Appropriation Act 2021-22 — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am rising to talk about Energy, Mines and Resources. I would just like to begin by welcoming our deputy minister, John Bailey, and our assistant deputy minister from Energy, Corporate Policy and Communications — and no stranger to the Legislature — Ms. Shirley Abercrombie. I am sure that everybody welcomes them here.

I wanted to talk about our budget. The department has prepared a lot of notes for me, and I will try to shorten them up a little bit, just in order to allow for more dialogue with members opposite, but overall, this year's budget is working to set us on a path to recovery and make life more affordable for Yukoners.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources obviously has an important role in that path. The department's job is to regulate the responsible development of our natural resources. It is a diverse department that covers mining, agriculture, land, forestry, and energy sectors — a lot of different groups and different branches.

There is wonderful expertise and professionalism in the department. I would just like to say thank you to the department for the early meetings that I've had with them. I know that they are working to provide benefits to our citizens and to the economic well-being of the territory.

This past year has been one like no other, and many land and resource sectors were significantly affected by the pandemic. At the same time, most resource activity still continued to some degree, meaning that the hard-working staff at Energy, Mines and Resources had to be innovative and adaptable to continue to carry out their duties. There is an incredible range of initiatives, as I've already said, and I'm going to try to provide a summary of the department's budget and then go into some details on many of the programs and their estimates.

Overall, total appropriations are just over \$72.5 million for Energy, Mines and Resources, which represents an increase of \$8.6 million from last year's budget. The increase is primarily a result of increased funding for water treatment and to conduct care and maintenance at Wolverine mine and funding to implement *Our Clean Future*.

Of the \$72.5-million overall budget, the total capital appropriations are estimated at \$1 million, which represents a \$537,000 increase from last year's budget. The increase is primarily due to funding to enable the purchase of new electric vehicle charging stations, which is exciting.

There is an Other category, which has a net of a \$6.8-million increase, and that's associated with new funding for *Our Clean Future* and Wolverine workplans, as I just mentioned. Government transfers are budgeted at \$11.8

million, an increase of \$1.9 million from last year's just under \$10-million budget. The increase in transfers is primarily due to an additional \$1.7 million in *Our Clean Future* funding for residential and commercial energy efficiency rebates.

Under the Sustainable Resources division, we have Agriculture, Land Management, Forest Management, and Land Planning branches. The total operation and maintenance estimate for the division is \$12 million, an increase of \$748,000 from the previous year. This change is partly due to the addition of two full-time equivalents, one term position for the Forest Management branch for *Our Clean Future*, and one for a new meat inspector position in the Agriculture branch.

The total capital budget for Sustainable Resources is \$477,000, which is an increase of \$52,000. This increase in funding is allocated toward development of timber harvest areas in the Yukon.

Under Land Management — this branch makes land available for Yukoners and Yukon development projects. They do this through the development and implementation of appropriate land tenure and management legislation, regulations, and policies.

The staff of the branch also provide land and advisory services to all municipalities, First Nations, and Government of Yukon departments.

I would like to offer my personal thanks to staff who kept the public counter running at the Land Management branch. Despite the pandemic, we had a very busy year in the branch, and I would like to mention a couple of highlights. Last November, the branch conducted the largest land lottery and tender of lots in Whitehorse history. In partnership with the City of Whitehorse, we advanced the vision of Whistle Bend to be home for many more Yukoners with the release of 141 single family lots, one duplex lot, 11 multi-family lots, and 91 townhouse lots.

In addition to the 253 lots released, eight commercial lots were made available, which will help actualize the vision of Whistle Bend's town square. When complete, Whistle Bend will be home to about 8,000 people. The new lots in Whistle Bend will alleviate some of the immediate demand for land in Whitehorse, and we continue to work with other orders of government to ensure the ongoing availability of land in Whitehorse and in all communities. We are also investing more than \$25 million per year for the next five years to develop lots in all of the Yukon.

On the regulatory front, the Land Management branch was key to developing the off-road vehicle management area regulation approved on January 28 of this year. The new regulation creates a regime to mitigate the impacts of off-road vehicle activity on wildlife and fish habitats in sensitive ecoregions while also recognizing the needs of responsible off-road vehicle users. We are pleased to move forward on this important regulation and look forward to working with stakeholders and First Nation governments to ensure responsible use of off-road vehicles and protection of key habitat.

The Land Planning branch plans for the development of residential, commercial, and industrial land to meet the needs

of rural Yukon and the communities. They do this by developing and implementing local area planning and zoning regulations. It has been a very busy year for the Land Planning branch with several active processes ongoing.

On the regional land use planning front, the branch continues to work with its First Nations partners to implement the Peel regional land use plan, and we are working with eligible claim holders to negotiate relinquishment of the remaining mineral claims in the Peel. I spoke about this early, Madam Chair. To date, 142 claims have been relinquished, and discussions continue with the other claim holders in the area.

Our officials are also engaged with our First Nation partners and planning commissions on the Dawson regional land use plan and the Beaver River plan.

We are committed to the regional land use planning process, and we have begun to talk with other First Nations about beginning the remaining regional land use planning processes.

On the local area planning front, we are continuing to collaborate with First Nations and Yukon communities to create local area plans that consider a broad range of issues to guide development and resolve competing land use issues. We are working on local area plans for Marsh Lake, Alaska Highway west, Łu Zil Män — also known as the Fish Lake area — as well as zoning amendments for Shallow Bay and other areas. We prioritize planning where population growth and land development pressures are greatest.

The Forest Management branch develops, manages, and regulates the forest resource sector, and this includes strategic and operational planning, forest engineering, forest health and research, industry development assistance, forest inventories, reforest, and reforestation.

This year, a total of \$227,000 is budgeted for developing timber harvest areas in the Yukon, primarily the development, repair, maintenance, and decommissioning of forest roads. This work is being carried out in several areas across the territory.

We work closely with First Nations to plan how we manage forests and have collaborated on management plans for the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes, Haines Junction, Dawson, and Teslin regions. The Whitehorse and Southern Lakes forest resource management plan has been approved by the Government of Yukon, as well as two out of three First Nation governments, and the final approval will hopefully occur within the next few months.

We have entered into a funding agreement with Liard First Nation to begin the planning process there. Completing a forest resource management plan for southeast Yukon is a top priority for the branch.

Fuel-wood harvesting is an essential service for Yukoners to heat their homes and increase energy use from renewable resources, and to expand on that, we provide opportunities for Yukoners to access biomass in the form of fuel wood, timber, wood chips, lumber, and other products. Materials harvested from fuel abatement can provide opportunities for fuel-wood supply and biomass industry development. The Forest Management branch and Wildland Fire Management are working together to create more fire-resilient communities

through participation in planning, contracting, and permitting for fuel abatement activities.

In the Agriculture branch, \$534,000 has been budgeted for operating and support costs, and \$1.2 million is for transfer payments to the Canada agriculture partnership, the Yukon Agricultural Association, and for funding designated for elk fencing. There is an increase in \$386,000 in the Agriculture budget, primarily due to \$225,000 in new funding for elk fencing and increases in personnel.

There is one new full-time equivalent to assist in meat inspection and other changes in staff costs, in accordance with our collective agreement. Last year marked a significant achievement for the Agriculture branch with the completion of an updated policy that will guide the development of Yukon agriculture for the next decade.

Cultivating our Future, 2020 Yukon agriculture policy, was the result of three years of work with Yukon's agriculture producers, the public, and First Nations. The vision for the 2020 Yukon agriculture policy is to create the right conditions to increase Yukon's self-sufficiency and food production, produce high-quality products that feed our vibrant communities, contribute to our local economy, and to leave positive cultural and environmental legacies for future generations.

One of the key initiatives to assist our local agriculture capacity is the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. This agreement supports investments, adaptation, and sustainable growth in the Yukon's agricultural sector. Under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, the Government of Canada commits to allocating \$1.5 million to Yukon agriculture each year for the five years until 2023. This funding amount includes the Government of Yukon's in-kind contributions. Many agriculture projects are eligible for 60-percent funding, with the remainder coming from the individual farmer — meaning that the \$1.5 million per year can trigger a large total investment in our farm community.

I want to talk about the Energy branch for a moment. The Energy branch develops and delivers energy projects and programs that increase the sustainability of energy use in the Yukon. The Energy branch also develops energy policy. The operation and maintenance estimates for the branch are \$10.9 million for the coming year, and this funding covers 17.3 full-time employees.

I would like to offer my personal thank you to the staff who kept the public counter running at the Energy branch over the past year. \$1.7 million covers operating and support costs and includes funding for two agreements — \$262,000 for the clean energy for rural and remote communities program, and \$557,000 for the low-carbon economy fund, supporting implementation and capacity development for energy-efficiency initiatives.

There is also \$7.3 million in transfer payment costs for the following areas: \$1.76 million for the good energy rebate program, residential energy efficiency incentive program, and the commercial energy-efficiency incentive program. The good energy program is the Energy branch's flagship rebate program, which promotes the purchase of energy-efficient and

greenhouse gas-reducing appliances, construction of energy-efficient housing, and deployment of microgeneration energy systems. The good energy program provides funding for energy-efficiency retrofits, including renewable heating systems for homes, businesses, non-profits, municipalities, and First Nations.

To date, participants in energy-efficiency rebate programs have saved enough energy to power 4,600 average Yukon homes for one year. They also saved over \$14.4 million in energy costs and avoided emitting 57,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases — which is terrific.

\$3.76 million is for the federal low-carbon economy leadership fund. The low-carbon economy leadership fund supplements the territory's funding for the good energy incentive programs to enhance support for greenhouse gas-reducing retrofits to existing buildings, as well as renewable energy generation. This fund has enabled the Energy branch to expand the good energy program to support a large suite of rebates in commercial and institutional buildings.

There is also \$1.74 million in new funding for *Our Clean Future*. Thanks to *Our Clean Future* funding, the good energy programs have been extended to include clean transportation and increased support for renewable heating systems for residential, commercial, and municipal clients.

Jumping ahead to the Yukon Geological Survey, I would like to mention a few of the Yukon Geological Survey's key programs, starting with the Yukon mineral exploration program. The Yukon mineral exploration program, or YMEP, is a funding program designed to support early stage exploration. It provides a portion of the risk capital required to locate hard rock and placer mineral occurrences. The total funding for the Yukon mineral exploration program for 2021-22 will be \$1.4 million.

In other projects, for the Yukon Geological Survey, just under \$1 million from Natural Resources Canada is going toward studies in the Yukon. This includes temperature drilling and feasibility studies, mostly taking place in the southern and central Yukon regions. \$470,000 is allocated toward conducting geothermal studies in the Yukon, and \$25,000 is allocated for glacier monitoring to assess the impact of climate change on water for hydroelectricity generation. \$50,000 is going toward permafrost-thaw-related risk assessments in communities. An additional \$50,000 is going toward permafrost-thaw-related risk assessments along highways.

For the Mineral Resources branch, I wanted to talk about the \$220,000 the branch has in transfer payment costs. \$100,000 is provided to the Yukon Chamber of Mines; I thank them for their work. \$120,000 is provided to the Klondike Placer Miners' Association.

As I said earlier, we were up in Dawson this past Friday, along with colleagues opposite, to attend their annual general meeting.

There were 2,183 quartz claims staked in 2020 and 174,000 total quartz claims in good standing. There were 1,394 placer claims staked in 2020 and just under 28,000 total placer claims in good standing.

In 2019, there was a total of 1,425 placer claims staked. Madam Chair, let me just move on. Let's leave 2019.

In 2020, more than 82,600 ounces of placer gold were exported from the Yukon, with an approximate value of \$165 million. This represents a 15-percent increase in gold production and a 43-percent increase in value of production compared to 2019.

Junior exploration companies conducted the majority of mineral exploration in the Yukon. Exploration activity contributes significantly to Yukon's economic development and growth.

Last September, Natural Resources Canada updated 2020 spending intentions for exploration and deposit appraisals to a predicted amount of just under \$77 million. A comparison of Natural Resources Canada 2020 pre- and post-COVID-19 estimates indicate that the territories experienced a significant drop in expenditures as a result of the pandemic. The Yukon was the least impacted at a 21.5-percent drop versus the Northwest Territories, which had a nearly 30-percent drop and Nunavut had an over 40-percent drop.

Madam Chair, I just want to talk about the Strategic Alliances branch for a moment and the Yukon-wide mineral development strategy, which came up in Question Period again today.

As part of the process, the independent mineral development strategy panel was established in September 2019 to undertake an engagement process and develop recommendations. I would like to thank the panel for presenting their report last month, and the Government of Yukon will now work with its partners to evaluate the final mineral development strategy and determine next steps for possible implementation. This will include discussions with First Nations as well as with the mineral industry.

We believe that implementation of a final mineral development strategy should strike a balance between community development, environmental stewardship, and economic prosperity while respecting the rights and traditions Yukon First Nations.

So, Madam Chair, as you can see, the branch is very diverse and there is much going on. My apologies for all of the material that I edited out. I'm sorry that I wasn't briefer, but I look forward to questions from members opposite.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for his opening remarks, and I thank Mr. Bailey and Ms. Abercrombie for attending here today, as well as for them and the other officials who provided us with the briefing on the mains and the supplementary and some general policy questions with respect to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. I would have asked in the briefing some of the questions that I will ask here of the minister, but I am just looking to get them on record.

We will start with the full-time equivalent numbers. According to the briefing documents that we received, there are 287.7 full-time equivalents, or FTEs, in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Can the minister tell us how much of an increase that was from 2020-21? We were told at the briefing that 16 percent of those individuals — just rough math for me — approximately 46 individuals are still working

from home. If the minister could confirm that number as well, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: In terms of new employees this year, compared to last year, we have eight new full-time equivalents. These positions are all term-funded. Seven of them are linked to *Our Clean Future*, and one is, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, linked to support of the meat inspections in the territory.

I think that I missed one other question by the member opposite, but I will catch it in a second.

Mr. Kent: The second part of that question was — again, at the briefing, the number that I think we were given, and I think that the officials were going to confirm it for us — 16 percent of the staff are still working from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I just wanted the minister to confirm that this is the number, and then how many bodies does that actually represent, as far as the number of FTEs who are still working from home?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, that number is correct. We still have 16 percent working from home, and we will work to get the exact number of people that it is or the equivalent of that. When I get back up in a later question, I will share the number on the record for the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: Just for the minister, of those individuals who are still working from home, is there a plan for some or all — or a portion of them, I guess — to transition back to the workplace as we hopefully move out of this pandemic and back to a normal existence here in the territory and country and in the world? I am just curious if that is in the works as well — transitioning those who are still at home back to the office.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We are working to transition people back, but I would like to note that the immediate step is to allow for that, but there is also this opportunity that we have — more broadly — to support people if they wish to continue working from home. I think that it may be a question if the Public Service Commission is called here in debate, but that is a broader strategy that I think we debated here in this Legislature previously.

Mr. Kent: If it is today or in a legislative return providing those numbers of individuals who are still working from home, could he also perhaps give us a sense of how many of those staff at Energy, Mines and Resources would be eligible to continue working from home and how many of them they are trying to get back into the office? That would be great.

I am going to explore a number of different topics with the minister here this afternoon. I wanted to start with land use planning, whether it is the larger regional planning processes that are underway or some of the smaller local area plans that are underway. First of all, I wanted to ask — and I did ask in Question Period, I think, last week — about the Beaver River land use plan.

When I went on the Government of Yukon website and downloaded some documents, according to the fall 2020 update — this is the Beaver River land use plan and agreement work plan. Phase 2 — a background report was to be completed in October 2020. Phase 3, which is a planning framework — again, completion was October 2020. Phase 4, which was an

analysis and draft plan, was to be completed in January 2021. The final draft plan was to be completed in March 2021. Then, of course, the final plan completion was to be determined by the parties.

I'm just curious: Are we on target for, I guess, what should have been phase 2, phase 3, and phase 4 — which should already be done — and has the final draft plan, as was on the website last week, been completed in March 2021? Does the minister have a copy of that in his possession, or has it been forwarded to the parties — the final draft plan?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite. I did ask the department to check on the website, and I did ask for an update on the status of this. I was briefed this morning about it. It is delayed somewhat. Let me just pull up my note, Madam Chair. We have hit some of the important milestones. To date, the committee has developed the road access management plan, the wildlife adaptive monitoring plan, and has completed three stages of the public and stakeholder consultations. The land use plan is currently being drafted by the committee, and land designation discussions, such as identifying conservation areas, are underway between the Yukon government and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

Based on recent discussions with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, it suggests that they will need more time to prepare mapping that reflects input from their citizens and interests on potential conservation areas. I know that it is delayed somewhat. I don't know exactly what the timeline is, although I know that it is not in my possession — I don't have any draft of it. As that work evolves, I'm happy to try to report back on what that timeline looks like.

Mr. Kent: When this was first announced coming out of PDAC in March 2018, it was mentioned in the news release at the time that it would be a two-year process. Even had the final plan been completed in March 2021, we are a year late on this already. I think that it is starting to affect investment and decisions by mining companies that are active in the area. It is unfortunate, I guess, that the minister doesn't know when to expect the final draft plan. Hopefully, the website at least gets updated so that those interested in this can take a look at it. Obviously, there is also a final opportunity for planned review by the public, and indeed citizens and stakeholders, that is part of that delivery of the final draft plan. That is going to take time as well, so we could be a couple of years past the initial deadline of March 2020 before the end. Again, we are more than three years after this work was to have been started in March 2018. I know that there are a number of individuals who are getting quite anxious to see this finished.

The minister did mention the road access management plan — and I think the fish and wildlife monitoring and adaptive management plan — as being completed. Can he just confirm that he did, in fact, say that those two documents were complete now?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I do want to acknowledge a couple of things. Land planning at any time is tough. I mean, look at how long the Peel took. It took many, many years over what was originally hoped for, I'm sure. It is important that we get it right. I know that there are tensions around the issues. I know

that Na-Cho Nyäk Dun has been working on this. The community has been working on it.

Also, I will say — and members opposite earlier suggested that it wasn't a fair excuse to say that COVID delayed things, but it has delayed things. I know that ATAC Resources has been in correspondence with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and is working to find sort of a facilitated meeting to work through some of the issues that they still have, and we are supportive of that, and we will continue to do that work.

I did say a moment ago that there is a road access management plan and wildlife adaptation monitoring plan that have been developed, but there are also those stages of public consultation that are still there. I don't want to suggest that, with those elements having been drafted, there isn't still an opportunity for people to provide input; I believe there is.

So, those are the elements — I have been briefed — that have been developed.

Mr. Kent: Just for the minister with respect to talking about what COVID delays were, that was during Question Period today, and it was a question about municipal staking bans that were initiated by his predecessor four and a half years ago. I felt that the one year and a few months that we've been in the pandemic wasn't an excuse for the almost three and a half years of inaction. But I do have some questions about that a little bit later on.

Just back to this road access management plan and the monitoring and adaptive management plan for fish and wildlife, the draft plans are done. I'm just trying to make sure so that we can communicate this to some of the stakeholders that have asked us. The draft plans are done, but is there still public engagement and stakeholder engagement that is required on both of these documents?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: That is correct. The two plans — the road access management plan and the wildlife adaptive monitoring plan — are drafted. We know that there is still one more round of engagement with the public that will come. I believe that we have completed three stages of that consultation and one more is coming. When that one happens, it will be on the overall draft of the Beaver River land use plan. The public or industry will be able to comment on the whole of the plan, which includes these subplans.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that. We look forward to an announcement on perhaps when that final round of consultations and being able to look at these documents will take place.

I did want to ask about the Dawson regional plan. The minister can provide us with an update on where that plan is at and what documents he is expecting in the next while from that planning commission.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just to go back to answer an earlier question, I am told that we have 44 employees who are working remotely. When I say that, Madam Chair, they are not all working entirely remotely. Some of them work part time from home and part time in the office, so it's a blend. It can be anywhere from one to five days per week that they work remotely.

In response to the question, I won't have an answer right now about how many we are moving back or not, and I'm sure some of that is how the department will manage and work with them, so I don't have a number that I can give. What I can say is that we will be working with them to bring them back. If there are specifics, I can try to get more information for the member opposite.

The other thing that I'll say with respect to closing off the conversation around the Beaver River land use plan is that I hope to have a conversation shortly with the First Nation of Na-Choo Nyäk Dun. As soon as I get a sense from them and from the department about what their timing is, I would be happy to let not only the members of the House know but also the industry what the timelines look like. I appreciate that everybody is looking to see this through, and I will check to make sure that everybody is working diligently toward that end.

With respect to the Dawson regional land use plan, I think that it's very soon that a draft should be out. I don't have a specific date, but I do think that it's still overall on track for the timeline that I had, at least, for a final recommended plan in 2022. I know that the commission has been working hard, and I'm anticipating that we will hear from them fairly soon with their draft plan.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for mentioning that the final recommended plan is due in 2022 and mentioning that the commission is expecting the draft plan — the draft plan still has not been delivered yet as well.

As part of the confidence and supply agreement that the Yukon Liberals signed with the Yukon NDP, there is a piece in here with respect to land use planning. Often, in Question Period with the limited time, we don't get the opportunity to read the entire section. This is section 4, "Policy Initiatives". This is on page five, so it is section 4.3.d., which states: "The Yukon Liberal government and Yukon NDP Caucus are committed to accelerate the pace at which the Land Use Planning (LUP) process, mandated under Chapter 11 of the Yukon First Nation Final Agreements, takes place. As such, adequate resources will be committed to complete ongoing LUP processes and to initiate new LUP processes and to initiate new LUP processes as agreed to with First Nation governments."

I am curious if the minister can tell us what the timeline looks like to initiate these new processes and what the agreement means by "adequate resources will be committed" to complete the processes. How much money is the minister estimating this will cost to accelerate these final land use planning processes?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, what I will say is that this is one of the files that is actively being developed at the Yukon Forum in conjunction with First Nations. I know that we are in active conversation with the federal government as well. Energy, Mines and Resources is one of the departments, but not the only department, that is working on this front.

I am not going to have specific details that I am able share with the member opposite today. What I can say — for example, when I had a conversation with the Yukon Chamber of Mines, we talked about how we would be resourcing this

ourselves, for our part in it — working with the federal government to make sure that they are resourcing land use planning — because, more or less, the land use planning dollars that were originally allocated are gone because the Peel land use plan took so long and was costly — it went to court. So, those things changed what was there in the bank, and so we are working with our federal counterparts right now to make sure that they are with us — and working with First Nations to identify priorities.

I know that we have another Yukon Forum coming up shortly, and I am looking forward to that conversation, but I don't have specifics that I can share today.

Mr. Kent: Just the last part of that quote from the agreement with the New Democratic Party caucus — it was to initiate new land use planning processes agreed to with First Nation governments.

I want the minister to clarify: Are those regional land use planning processes, or are other local area plans like — he mentioned a few — Marsh Lake, Fish Lake, and Alaska Highway west or even the Beaver River watershed plan, which is a sub-regional plan — are those also being contemplated as part of this new process, or is it just for ones that are set aside as regional ones that are being contemplated as part of this piece of the agreement with the NDP?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No, this is primarily talking about chapter 11 — a portion of the final agreements. We are thinking of the regional land use plans. That is what I think is contemplated here, but in terms of acceleration — as the member opposite noted — and the new land use planning processes, one of the things that I think might be contemplated there is the ability to run more than one regional land use plan process at a time. So, rather than them just sequencing, as we have been doing so far, maybe one of the ways that we can move them more quickly is by having more than one land use planning process underway at a time now.

I don't want to say today what exactly that will be, but that's a way in which we could have a new approach to the land use planning process that we haven't had to date and that would allow us to accelerate things while abiding by chapter 11.

That conversation, as I said previously, will come out of dialogue at the Yukon Forum. I'm looking forward to that conversation. Just to be clear for the member opposite, I think that all that is being referenced here is regional land use plans.

Mr. Kent: We'll look forward to revisiting this with the minister once he has had a chance to talk to other levels of government and get a better sense of the resources that will be required to accelerate this and have multiple plans proceeding at the same time, as he mentioned.

I do want to talk about successor resource legislation. Obviously, the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act* are foundational pieces of legislation for the mining industry, whether it's placer miners or those involved in hardrock mining. Again, I'm going to quote the entire passage from the agreement with the NDP. This is section 4.3.c. It reads: "To meet the commitment to Yukoners made at the time of devolution, successor legislation for the mining sector is required. Subject to meaningful consultations with Yukon First

Nations, the Yukon Liberal Government and the Yukon NDP Caucus will develop and implement such legislation during the term of this agreement.”

We’ve been asking about this in Question Period. The term of this agreement — I think that it runs through January 31, 2023. For us, in order to meet this commitment, the Liberal government would have those two pieces of legislation on the floor in about 16 months’ time, which is the Fall Sitting prior to the expiration of this agreement.

Can the minister confirm that this is the case, that they intend to have these two pieces of legislation on the floor of the Assembly here by the fall of 2022?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The member opposite just read it, and so let me just emphasize the point that he just read: “Subject to meaningful consultations with Yukon First Nations...” is what is there in the agreement. That’s the work that’s underway right now. So, we have a successor resource legislation working group that is developed out of the Yukon Forum. That work is underway, and I think everyone will make best efforts, but we’re saying that we need to be respectful of process here. We acknowledge that there is process to be followed, and we will work to follow it.

Mr. Kent: So, is the minister saying that there’s a chance that this legislation will not be on the floor of the Assembly by the fall of 2022? Again, I’m just reading what’s in this document, and it says: “Subject to meaningful consultations with Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Liberal Government and the Yukon NDP Caucus will develop and implement such legislation during the term of this agreement.” It’s pretty explicit from a timing perspective.

I mentioned earlier in Question Period today, when I was reviewing the final mineral development strategy, that they felt four years was an aggressive timeline for legislation and regulations on these two pieces of legislation. That’s why we felt — and going back to last week, as well, we felt that 16 months was unrealistic to get these two pieces of legislation rewritten and on the floor of the Assembly.

I’m just hoping that the minister can confirm that there is no timeline to get these pieces of legislation on the floor by next fall, and then he did mention the successor resource legislation working group. I’m curious if the NDP caucus will be part of that working group — just flowing — because again, I’m reading here that the Liberals and the NDP will develop and implement such legislation. So, is the NDP part of the successor resource legislation working group as well?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The Premier will issue me a mandate letter, and that mandate letter will give me responsibility to try to move all of this forward. I take it as: “Here’s what we will work to achieve.”

I have already noted right away that the language of the agreement that we have with the NDP says that there are certain conditions that we need to meet, and we will work to try to meet those, but I can’t predict the future. That is not my job; my job is to work hard. I don’t know the answer to the question about the NDP being part of the successor resource legislation working group.

I should note that it is not one, for example, that I sit on all the time. It is public servants who work on those groups and report back. As part of the agreement, it talks about how we will work constructively together, and I will look for those opportunities. That group is a government-to-government group, and part of that, of course, is that I would need to also talk with our partners at the Yukon Forum — the First Nation governments — about what they wish to do and how they wish to see that work unfold.

So, respectfully, all that I am here to do today is to say that we are going to work hard toward successor legislation and that the successor legislation must require us to work closely with First Nations. I have also committed to working closely with industry, and I will continue to make those commitments.

Mr. Kent: I know — recognizing, of course, that I have a number of questions — and I will turn the floor over to my colleagues from the Third Party a little bit later on this afternoon before we adjourn — but there is some language in this — words matter, Madam Chair — and there are some words in this confidence and supply agreement between the Liberals and the NDP with respect to developing successor resource legislation. It seems to me like the minister is saying that these two pieces of legislation will not — or there is a chance that they will not — be on the floor of this House before this agreement expires. I would have thought that the wording in this — instead of saying that the Yukon Liberal government and the Yukon NDP caucus “... will develop and implement such legislation during the term of this agreement...” — why doesn’t the wording perhaps say that the Yukon Liberal government and the Yukon NDP caucus “may develop and implement such legislation during the term of this agreement”?

As I said, to me, words are important, especially in a document that is signed between two parties to ensure that the government will continue to stand and won’t be brought down on any confidence matters. I’m just curious why the wording is so definitive in the CASA, but the minister is less definitive in his commitment to develop and implement this legislation during the term of this agreement.

I’ll ask just another question as part of that. During Question Period last week, the minister said that, while there weren’t new resources in this budget to accomplish the drafting of these two pieces of legislation, there were existing resources. If he could let us know what line we would find those in or how much in existing resources are in the budget that was tabled prior to the election that he mentioned — again, the main question is with respect to what really comes down to this one word — that this legislation “will” be developed during the term of this agreement. As I mentioned, that would mean that it would be on the floor in the fall of next year.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I think that Yukoners sent a clear message that we should all try to work together for the benefit of the territory, and that’s what we’re committed to doing. The member wants me to talk about one word in the sentence — the word “will”. But the sentence starts with: “Subject to meaningful consultations...”; that’s how it starts. I think the word “will” then has to at least — it’s amazing to me

that I'm debating the word — words do matter. I agree with the member opposite.

So, you have to read the whole sentence. It reads: "Subject to meaningful consultations with Yukon First Nations..." I just stood up and said that we would talk with First Nations about how this process would unfold because that's what's important.

I think the word "will" in this case just indicates that I should work hard, or the department should work hard, to try to achieve this and that this is important, because the word "may" would sound pretty wishy-washy. It's like, "Yeah, if I want to or I don't." No, we are going to get to successor legislation. We should work to bring it here as quickly as possible while respecting the need to have meaningful consultations with First Nations. I will work to get a number.

The opposition House Leader also asked about resources. Many of the resources required already exist within departmental budgets, although they may not be specifically identified as being dedicated to this legislative project. These include salaries, travel, communications, program materials, and funds for participation of First Nations.

I have asked the department if they could sort of try to identify what that level of funding is and how much goes toward these types of projects, like legislation. It is not usually pulled apart exactly that way within the department, so it is a little bit tricky, but I am asking the department to help get information to support the member opposite's wishes to understand what those resources are.

Mr. Kent: To me, it looks like, again — "subject to meaningful consultations" — I get that part. The way we read this and the way we were discussing this in Question Period — and the Premier committed to living up to what was said in this document. It now appears to me, unless the minister can confirm otherwise, that perhaps these two major pieces of legislation will not be ready for the fall of 2022. Quite frankly, my colleagues and I believe that those are timelines that cannot be met. I mean, these are foundational pieces of legislation for the success and responsible operation of those two industries. I think that rushing them would be foolhardy. That's why, when I first read this agreement, I was surprised to see such an aggressive timeline in here. With that said, I guess we will see what happens and what unfolds.

I do have another question, and the minister may or may not be able to answer this; it might be the Premier or another one of the minister's colleagues. Under section 3, "Collaboration", the third one does speak about the Yukon Forum. It says: "A letter will be sent to the First Nations members of the Yukon Forum requesting the full participation of the Leader of the Yukon NDP Caucus. The letter will be jointly signed by the Premier of Yukon and the Leader of the Yukon NDP Caucus and sent no later than May 15, 2021."

So, if the minister knows — and if he doesn't know, I can appreciate that — that this letter was sent and if there was a response received from the First Nation members of the Yukon Forum.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am not aware of the letter, whether it has been sent or not. I am sure that the Premier would be happy to respond. I am just checking across the floor with

my colleagues to see if we know. I am not aware, and I am sure that the Premier would be happy to respond.

Mr. Kent: I know that the minister attended a briefing with the Yukon Chamber of Mines shortly after being appointed minister. I attended, and the Leader of the Official Opposition also attended that meeting remotely. One of the things that they had mentioned with respect to successor resource legislation was that, in order for it to be successful, industry must be fully engaged in the process. They followed up in a letter, I believe, to the Leader of the Official Opposition, suggesting that they would be looking for a seat at the drafting table. I know that I asked the minister about this in Question Period, but as I have mentioned often, there is not a lot of time. You don't have the support of the officials to answer those types of questions, so I am curious what kind of engagement the minister is considering for industry and how they will be involved in this process — whether it takes 16 months or four years, as suggested by the mineral development strategy, to complete.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It was a really good meeting — the first meeting with the Yukon Chamber of Mines — if I can just give them a bit of a shout-out. It was really articulate. It was focused on their key concerns, and we worked through a lot of ground very quickly and we acknowledge that there was much work to do.

What I said to them is what I will say here today — or hopefully I will paraphrase it fairly. We certainly want industry engagement. We are working with them to see how we can do that effectively. What I also said is that there is a part of this — when, for example, it is a government-to-government table, I will respect that government-to-government table.

I'm not expecting to create an extra seat. What we do want to do is to make sure that the industry has the ability to provide advice early and often so that, if we're moving down a path, we have a sense of what the industry's concerns, opportunities, and ideas are so that we're not doing the work in the absence of their input. But there will be lots of opportunity when they actually are at the table. I heard loud and clear that the interest was there. I stood in the Legislature in response to one of the questions from Question Period, I think, for the Leader of the Official Opposition. I said that I felt that the Third Party was interested in that as well. It was pointed out that it's not there exactly in the wording of the agreement between us and the Third Party. However, there is wording in there that talks in generalities about how to work constructively. I took it from this that the Third Party was also interested in having industry involved as seamlessly and effectively as possible. I think that makes all three of the parties here in the Legislature that would like to see that happen. I will continue to do my best to make that so.

Mr. Kent: One of the other things that was brought up by the Yukon Chamber of Mines with respect to the confidence and supply agreement was the Yukon Climate Leadership Council. The Chamber of Mines wanted to represent the exploration and mining industry on the council. I'm curious if the minister was asked about that at his meeting with the chamber and what his response to the chamber was.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I was asked about that by the chamber. They did make that generous offer, and I would love to take them up on that offer. I hope to work alongside other colleagues here — the Minister of Environment — on the Climate Leadership Council. I think that it's really important that we have industry there.

I will note that mining is a key industry but certainly not the only industry representation that I would like to see on that panel. There are a number of other sectors that would have a good voice there and a chance to help us work together to achieve our targets.

What I said to the chamber was "Thank you very much" and I do hope that they are one of those voices at the table.

Mr. Kent: I'm going to step back into the Liberal-NDP agreement here for a second. Reading in "Appendix A — Consultation and Dispute Resolution between the Yukon NDP Caucus and the Yukon Liberal Government", going down to measure 3, the lead-in to this is: "In practice, this requires both parties to work together in good faith to..." Number 3 under that is: "Ensure that the Yukon NDP Caucus is informed about the policy agenda of the government. The Yukon Liberal Government agrees to provide access to:

- "a. Deputy minister and ministry staff briefings;
- "b. Executive summaries and full briefings on key issues as requested by the Yukon NDP Caucus;
- "c. Adequate background documents and support information used in the preparation of initiatives;
- "d. Other resources as necessary to enable informed participation by the Yukon NDP Caucus."

I'm curious if any of these particular aspects of the CASA between the Liberals and the New Democrats have been utilized with respect to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Have any of these briefings taken place? If so, are you able to tell us which ones?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I just want to acknowledge that Energy, Mines and Resources is one of many departments in the government — and certainly not the only one — that is working with this agreement. I don't know of any briefings, as of yet, of Energy, Mines and Resources with the Third Party.

Right now, I will stand and apologize to the Leader of the Third Party, because she sent me an e-mail some time ago that required me to respond, and in all of the hubbub, I had sent it off to the department to get some response, but I hadn't even acknowledged her letter, so I will just do that right here, right now.

Madam Chair, we don't have anything that has happened as of yet, but I'm looking forward to that. I said earlier — and I believe this to be true — that, in the election — and I think that the principal form of democracy in our territory is an election — Yukoners sent a clear message that we should all try to work together for the benefit of the territory.

That is what we are committed to doing, and that is what this agreement talks about. I am happy to have the agreement and to work with the Third Party.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I can appreciate that Energy, Mines and Resources is but one department, but some of the

aspects in this document — it is a seven-page document, and I have mentioned, obviously, the successor resource legislation and accelerated land use planning. Those are but two of the initiatives. There is an increase in the greenhouse gas-emission reduction target from a 30-percent reduction to 45-percent reduction. So, Energy, Mines and Resources, through that and sprinkled throughout the document, plays an important role in this.

The minister referenced a letter from the Leader of the Third Party. Since he referenced it on the floor of the Assembly, is he able to inform us what that is about, or is it of a confidential nature?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The letter was talking about agriculture. I will have to look it up. I apologize. I would have to read it again to understand what the specifics were, but it is about agriculture. I think we have heard from all parties here about the importance of agriculture for the sustainability of the territory.

Madam Chair, yes, the confidence and supply agreement between the Yukon Liberal caucus and the Yukon NDP caucus is seven pages long, and it does contain some important references to Energy, Mines and Resources. I will also say that our part of the budget is 70 pages long — Energy, Mines and Resources — and there are some great things in there that might be of some interest as well. These are all important, so I am happy to stand and answer questions about the agreement and about the budget, too.

Mr. Kent: With due respect to the minister, I did ask a couple budget-related questions that are part of this — about resources for successor resource legislation development and how much the land use planning acceleration would cost — and the minister was unable to answer those. He did commit to get back, and I appreciate that. I recognize that we are here to talk about the budget, but there are budgetary implications for this agreement that was signed between the two parties.

Just to close the loop with the letter from the Leader of the Third Party regarding agriculture, if there is information in there that the minister believes is important to the House, I hope he would provide the Official Opposition with a copy of his response as well. Obviously, agriculture is important in many of the ridings that we represent, so if there is information in there that would help us in communicating with our constituents, we would appreciate a copy of that response.

I wanted to turn to the mineral development strategy for a little bit here. We talked last week about free-entry and successor resource legislation, and the minister referenced the mineral development strategy in both of those answers. Again, I asked earlier in Question Period today. It seemed to us at the time that, by referencing the MDS as part of the answers last week, we were expecting the government to adopt and endorse the mineral development strategy.

Can the minister confirm if that is indeed the plan, to adopt and endorse the recommendations that were made by the mineral development strategy panel?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I would be happy to share the information from the department regarding agriculture to the Official Opposition as well; it is no problem.

With respect to the mineral development strategy, I stood up — I think today in the Legislature — and said that we are not adopting the whole of the strategy as it was drafted and presented to us. We are working with First Nations, with industry, and with other stakeholders who are interested in this issue and will work from that as a starting point. So, if I can just be clear, what has happened is that the strategy has created an important conversation from which we will move forward.

We are not adopting it as a whole. I have now had — and I will have to go back and count them — but probably more than five questions asking me specific details about whether we accept or support this one specific detail, and as I have said every time, as I stood in the Legislature, we are not using the Legislature to say, “Yes, that is one detail and we’re adopting it.” We want to use the process of engagement with Yukoners around the mineral development strategy in order to move forward from it. So, that is the plan, and it is not that we adopt it as a whole; it is the starting point for a conversation.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that clarity here this afternoon, because as I mentioned, sometimes it’s difficult in Question Period, given the limited time, to get that level of detail out.

So, now the government is not adopting the whole strategy, yet this was something that I believe came out as a partnership between the Yukon government and Yukon First Nations. I believe that the Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon government were partners in developing this. So, does the minister know which parts of the strategy that he’s not adopting or which part of the strategy he is adopting? Whichever list is shorter, I guess, would be the easiest way for him to let us know here this afternoon. This is certainly interesting news, and as far as I can tell, it’s new for us that the government will not be adopting the entire MDS strategy.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The process was developed from the mining memorandum of understanding, which was an agreement between us, as a government, and I believe that it was the chiefs who signed on to it, including the Council of Yukon First Nations. That is where that originated.

The notion was to create an independent panel that would make recommendations. That is what we have now. I think that the panel released their document publicly last month, on April 15, and now we will work to see which of those recommendations we want to adapt or which ones we wish to modify, and that isn’t a unilateral decision by us, as a government. That will be a conversation that we have. We want to engage with industry and the public to hear their feedback and to see which ones various groups support and which ones they don’t and how that can come together.

What came out of the mining MOU table was that the mineral development strategy be struck as an independent panel from us, and that’s what happened. Now we have that report, and we can all see it. It’s out there for everyone to take a look at, and from there, we will move forward.

Mr. Kent: So, the NDP-Liberal agreement does reference some of the things that are in the mineral development strategy, such as successor resource legislation. So, obviously that is one of the recommendations that is being

advanced. Obviously, there are some time considerations, given the fact that the Liberals are trying to get this tabled within 16 months so that it’s tabled before the expiration of this agreement.

Just because this is new information for me this afternoon that has been presented by the minister, who has definitively said that they will not be adopting the entire strategy, have they had those initial conversations with First Nations yet to let them know which parts of the strategy they won’t be adopting or which parts they’re particularly concerned about before this broader engagement with industry and the public occurs?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I should acknowledge that we always had it as our plan to move to successor legislation. We campaigned on it; it was part of our platform. That has been an intent that predates the agreement with the Third Party. I just want to make it clear that it has always been our intention to get to successor legislation. It’s easy for me to stand up and talk about the importance of it.

The Member for Copperbelt South asked whether we’ve already indicated to First Nation governments what elements of the mineral development strategy that we’re supportive of. No, that has not happened as of yet. The two levels at which this works — at my level — we will be meeting with the Yukon Forum shortly, and we will have that conversation.

Second of all, I talked about the working group that already exists. As I understand it, or as the department has informed me, they have not yet had conversations at that table to talk about elements of the mineral development strategy from either side.

Mr. Kent: Just to clarify then with the minister, are First Nation governments and officials finding out here this afternoon that the Liberals aren’t planning on adopting the whole strategy as presented? I just want to clarify that the minister has mentioned that there haven’t been discussions with First Nations; there is an upcoming Yukon Forum; there haven’t been discussions at the officials’ table. So, again, that leads me to think that they are finding out here, just like we did for the first time this afternoon, that the Liberals are not planning on adopting the mineral development strategy in its entirety.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The answer is no. Our partners through the Yukon Forum and First Nation governments are not finding out today about our highest level response to the mineral development strategy. We wrote to the panel. I am not sure whether the members opposite have this letter, but I will quote from it. This is a letter to the panel dated February 22, 2021. It is signed by the Deputy Minister responsible for the Executive Council Office and the then-Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and it talks about the context of the strategy and our response — and I quote: “Our submission provides comments on a number of broad themes, potential omissions, specific policy issues and important implementation considerations. We offer our review in the spirit of commitment to the Mineral Development Strategy process and in respect of the independence of the Panel.” I think that we said that fairly publicly. I believe that

our partners — the First Nation governments — are well aware of that.

We have even put some of that up on our website, so I think that information is all pretty public.

Mr. Kent: Can the minister confirm for us that this letter sent from the Yukon government was with respect to consultations on the draft agreement, and then the final agreement has come out subsequent to that? So, what aspects of the letter — particularly the EMR ones, I guess, because obviously it was the Deputy Minister responsible for the Executive Council Office, who also said — what aspects of that letter did not appear in the final agreement?

Again, the information that we're getting here today that the final strategy that came out post-election will not be adopted in whole by the government is interesting, because the minister can't tell us what aspects of the final plan — I know there are a number of different recommendations in there, but he can't specifically tell us which ones they're not happy with. Are they reflected in this letter? Can he just give us a sense of the timing here? When will he be announcing which recommendations that the government is not willing to adopt that were presented by the panel?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The draft came out, we provided some of our feedback, and then the final was released on April 15. I'm sure that there was some change, but I think that it wasn't a large-scale change between the draft and the final. Our submission is up on the mineral development strategy panel website.

If we want to take the time, I can start reading through it here for the Legislature, but I think it's fair to say that it's there in public view. I'm happy to dive in, if that's what we want to do, and talk about it. I will rely pretty heavily on colleagues here — the deputy minister — because I was not involved at that stage, but I'm happy to look backward and get that information.

I think we have been pretty open all along that the strategy, while it has many redeeming features to it — we have never said that we would adopt it whole. We have given every indication that it is a place to work from, and that's the indication that we have given to First Nations and the public.

Mr. Kent: I guess, with due respect to the minister, that response that he correctly referenced is on the MDS website and is in response to the draft plan. Obviously, the final plan, as he mentioned, was released in mid-April, after the election.

What we would be looking for is the response with concerns on the final plan. Obviously, that has not been made public. What has been made public is that the Liberal government will not be adopting the entire strategy. I guess we could look back to the response that was made on the draft agreement and try to get a sense — cross-referencing what was taken out — what concerns were addressed by the time the final strategy was released. But I guess what we would be looking for is that statement from the government on what concerns they have with the final mineral development strategy and which aspect they will not be adopting, as part of what was presented in mid-April.

I will move on from that and look forward to having that made public at some point. I would hope that it would be done, obviously, prior to the adjournment of the Spring Sitting, but it is quite short. We are done on Monday, May 31, so perhaps it won't be then, but I do look forward to getting a sense on that and seeing exactly what aspects will not be adopted by the government.

I have a couple of other questions though — more general questions about the MDS. One of the concerns that we had was that the panel either didn't have the time or the resources to give us a true indication of what the cost to government would be with respect to additional FTEs or additional resources for many of the things that they're asking government to do, or what the cost would be to industry on a holistic level, what the overall cost of adding a water tax, a payroll tax, and additional fees and agreements and the other things that were identified in there would be.

Is that an exercise that the government is going to undertake? Is that something, I guess, that would be led by EMR to cost out the mineral development strategy so that they can make an informed decision on exactly what the growth of government would be and then, again, the holistic costs to industry?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: That would be part of our work with the industry to do that. I don't think it will be just — it may be led by Energy, Mines and Resources, but I think there would be other departments involved — even the Department of Finance, for example. There will be a group of departments that will work to prepare what the impacts will be, both financial and otherwise, from a policy perspective.

There may be a range of impacts. We will work with industry to develop that, but of course, some of that depends on what the choices are toward successor legislation. We can start to see some of the path, but it may take time for some of those differences to be realized. That work will be ongoing.

Mr. Kent: Again, last week, when we asked the minister whether or not he supported the free-entry system — I should note, as well, that when we asked a similar question during the 34th Legislative Assembly — obviously the one before the election — the Premier and the minister — or the minister I think it was at the time — indicated that they did support the free-entry system. The new minister was a little less certain of that. He referenced a modified free-entry system. I think that was part of the mineral development strategy. I'm curious if he can tell us what, exactly, he meant by a "modified free-entry system" for securing mineral tenure in the territory or for staking claims.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Actually, Madam Chair, what I did the other day, when the members opposite asked about free-entry, was I referenced what I had seen within the mineral development strategy, just as a starting point. I noted that the strategy made several comments — I don't know, I think I found it on a half dozen pages or so — where it talked about the free-entry system, and I talked about what was in the strategy. I wasn't talking about what my position was. I'm not even sure that it's my position per se. I'm happy that we work as a government across departments to develop some analysis

of what successor legislation should look like. I'm happy that we work with other governments. I'm happy that we work with industry. I'm not here on the floor of the Legislature to start to say "Yeah, this is in; this is out", because that process should be with that engagement with our partners. It's not just us who will do that.

So, I appreciate that the Official Opposition has already made up their mind that free-entry is in. But you know, when I read that in their platform, or around some of their correspondence, I'm still scratching my head. What does that mean for them? Is that including Tombstone Park, or is that out?

There are aspects of free entry that they do not support, but they are not spelling that out. I am more concerned that they are trying to move us into a corner. The place that I have said, and continue to say, is that, with the mineral development strategy, we will work through the process that we laid out, starting with the mining MOU and working forward with First Nations, with industry, et cetera. We are not taking a position. All I was doing was referencing what is in the mineral development strategy, as it was presented to us.

Mr. Kent: Again, for the minister — and I will dig up the exact quote. I do not have it with me; it is from Hansard, but during the 34th Legislature, the Liberal government — the minister at the time or the Premier, one of the two — said that they did support free-entry. Now, last week, during Question Period, the minister referenced a "modified free-entry system". I think Yukoners, and especially those who are prospectors or involved in staking claims, need to know from this minister what exactly he meant by a "modified free-entry system". He said it in Question Period, so we are quite curious as to what exactly he is talking about when he talks about a modified free-entry system.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I just stood a moment ago, and I said what I was referencing was the mineral development strategy. Let me quote from the mineral development strategy right here, right now. And I will check back through Hansard to see exactly what my words were to make sure it was clear enough. I believe, when I spoke about free-entry, I was referencing what was in the mineral development strategy. So, for Hansard, I am on page 19 of the mineral development strategy.

So, here I am — for Hansard, I am on page 19 of the mineral development strategy. Now I'm quoting: "Ensuring the new mineral resource legislation and regulations are aligned with Yukon's modern treaties, Canada's *Constitution Act*, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and current case law by:

"acknowledging the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent;

"modifying the free entry staking system to be consistent with Yukon's modern treaties, court-guided agreements and case law..." — I'll stop there. I won't read the full quote, but what I'm saying is that I stood in the Legislature during Question Period and referenced the mineral development

strategy. That's what I'm talking about here. There are questions around it.

Now, when I referenced it, what I'm saying as well is that, when the Official Opposition says that they support free-entry staking, I have my own questions on what they mean by that. So, I would be happy — as we engage on this issue, moving forward — to pick up all that input — the Opposition, industry, First Nation governments. That's what I want to do, and free-entry is an important question inside the whole picture of how we move toward successor legislation.

That was my reference then; it's my reference today. I'm not taking a position on free-entry staking. What I'm doing is taking a position that we will work through this process with First Nation governments and industry.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate the minister flagging that piece of the MDS that he was speaking about. We'll review Hansard, as well, and come back if we need to with respect to this particular one, because modifying the free-entry staking system to be consistent with Yukon's modern treaties, court-guided agreements, and case law, as he mentioned, will be something that we can follow up with the minister on when the government announces which portions of the strategy and recommendations they are going to endorse and which ones they are not going to endorse with respect to the final document that we have.

I just wanted to ask about — again, this comes from the Chamber of Mines meeting that they had with all three parties. I'm curious about land withdrawals and the staking bans. The documents that were presented to us by the Chamber of Mines say that 52 percent of Yukon land is currently withdrawn from mineral staking. Parks and protected areas total a little bit greater than 60,000 square kilometres; prohibition *Quartz Mining Act* OICs, or regulation with prohibition of entry areas, are 188,000 square kilometres, or 39 percent of the Yukon. The parks and protected areas were 13 percent. Not included are Yukon wetlands withdrawals. The MDS recommends a 20-percent limit as a moratorium to use during each land use planning exercise. Every other Canadian jurisdiction has some form of free-entry staking, and it is critical for our industry to be competitive. Withdrawals have significant negative effects on exploration, mining, and the economy.

So, two of those large areas that are withdrawn from staking are the Ross River area and the Liard First Nation area. Is Energy, Mines and Resources at the table with those two First Nations, or is that a different department that is leading those discussions about removing those broad staking bans from those two areas?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I will do is to, first of all, go back to what I said in the Legislature this past Thursday during Question Period. I will quote myself. I am on page 173 of Hansard — and now I quote: "... I read through that strategy to look at what it said about free-entry staking. It talked about making it consistent with our treaties and case law. It talked about using land use planning and about where and where not to have free entry. It talked about the importance of free entry and that a modified free entry would still be important. Those are the things that are in the mineral development strategy."

So, yes, I did talk about it; I talked about it in reference to the strategy.

Second of all, another question that the member opposite asked is about whether Energy, Mines and Resources is at the table for those conversations with the Kaska. The answer is yes. That work is led by Aboriginal Relations, I believe, but Energy, Mines and Resources is at the table as well.

Mr. Kent: I too would like to thank staff in our office for sending in the Hansard from November 18, 2019. It was a question that I had asked about mineral staking.

Just to skip to the end, I said: "Currently, the method for staking claims is often done using a process known as 'free-entry' staking. Does the Liberal government support the free-entry system — yes or no?"

The former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources' one-word answer was "Yes".

Just so that it is entered into the record again so that perhaps the minister can talk to his colleague about whether or not that response is boxing him into a corner or those types of things, I just wanted to read that into the record from less than two years ago on the floor of this Legislature.

The minister mentioned that Energy, Mines and Resources is at the table. Perhaps Aboriginal Relations is leading these discussions regarding the staking bans. I'm just curious: When was the last meeting of this group to talk about or to continue negotiations to reverse those land withdrawals from staking?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'll work to get a date for the member opposite for the most recent meeting.

Mr. Kent: I look forward to that. Perhaps when he is getting the date for the last meeting, again recognizing that these are government-to-government discussions, I'm just curious if he could provide us with a list of meetings that have taken place over the past four or five years since his party came to government with respect to discussions around the staking bans.

The other thing that I would like to see if the minister would provide for us is when those staking bans are set to expire. I know that they have been renewed and extended a number of times, but I'm just wondering when the current bans are expected to expire with respect to staking bans in the Ross River and Liard First Nation traditional territories.

I just wanted to move on to talk about the collaborative framework. It's something that came up during Question Period today. As I mentioned in QP, there was a joint news release with quotes from the Premier, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the Yukon Chamber of Mines at the time that said that a collaborative framework would be developed to deal with industry concerns regarding timelines and reassessments. As I mentioned, that commitment was a little over four years ago, and still, nothing has materialized with respect to that.

Again, if this is something that Energy, Mines and Resources is not involved in, we can follow up with the Premier, but I am curious if the minister can give us a status update on the collaborative framework. Is it still being worked on, or has that been abandoned? It was a pretty significant promise to the mineral industry by a relatively new government

at the time, early in their mandate, that has gone, so far, unfulfilled.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: For most of these answers, I will have to ask the department to get some information. Again, the collaborative framework is led by the Executive Council Office and, I believe, Aboriginal Relations, so I will work to try to get that information, including lists of other meetings that have taken place over the last four and a half years — our previous term.

The member asked, as well, about the mineral-staking prohibition. For the Ross River area, it is in place until April 30, 2022.

I will have to get back on the Liard First Nation withdrawals. I do not have it sitting in my notes, so I will have to get that information for the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, the issue of mining in municipalities came up at the Klondike Placer Miners' Association general meeting and again today in Question Period.

I just wanted to get a status update from the minister on the action plan that was committed to in 2016 shortly after the government was sworn in that this would be done or work would be started and meetings would be underway in 2017. I'm just kind of curious about where we're at with that process and if the minister can update us on when he anticipates some sort of further engagement or an agreement to be reached with respect to mining in municipalities and existing claims — the other things that I raised in Question Period, as well, around compensation for claims that do end up being expropriated either directly or indirectly by the government.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Apologies to the member opposite, because I missed the very last sentences that he said, so if I miss anything right now — if he could just help me to know what I missed.

For the Kaska traditional territory, both Ross River and the Kaska — on the southern portion of the Kaska, the date is April 30, 2022.

I am keen to get going on the mining and municipalities question. I have asked the department to help to get this agenda moving. We will be working on it. Today — I think it was during Question Period when the member opposite asked about the Association of Yukon Communities and the Klondike Placer Miners' Association. I said that, yes, I would be happy to meet with them. So, the department and I have indicated that we should work to achieve that soon, so we'll be working on it right away. I'm sorry I don't have a timeline today, but I can say that I agree that this is an important policy piece to bring forward.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that.

The piece of my question that he missed with was with respect to a compensation plan for claim holders that are either expropriated directly or indirectly based on decisions made with respect to their claims within municipal boundaries. I'm hoping that the minister can include that as part of his conversations with AYC and the KPMA and other stakeholders that he may identify to continue this work.

I do want to cede the floor to the Leader of the Third Party, but I just wanted to touch on a couple of other topics, the first one being forestry.

We have been hearing from a number of the larger fuel-wood suppliers, those in southwest Yukon near Haines Junction and others, that access to fuel wood is getting very difficult for some of the larger commercial suppliers of fuel wood. I'm curious what the minister is contemplating around developing other areas for fuel wood that are close to the larger population centres, and if he can give us a sense of what is happening, particularly in southwest Yukon near Haines Junction, with respect to fuel-wood access for the operators down there. They are quite concerned about getting fuel wood out the door here — running out of supply for their clients.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, on the expropriation, we have a couple of hundred thousand mineral claims in the Yukon, and 85 percent of those are quartz claims. As land use planning and management evolves over time, in some areas, the ability for a company to work a claim may be affected.

No expropriations of placer or quartz mining claims are occurring or planned, including as a result of the implementation of the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* or the Dawson regional land use plan. The Government of Yukon continues to work with claim holders to consider compensation requests on a case-by-case basis. So, it's not a one size fits all.

As I said earlier, I think, during Question Period, if something happens through the mining and municipalities piece, and there are claims to which people effectively don't have the access that they used to have as the result of some change, then we will work with those claims to resolve them.

There are a couple of things that I wanted to say with respect to commercial and personal fuel wood. We want to make sure that people have access to fuel-wood harvesting on public land. I know that there have been some concerns raised.

One of the things that we believe is that, right now, with climate change, we're concerned about fuel-loading around our communities. It's important, not only as a means to help people to have fuel wood but also as a concern about the risk. So, we prioritize planning for small-scale softwood lumber wherever the timber profile suits those types of business opportunities, and fuel-wood harvesting is an essential service for Yukoners to heat their homes and increase energy use.

Let me just acknowledge the member opposite's point. We work closely with First Nations to plan how we manage our forests, and we've collaborated on management plans for the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes, Haines Junction, Dawson, and Teslin regions. I don't have much detailed or specific information for the member opposite on those questions, but let me just acknowledge the concern that he's raising and let him know that the department is live to that situation and working on it. Thank you.

Mr. Kent: My final question this afternoon is, again, forestry-related. Just before I cede the floor to the Third Party, I want to once again thank the officials for providing support to the minister here this afternoon and to those who are listening

on the radio and sending additional information to the minister. Thank you to them as well.

So, we talked about fuel wood. Timber access for some of the smaller micro sawmills around the territory is also a concern. Some of those mills are in the Southern Lakes area. Access to a supply of timber is incredibly important to them. With the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes forestry plan, can the minister tell us — I believe we are waiting for one of the First Nation partners to sign off on the plan. Could he let us know if that has been done and if there is any reference, in those documents, to a timber supply analysis or an annual allowable cut for commercial purposes, not related to fuel wood but commercial for milling lumber? I'm sure we've all been to the lumber store lately and recognize the price and cost of lumber. There is a market for this Yukon-based product. I'm curious where, in that document — or if work has already started on a broader timber supply analysis and an annual allowable cut out of that forestry planning area.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I have just asked the deputy minister to confirm the status of the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes plan. I know what I said when I stood during opening remarks, but I sense that those remarks were prepared some time ago, and I think that plan is now in place, but we will confirm that.

Let me just talk for a moment about Haines Junction. There is a Quill Creek timber harvest plan. The Forest Management branch submitted the Quill Creek timber harvest plan in March 2020 to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board as an executive committee screening. This plan prioritized fuel abatement and economic development opportunities in the Haines Junction area. The plan was expected to be completed — the executive screening process — by the fall of 2020, but again, it has not made it there yet. Again, I think that is COVID-related, but there you go.

The Quill Creek timber harvest plan executive level *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* screening is the first one for forestry in the Yukon. A timber harvest plan is required to maintain a supply of fuel wood for Yukoners. It is in the YESA process, Madam Chair.

With respect to Whitehorse and Southern Lakes, it is an agreement between us, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. The Whitehorse and Southern Lakes plan balances the need to harvest timber within Yukon's most populated region with the values of community wildfire protection in the presence of the important caribou winter habitat.

The next steps are to review the timber harvest plans for consistency with the newly approved forest resource management plan and complete a timber-supply analysis and an annual allowable cut process to determine a sustainable supply of timber for harvesting.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for Copperbelt South for sharing the time. I would also point out to him that, if he would like to send me any of the e-mails or communications he has with ministers, I would also welcome that, as I reference an e-mail I sent on May 5. So, again, I will put that out there for the Yukon Party that, if they wish to cc

the Yukon NDP in their e-mail communication, I will not say no. That door was open, so I thought I would just walk through it.

The question that I actually sent to the minister in May — which, he is right that he had not responded to 20 days later — is about quota, and that is to do around egg producers. I'm sure that others in this Chamber had extensive conversations with agriculture, and one of the conversations that I had was with Yukon egg farmers. It was actually them who reminded me that I hadn't heard back, so I sent the follow-up e-mail today.

One of the concerns that Yukon egg farmers had highlighted was access to outside marketers and funding — for example, commercial loans. They said that it was problematic, in part, because Yukon isn't a part of Egg Farmers of Canada, and therefore, they are not part of the quota system. To be clear, Madam Chair, I am not an expert in the quota system; I have just been learning the language. Egg Farmers of Canada is kind of a national organization with partner groups in the provinces — not so much in the territories yet. The question I sent to the minister was asking if he had conversations with Yukon egg farmers and their ability to access outside markets.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I did right away was ask the department to get a response for the Leader of the Third Party. My apologies that I hadn't sent a note. It was my job to send the member opposite a note, and that was my oversight. I am just acknowledging the letter.

Second of all, in the first few days in the role, what I was told was that the question is a complicated question, because if you move into the quota system, that can affect those who do small production levels, so it just changes the system completely. You have to have a very thoughtful decision to move into the quota system. So, yes, it would open up external markets, but it would also change the system here right now.

Will there be conversation with egg producers about this? Yes. What I understand is that there is no clear decision as of yet, and it may even be that the department has gotten back the information to send across to the Leader of the Third Party, but I have not yet reviewed anything. As soon as I do, I will be sure to share it with her and the Official Opposition.

Ms. White: I look forward to that response. I'm sure that egg farmers look forward to conversations with government about the way forward, understanding, of course, that there is a difference in production levels if you have 100 chickens or if you have 300 chickens or if you're selling to, for example, Extra Foods, Save-On Foods, or Superstore than if you're doing gate sales — understanding that farm realities are different.

I'm going to move on to local area planning, specifically around the *Hamlet of Ibex Valley Local Area Plan: Plan Ibex*. When is that plan up for review? I'll start with that question.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The Ibex Valley local area plan was approved in 2001. We have a memorandum of understanding drafted, and it will be shared with the First Nations for review and discussion. The Government of Yukon and Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations have agreed to begin a comprehensive review of the plan. A memorandum of understanding has been drafted and will be shared with the First

Nations for review and discussion. The memorandum of understanding will set out how the comprehensive review process will proceed.

What I will say is that we don't have dates in place, but what we do have are the initial stages of review underway.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. Since 2001, has that plan been reviewed at all?

I'm just going to repeat that question. Since 2001 when that plan was accepted, has it been reviewed?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No, not that I know of. The plan has not been reviewed over the past 20 years. I will note, for the House today, that I just received word that the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan has been fully signed off and adopted. I just want to correct my earlier remarks that I gave the first time that I stood to speak here today in Committee of the Whole, because I was incorrect then. That plan is now fully signed off.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that follow-up answer. The reason why I ask about a review — if it has happened or not — is that, in the Ibex Valley local area plan on page 39, it says — and I'm on point 10 and I'm quoting from part of it: "... that a more thorough review and update occur at least every 5 years thereafter."

So, if we're 20 years in and we're getting to our first review, one can understand that there may be some conflicts in the area or some problems, which is going to bring me to my next question.

In 2018, the Hamlet of Ibex Valley LAC sent a letter to the then-minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I'm just going to read from it. It says: "Regarding: Mineral Staking in the Hamlet of Ibex Valley

"On behalf of the residents of the Hamlet of Ibex Valley the Local Advisory Council (LAC) is respectfully requesting an immediate temporary withdrawal of all land from mineral staking that is titled private property, or designated agricultural lands or Protected Open Space (POS) in the Hamlet. We are requesting a prohibition on these lands from all quartz and placer staking until the LAC can consult with local land owners and other interested parties to determine how mineral staking and development should be considered with respect to the Ibex Area Plan.

"We are requesting this withdrawal be effective immediately as it has been brought to our attention that placer claims (pending) have been staked which partially overlap on all 3 types of land (titled, agricultural, POS). This is causing significant stress to a local resident that lives on private titled property that has been partially included in the staking application. It has also caused high concern and anxiety amongst the residents that live here who did not realize or understand that mineral claims can be staked in this manner (i.e. across titled, agricultural or..." — protected open space — "... land)."

The reason why I am quoting from this letter — and I can send it on to the minister, although I believe that it has been, and I have sent it to Hansard, but it is dated April 18, 2017.

The reason that I highlight this is that Yukon government released a "what we heard" document in the spring of 2020,

called “Mineral Staking Development in Yukon Communities”, which highlights the concerns of local planning areas and others. So, the reason why I highlight this is that I am sure the minister has also been in recent communication, which highlights the concerns, because that pending mineral claim is no longer pending in the Ibex Valley — it is now a “go”.

There has been a request, of course, for that community plan to be reviewed, but there is concern about active mining now in that community. So, I wanted to know if the minister has taken any steps to reach out to the local area council with regard to active mining within the Ibex Valley hamlet.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I got a note from the department that there have been minor revisions to the Ibex plan as a result of some work in 2007 and 2010, but the point that the Leader of the Third Party is raising is a very valid point, and it is not unique to Ibex. Let me also say that, throughout the Yukon, this is talking about some of the conflicts that we have in planned areas, including municipalities. I appreciate that Ibex wrote and asked for a staking withdrawal, but we did enter into a process. As I stated, I attended several of those meetings. I don’t think that I was in one in Ibex, but I went to four or five of the meetings about mining in municipalities, which included local areas that have a land use plan.

So, the process that we need to get to here is that process that we were talking about in the Legislature earlier with the Member for Copperbelt South, which is around the mining in municipalities piece.

We have been reached out to by, I think, the same person that the Leader of the Third Party is quoting. She has reached out to me, and I have asked the department to develop a response. That, as I understand, is underway. In order to get at this problem properly, we need to get at the mining in municipalities piece. I don’t want to make out that it is just as easy as snapping fingers, because I know there will be challenges. I understand clearly that there are different opinions on both sides of this question; however, I think the point is that we need to decide, as a territory, which way we are going to go here. I know, when I was a city councillor, when we started asking questions around the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act*, we were told that all acts apply — the *Municipal Act*, et cetera. Those are all important here.

I just want to say that I make the same commitment that I made when I stood to respond to questions from the Member for Copperbelt South, which is that this is an important issue, and we will work to put some energy behind it to bring people together and to work together to the finish line.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

Understanding that the “what we heard” document about mineral staking and development in communities came out in the spring of 2020 and of course we are now in 2021, what are the next steps with that conversation, either territory-wide or internally? Where do we go from the “what we heard” document in 2020?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The general plan is to put forward a draft policy, based on the engagement that happened, and to put it out to the public for engagement. In particular, I note that I agreed today to sit down with the Association of Yukon

Communities and the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association. Hopefully, that can be joint, but I recognize that we have to accommodate the fact that there is a mining season coming up; however, we will work to get that draft policy out and in front of Yukoners so that they have a chance to provide their feedback.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that, and I would note that, understanding that this is a long, ongoing issue, it probably makes sense to try to do that sooner rather than later.

During the Energy, Mines and Resources briefing, I had asked how much money to date had been spent on elk fencing. At the time, I was told that the department didn’t have an answer, and I am hoping that they can have an answer now. So, even not going back for eternal, let’s say, since 2017, can the minister give me an idea of what the Yukon government has spent on elk fencing to date — since 2017?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, what I can say is that, over the past eight years, roughly \$350,000 has been spent on preventive measures, which include fencing and compensation for elk. I have just asked the department if they could get me a breakdown, if possible, on the difference between the compensation and the fencing. I will work to see if we have that.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I am actually a bit surprised, knowing that there was \$225,000 included in the supplementary budget for fencing — to know that the number for the last eight years is \$350,000 is a bit of a surprise.

Has the minister seen any of the quotes that the farmers have gotten about installing the elk-proof fencing around their properties? Has the department seen any of those amounts?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I had not seen any of those quotes, but I am informed that the department has seen those quotes, and I am informed that the dollars are substantial, for sure. We have had some conversations — for example, earlier today, I talked about the elk harvest approach to try to reduce the pressure of the problem itself, and I heard both opposition parties today talk about it, one by way of a motion and one by way of a question in Question Period.

The simple answer is yes; the department has seen some of those quotes. As I said earlier, there was a two-year approach, jointly with the Department of Environment and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, to try to work on the problem. I am sure it is an ongoing question, especially given the price of construction these days.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, I appreciate that the minister has not maybe seen any of those quotes himself, but maybe his officials can give him an idea. Are we talking tens of thousands of dollars, \$50,000, \$100,000, or are we talking in the millions of dollars?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I note that what we need to do is get a price per linear measure somehow. It is not going to say “the fence”, because it depends how big the fence is. I know that these fences are quite tall — I think eight feet tall, is what I recall being told.

I will work to get a price for what the estimates are these days per metre or per length. If I get that information today, I will stand up and share it as I hear it.

Ms. White: I appreciate that answer. I guess the concern that was highlighted by the Yukon Agricultural Association was that, for four farms, it was over \$4.5 million for the fencing. The reason why that is a concern is that is a lot of money to invest for the elk problem. The other concern, of course, that I highlighted in Question Period today was around the capital gains question. It is an increase in property value; therefore, it becomes an increase in insurance, and it kind of spirals from there.

The reason I was asking about fencing is because the party leaders — the Liberals, the Yukon Party, and myself as the Yukon NDP leader — have been invited to a farm tour to see the damage done by elk. I am not sure if the Liberals have responded, but I am hopeful. One of the reasons why I believe that this tour is important to whoever goes is to get a common understanding of what the issue is.

The reason why I bring up a common understanding is that we have two departments that work on this issue from two different angles. We have the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources that looks at it from the perspective of agriculture and, of course we have the Department of Environment that looks at it from the issue of elk, but they come at it from very different values with very different opinions about what should happen. One of the questions I have is: Have the department of agriculture and the Department of Environment attended the farm at the same time to hear from the farmers? Have they gone out together for a site visit?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm going to go back for a second and just talk about the fencing versus compensation piece. Overall, over the past eight years, we've spent about \$160,000 on compensation and \$190,000 on fencing. What I can say is that, in the split — more recently, we've been working to get the compensation side down and the prevention side up, which is the fencing. I appreciate the member opposite's notion about the price of the fences.

I also will say that the Department of Environment and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources work very closely. I don't know specifically whether they attended the tour of sites always together at the same time, but I do know that they work closely. If I can just give that impression, I would be happy to do it.

What I appreciate is that there is a difference in perspectives, for sure. I'll throw another one in there: First Nations have shared a different perspective again. I think that there are a range of perspectives that we need to look at, at all times.

I will say that I unfortunately had booked meetings this coming Friday with chiefs, so I'm not able to make it, but I'm hopeful that someone will make it. I appreciate the questions and the concerns being raised about this issue.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. The reason I ask about the common understanding — and it's not that I don't believe that the departments work together. We often get told by the government that we have a one-government approach. The experience is often quite siloed and not quite as one-government as one might appreciate. The reason why I ask

the question about that common understanding is because I have also had conversations with chiefs in the area.

I tell you, the elk issue is an interesting one. It's important to note, as well, that it's an introduced species — introduced for hunting opportunities. We've gone from hunting opportunities to now, I guess some could argue, agriculture destroyers in some cases. I understand the destruction that can happen to the fields in a short amount of time, and I appreciate that there have been some solutions brought forward, but based on the fact that party leaders have been invited to a tour on Friday, my guess is that there is concern that two years to see how it falls out is going to be too long, because this has been an ongoing issue. That is why I'm highlighting it. For anyone who attends the tour with me on Friday, I'm sure that we will learn lots of things, and I think it's important.

My next question is around Wolverine securities. It is my understanding that, after this budgetary year, Yukon government will no longer be holding any security money from the Wolverine mine. Can the minister confirm that, please?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just before I leave the question about elk, in all of this conversation, the one part that hasn't been talked about yet is the elk harvest portion. That part of the solution actually has had some success. I don't know how much. I look forward to talking with farmers in the area. I appreciate the point that the situation is fluid and that we need to be responsive. I take that point right away. I also thank the Member for Lake Laberge for his motion earlier today.

With respect to Wolverine mine, the basic answer is yes; the security is now mostly exhausted. There may be some finer detail, but the point that I understand is that, in April this year, PricewaterhouseCoopers initiated a court-approved sale process for the mine site, and we hope that there will be a sale by the late summer, but that is always going to be dependent on the issuance of required authorizations.

What I am trying to say is that there is also value there, not just cost, and so, if there is a sale, the liabilities would go with the sale along with those opportunities.

I can speak further to it, but the basic answer is yes; the money that was held back previously and through the process of dealing with the courts is now expended.

Ms. White: I don't want to go too far back, but I am going to touch back on the elk issue, because unfortunately it is not Energy, Mines and Resources that would have an up-to-date number of elk in the territory, but I think that part of the challenge is that it is a double-department overlap between Energy, Mines and Resources and Environment, and if we don't have an accurate count of elk, then it is really hard to tell if harvesting 43 is making the dent that is required. Although, again, I will lay out that going for a site tour by the invitation of farmers with concerns around the elk issue would highlight that 43 is not enough to make a dent in the problem. I am just going to leave that there.

I am going to move back to Wolverine. The reason why I ask about the Wolverine mine is actually because I spent almost a calendar year on-site. I started off when it was care and maintenance and it was in wall tents down by the lake, and then I moved into the new camp that was constructed up on the pad.

I was there for a good portion of that before I left. I have a very clear idea of what Wolverine mine looks like; although, by the time I left, the mill was under construction, and I went on to do other things. But having been on site tours, for example, of the Minto mine and seeing how big the mill is and things like that — one of the reasons that I ask about the Wolverine mine is that it is slated for sale. For folks who aren't familiar, Wolverine was an underground project, which means that it was tunnelled. One of the really interesting things is that shotcrete is a building material — that is the best way that I can describe it — that is used in underground tunnelling, and it is a combination of concrete that actually has metal fibres in it, and so it is used to support the tunnel. If it is required, it is used.

I can tell you, based on my time in the year that I was there and the amount of time I spent with miners as the camp cook, which was significant, and concerns that — so, the tunnel — there was shotcrete used for almost the entire time that there was tunneling — 24 hours a day, shotcrete was used, which was quite unusual — but the tunnel was full of water. I'm not sure how deep it went in by the end, but when I was there, it was already substantially deep. I left in 2009, and they got work for after that. The tunnel is fully submerged in water. That's what has to be treated: the water that's coming out of that tunnel, the water processing plant, and things like that.

What is the expected cost of processing that water per year before it can get turned back into the environment? In a year, what is the expected cost of that water treatment? The Wolverine mine goes for sale this fall. If it sells, then that liability gets transferred, but I want to know what the cost is for the water treatment for the year.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I know, at the risk of labouring on the elk question, but I agree that it's important — I'm not suggesting that the 43 elk taken have put a dent in it, but maybe they will over time, if that is a good solution. In fact, what I heard in the motion today was to extend that area, so maybe that is a solution. I'm not suggesting that it be the only solution; I'm not suggesting that we're closed to other discussions. I think the point is correct that it's an ongoing problem. Maybe part of the solution is the harvest.

The Wolverine mine — I have asked the department if they have a specific number pulled out for what the treatment of the contaminated water from the portal is into the tailings storage facility. I don't have an answer. I am not sure that they have it separated out into that portion of it. I could ask them to estimate something like that, but I do not know that we have a number specifically.

Let me just agree with the member opposite. I have worked underground, and I have seen different mines. It really depends on the nature of the rock and the nature of the situation, just what you use for reinforcing. You are going to base that on the conditions you have at hand. It really depends on the mine. I have not been in Wolverine, and I don't have her experience, so I am not sure exactly about that situation, but if the department can get me a number, they will, but I don't know that they separate it out specifically.

Ms. White: The minister just missed his opportunity, so I will leave one question on the record. If it is not about dividing

for water treatment, what is the cost of care and maintenance for a calendar year at Wolverine? He can get back to me with that answer.

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

Chair: It has been moved by Ms. White that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, seeing the time, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

**Written notice was given of the following motion
May 25, 2021:**

Motion No. 67

Re: condemning anti-Semitism (Dixon)

The following written questions were tabled May 25, 2021:

Written Question No. 1

Re: court cases involving the Government of Yukon (Cathers)

Written Question No. 2

Re: legislative drafting (Cathers)

Written Question No. 3

Re: development schedule for Whistle Bend (Clarke, Y.)

Written Question No. 4

Re: Whistle Bend school (Clarke, Y.)

Written Question No. 5

Re: housing projects (Clarke, Y.)

Written Question No. 6

Re: Whistle Bend Place (Clarke, Y.)

Written Question No. 7

Re: pedestrian-activated crosswalks in Watson Lake
(McLeod)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 9

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin

DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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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, May 26, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 63, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge, was not placed on the Notice Paper, as motions should be expressed in the affirmative, and Motion No. 65 was not placed on the Notice Paper, as motions should not be argumentative or in the style of a speech.

I would like to remind all members that the rubric for notices of motions in the Daily Routine is not an opportunity to make members' statements. Motions that do not follow the guidelines for drafting motions will not be placed on the Order Paper.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would ask my colleagues here in the Legislature Assembly to help me welcome to the gallery — no stranger to the gallery — the Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations, Peter Johnston.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would also ask my colleagues to help me welcome some special guests to the gallery today.

I would like to introduce Luke Campbell. He has been here before, but Luke is a language expert in his nation and I am happy to have him here today with us.

Also, I would like to introduce my ministerial advisor, Dario Paola, and Emily Farrell, who is also a ministerial advisor. Thank you for being here today.

I would also like to recognize — and I know that he is likely here as a guest for the New Democratic Party — my good friend George Bahm. I welcome you here today as well.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, just to add to that introduction, today, a good friend, a mentor, and someone who I feel is a language champion, who is doing so much to revitalize his own culture and language, our friend George Bahm is also in the gallery today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the 28th anniversary of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, today I rise in recognition of the 28th anniversary of the signing of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, also known as the UFA.

May 29, 1993 was a historic day for all Yukoners. The Council for Yukon Indians, which we now know today as the Council of Yukon First Nations, signed the UFA following 20 long years of hard work and negotiations with the governments of Canada and Yukon. That same day, four Yukon First Nations joined their Yukon and federal partners in signing final and self-governing agreements. They are Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Teslin Tlingit Council, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and Vuntut Gwitchin. By 2005, 11 Yukon First Nations had signed agreements. It was the UFA that made it possible.

The UFA is a blueprint for Yukon land claims and heralded by indigenous peoples from across the world as a model for modern treaties. It acts as a framework for individual land claims and self-governing agreements asserting indigenous rights, titles, and interests with respect to First Nation traditional territories and settlement lands. It guarantees that Yukon First Nation voices are heard and have an effect by ensuring representation on more than a dozen boards and committees. It lays out the terms of engagement between First Nations, Yukon, and Canada, government to government to government. It provides certainty for Yukon First Nations, citizens, and for Yukon. It protects a way of life and spirituality that was stripped away by colonialism.

We have all seen the image of respected elder and former Commissioner of Yukon, Judy Gingell, in her capacity as the chair of CYI in 1993, signing this document alongside the later former Yukon Premier John Ostanek and the Hon. Tom Sidden, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. Judy was also there when Chief Elijah Smith and other leaders presented the visionary document *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* to then-Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau in Ottawa in 1973.

Judy continues to work hard on behalf of all Yukon First Nations. Shaw nithän to Judy.

Thank you also to all First Nation governments and citizens who continue to work tirelessly on implementation of their land claims and self-governing agreements.

We know that the work is far from over. To the contrary, the UFA and the signing of the agreements signalled a new beginning. It started Yukon on a journey toward a better, more inclusive, and more just society. It has brought us together and it has made us stronger. It has given us hope that reconciliation is still possible.

During my time as Premier, I have witnessed and participated in countless collaborative efforts with Yukon First Nation governments. The Yukon Forum is thriving as a safe and productive place for chiefs and ministers to collaborate on shared goals and initiatives.

Yukon Days, where the Yukon government has the opportunity to meet one-on-one with federal ministers in

Ottawa, has evolved into an inclusive team Yukon approach with chiefs and ministers now representing Yukoners together. This collaborative spirit did not develop overnight. It has taken decades of perseverance by countless individuals, especially those who negotiated the terms of their land claims and self-government agreements and the UFA.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Yukon First Nations for all of your accomplishments so far and so many more to come.

Günilschish.

Mr. Dixon: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the anniversary of the signing of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the first four Yukon First Nations final and self-government agreements.

On May 29, 1993, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Teslin Tlingit Council, and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation made history by ratifying the first self-government agreements and paving the way for seven others to do the same.

The *Umbrella Final Agreement*, signed by Canada, Yukon, and the Council for Yukon Indians — known today, of course, as the Council of Yukon First Nations — acted as a template for the 11 modern treaties that we have in the Yukon today. From there, negotiations made way for the signing of the first four self-government agreements. Self-government agreements recognized the right of First Nations to develop their own constitutions and pass laws for their own citizens and settlement land. They recognized the right to provide governance in areas such as justice, land management, and education and defined self-government powers, programs and services, taxation, and law-making.

Yukon's modern treaties and self-government agreements have been instrumental in making Yukon self-governing First Nations partners at both territorial and federal tables in shaping policy across the sectors.

Yukon First Nation governments have been leaders in economic development, environmental stewardship, resource management, business, tourism, and much more. I would like to recognize and thank each of our 11 self-governing First Nations for the contributions that they have made to the Yukon across all sectors.

My colleagues and I are proud to celebrate the Yukon First Nation final and self-government agreements today and the benefits that they have created for all Yukon.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the anniversary of the signing of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the four Yukon First Nations that first signed their self-government agreements. The first set of final and self-government agreements were signed in 1993 by the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Teslin Tlingit Council, and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

Decades of courage, strategic thinking, and hard work of our visionary leaders established the historic *Umbrella Final*

Agreement on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

We recognize Ta'an Kwäch'än Council's hereditary chief, Jim Boss, who was a visionary leader of his time. In 1902, Chief Jim Boss wrote to the Government of Canada, seeking recognition and protection for his people and their lands. His efforts triggered the path toward Yukon First Nation modern-day treaties.

We also pay tribute to the Yukon delegation of Yukon First Nation leaders who, in 1973, made their journey to Ottawa to present the document *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* to the Canadian Prime Minister. I recall, as young children, sitting at the feet of our elders and leaders as they shared with us the importance of self-government and the work they were doing to secure the future for our lands, our language, our culture, and how we exist in the world.

We listened to our elders talk about their lives transitioning from a nomadic lifestyle that was based on traditional laws and practices to a community-based setting where their lives and ways of being became dictated by the *Indian Act*. At that time, our elders and leaders were teaching us, as children, the responsibility that we would one day inherit.

The *Umbrella Final Agreement* is a pivotal document that guided 11 Yukon First Nations to negotiate their individual final agreements for a path forward to autonomy and self-determination. Our modern-day treaties are living documents that hold us all accountable for the work we do today to secure our future. We pay tribute to all those individuals and groups representing Yukon First Nation governments, the federal government, and the Yukon government who fought so hard for a common vision of mutual growth and collaboration and who contributed to the establishment of these agreements.

We also remember those who are no longer with us. It is because of these agreements that we, as Yukon First Nations, are able to raise our children in our homelands and why we are able to live within our traditional territories. Our self-government agreements ensure that we are active participants in determining our future and all aspects of the decision-making processes that have direct impact on us as a people.

There remains plenty of work yet to do toward reconciliation and supporting the prosperity of Yukon First Nations and in encouraging the continuation of relationship-building between all governments. As we celebrate the 28th anniversary of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, we encourage all Yukoners to continue to strengthen and uphold the shared vision of cooperation, collective prosperity, and justice, which fill the hearts and minds of those who forged these agreements all those years ago.

Applause

In recognition of Dákwänjē Southern Tutchone adult language immersion program graduates

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize the first graduating class from the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations' Dákwänjē Southern Tutchone adult language immersion program. The intensive three-year program is

entitled Dän K'e Kwänjē Ghäkenidän, which translates to: "We are learning our native language program".

The class of nine Champagne and Aishihik First Nations citizens began the program in September 2018 and attended full-time classes from September to June each school year. Champagne and Aishihik First Nations funds these adult learners as language apprentices so that they can fully participate in the immersion program without trying to hold down jobs. Their program is based at Da Kų Cultural Centre in Haines Junction and has a large on-the-land component where students practise the language and learn through traditional activities, including land-based camps with elders, storytelling, and other interactive experiential methods. The program is entrenched in prayer and ceremony. Each day starts with a prayer.

I would, first of all, like to pay my respect and give thanks to the elder instructors, Lorraine Allen and Audrey Brown, for their dedication and sharing their expertise. They are truly at the core of the program's success through teaching and language as inseparable from the world view and the way of being of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations people.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank Champagne and Aishihik First Nations citizen and language teacher Khâsha — Stephen Reid — the lead instructor who developed the curriculum and delivered the program full time, as well as instructor Mary Jane Legér and the additional members of the leadership team: Leslie Cromwell, who is a support officer, and Erin Pauls, as their education director.

On behalf of the Government of Yukon, I would like to express my gratitude to the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations general assembly, which has committed \$1 million to reclaim their language. The Government of Yukon is pleased to support language revitalization as part of the recovery of Yukon First Nation language fluency and proficiency. Revitalizing language is a very challenging task. Yukon First Nation languages were deeply impacted by colonization and residential schools.

This first cohort of students is called the "Dän Nákwakhéł" or the "trail blazers". Breaking trail is not an easy process. The students had to pull together and work really hard to overcome the trauma that surfaces in the process of reclaiming their languages, which involves examining the reasons why a nation has lost their fluency.

Champagne and Aishihik First Nations worked closely with the Simon Fraser University to have the program accredited. Students earned their certificate in language proficiency in Southern Tutchone in the first half of the program and their diploma in language proficiency in the second half.

Today we celebrate the significant achievements of this first graduating class of adult learners, who have dedicated three years of their lives to mastering their traditional language. It is incredible to think that we now have nine additional Dákwanjē Southern Tutchone language speakers.

Thank you and congratulations to our hard-working graduates: Natane Primozic, Earl Darbyshire, Elizabeth

Gladue, Marianne Joe, Sarina Primozic, Sheila Kushniruk, Marcus Sparvier, Heather Jim, and Liza Jacobs.

I also congratulate and offer best wishes to the next cohort of 10 students who will begin the program in the fall of 2021. On behalf of Government of Yukon, I extend my gratitude toward everyone who has been involved in developing, supporting, and delivering this innovative and successful program. I would like to particularly recognize Chief Steve Smith for his unwavering vision for the well-being and advancement of his people. I also again want to thank Yukon teacher Khâsha — Stephen Reid — for his personal commitment to language revitalization. It was through their collective vision, passion, and leadership that this program came into being.

I want to quote Chief Steve Smith from a recent conversation that I had with him. He said to me: "Education and languages are our highest priority. We do everything else because we have to."

Through language revitalization, we will preserve the traditional ways of knowing, being, and doing, as well as the identity of each Yukon First Nation. Champagne and Aishihik First Nations' program truly inspires hope by using creativity and working together, and through immersion language programs like theirs, over time we will restore the number of indigenous language speakers in Yukon.

Shaw nithän.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Before I start, I just — one of the graduates, Sheila Kushniruk, while she was going through this course, constantly would speak Southern Tutchone to me when I would see her. For her, I'm going to try to incorporate, as the minister did, a few Southern Tutchone words as I do this tribute. Luke is here today, so I'll probably get a little critique later on that, too, so I'll give this a try.

Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Dän K'e Kwänjē Ghäkenidän program, "We are learning our native language" program. This adult Dákwanjē Southern Tutchone language immersion program began in 2018. The students are called "Dákwanjē", which means "trail blazers". Breaking trail, like the minister said, is not an easy process, and its hard work. The students had to pull together and work hard to reclaim their language and unpack the reasons why their people have lost their fluency. These have been among some of the hardest hurdles and lessons that these students have had to face.

Champagne and Aishihik First Nations work closely with the Simon Fraser University to have this full-time, two-year "we are learning our native language" program accredited. Students earn their certificate in language proficiency in Southern Tutchone in the first half of the program and go on to earn their diploma in language proficiency in the second half.

The "We are learning our native language" program was borne from a general assembly request, at which the government put \$1 million aside to reclaim the Southern Tutchone language. The program is based at Da Kų — "Our Home, Our House" — Cultural Centre in Haines Junction, but

students will also practise the language on the land through traditional activities, where it is most meaningful.

Khâsha, who is a Champagne and Aishihik First Nations citizen and also a language teacher, is credited and should be very proud of the development of this curriculum, and he teaches with the program. Of course, the program could not have gone forward without the knowledge and expertise of Khâsha and our elders, Chughäla, who is Lorraine Allen, and Khut'äla, who is Audrey Brown.

Congratulations to the 2021 graduates: Natane Primozic, Earl Darbyshire, Elizabeth Gladue, Marianne Joe, Sarina Primozic, Sheila Kushniruk, Marcus Sparvier, Heather Jim, and Liza Jacobs. Language is connected to the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations people. Their language holds the key to the world view and the ways of being. The program is entrenched in prayer and ceremony, as we heard earlier from the minister. Each day is started with a prayer.

The program has a large on-the-land component and traditional pursuits. To end, I also want to quote something that Kaaxnox — Chief Steve Smith — said when the program first came out: “This is one of the most important endeavours the Champagne and Aishihik people will ever undertake. We are committed to having a successful program to teach our people, Dákwanjē ... The students will have a critical and important role in maintaining who we are as a people.”

Big hands out to all those who made this program possible. Shäw Nithän. Thank you.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon NDP is proud to pay tribute to the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations’ language immersion program. As they get ready for their first graduation and fluent speaker recognition ceremony, it is a chance to celebrate this program and all it does to help keep the Southern Tutchone language alive for now and for future generations.

A few years ago, I was at Gwaandak Theatre’s annual silent auction. As I looked through the prizes, one caught my eye in particular, and it was a private Southern Tutchone language lesson. I bid on it and was delighted when I won. I thought I was going to learn a few phrases in Southern Tutchone, but I learned much more than that. That lesson was a window for me, a glimpse of what language is and can be. I learned that it is a lot more than a way to pass on a message or to keep track of a grocery list. My teacher explained to me that when she introduced herself in her language, she was telling me much more than her name. She was telling a story of relationships between people and relationships with her traditional territory and all the responsibilities and privileges that go with those relationships.

The Champagne and Aishihik First Nations’ *Language Act* speaks to this very directly. One section reads: “The elders remind us that our words themselves contain values, spirituality and principles of respect within them. Knowing the words and languages instills the way by which we live on the land, with the animals and how we treat each other. As well, the words and phrases contain knowledge, traditional and cultural, as well

as scientific details which must be preserved in a living language that we learn from.”

Congratulations to everyone who has been part of the Champagne and Aishihik language programming and to everyone who will be recognized at the upcoming ceremony.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today a legislative return regarding mine closure security in response to questions that were asked on May 13.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Notices of motions.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Liberal government to publicly explain and provide evidence as to why the state of emergency needs to be extended 90 days.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to dedicate a portion of the Department of Highways and Public Works 2021-22 capital budget to upgrade with BST the gravel stretches on the Champagne access road.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to dedicate a portion of the Department of Highways and Public Works 2021-22 capital budget to improve maintenance of the Kusawa Lake and Aishihik Lake roads, which lead to popular territorial campgrounds.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to work with first responders, governments, and unincorporated communities to develop a strategy to strengthen rural fire and ambulance services, including:

(1) holding recruitment drives for new volunteers;

(2) increasing retention of EMS and fire volunteers, including improving supports and addressing barriers;

(3) looking at a possible way of making training more accessible to volunteers;

(4) reviewing training standards and qualification requirements to ensure that they strike the right balance between keeping people safe and not leaving communities without coverage as a result of high minimum standards; and

(5) improving fire protection and ambulance coverage for rural communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to uphold their commitment made in the Speech from the Throne to subsidize the cost of period products for Yukoners in need by providing menstrual products in all Yukon schools.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to require the Yukon Liquor Corporation, when approving offsale licences, to collaborate with the Department of Health and Social Services by assessing locations and hours from a public health perspective.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Housing initiatives fund

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, in 2018, our Liberal government created the housing initiatives fund to support the development of affordable housing options for Yukoners. The fourth intake concluded in January of this year. \$3.6 million was made available through three funding streams: one for shovel-ready projects in Whitehorse, one for shovel-ready projects in communities, and one for project concepts.

Today, I'm pleased to announce funding for eight more shovel-ready affordable housing projects. The selected projects will support 102 new affordable housing units for Yukoners in Dawson City, Teslin, Watson Lake, Lake Laberge, and Whitehorse. Through this intake, we will also support four project development concepts. The applicants who receive this funding will continue to develop their project details and may reapply to the housing initiatives fund or other government funding when they are ready to move forward with construction.

In order to support applicants, we improved the fund process based on feedback from previous housing initiatives fund intakes. These included: increasing funding thresholds to reflect the higher cost of construction during the COVID-19 pandemic and in rural communities; allowing developers more time to prepare for the construction season; and increasing the support for the development of project concepts.

Over the past four intakes, this program has now supported 40 projects that will lead to more than 470 new homes in Yukon. Out of these 470 units, we are pleased to announce that more than 385 units are designated as affordable. This means that Yukoners living in these homes can expect rent to be held at below median market for 20 years.

The increase in housing units will help Yukoners to access affordable housing through the private market, through First Nation housing providers, and through community organizations. Under the first three intakes, eight shovel-ready projects have been completed, two are near completion, 19 projects are underway, and three projects are scheduled to start construction.

To date, 65 units have been completed in Whitehorse, Dawson City, Carmacks, and Haines Junction. This is a

significant accomplishment, and I want to acknowledge all First Nation governments, First Nation development corporations, developers, contractors, community organizations, and the general public who have applied to the housing initiatives fund and who have stepped up to partner with government to support the unique housing solutions of our communities.

Together, we are a strong community. I'm proud of the work of Yukon Housing Corporation in building these housing partnerships with the private sector community organizations and First Nation development corporations.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this issue today.

In the minister's statement, he mentioned that, in the last three years, they have supported the development of 470 units through this initiative; however, he also states that only 65 units have been completed. So, it would seem that there are still 405 units left to be completed.

Can the minister tell us when these 405 units will be completed?

Another question that we have is to do with the increase in the costs of lumber and other construction materials over the last year. Some have noted that prices of construction materials have tripled in the last year, and this is having impacts on the cost of construction and home building. The original fund was announced in 2018, before these massive price increases. Can the minister tell us if the increased cost of lumber and other materials will have an impact on the number of units that will be built from this \$3.6-million fund?

I look forward to the minister's answers.

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, today we heard a recap of a throne speech announcement. This is something Yukoners hear a lot from the Liberal government. We hear a long list of accomplishments about all the ways that housing is getting better, but that is not what Yukoners see. What we see are lots sitting empty. What Yukoners see is post after post in Facebook groups by families desperate for a place to live.

I would have more sympathy for the government if this were a new problem, but it is not. We have been in a housing crisis for a decade. It is starting to feel permanent, and we have a government telling us that this is the best we can hope for. I disagree; we can do better than accepting housing insecurity as the new normal.

I want to congratulate the applicants on their projects and thank them for their work, but we cannot leave all the heavy lifting to the private sector. Right now, there are 375 applications on the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list. Some of those applications represent entire families. That is a problem that belongs to the Yukon government. I have not seen any serious moves to deal with it.

I am also curious about their promise that the units announced today will stay affordable for 20 years. How do they intend to monitor and enforce this?

Here is what Yukoners want to see: a day when housing is no longer the number one election issue. That will be an

accomplishment. When we can stop talking about housing because everyone can afford a place to live, that will be something to be proud of. Until then, we need to do better.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Every Yukoner deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. Our government supports a multi-faceted approach to providing Yukoners with increased housing options. Today I spoke of the fourth intake of the housing initiatives fund, which is supporting eight new shovel-ready affordable housing projects across the territory. Since we launched this fund in 2018, it has supported a total of 474 new housing units — again, including the 389 affordable housing units. These are projects built by First Nation governments, First Nation development corporations, developers, contractors, community organizations, and individuals.

The Normandy Manor project that is currently under construction is another project supported through the housing initiatives fund that will add 84 supported, affordable housing units for Yukon seniors. We are proud to be working with our partners at the City of Whitehorse, the federal government, and Northern Vision Development to provide more options for our elderly. This is a private sector senior-supportive housing project in the territory and it is a great example of our collaborative approach to addressing housing needs in the territory.

This year's budget includes \$8.5 million for the completion of a new 47-unit 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 54-unit Cornerstone Housing project. These are major projects that will substantially increase our housing supply.

We have opened our first-ever Housing First residence in the north in Whitehorse. This groundbreaking initiative is providing safe, secure, low-barrier housing for the most vulnerable in our capital city. Building on this success, we are working with the next Housing First project in Watson Lake. To help Yukon tenants, we have introduced the Canada-Yukon Housing benefit. It provides Yukon households with up to \$800 per month to help them afford to rent a home that meets their needs. This goes directly to the tenant and stays with them, even if they move homes. This year's budget also has \$1.4 million for rent supplements and millions for more housing projects.

Making land available for development is another important way to meet the growing need for housing. During the previous mandate, our government tripled the investment in lot development. Last year we released 250 lots, which is part of the largest land lottery ever seen in Whitehorse. This trend will continue and we will continue to release residential lots throughout the territory and in coming years.

We recognize 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. We have taken a collaborative and multi-faceted approach to addressing housing needs in our

territory. I would also like to thank both opposition members for their questions.

In order to be respectful of the time allotted, I will work with the Yukon Housing Corporation to provide answers to the questions that have been posed today.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Mineral development strategy

Mr. Dixon: One of the mineral development strategy recommendations is to develop a modern mineral management regime by — and I quote: “Drafting and bringing into force the new mineral resource legislation and regulations within the next four years (by the end of 2025). Achieving such an aggressive timeline will require all involved to declare the work a priority and to dedicate the necessary resources.”

Yesterday, the Premier incorrectly stated that this reference to “an aggressive timeline” was not specific to the development of successor resource legislation. The facts clearly show that he was wrong, and this is concerning for two reasons: first, that the Premier shared incorrect information, but what’s even more concerning is that it’s clear that the Premier doesn’t even know what the strategy says.

So, I would like to hear from the Premier. If the MDS says that developing these pieces of legislation in four years is an aggressive timeline, how does he think he can get it done in just 16 months?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We spoke quite a bit yesterday about the mineral development strategy. I’m happy to get up on my feet again today and talk about the mineral development strategy.

Again, the panel released its final mineral development strategy report and recommendations on April 15, 2021, and we are working on reviewing those recommendations. Many of the recommendations are within the scope of the development of successor resource legislation for mining. The components of the final strategy that are not within the scope of new mining legislation will also be evaluated for potential implementation.

With respect to successor resource legislation, we are committed to developing new successor resource legislation for both lands and mining. Work on the new *Lands Act* has already begun under the successor resource legislation working group, a process established in 2019 at the Yukon Forum by the Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations, and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

So, we are committed to work toward this, and we will target timelines set out in the confidence and supply agreement, subject to meaningful consultation with Yukon First Nations. The conversations around mining legislation have been going on through the mineral development strategy panel’s extensive outreach and engagement, and I have been working to follow up on that with the Yukon Chamber of Mines and the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association and am happy to continue that work, as we move toward successor legislation.

Mr. Dixon: I see the Premier wasn't willing to stand up and correct the record on his incorrect statements from yesterday, but I will move on.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the minister mentioned the CASA, because we've seen what happens when the Liberals let the NDP write policy for them with the recent rent cap policy. One local economist stated recently in the *Yukon News* that the new Liberal-NDP rent control plan for the Yukon is further to the left than Bernie Sanders. Further left than Bernie Sanders, Mr. Speaker — that's what happened with rent control when the Liberals let the NDP write the policy. Now the Liberals are letting the NDP hold the pen on our new mining legislation.

How are the Liberals going to ensure that what happened with the disastrous rent control policy doesn't happen with the territory's mining legislation?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think I just stood and talked about that process. I talked about how we will continue to work. I'm happy to stand again and say again that we're committed to responsible development and management of the Yukon's mineral resources in a way that protects the environment, respects the rights and traditions of First Nations, and benefits all Yukoners.

Mining and mineral exploration remain of central importance to the Yukon's economy and contributed significantly to the territory's economic performance throughout the pandemic. We're committed to working with our partners to develop successor legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the mineral development strategy represents an important conversation and mineral development and management in the territory affects all Yukoners. We will continue to follow and respect the process in place as we work toward successor legislation. As I've stated every time I have gotten up on my feet, that will include talking with industry, talking with the Yukon public, and talking with Yukon First Nations about that successor legislation. I'm looking forward to that because I think it's a great thing for the territory.

Mr. Dixon: We've now heard three different answers to this. We've heard the Premier's commitment to the CASA. We've heard the minister now say that it's a target that they are hoping to achieve if they work hard. But yesterday, we heard from the Leader of the NDP as well. When asked about the media, she said, "If it takes Yukon government with a full force of drafters, researchers, and others longer than 16 months then I think we have a problem."

However, yesterday during Committee debate, the minister started to walk back his commitment. He said that it was no longer definitive and that they would have legislation by the fall. He now is using weasel words like "make best efforts" and "try to achieve". Everyone knows that the 16-month timeline is unrealistic. However, the government will fall if they cannot live up to their commitments to the NDP.

Will the minister definitively tell us: Will the government table new successor resource legislation by next fall — yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This is the same question that I've been answering yesterday, last week, and again today.

I am really happy to get up on my feet, because I think it is an important question — although my answer is not changing; it is still the same answer. The Yukon mineral development strategy presents an important conversation. Mineral development and management in the territory affects all Yukoners. We will continue to follow and respect the process in place as we work toward successor legislation and will not predetermine the outcome of that process. I think that this is a great process and I am looking forward to carrying it out.

I am happy to have already had conversations with the mining industry. I had one conversation with Yukon First Nations — an early call with chiefs — and I am looking forward to the Yukon Forum where we can continue that conversation.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic public health measures

Mr. Cathers: Yesterday, the Government of BC released a clear plan for reopening the province. That plan includes clear timelines and benchmarks for when next steps will occur. It is based on information that can easily be found by the public: new cases, hospitalizations, and vaccination rates.

If all goes according to current trends, British Columbians are expected to be able to travel around the province by mid-June, and by July 1, mask use is to become a personal choice. Attending professional sports in BC is slated for September. This kind of forward-looking, transparent plan is a good step forward and is basically what we had promised in the last election to provide Yukoners with — a clear path forward.

Will the Liberal government now agree to deliver a clear path forward for a safe reopening of the Yukon that includes clear timelines and benchmarks?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am actually very pleased to be able to get up today in response to this question, because I was thinking about this yesterday as the Leader of the Official Opposition was talking about them being the only party during the election to have committed to a clear path forward and that they would do such a thing. Actually, the wording used by both the member opposite today and by the Official Opposition leader yesterday is in fact the name of the plan that the Yukon has right now — *A Path Forward* — for the purposes of informing Yukoners, for the purposes of indicating benchmarks, for the purposes of discussing and making public for Yukon citizens exactly what the path forward is going to be for reopening, for dealing with issues around COVID-19, for dealing with vaccine rollout, and for dealing with concepts of variants that are here in the territory or that might come to the territory.

I think that it is an important opportunity to remind the members opposite that Yukon is by far the safest place in Canada. Kids are in school, businesses are running, the self-isolation requirements have been reduced if fully vaccinated individuals are here, and a success story it is.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, what the minister is missing is the importance of clarity and transparency. During the last election, the Yukon Party was the only party pushing

for a clear path forward for a safe reopening. In response, the Liberal Party held a bizarre and seemingly desperate press conference in the final days of the campaign to denounce such a commitment. Yet in BC, we see now a willingness to communicate openly and provide a clear and transparent reopening plan for that province.

The Liberals have taken some steps forward to reopening, but they seem to be making it up as they go and there is a real lack of clarity. For example, with the return to in-person classes in Whitehorse high schools, one day the Liberals said that it can't happen and, a few days later, they said the opposite without being able to explain what changed in just a few days.

Will the Liberals now agree to end the uncertainty and provide Yukoners with a clear path forward that includes clear timelines and benchmarks so that people can see when reopening will happen and businesses can plan for the future?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We have been clear throughout the pandemic. We have worked with the chief medical officer of health and our partner governments to keep Yukoners safe. Recommendations come without any political interference the moment that they are ready to be given by the chief medical officer of health and then the public servants, with our leadership, work on the implementation. In *A Path Forward* — the member opposite should read the document — it speaks very directly about a two-week to three-week window in between those things as we work with our partners.

What we have seen with the Yukon Party is, you know, this time last year, pen-to-paper criticizing the chief medical officer of health. We have also seen, when we were closing down the bubble to BC, them urging us to open up to Alberta. We also saw them on the campaign trail saying, "Come hell or high water, we are going to open up to the restrictions" — again, without consulting the chief medical officer of health and actually criticizing him publicly in the newspapers.

So, again, we are leading the nation and much of the world in vaccinations. We have announced plans to start lifting restrictions. We are following the advice of the chief medical officer of health to ensure that we lift the restrictions safely, and we want to thank all Yukoners who have been following along, doing the steps that are necessary to keep everybody safe, and we will continue to follow the evidence while the opposition says that they will arbitrarily give timelines without consulting the chief medical officer of health.

Mr. Cathers: We just saw the same sort of bizarre, desperate rhetoric from the Premier that we did in the closing days of the election campaign, where they lost the popular vote and lost seats. Saying that you are clear doesn't make it so. In fact, the government has criticized us for committing to do basically what the province of BC just did.

Outfitters, tourism operators, and other businesses are looking for a clear path forward, and we have seen a worrying trend of worsening governance under the Liberals since the election. They continuously leave things to the last minute, hastily make announcements without understanding how things will work, and end up missing the mark. Having a clear plan, clear benchmarks and timelines would help to give confidence

to Yukon citizens and businesses about what's next and what's to come.

Will the Liberals now agree to develop a clear plan, similar in concept to what BC has come up with, that includes clear benchmarks and timelines for reopening the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would appreciate if the questions could be delivered minus the personal insults. I don't think it's worthy of this location or this House.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We are leading the country in the fight against COVID-19. During the pandemic, Yukon Party MLAs called on us to ignore the science, as mentioned by the Premier, and to lift restrictions and even to bubble with Alberta when they were in a very difficult place.

Last week in the media, the Leader of the Yukon Party told Yukoners that he does not support the lifting of self-isolation requirements for fully vaccinated people. Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult to make sense of where the Yukon Party stands on any of this.

The good news for Yukoners is that we have a reopening plan, as mentioned by the Premier and by me, in a former answer to this question — *A Path Forward* plan. We are following that plan. We have overseen the most successful vaccine rollout in the country. We're working closely with our public health professionals to lift restrictions in a way that protects the health and safety of Yukoners.

We need steady leadership to get us on the path to recovery, and we will continue to provide that leadership.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I just want to remind members on the floor that all the chattering in the background is very disruptive, and it's hard for me to listen to the members who are speaking at the moment. So, let's please be mindful and respectful of the members who are speaking.

Question re: Mental health services in rural communities

Ms. Blake: We have heard a lot from this government about the mental wellness and substance use service hubs in the communities of Dawson City, Carmacks, Watson Lake, and Haines Junction. When this program was announced in 2018, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services was to integrate the programs of Alcohol and Drug Services, Child and Adolescent Therapeutic Services, and Mental Health Services. This change was made to improve access to mental wellness and substance use services for Yukoners.

Staffing in each hub was to include a mental wellness and substance use counsellor, a clinical counsellor, a child and youth counsellor, and a mental health nurse. Can the minister tell Yukoners who live in the communities if the mental health hubs are fully staffed?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I will see if I have that at my fingertips; I don't know that I do. What I can commit to are the concepts of increasing mental health services and supports in *Putting People First* and certainly by my

predecessor in this role from the Yukon government in respect to having services for Yukoners, meeting them where they are, providing the services that they need with respect to mental wellness, mental health, and substance abuse services.

Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services continues to enhance services to provide Yukoners with high-quality, accessible, and consistent access to care. We have expanded the scope of supports provided by our mental wellness hub staff to include counselling for adults, children, youth, and families, mental wellness and substance use counselling, relationship counselling, trauma counselling, groups and community support, access to psychological services and psychologist services, as well as outreach services.

A key priority for me as I enter this important role is to determine what the current state of the mental wellness hubs are. Are they providing the services that are needed in communities? Are we assessing them properly? I hope to answer more in the next questions.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, this government has been holding up these hubs as proof of their action on mental health, but the situation isn't improving on the ground, to the point that, just weeks before the last election, one of their own MLAs quit. We know that the many positions in mental health hubs have remained vacant over the years. We have now learned that the minister has just thrown in the towel and relocated three mental health nursing positions from the communities back to Whitehorse. How can the minister justify the relocation of three mental health nursing positions from Yukon communities to Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that is a fair characterization of what may or may not have happened with staffing. It's certainly something that I will look into.

Obviously, the member opposite thinks that she has information that is not available to me with respect to a personnel matter. I will look into it. As I was saying in my previous answer, I have committed to looking at the services provided at the mental wellness hubs throughout the territory. They are a key improvement in the services that existed in the past. They are putting key personnel across the territory for the purpose of being accessed by Yukoners for their personal needs.

I think that it is certainly an opportunity for us to review the mental wellness hubs and determine how they can be improved, how they can be properly serving their communities, and, more importantly, how we can make sure that we are not duplicating services with First Nation governments, with community governments and councils, and we can determine how we can all work together to improve services for Yukoners.

Ms. Blake: The Yukon Bureau of Statistics has reported that, since the COVID-19 pandemic, over half of Yukoners feel their mental health is either somewhat worse or much worse now. We are all aware of the deaths from opioid overdoses and suicides across the Yukon, including in the communities.

Parents and families are raising concerns about the mental wellness of school-aged children and the impacts of COVID on

their mental health. Removing the mental health nurse positions from the community hubs is a step in the wrong direction.

How is the government going to provide the needed mental health services to communities without mental health nurses in these communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, information contained in the preamble to that question is not information that I have, but I'm happy to speak with the member opposite if that information can be provided to me. I am more than interested to determine what her information is.

The wellness of children, youth, and families is a high priority — the highest for our Yukon government, particularly as we navigate the stress of COVID-19. There is no question that, across Canada and frankly across the world, dealing with this pandemic has been a stress for individuals and for youth and families. Recognition of that is a worldwide phenomenon.

Mental health supports to school-aged children, youth, and families continue to be provided across the territory. The child, youth, and family treatment team, sometimes known as CYFT, is in a number of high schools, elementary schools, and other venues to meet student needs, to offer support and training, and to provide scheduled or drop-in counselling services on a weekly or as-needed basis. This is an important opportunity for children and youth to not have to seek out services, but to know they are nearby.

We have many supports available for youth and families. I'm proud of the work of the department and will continue to provide those services.

Question re: Marwell grader station remediation

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, in the last election, the Liberals promised to relocate the Marwell grader station and use the current site to build housing. They said this would be done within the next four years. This was a surprising announcement, because the site is a very high-profile, contaminated site. Has the Government of Yukon done an assessment of the cost of remediation, and who will pay to have the site cleaned up?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think to start, I would just touch on the fact also that another key component of this project is the fact that the Kwanlin Dün First Nation has the right of first refusal on that particular piece of land. Previous to the election, there were conversations — an unsolicited proposal that was brought forward by folks who were doing planning and working. It laid out some options for this particular site.

As well, when you look at a site that has been used for these industrial purposes, there are also — through organizations such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities — different funds that can be leveraged for brownfield development. The key is really — especially inside these urban areas — to identify areas where you can leverage funds once you have been able to do the environmental assessment. This is an absolutely key piece of real estate in the downtown area; that makes sense, of course, because of the adjacent amenities as well as the transportation challenges we have seen in other areas. Of course, this is right on a transit line.

Upon first look, this looks like it has all the elements of a particular area that should be developed, and I look forward to questions number two and three.

Ms. Clarke: The final agreement of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation gives the right of first refusal to the First Nation should the government ever look to sell the property. Has the Government of Yukon begun consultation with the KDFN about their plans to convert this site into housing? Has there been any consultation since the election?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I would just add that conversations with leadership have taken place with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, but no consultation has occurred since the end of the election. In the last 30 days, I think we have all been quite focused on the work here in the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Clarke: The Liberals promised to release 1,000 lots in the next four years, and this grader station site was an important part of that commitment. It does not sound like they gave much thought to the previous uses of the land before they made this commitment. The site is contaminated and the KDFN have a right of first refusal on the site.

When can Yukoners expect the Liberals to live up their election commitment and turn this site into housing?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, the commitment that we made was for 1,000 lots over the next five years. It is not dependent on that lot. We didn't use that in part of the accounting and analysis for the work that we will need to do.

Another thing to note here, Mr. Speaker, is that, no matter what, that site has to be cleaned up. If there is environmental remediation required, then it is required — and then once that happens is when we will bring that land back into play.

I think that one of the great uses that the Minister of Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation just pointed out is that it would be a great place to have lot development and there is conversation going on with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. It is not situated on one bus route; I think that it is situated on five of the bus routes. So, it is really well located to be accessible for folks. It is a great location; it is a beautiful location. Once it is remediated, it would be really great to see it developed as land for housing.

Question re: Construction project costs

Ms. Van Bibber: Earlier this year, the government tabled their budget, which includes a number of major construction projects. Since these projects were initially budgeted for earlier this year, there has been a massive spike to the cost of construction materials. This will have impacts on the budgets of projects, likely causing many of them to cost more than originally planned for.

Can the minister tell us if the government has done a reassessment of what the spike of construction costs has done to the government's budget?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the Member for Porter Creek North. I am in the process of reviewing all of the major contracts that this government will be committing to over the course of fiscal 2021-22, including

things like the Carmacks bypass, the Dempster fibre project, the Whistle Bend elementary school, the Old Crow health and wellness centre, and the 10-plex.

Certainly, during the course of this fiscal year, we will be reviewing the unavoidable potential cost pressures which have been brought to bear based on international factors on lots of raw material, including steel and wood, and of course labour costs as well related to the now-15-month global pandemic.

So, yes, I would say there will be cost pressures going forward. Nevertheless, we are making best efforts to take action on the commitment of over \$400 million in capital projects to get out the door this year for the benefit of all Yukoners.

Ms. Van Bibber: According to the experts, some of the most common building materials have tripled in price since last year. It sounds like the minister is considering the rising costs on the budgets of the government projects that are going to be built or planned for next year. Will he make a commitment to complete this assessment and to release it publicly within a month?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the follow-up question from the member opposite. I would stand by my first response that there are now in excess of over \$400 million of capital projects which are planned to get out the door during the course of fiscal year 2021-22.

I agree with the member opposite's contention that there are cost pressures. We will certainly be in a position to report back. With respect to the issues of cost pressures, it's unlikely, I would say, that I will be meeting a one-month — somewhat arbitrary — deadline. But certainly, in the early days of me being the Minister of Highways and Public Works, I have been briefed by my department on the various major projects and concede that — as is the case in the 10 provinces and three territories and on federal projects across Canada and in fact globally — there are cost pressures on major construction projects that have been impacted by constraints on the global supply chain. The Yukon is not unique and is not immune from those pressures.

Ms. Van Bibber: The recent spikes in the cost of lumber and the lack of supply are having a serious effect on local contractors and the economy. Multiple small- to medium-size construction companies have reached out to us, saying that their clients are cancelling or postponing jobs, forcing them to scale back operations and, in some cases, lay off employees.

These projects range from fences to decks to homes. The Yukon is blessed with potential for a viable forest industry. What is the government doing to ensure a secure local supply of lumber?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There was a question that came up about this just yesterday during the debate on the budget. What I can say is that we have just signed off on the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes forestry management plan. There are several others. People in all communities that are accessible from Yukon highways have access to fuel-wood harvesting areas on public land. The Government of Yukon identifies and develops new areas for cutting fuel wood, in addition to the areas already in place, and we work with Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Wood Products Association, and woodcutters to provide wood

supply for commercial operators to support their businesses. We prioritize planning for small-scale softwood lumber wherever the timber profile suits those types of business opportunities.

As I mentioned yesterday, I went over the initial steps that are happening under the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes forest resource management plan, where we're starting to identify those resources right now. We recognize that it's a great opportunity for the local economy and for local supply, and I hope that it will assist in some of the pressures that exist on the global supply chain right now as a result of COVID. It's a really good opportunity for us and our economy here in the territory.

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. 61

Clerk: Motion No. 61, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by Government House Leader:

THAT a Special Committee on Electoral Reform be established;

THAT the Government appoint the first member to the committee;

THAT the membership of the committee also be comprised of one member from the Official Opposition caucus selected by the Leader of the Official Opposition and one member from the Third Party caucus selected by the Leader of the Third Party;

THAT the Premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the Leader of the Third Party inform the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of the names of the selected members from their respective caucuses in writing no later than seven calendar days after the adoption of this motion by the Assembly;

THAT the Chair of the committee have a deliberative vote on all matters before the committee;

THAT the committee examine electoral reform;

THAT the committee be empowered to conduct public hearings;

THAT the committee have the power to call for persons, papers, and records and to sit during intersessional periods;

THAT the committee report to the Legislative Assembly on its findings and recommendations no later than March 31, 2022;

THAT, if the House is not sitting at such time as the committee is prepared to present its report, the Chair of the committee shall transmit the committee's report to the Speaker, who shall transmit the report to all Members of the Legislative Assembly and then, not more than one day later, release the report to the public; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly shall be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the committee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the opportunity to rise to speak to this motion. I will be brief.

Yukoners have sent a clear message that we all need to work together for the benefit of the territory. That is what we are committed to doing, and I have heard members in the opposition — both parties — say the same. We believe that this Assembly works best when all members can put forward good ideas and come together to support those ideas that advance the public good.

We will continue to work with our partners across the territory to advance community priorities that benefit Yukoners. We have heard from Yukoners that this is an exploration that they are interested in having the Members of the Legislative Assembly explore.

My motion here on the floor today deliberately does not name individuals to this particular committee. It is, in my view, appropriate that each party choose who shall represent them, and as set out in the motion, the leaders of the individual parties would present those persons by letter in written form within seven days of the beginning of this motion being passed.

I urge the Members of the Legislative Assembly to cooperate in this important work, and I urge them to pass this motion today so that work can begin.

Mr. Cathers: In rising to speak to this motion, I would just note, as we have consistently on this matter, that we are not opposed to the consideration of possible changes to the electoral system if that indeed is something that Yukoners would like to talk about. But we have consistently laid out the position, and believe that it should be the case, that if it is being considered, it should not be left to just one party to write the terms of reference for some such a committee and that there should be a sincere all-party attempt to come up with a mutually agreeable process.

Unfortunately, I have to remind Yukoners who may not recall the history on this that this isn't the first time this Liberal government has talked about a committee on electoral reform. However, in their previous term in office, they adamantly refused to actually work with other parties on crafting the terms of reference. They insisted in unilaterally setting the terms of reference and unilaterally choosing the three members to sit on the committee. For that committee, of course, it was private citizens and not Members of the Legislative Assembly. We repeatedly made our position clear that we were open to a committee, either composed of citizens or of MLAs, but that the key components had to be that it should not be left to one party that was elected. Last time they were at about 39 percent of the vote. Now they have declined to 32 percent of the vote, I believe it is, in the last election. It should not be left to one party representing a minority of Yukoners to set the terms unilaterally that could potentially lead to major changes of our electoral system. It should be an all-party process aimed at reaching agreement on a reasonable path forward.

Fast-forward to today, their last committee did not achieve what it set out to do because, after repeatedly refusing to play well with other children, if I may use the analogy, the government found themselves in a process where their committee lacked the legitimacy, lacked public support, the chair of the committee resigned, and the government just stopped talking about the fact that they never really officially disbanded the committee with the two remaining members.

I want to also note, just for the record, that for people who did put their names forward to serve on the committee, we, as the Official Opposition, do not take issue with people choosing to put their names forward to participate and respect them doing so but believe that a process is fundamentally flawed by its very nature if it is left up to the governing party, which represents less than half of Yukoners, to determine the terms of reference and the membership of said committee.

So, that committee, after the four and half years that the Liberals spent in office, got nowhere. Now, as a condition of the Liberals clinging to power with the support of their NDP coalition partners — or a coalition by another name, if you prefer — have proposed this motion.

Again, we do not fundamentally object to the concept, but we do have to note that, just like last time, they did not actually show us the details and make a sincere effort to agree on the wording. There was absolutely nothing, other than arrogance, preventing them from doing so.

The Government House Leader could have sat down with our House Leader and the Third Party House Leader, or the leaders could have sat down, and we could have, I'm sure, come up with motion wording that we would all agree to for this process.

Problem number one is that the unilateral approach — or perhaps this wording was worked on with the NDP, but again cutting out the Yukon Party — the party that actually won the popular vote in the territorial election — is not an acceptable nor democratic approach.

The other key issue for us from the start has been, and will continue to be, that if a committee of a legislative assembly or any other structure that you choose to do in considering electoral reform is to recommend change, the Yukon Party continues to believe that our democracy belongs to Yukoners and that any proposal that would significantly change the way by which members are elected to this Legislative Assembly should be presented to Yukoners in a referendum. It should be up to Yukoners to consider both the status quo and any proposed change and to cast their vote and choose whether they wish to accept the proposed changes. It should not be up to Members of the Legislative Assembly, especially members elected with significantly less than half of the popular vote, to majorly change the structure of our democracy. That is not a democratic approach.

So, I wish to emphasize, as our lead speaker on this motion, that we continue to believe that, if a committee of this type recommends change, it is fundamentally undemocratic unless that proposal is presented to Yukoners in a referendum and that no changes should occur unless Yukoners support such a change through a referendum.

We would have ideally liked to propose a change to the motion; however, we understand that, due to the fact that the committee has to report to the Legislative Assembly and then the Legislative Assembly chooses what to do with it, it's not really possible to amend this motion to throw in a requirement that there be a referendum before change occurs, but I wish to make it crystal clear that the Yukon Party will continue to stand up for democracy, even if we are the only party doing so, and we will demand that, if a committee recommends change, no major change to our electoral system occurs until and unless that change is supported by Yukoners in a referendum.

Ms. Tredger: I'm excited to be talking about this topic, because it's something that I've been thinking about for a long time. I remember, when I was a kid, first learning about how our electoral system worked and how disappointing it was when I realized that often 40 percent or less of voters will actually vote for the person who represents them.

As I got a little older and it was my turn to start voting, I started to feel like: What is the point of voting in this system where so many people's votes do not count? At that time, I didn't have a model for a better way forward. I was lucky enough to spend a year living in New Zealand where they have mixed-member representation. It was pretty exciting to see that there was another way to do democracy and to do elections.

I was really inspired when I lived there by seeing the engagement of the citizens in their government. People had a sense of ownership in their government. They felt that they were being represented by who they voted for, and they felt they had a stake in the decisions and were able to influence change in the ways they wanted to. They felt that their votes made a difference.

When people don't think that their vote counts, they don't feel like the government belongs to them. This is something that I heard on the doorstep during the election. I heard frustration with feeling like the government wasn't accountable to people, but I also heard optimism that we could do things differently.

I believe that this motion is the first step toward an electoral system that truly does represent Yukoners. When people believe that their vote counts, they vote; when people believe that their voices will be heard, they speak up, and that's why the Yukon NDP fought so hard for this committee during our negotiations.

We're very proud to be moving this important issue forward on behalf of Yukoners.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Motion No. 61.

The Member for Lake Laberge, as he summed up his comments, is aware that he was being somewhat anticipatorily negative as to the outcome of any proceedings, and he did ultimately concede that all the motion does is direct that the committee report to the Legislative Assembly on its findings and recommendations no later than March 31, 2022.

I've heard the member loud and clear over the course of the last now almost five years that the Yukon Party is of the

view — and fine, they're of the view — that there ought to be either a plebiscite or a referendum going forward in order to determine if there is some sort of consensus and that, if a consensus on electoral reform is to be considered or presented, it ought to go to Yukoners for ultimate determination. I have heard that loud and clear from the Member for Lake Laberge and from other members of the Yukon Party.

Obviously, there is nothing in this motion that stops that from occurring. The findings would have returned to the 35th Legislative Assembly, and at that point, the wise members of the Assembly would presumably receive those recommendations and begin the process of debating those recommendations, including and not limited to the potentiality or possibility of there being either a referendum or a plebiscite if that were the ultimate democratic wish of this Assembly.

So, although, as I said, I have heard the Member for Lake Laberge loud and clear on the Yukon Party's position with respect to two, three, four, five steps down this process — that there ought to be a referendum — there is obviously nothing stopping that from occurring after this proposed committee returns with its findings.

As well, the Member for Lake Laberge is interpreting — and it is certainly his prerogative to interpret this motion as providing the terms of reference. In my view, that is not necessarily the interpretation that is to be preferred. This is really the brass tacks of how the committee is to be constituted and set up, but in my view and in my submission to the Assembly this afternoon, it is clear that the three members would have a great deal of latitude in determining how they were going to conduct the public hearings and what persons, papers, or records they were going to call for during intersessional periods.

This motion is purposely non-prescriptive. It is only a framework, and a relatively simple and fair framework, as to how this committee ought to operate.

As I said, in my view, the Member for Lake Laberge is being anticipatorily pessimistic as to the good work that this committee could potentially do, and I think, importantly, there is nothing stopping there being a debate on whether there ought to be a referendum or a plebiscite at some point in the future.

Briefly then — and I thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for her comments in support of this motion — I rise to speak in support of Motion No. 61, calling on this House to establish a committee on electoral reform.

We are committed to having an in-depth conversation with Yukoners about our electoral system. Do Yukoners want it to be changed, and if so, what system would best represent their voice? We are open and willing to work with the other two parties going forward on this. The task of ensuring an accurate reflection of people's wishes and preferences, as it pertains to the expression of their democratic franchise, is admittedly not a simple process. It is important that not one election or event prescribe or frame the terms of this conversation.

In the Yukon Liberal platform, we committed to consult with Yukoners about their vision of what comes next for electoral reform within six months of re-election. Our Liberal

government believes that this can only be done through a robust and fulsome conversation with Yukoners.

This proposed committee, as mandated through this motion, will closely examine electoral reform, conduct public hearings, and have the authority to call for persons, papers, and records for that specific purpose. This committee, as I said previously, will present its findings to the Legislative Assembly no later than March 31, 2022.

We do not believe that our party — or any other party, for that matter — should presuppose what Yukoners want from potential electoral reform. This is why we committed to having an equal number of representatives appointed from all three caucuses on this committee.

Many Yukoners have asked for there to be a conversation about our territorial electoral process. With this motion, we will deliver on our commitment to facilitate an exchange of ideas in the spirit of fairness and collaboration. To my colleagues from across the floor, I urge you to vote in favour of this motion in order to support the important work of this committee.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief in my comments speaking in opposition to this motion. I think that it has been made clear — some of our policy — by my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, but I wish to elaborate on his position and articulation of our position.

One of the issues that we take with this motion is the fact that this is yet another example of the Liberals and the NDP cooking up a system behind closed doors and presenting it through their CASA to the Legislature. It's not unlike what happened with the committee structures for the other standing committees of the Legislature, which we debated a few weeks ago, where an agreement has been made between the two parties and presented to us as a done deal, and we should just accept it and participate, even though we had no contribution, discussion, or consultation prior to it being presented to us.

What worries us, in particular, is that we don't know what else the Liberals and the NDP have agreed to on this file. With legislative committees, we know that their agreement, as articulated in the CASA, extended to the structure of committees. But we learned at the first House Leaders' meeting that the agreement also extended to the sitting length of this Sitting. We know that there are other things that are unwritten but obviously agreed to by the Liberals and the NDP that aren't in the CASA. We wonder what else has been agreed to by the two other parties with regard to this file.

I know, very clearly, where the NDP stands on electoral reform. They've been very clear about their position over the years. The Member for Whitehorse Centre just explained her take on proportional representation and, I believe, expressed support generally for the model as espoused in New Zealand.

I think that the Yukon Party has been clear as well. We are not in favour of proportional representation.

What we wonder about is the position of the Liberal Party, because we know that there are a variety of views. I have heard the Premier — both publicly and privately — express positions that sound to me like he is against proportional representation, but we have heard from members like the Member for Mount

Lorne-Southern Lakes express publicly a position that seems to be in favour of some form of proportional representation.

We know that there is a diversity of views in the Liberal Party on this, and we know that they were desperate to stay in power and willing to offer up just about anything to the NDP to do that. So, we wonder what else has been offered up and if our electoral system has been offered up as an offering to the NDP for the Liberals to stay in power.

That worries us, Mr. Speaker. It worries us because, while the committee has a representative from each party, of course, the committee itself is not proportionally representative of this Legislature; therefore, the two parties can very easily use this opportunity to force through something in this committee.

As the Member for Riverdale North has indicated, there is a stop-check that it will have to come back to the Legislature, at least, and so we are happy to hear that, but we do worry about what sort of side deals have been made between the Liberals and the NDP on this particular file. We are concerned about being forced to participate in this process if the outcome has already been determined as we have seen with other instances in the Legislature and as we have seen with other instances in this confidence and supply agreement.

We know that the Liberals have a very poor record when it comes to electoral reform. They made this promise in the last election back in 2016 to look at electoral reform. Naturally, they failed at that. They tried to unilaterally create a committee to look at that. That committee structure, despite their best efforts, collapsed under its own weight, and the incompetency of the government in naming it created a huge number of issues for that committee. Obviously, it resulted in the fact that the unilaterally appointed chair resigned, and the Premier, at that time, threw up his hands and let the process continue to just fail. Ultimately, it sat undone.

Of course, the Liberals didn't include, to my knowledge, a commitment to electoral reform in their most recent platform, but as we have seen quite frequently, they have adopted the NDP's platform. That is what we see here — that the Liberals have adopted the NDP's platform.

Again, Mr. Speaker, that's my concern with this motion. Obviously, if this motion passes, we'll be compelled by the Legislature to participate in it and so we will, but we remain concerned about what sort of deals have been cooked up between the Liberals and the NDP on this particular file, and we'll be watching the operation of this committee very closely.

So, we will be voting against this motion, but we know that it's a bit of a foregone conclusion that, because of the confidence and supply agreement, this motion will pass and that the Liberals and the NDP will get their way on this one, for sure.

Ms. White: I thank my colleagues for their comments today. It's fascinating, because this isn't the first time that we have had a conversation about electoral reform on this floor. As a matter of fact, it's important to note that we've talked about this numerous times — not just in the 34th but in the 33rd — and there have been a lot of times that this has come up.

The really interesting thing is that, during the 34th, when the then-Liberal government proposed an independent commission on electoral reform, both opposition parties were in opposition to how it was set up, and that was because, at that time, it did feel very unilateral. It was decided by government and members were appointed by government. It's important to note that there was a letter received from the former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly talking about why the independent commission on electoral reform wasn't the best idea.

It's interesting to hear the Member for Lake Laberge talk about select committees and terms of reference and how things were decided Outside, being the fact that, in this House, he is the member who has been on the most select committees, as a matter of fact, having been elected ahead of those of us who have been around since 2011.

It's important to note that select committees are set out with the members of that committee. They decide what work they're going to do, who they're going to invite, where they're going to go, and how that's going to look within that committee. It's one of those things — you get to hear things about cooking up a system or what other things have been done — because unlike maybe the way the Yukon Party behaves, the Yukon NDP have been really honest about what we're doing and about that.

As a matter of fact, the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Liberals released the confidence and supply agreement — it is a public document — which benefits everyone when it gets re-read into the record on numerous times every day in questions from the Yukon Party.

So, it has been clear. Spoiler alert to folks listening: There isn't a super-secret document that is private. There isn't one that is locked in a drawer that can only be looked at by people who signed the document to say that they are allowed to see it. There is no hidden agenda. This is a matter of going out and having conversations with Yukoners and finding out what they think about electoral reform.

We saw a large-scale national movement by the federal government and it is important to note that hundreds of Yukoners turned out to those consultations. They were held at the High Country Inn Convention Centre and there was standing room only. Hundreds of people came out because they had thoughts that they wanted to share on electoral reform. In that case, Canada's electoral system — and in this case, we are talking about Yukon-specific. It has not been pre-decided how it is going to look. It hasn't done any of those things.

It is important to note that, in the 34th, both opposition parties spoke against it — because at that point in time, it did feel like it was being dictated. I think that the important thing to note here is that we are talking about three members — one from each political party. That is very similar, I would highlight, to the electoral boundaries commission, where it had one appointed member from each political party — similar, one of each.

I think that it is important to note that this is a select committee of the Legislative Assembly, which means that it comes back to the Legislative Assembly — those conversations. I appreciate that the Leader of the Yukon Party

is concerned that it is a done deal, but — like I said on election night — maybe this was the time to have that conversation. Maybe we hear repeatedly the interpretation of the election results and how they are unfair, but here is that opportunity to have that conversation across the territory — which is something that I am looking forward to actually; I think that it is going to be really interesting. It is also one of those things too where I really do believe that this is an opportunity for us to work together, so I welcome that — because things have to be different; they do.

I can look back to the 32nd Assembly and I can think about how many things were cooked up and rammed through by that false majority government and how I didn't think that it worked. I can say the same thing about the 33rd — again, false majority. Things that got passed — we jokingly said that when there were votes being held that we were so close because we were always just one shy — one shy of tying. This is actually an opportunity, I think it's important, and I look forward to those conversations.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will take this opportunity — I appreciate the other parties weighing in — other Members of this Legislative Assembly weighing in on this particular motion, but I will take the opportunity to make a few comments.

I am quite concerned about the characterization of this motion by the Leader of the Official Opposition. He indicates that somehow this is not a valid motion on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, in his view — I don't mean technically valid.

I note that the wording of this motion, with the exception of the names indicated in the motion, is almost identical to a motion that was passed in the Fall Sitting last year for the purpose of again striking a committee to look at electoral reform. Several of the things that he mentioned about the former committee were not correct. Unfortunately, what I heard is that the Yukon Party conservatives are not interested in cooperating on a good idea, despite the fact that they keep talking about wanting to be cooperative and move forward.

What this motion is asking for is that we go and we listen to Yukoners. The motion is about gathering information and about speaking to Yukoners about an important issue. The motion doesn't mention proportional representation or any other kind of democratic process. Those are the Leader of the Yukon Party conservatives' — those are his words, not mine — in this motion. The conservative Yukon Party leader is really fear-mongering, I think, rather than wanting to support a motion that is looking to hear from Yukoners.

The committee, we're suggesting here, would be created by a motion, and that's what we're debating here. I have noted — and I'm going to take this opportunity to clear up a few things. I'm quite concerned about the Official Opposition's characterization and providing Yukoners with truly incorrect

information. The Member for Lake Laberge speaks endlessly about a popular vote, and he came very close today to even indicating that somehow this government is illegitimate, and that's clearly something that he should take care with. Those comments are not worthy of this Legislative Assembly; they're not worthy of Yukoners; they're not worthy of the democratic process. What is more democratic than an election? Yukoners have had their say. They have brought us to this Legislative Assembly to work together.

One point that I think is important in response to that is that the Yukon Party conservatives got 39 percent of the popular vote in the last election, which is a little over one-third of that vote. The Liberals got 32 percent, which is about one-third of the popular vote, and the NDP got 28 percent, which is a little under one-third of the popular vote. I don't suspect that will put an end to the Member for Lake Laberge continuing to put forward numbers that are not those, but those are what occurred in the last election.

The Leader of the Official Opposition also spoke about how this was somehow a concern to him. The CASA — I think the Member for Takhini-Kopper King makes an excellent point — is a public document. I'm not sure why the Leader of the Official Opposition is casting aspersions on what's to come next and what's a secret deal. It's a public document; it's open for all Yukoners to review; it's open for all members of the opposition to review. If they have questions, I'm sure that they won't bring them to us, but we would be happy to answer them.

It's important, with respect to this particular motion, to point out — Yukoners know this, Mr. Speaker, but to really point out to the members of the Official Opposition — that electoral reform, a concept that I have presented here in today's motion, was in our platform. A promise was made by the Yukon Liberal Party to consult with Yukoners about their vision — their vision, Mr. Speaker — for what comes next for electoral reform within six months of re-election. That is why I have brought this motion. I urge all members to support it in the spirit of cooperation and of hearing from Yukoners.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

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

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

Motion No. 61 agreed to

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22 — continued*

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Health and Social Services

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am just being joined by Deputy Minister Stephen Samis from Health and Social Services and Assistant Deputy Minister of Corporate Services, Karen Chan. I would like to welcome them here to the Legislative Assembly today for the purpose of assisting in the questions that will come in relation to the Health and Social Services main budget for 2021-22. Welcome to them.

I would like to take a moment to thank the department staff who worked very hard on this particular budget, and they, along with the whole department, have been instrumental in ensuring

that we develop a budget that supports Yukoners. I want to thank them for all of their hard work.

Keeping Yukoners safe has been our government's top priority always but particularly since the COVID-19 virus first appeared here in the territory and across the world. Our territory is in a good position today — a good position due to the ongoing hard work of all Yukoners. Yukoners have followed our public health measures, have adapted their businesses, their practices, and changed their habits and worked hard to keep us all safe.

I am pleased to say that through the dedication and hard work of all of our front-line health and social support workers — from nurses and doctors, to social workers, 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 have continued to offer the services and supports that our citizens rely upon — not an easy feat.

Thank you to all of our health workers for their extraordinary work. We are winning this battle and we are grateful for the effort that everyone has made and continues to make. The pandemic has been difficult. It has been a very challenging time for all of us and it continues to impact all aspects of our lives, including this year's budget for the Department of Health and Social Services.

Our estimated budget for this year is \$490,290,000. These funds are critical to maintaining and improving the health of Yukoners — all Yukoners. Simply put, they are investments in our health and well-being — directly or indirectly, this benefits us all.

I will review in summary the 2021-22 budget for Health and Social Services. The most substantial increase in this year's budget is to the funds that have been needed to fight COVID-19. This year, we are budgeting an additional \$14,299,000 to fight the virus and its impacts and support the vaccine rollout. This includes funding for an additional 72 temporary employees, and I want to emphasize that these staffing increases are temporary. These positions are needed to vaccinate and protect Yukoners now. Over the coming months, we will assess any ongoing needs as a result of the pandemic. We are all thankful to those individuals who have helped to keep us safe.

This COVID-dedicated funding also includes \$4,207,000 in direct transfers to individuals and organizations impacted by COVID. This includes transfers to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Family and Children's Services, and other vulnerable clients. This represents an approximate three-percent increase to the overall budget when compared with last year.

While the pandemic continues to occupy headlines, the opioid overdose crisis continues to be one of the most serious public health crises in Canada and in our recent history. We have seen that the COVID-19 pandemic is worsening this crisis. The number of overdose deaths in the Yukon is heartbreaking. Our government takes this issue very seriously.

We are taking significant and immediate action to address the public health crisis. We are committed to opening a safe

consumption site in Whitehorse. We are also committed to creating a safe supply program. Safe supply programs have demonstrated that they save lives given the ever-increasing toxic drug supply that we see throughout Canada.

This 2021-22 Health and Social Services budget commits \$1 million to get these two life-saving programs up and running as soon as possible. Further efforts to address this crisis also include the Department of Health and Social Services assisting with the purchase of a mass spectrometer, which we then provided to Blood Ties Four Directions to support its drug testing services. Blood Ties makes drug testing services available through its location on Ogilvie Street via their outreach van and, since last July, to the Wood Street Housing First residence.

The Yukon government's referred care clinic began offering drug testing on-site for its clients last December. Our referred care clinic also provides an opioid treatment program that includes access to prescription medications such as suboxone and methadone.

Another priority of the department is continuing to move forward with the direction proposed in the *Putting People First* final report. *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 remain committed to implementing the report's 76 recommendations. Implementing these recommendations will provide better value for money, make services more effective, and improve outcome and experiences for clients, patients, families, and health and social service providers. If I seem excited about that, I truly am. I know our government has worked hard to have that report completed and are now looking forward to the path it sets out.

For this fiscal year, we are budgeting nearly \$10 million for *Putting People First* initiatives. This includes nearly \$6 million in O&M and \$4 million in capital expenses. \$1.9 million is proposed for health human resources. There is \$610,000 to support our commitment to health human resources in implementing *Putting People First*. There is \$806,000 in bringing care closer to home by increasing the number of nurses in communities, including increasing community nurses and the number of nurse practitioners.

Lastly, there is a proposed increase of \$542,000 for Continuing Care to introduce a number of system-level enhancements, including a new rural end-of-life program and operating funds for the community day program. Continuing Care will also be hiring a manager of indigenous services and relations as part of our ongoing commitment to advance reconciliation and improve access to care and support for Yukon First Nations.

Another important *Putting People First* recommendation is to provide Yukoners with universal dental care. Oral health is vitally important to a person's overall health. We are committing \$500,000 this year to develop a territory-wide dental care plan, which will be implemented and funded in the 2022-23 fiscal year.

We are investing \$1 million in capital funding and \$520,000 in O&M to help get the new bilingual health centre up and running. As the third-most bilingual province or territory in Canada, Yukon has a long-standing and growing francophone and French-speaking community. The centre will provide primary care services, using a collaborative model, and have an increased focus on preventive care.

The *Putting People First* report is, as we all know, a chart forward, and we look forward to modernizing and improving all aspects of the services we provide. When looking at the future, technology is always of primary concern. That is why our work on 1Health, Yukon's electronic medical records system, continues.

We have proposed a funding increase of \$3 million in capital and \$889,000 in O&M cost to support the expansion and implementation of 1Health. This funding will also enhance and support virtual care options for Yukoners. When 1Health is fully implemented, all care providers within Yukon will use the same system and all Yukoners will have access to their medical records through a secure online client portal.

We are on track to become the first and only jurisdiction in Canada to have an electronic health information system that connects public, private, and First Nation-led care settings through one integrated platform.

Complete and accurate health information is foundational to a person-centred approach to care. 1Health will soon provide that. All Yukoners will benefit from this investment in their health and well-being.

Medical travel in the north is a necessity — a fact of life — for those of us who live in this great territory. Improving and enhancing our medical travel program is something that Yukoners have been asking for. We have already doubled the medical travel benefit and have applied it to the first day of travel for patients who need to remain overnight for medical care. In addition, we are now providing a subsidy of \$75 for approved escorts starting on the first day of travel and a subsidy of \$75 to those travelling for medical treatment on the same day.

This fiscal year, we are standing up our new care coordination and medical travel unit. This unit will deliver a new model of service delivery that reflects a new vision for medical travel and the coordination of care.

This year, we are investing nearly \$1.5 million to improve medical travel. This includes more than \$1 million for increases to the medical travel subsidy and approximately \$400,000 in personnel costs to establish a dedicated team that will provide enhanced assistance to all Yukoners at every stage of the medical travel process.

I am pleased to say that the Government of Canada has renewed its investment and commitment to the territorial health investment fund. Yukon will receive \$12.8 million over the next two years through this initiative. These funds are used to offset medical travel, to strengthen services, to increase access, and to improve the quality of our health care system.

We are projecting more than \$1 million in savings this fiscal year by successfully reducing the cost of prescription drugs by reducing pharmaceutical markups. This is a

significant savings accomplishment at the same time as we are expanding the scope of services provided by pharmacists — again, with the aim to improve the health and well-being of all Yukoners.

I am going to turn for a moment to the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We are continuing to increase funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation. They are a critical partner, and we are increasing core funding by more than \$4.2 million. This proposed increase to support the Yukon Hospital Corporation represents a 5.2-percent increase over the 2020-21 main estimates.

Between fiscal years 2015-16 and 2021-22, the Hospital Corporation services' operation and maintenance budget has increased by 35.4 percent, an average of 5.9 percent per year. I'm emphasizing this because there has been more than one comment in this Legislative Assembly during this Sitting from the members of the Official Opposition that somehow the Yukon Hospital Corporation is not being properly funded. So, I will repeat: In the last number of years, between 2015-16 and 2021-22, the Yukon Hospital Corporation services' O&M budget has increased by 35.4 percent.

This O&M funding includes \$1 million to improve safety and security. This year's budget includes nearly \$1 million to improve safety and security at Whitehorse General Hospital's secure medical unit. We will also be investing \$5.7 million in capital costs this fiscal year for the new secure medical unit project.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation will also receive \$1.2 million to replace aging CT and ultrasound equipment and \$800,000 to refurbish elevators at the Whitehorse General Hospital. Our government is committed to working closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that we are meeting both their core and their capital needs.

We're also making other capital investments through the Health and Social Services budget. Major investments include: \$1.3 million for renovations for primary health care in Yukon facilities and to replace aging equipment in community nursing facilities within Health Services; \$589,000 to replace operational equipment within continuing care homes and home care operations; \$500,000 for Whitehorse Emergency Shelter renovations; and \$162,000 to replace operation equipment for Family and Children's Services.

Family and Children's Services, in this year's budget, has a proposed increase of nearly \$4.5 million. This increase is for Yukon to begin working with the Canadian prenatal nutrition program, as well as enhancing paternal and maternal supports through investments in community-based projects throughout the territory.

Reducing the number of children in care remains one of our top priorities. We are increasing the child and family services budget by more than \$2.9 million this year to increase supports for children, youth, and families. This includes extended family care agreements, which are essential to reducing the number of children in care while making sure that children remain safe and attached to their families.

In conclusion, everything that we do within the Department of Health and Social Services is to maintain and

improve the well-being of Yukoners. Particularly in the last 15 months, the responsibilities that have rested on the shoulders on those who work at Health and Social Services have become immense. They have ultimately been responsible as a key player in the government's response to COVID, in the work to keep Yukoners safe, and in the work to keep our territory safe.

I am happy to have this opportunity to thank them for that work. I know that it's not over. I know that it will be continuing, and I know that the folks who have been on the front lines of this pandemic have supported all Yukoners, have done it for the good of our territory, and will continue to meet the challenge every day that comes through their work.

Madam Deputy Chair, I am pleased to answer any questions about the important work of the Department of Health and Social Services. I look forward to providing whatever information we might be able to.

Mr. Cathers: Welcome to the minister on her new role as she begins her first debate as Minister of Health and Social Services. We are pleased to have the opportunity to debate this important area of government, which spends almost half a billion dollars. In recent years, there has been a disturbing lack of debate in the Legislative Assembly on the department's budget and on the program areas related to that budget. It includes that the Liberal government has gone to great lengths to avoid debating the Health and Social Services budget in previous years and has put it to the back of the queue in terms of debate in more than one Sitting. It is pretty clear that, when a government doesn't want to call a department for debate, they are afraid of the questions that they will have to answer or the non-answers that they would give to those questions.

I do have questions today about a number of areas, including, of course, the government's response to the pandemic. I would also just like to take a moment to thank all the staff of the Department of Health and Social Services, as well as the Hospital Corporation and NGOs that are funded by Health and Social Services, for the important work that they do to meet the needs of Yukon citizens.

I would like to particularly recognize the good work that has been done by staff of the department and others in terms of the rollout of the Yukon's vaccination campaign for COVID-19.

First, I do want to begin by talking about the important area of our hospitals. We heard the minister earlier attempt to spin the government's record on it, but as the minister knows, in the area of hospital funding, we have seen chronic neglect under the Liberal government for this area during most of their first term. This includes that the territory literally entered a pandemic with the Hospital Corporation being short millions of dollars in core funding for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Madam Deputy Chair, that is not just me saying it. The Hospital Corporation's own annual report — as tabled in the Legislative Assembly and available on their website — for the 2019-20 fiscal year says it. On page 14 of that report, it shows that the Hospital Corporation's total expenses for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, were \$96.5 million. Total revenues, on

the other hand, were only \$92.6 million. Again, that is according to the Hospital Corporation's own annual report.

On page 15 of the Hospital Corporation's annual report, it provides more detail. Both page 14 and page 15 show that, for a fiscal year that ended after the territory and the world were literally in a pandemic, the Hospital Corporation ended that fiscal year short \$3.9 million in funding. That was unacceptable.

Witnesses from the Hospital Corporation also confirmed our understanding of this chronic funding shortfall when they appeared in the Legislative Assembly in November 2020 and November 2019. The problem didn't start in either of those years; it began in 2017 with the first budget of the Liberals.

I want to also just point out, in specific rebuttal to the claims that the minister made about increases to hospital funding, that if you look at when the Hospital Corporation witnesses appeared to testify in this Legislative Assembly in November 2020 — on November 19, to be precise — on page 1970 of Hansard, we heard from the CEO of the Hospital Corporation, who indicated that the hospital funding — "... over the past five years, we have seen an annual increase in our core funding of two percent per year on average..." That is a dramatically different picture than the number the minister gave to this House. I think Yukoners know who they can trust on this issue.

As noted, the problem with the Liberals' chronic neglect of the Hospital Corporation didn't start in 2020 or 2019; it began in 2017 with the very first budget of the Liberals. Statements made by the Premier and his former Minister of Health and Social Services, which are recorded in Hansard, were very telling about their attitude toward the Yukon hospitals and unfortunately foreshadowed how the Liberals would act during their last term in office. They seem to see our hospitals as wasting money and naively believed that increasing core funding by less than the rate of inflation, and/or withholding millions of dollars in core funding for the Hospital Corporation until late in the fiscal year or even to the next fiscal year, was somehow a workable approach.

The former minister confirmed in Hansard in May 2017 that the increase that the government provided for the hospital that year was just one percent. She also confirmed that the hospital had asked for millions more.

Just for the reference of members and anyone listening and reading, you can refer to Hansard from May 2017, pages 427 to 431, and from the appearances of the Hospital Corporation witnesses in November 2019 and 2020, as well as the Hospital Corporation's own annual reports.

Unfortunately, at the time, the now-former minister also made remarks about the Hospital Corporation which in my view were disrespectful, going so far as to accuse them of not being accountable. Among her statements, which have not aged well, is this one — and I quote: "There was no accountability previously. It was just, here's a bunch of money, go run the hospitals." That, of course, is from Hansard, page 430, May 15, 2017.

I hope the minister has learned from mistakes of her colleague and that the Liberal government has learned from

their mistakes and their neglect in this area. I would give the new minister a bit of the benefit of the doubt and a chance to see what actions she will take to meet the needs of the Hospital Corporation, but I will also put both her and the Premier on notice that I will be watching this very closely as our critic for both Finance and Health and Social Services.

I will now go on to some specific other areas and will return later to some of the specific issues, projects, and programs at the Hospital Corporation, but for the moment, in the interest of maximizing the time for debate, I'm going to move on to a topic that's top of mind for everyone, that being the pandemic that we're currently in.

I would like to begin by returning to the topic that I raised in Question Period regarding reopening of the territory. We've seen a number of provinces — most recently, the Province of British Columbia — release their plans for reopening. I'm looking here at BC's plan, entitled *BC's Restart: A plan to bring us back together*.

That plan — for anyone interested — is available online and talks about BC's plan, starting May 25, for restarting social connections, businesses, and activities. It describes moving through the steps, with clear benchmarks, beginning on May 25, indicating the criteria for that step that would be required. It goes on to establish step 2, with the earliest start date anticipated of June 15 — again laying out clear criteria based on the percentage of the population vaccinated, as well as the case counts and COVID-19 hospitalizations.

In each of these areas, it describes changes to limitations on things, such as personal gatherings, organized gatherings, travel, business restrictions, and so on. The next phase in BC's plan is for step 3, for which they anticipate the earliest start date of July 1. That includes that the criteria for moving to step 3 is at least 70 percent of the 18-plus population vaccinated with dose one, along with low case counts and declining COVID-19 hospitalizations.

It's notable, in comparing those steps, that it does seem that the Yukon appears to be in line with what in BC would meet their step 4 criteria, where they have indicated that their earliest start date is September 7. Quoting again from BC's document: "The criteria for moving to Step 4 is more than 70% of the 18+ population vaccinated with dose 1, along with low case counts and low COVID-19 hospitalizations."

"The earliest date we move to Step 4 is September 7."

As we have been hearing from businesses, especially within the tourism sector, within the outfitting sector, as well as restaurants and retailers that derive a significant portion of their income from tourist traffic during the summer months and the fall — one of the things that my colleagues and I have heard consistently from business owners is that they need clarity, and they are not getting clarity from government. They have had vague and high-level terms tossed around, but we have seen a real lack of clarity in the reopening.

As the minister recalled — and as I reminded them of in Question Period — we have seen the government also flip-flop on issues such as whether high schools can return to class or not just within the space of a few days. Business owners do not have confidence in this Liberal government and do not see the

details that they want to see in the government's plan for reopening. The Liberal government's plan, compared to others — including, I will note in this case, especially the province right next to us, British Columbia — when you compare the Yukon's plan with BC's plan, the BC government's plan is a lot more clear and a lot more transparent, and it establishes clearer benchmarks and timelines as well as indications on what restrictions that are currently in place will change if everything goes according to what the government expects.

Most business owners and citizens understand that things may change, but that is why an approach basically in line with what BC has done — in terms of spelling out the steps — is a good model for identifying what the government expects will happen and when they expect that will happen and giving people clarity about what the key criteria are that have to be met for that to occur and what could interfere with that.

The question for the minister is: Does the government now realize that their plan is not sufficiently clear enough to meet the needs of Yukon businesses and will she agree to revisit this and actually come up with a clearer plan and clearer timelines, comparable to what the province of British Columbia has announced, in terms of its details?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am happy to address this question. I addressed it earlier today in Question Period. I appreciate that the member opposite seems to be enamored by and likes the BC plan — I think "BC's Restart" or something is the title of that — but I am not entirely sure that the member opposite has read *A Path Forward*, which is the Yukon plan and the plan that has actually been in existence — with some changes, going forward — since last summer and benchmarks have been required to meet opportunities that exist here in the territory. Yukoners can look at that document and see what those benchmarks might be.

Of course, we have to remember that any plan, going forward, needs to be responsive to reality, it needs to be responsive to the science, it needs to be responsive to the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health, and it needs to be rooted in reality.

I just want to clarify a few things. Firstly, we announced our next steps and the reopening that occurred — the concepts and the plans and the changes that were made to *A Path Forward* on May 5 publicly in a presentation made by the Premier and the chief medical officer of health. I'm not sure that the member opposite knows that those are weekly public media events where announcements are made and ultimately media gets to ask questions and members of the public can look online, they can send in questions online, and they'll be responded to. It's always Dr. Hanley and either the Premier or another minister. In fact, two weeks ago, I had the honour of doing that announcement with Dr. Hanley.

What Dr. Hanley tells the public during those media events are recommendations he makes, what the science is, how his recommendations are rooted in science, what the rationale is for recommendations that he is making — and ultimately, it becomes the government's responsibility to determine whether or not those are recommendations that are accepted, that can be implemented, and that are meeting the needs of Yukoners.

Luckily — and with a lot of work and a lot of cooperation going forward — the opportunity has been there for those to be sound recommendations that are ultimately implemented by government.

I think that is a system that has been working well for Yukoners, and it is the system that has occurred.

On May 5, our government announced that there would be a number of changes taking place on May 25. British Columbia, in contrast to that, announced their next steps the day that their lockdown ended — which I think was yesterday — and there was certainly no advance notice — although that was something in the Yukon — although there have been complaints about how much advance notice that was and whether or not that was sufficient, it certainly — as the Premier and I have said publicly — in the event that a recommendation is made and if it's going to change something, we have been telling the public immediately.

We are in a very different place from British Columbia and have opened up in ways that British Columbia is still only contemplating. That is as a result of our vaccine uptake and as a result of our implementing the safe six plus one, of Yukoners keeping each other safe and of abiding by the rules. Unlike our path forward, British Columbia's benchmarks will depend on epidemiology and vaccine rates.

What is important to note is that the member opposite, in his hailing of the BC restart program and ignoring the Yukon's *A Path Forward* — which I say are individual to those jurisdictions, but are not unlike one another — he has failed to note the proviso that, if numbers rise again in British Columbia or if they do not reach their vaccine uptake or if the epidemiology changes, the plan will need to be changed or stopped or retracted.

What he has also failed to note is that the dates set out in the BC plan are earliest possible dates; they are not carved in stone. They depend on a number of factors, and all will need to be responsive to the health and safety of folks in British Columbia.

I don't want to spend a great deal of time comparing the two. Clearly, I urge the members opposite to read *A Path Forward*. It's available online. It is a plan that has been in place here in the territory — with the necessary changes, with the necessary responsiveness to our situation — for well over a year — I should say for about a year, to be clear.

One of the components used to inform our response is the epidemiology of COVID-19, which provides some evidence related to patterns in cases, to spread, to effectiveness of measures, and risk factors. This includes but is not limited to looking at demographics, locations of outbreaks in other jurisdictions, and the prevalence of the COVID-19 variants and those effects on reopening.

The CMOH reviews weekly international, national, and territorial epidemiology and technical reports to inform advice and recommendations.

Based on a review of the epidemiology, modelling scenarios for the Yukon and knowledge of our territorial health system are critical. The CMOH makes recommendations meant to ensure the health and safety of Yukoners.

As we have mentioned many times here in the Legislative Assembly — but I think it is valuable, because the *A Path Forward* document is based on this kind of information. As discussed, decisions and the document take into account a number of factors, including ways of reducing the risk of introducing new cases of COVID-19 to the Yukon Territory, as well as ways of limiting the risk of transmission within our community.

I think that is what I can say about *A Path Forward*. I appreciate that the question at the end of the commentary by the member opposite was: Will we make a document, make our plan going forward similar to BC's? I daresay, not only do we have that, but BC has been looking at our plan to figure out — and other jurisdictions have as well.

I think, perhaps lastly, what I should say in response to this question is that step 3 of British Columbia's plan is dependent on British Columbia hitting 70 percent of British Columbians receiving their first dose of a vaccine. Of course, already today in the Yukon, we have 78 percent of individuals having received their first dose, and the epidemiology is a factor. As I have noted, lastly, it is why we are well down the path to what British Columbia hopes to achieve — and the rest of Canada. This is in no way critical of the British Columbia plan or of any plan across the country. It is critical to recognize that the Yukon is in a very positive place as a result of the hard work that Yukoners have done.

I take the member opposite at his word that he will ask questions with respect to the Yukon Hospital Corporation budget. I could take some of my time in response to this question to go there. I certainly challenge the facts that have been put forward as part of that commentary in this debate, and I certainly will take the opportunity to go there in the event that I have the opportunity to do so.

I'm not interested, at this time, in taking more time. I hope that we will get to many more questions. I will cede the floor, but I certainly don't agree with those comments about the Hospital Corporation funding. I guess the one thing that I can say is that there is timing with respect to the Hospital Corporation annual report, and then there are supplementary budgets. The Hospital Corporation is made whole through that process.

Mr. Cathers: In the interest of the time of the House, I won't spend too much time debating the minister's inaccurate comments about the Hospital Corporation, but I would remind the member that I'm not going to buy their numbers because I can actually read a balance sheet and an annual report and the facts speak for themselves on the government's chronic neglect — the Liberal government's chronic neglect — for the Hospital Corporation during their last term in office. But it's a new term, and they have a chance to do better this time and I hope they will.

I want to talk again — so, comparing plans to plans, the minister has attempted to suggest that we were somehow enamoured with BC's plan for reopening. In fact, I would point out to the minister that the reason that we're pointing to it is that the government itself, the Premier, and Dr. Hanley have often referenced what BC was doing and referenced looking to

the model of what Dr. Bonnie Henry was doing in British Columbia. That is the big part of the reason why we are pointing to British Columbia and saying, simply put, that you yourselves have said that BC is a good model and that you are looking to them in how they're handling it. Their plan is far clearer than yours. Will you commit to fixing it and doing what, by the way, the Yukon Party committed to doing in the territorial election of providing Yukoners with a clear plan for reopening?

Now, the minister questioned whether I had read the government's *A Path Forward* document. Not only have I read it, I re-read it while the minister was talking here this afternoon, and it looks to me like the minister may not have read that document herself because, comparing BC's plan for reopening to the Yukon's, what I would challenge the minister to point out to me is where in the Yukon's document does it actually say dates. Where does it establish clear metrics for moving from one stage to another? Please feel free to reference the exact pages, because I have the document right here with me, and it is not clear in the way the minister has suggested that it is.

I want to point out that, as a number of people have said throughout the pandemic, we are all in this together, but we're not all in the same boat. This pandemic and the restrictions associated with it are having a far greater impact on Yukon business owners who are desperately wondering whether they are going to have a tourism season or fall, depending on what their specific business is. For those people who are looking for clarity about what government's best guess is, when will they know what factors would change that — and not in the way government has presented them, as vague, possibly, maybe, but without clearly saying that if this happens, this would change?

Business owners, some I have heard from — and I know my colleagues have as well. There are a lot of business owners who, at the start of the pandemic, were looking forward to the future with optimism. Some of those very same Yukon business owners are now just wondering if their businesses can survive and recover. For those who are considering whether they can have a summer tourist season and/or a fall tourist season, they need details. They need clarity from the government, similar in concept to what British Columbia has provided their citizens, which provides an indication of what date government expects to move to another stage and what the key variables are that could change that.

Again, for the minister and her colleagues, this may be a bit more of a theoretical debate because, for everybody here in this Assembly — at least every Member of the Legislative Assembly — our paycheques keep arriving in our bank accounts, regardless of whether the territory is open or not. The same applies to anyone who works in the public service.

Not to disparage the efforts that are being made by anyone, but for business owners who are dependent on whether they can operate or not, there are some people who are really facing a very uncertain future and a very uncertain summer, and they are turning to us, in some cases with desperation, asking us to push the government for clarity so that they can plan for whether they have a chance of operating in June, in July, in August, in September, in October.

I am asking the minister to commit to doing a better job of providing clarity. If she really wants to say that the government's document released in March provides more clarity than BC's, then take that document and show me where the dates are in it. Reference the pages and I would be happy to see it, because I have read through it here again this afternoon and that clarity is simply not there.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will provide some commentary. I apologize if I am not directly answering the question, which I think is: Will you provide dates? But I will make a comment on that.

Dates were not included in *A Path Forward* because I think that it is irresponsible, frankly, to say to Yukoners that something is going to happen on June 1, or something is going to happen on July 1, or something is going to happen in November 2020. When the waves of COVID-19 — and the effect that they have had on the health and safety of Canadians and the effects that have taken place in other places as a result of COVID-19 have seen many, many people die as a result — I appreciate that the member opposite thinks that certainty of dates in a chart would help people, but I don't agree with that.

What we have been doing very carefully is outlining the circumstances that must be achieved in order for us to move forward. They've been based on science; they've been based on the epidemiology recommendations; they've been based on, more recently, the vaccine uptake by Yukoners and how positive that has been. We have set out the criteria for when things can move forward.

The other piece that I'm puzzled by is — Yukon is leading the country. That doesn't mean we're out of the woods, but Yukon is leading the country, and the restrictions that were lessened yesterday for Yukoners have allowed increased gathering sizes, have allowed increased personal bubbles, have allowed bars and restaurants to open at full capacity — so long as people are being safe with registering and saying who they are when they come in and wearing masks when they move around the room, restaurant, or bar — so that those businesses can recover in a way that was not anticipated even a few weeks ago, to be frank.

If we had produced a document two months ago that said that you can do all of that on the first of July and here we are on the May 25 and we can do it already, I don't think that would be helpful for Yukoners either and certainly not helpful for the businesses and organizations that are planning things like school graduations or having a tourism season. Everybody is in this uncertain area, but our government has produced *A Path Forward*, has produced the criteria for what would make those changes a positive thing, and then frankly changed very quickly when the recommendations have changed by the chief medical officer of health.

I will speak about something in my former portfolio because it has been brought up in this Legislative Assembly at least once, twice, or maybe more than that — that somehow having the grades 10 to 12 youth return to high school in a number of weeks was somehow a political ploy or somehow a political move. I take great offence to that. I know that won't matter to anybody on the other side of this House, to be frank,

about whether I'm offended by that or not, but the truth is that grades 10 to 12 students have benefited from returning to school.

The chief medical officer of health's recommendations changed quickly as a result of all of the things I mentioned earlier that he takes into account when he makes those recommendations, and he made the recommendation that those children could safely return to school. That happened very quickly. It happened within a couple of days of a previous announcement being made. Again, the criticism would be: "Your chart said it could happen on this day", and sure enough, it happened sooner than that.

Nonetheless, the reality is — and I'm sure that's not necessarily the reality of the opposition, but these things are changing quickly, and it is the responsibility of this government to respond to those quick changes and to open things when they can safely for Yukoners and to provide implementation of how that can be done. I am very pleased to say now that we are very likely to be able to have Yukon graduation ceremonies at Yukon high schools for students that were not available for them last year, and all of that is very positive.

A Path Forward's next steps, on page 9, sets out the criteria and the monitoring that needs to be done. Page 13 is the table that sets out the Yukon risk levels and the thresholds. That's what I'm speaking about with respect to those. Do they have dates? No, they don't have dates; they have thresholds; they have risk factors; they have things that have to be taken into account for us to move forward.

Our plan was put out months ago when dates were not possible to forecast. In my view, they would be irresponsible in any event. I truly hope that the British Columbia plan and the British Columbia chief medical officer of health and their citizens can achieve the dates that they have set in that. I truly hope so, because that will mean that they're out of a very difficult third wave, a serious lockdown that they have just come through, and that other provinces and territories will be able to follow. But if and when those dates come and go, I think that they will need to be adjusted based on the epidemiology and the science.

Jurisdictions have been tragically hit by a hard third wave, Madam Deputy Chair, and this was not known when we first put out *A Path Forward*. It needs to be responsive. I suggest to you that it is. BC has come through a major circuit-breaker lockdown, as they term it, while we have been open, relatively speaking, for several months. Our experiences here in the territory are the envy of many. I'm sure that we all have friends and family across the country who are saying: "What — you can go to a restaurant? What — you can go grocery shopping?"

The personal effects of those situations are yet to be known in those places. In places in Ontario, they have been in lockdown for months; there are places in Ontario where children have been going to school and then not being able to go to school; in Alberta, schools opened, then closed. We have been lucky enough, by strict management and the very hard work of Yukoners, to not have to experience that in a way that other places in Canada have. As a result, we are further ahead of British Columbia. In some jurisdictions, as I have mentioned,

like Alberta, they have had to make many announcements about what will be open and what will be closed, and when it will be in lockdown and when it will be open, and schools in and out. I suggest to you that those are even more complicated or more complex for citizens to sort out. We have been lucky enough to avoid that.

I said before, and it is worth saying again — I know that Yukoners are listening — that we are leading the country and we are ahead of others. Other jurisdictions in Canada are looking to us. The deputy minister, the chief medical officer of health, the Premier, the Minister of Community Services, other ministers — depending on the areas — the Minister of Tourism and Culture, I, and others have been weekly on the phone with their counterparts across the country — if not more than once a week in some cases.

I know that the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services is on the phone, if not daily, conferring with counterparts across the country, and they are often seeking to determine what has happened here in the territory.

I hope that I have answered the question with respect to *A Path Forward*, and I hope that we can move on because there are many other important aspects to talk about in this Health and Social Services budget.

Deputy Chair: Would members like 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 now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Cathers: I just have to point out the fact that, when the minister last rose, when I pointed out the fact that BC's plan for reopening included dates and said that the Yukon should as well, the minister said — and I quote: It's irresponsible to provide dates.

Madam Deputy Chair, providing dates is exactly what the Government of BC did, so I do have to point out to the minister that she just indirectly accused Premier Horgan and Dr. Bonnie Henry of being irresponsible by providing dates in BC's plan for reopening.

The minister then went on to talk about how she was offended by the characterization that this government had made a decision for political reasons regarding children going back to school full time. Can the minister explain why the government's *A Path Forward* document that they released in March says that kids could not go back to school full time for high school until "children are eligible for vaccination" but then, five days later, they flip-flopped and did the opposite? What changed in those five days?

The next point I should make, actually, regarding dates being provided — when the minister says it is irresponsible to provide dates for reopening, the minister is just showing the Liberal government's lack of experience in business. I know that few of them have any experience running a business. Unfortunately, that is showing through their complete lack of understanding of what life is like for Yukon business owners who are currently unable to operate as normal because of the pandemic.

Again, we have consistently stated our position that the reopening plan should be clear and it should be based on smart decisions based on the best available information. If businesses take a plan such as British Columbia's, they can see what government expects they will be able to do and when. They can make decisions on that basis, being aware that it may change. This government has been vague and wishy-washy and they have flip-flopped on their plan for reopening. The minister and her colleagues, through their shared lack of business experience, are showing a lack of understanding of what the Yukon's private sector needs — particularly for businesses in the tourism sector as well as big game outfitters, restaurants, retailers, and others who are dependent on the clients of those first businesses. They are in the situation where, if people are making a decision to come to the Yukon, typically they are looking months out. They're not generally making a decision about whether to travel here for a vacation next week. There are some exceptions to that, but as a general rule, most people — most potential clients of Yukon businesses in the tourism and outfitting sectors — are planning for months down the road. If those businesses can't tell their clients whether they are likely going to be able to operate or be able to explain the variables there, they simply can't get those clients to book.

In response to national efforts to encourage Canadians to travel within Canada this summer for vacations, those Canadians are going to choose to travel somewhere other than the Yukon if the Yukon isn't clear about whether operators can book them and when and how.

The minister views Premier Horgan and Dr. Bonnie Henry as being irresponsible for providing dates in their plan. I would counter with the assertion that it looks like they've actually listened to businesses enough to realize that businesses need information about what's going to happen over the next number of months before they can plan and make decisions around booking clients, hiring staff, and so on. Unfortunately, it seems like this Liberal government is not listening to Yukoners in this area. We know that they have been afraid of consulting with Yukoners on the rules that are affecting their lives and they have been adamantly unwilling to consider any of the proposals we've made to have a government consult on the details of ministerial orders, either prior to their implementation or afterward, with businesses that are affected by them.

The question I have to ask the government is: Why are the minister and her colleagues so resistant to consulting with Yukon businesses and the public on the rules that are in place? Why are they not making more effort to actually sit down with people whose lives are affected by this, listen to them, talk

about it, and take that as part of the information that guides government's decision?

So, in closing, I just would provide the minister an opportunity to answer these questions again before I move on to other matters on my list. I do have to remind the government that the ink was barely dry on their *A Path Forward* document that was released in March before they flip-flopped on a provision related to when kids in grades 10 to 12 could return to full-time instruction. The government has yet to provide any real explanation of what changed other than the one that's obvious to most people — that they decided to call an election.

Another opportunity for the minister: In that five-day period, back in March, can she explain what, if anything, changed other than the politics of the situation?

The last question I will have for this current round is whether the minister has actually met with, or attempted to meet with, industry associations, such as the Tourism Industry Association, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the Yukon Outfitters Association, Wilderness Tourism Association, Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, Yukon Convention Bureau, the First Nation Chamber of Commerce, or any of the community chambers of commerce? Has she made any effort to reach out to the businesses that are being affected by the government's rules to actually understand what they need to be able to plan for the possibility of having a summer or fall season?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It never ceases to amaze me — it shouldn't anymore. The member opposite has said — and I appreciate him being the critic for Health and Social Services and for Justice. He said earlier today that he will be giving us a chance but watching closely, and I hope that he listens closely, if those two things could go together.

What I said about — and it will be characterized however it is characterized, Madam Deputy Chair. But what I talked about was that putting out dates when *A Path Forward* was first initiated would have been irresponsible here in the territory. I am not criticizing any other jurisdiction; they have their own issues to deal with.

I would like to remind those listening in the Legislative Assembly that British Columbia includes dates in their documents — earliest possible dates, not dates when these things will be ticked off.

I am going to challenge — I mean, I don't want to get into the weeds here. I would really like to answer these questions and be able to answer the budget questions, but the comments regarding lack of business experience on this side of the House — simply untrue. I don't want to name the 20 or so businesses that many of us have been involved in running over the course of our careers. I am going to just leave that to say that it is not only an irrational criticism; it is simply untrue. As a result, even if we hadn't run businesses, like the member —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: The member has twice used the word "untrue", which has always been ruled out of order in this Legislative Assembly. I would ask you to rule that out of order and have her retract that statement in keeping with past practice.

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: There is no point of order. In my opinion, this is a dispute between members.

The Minister of Health and Social Services has the floor.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I can say "inaccurate". I'm not interested in saying things that are offensive to this Legislative Assembly. The information that none of the members on this side of the House have run businesses is inaccurate.

It wouldn't matter anyway, because the assumption there is that if we hadn't run businesses, we somehow can't understand the concerns of the public and of the business corporations, the business community, and industry throughout the last year during the COVID pandemic — again, not a link that is rational.

Yes, we have met with industry. Have I personally met with the tourism sector? No. Am I meeting with the chambers of commerce in the next number of weeks? Absolutely, yes. Have my colleagues started to meet, since the election, with individuals in business and industry, understanding their concerns and their needs in the tourism sector? Absolutely, going forward — and that work is done.

We have worked very closely with so many individuals in the private sector, businesses, in providing industry-based guideline documents, as has the chief medical officer of health, including the wilderness tourism sector. Some of these guidance documents have been leading the way in Canada and have enabled many businesses to proceed this year.

As I noted earlier, we are one of the first jurisdictions to start to open up. It is a true achievement and success that rests on the backs of Yukoners. It would have been noted that we have processed almost 800 self-isolation plans through the process to enable businesses to proceed and Yukoners to continue on with their lives. We have met with business sectors constantly throughout this process.

I know that the chief medical officer of health also does. I know that all departments are meeting with business. My colleagues responsible for aviation have met with the aviation industry. My colleagues working, before and after the election, in tourism have met extensively with the tourism industry. We have met with businesses — the business relief program, which came out very early in the process in response to COVID. I don't want to be trite to say that we are meeting with industry and businesses constantly in order to have their input into how the response to COVID not only affects them but how it can be done in a way that recognizes their importance and will benefit all Yukoners.

I note that we have spoken with the Yukon Outfitters Association and the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon most recently and throughout this process. Those are the questions that have been asked here in this group, and I will

stop, hoping again that we can get to some questions about the budget.

Mr. Cathers: In keeping with past practice, I'm asking questions about the issues related to the minister's department that are affecting the lives of Yukoners — none more dramatically so than the issues related to the government's management of the pandemic.

The minister has seemed to walk back her comments a bit, but she did say — in response to my question about whether they would commit to doing like BC did in their planning, including dates of the earliest possible reopening or expected reopening or however you wish to refer to it. The minister responded and said that it "would be irresponsible".

So, if she's now walking back her comments or attempting to retract them, that's fine. But it's clear at the time that she was saying that the reason the government couldn't do what BC did — that we suggested they follow the basic model of — was because it "would be irresponsible".

If the minister no longer thinks that it's irresponsible to provide those timelines, will she agree to revise the government's *A Path Forward* and include clear timelines for steps of reopening like BC has?

I would also invite her to clarify, as well — Yukoners will be asking, as they compare the Yukon's vaccination status, which, according to the government website, shows 77 percent of the population 18 and over vaccinated with dose 1 — and we have, as a territory, typically low or no case counts and low or no COVID hospitalizations. People will be asking us, and will be asking the government as well, for a comparison to the restrictions in place under BC's step 4, which are very different than some of the measures in place here in the Yukon.

I would note as well that I'm going to quote again from BC's document: "The criteria for moving to Step 4 is more than 70% of the 18+ population vaccinated with dose 1, along with low case counts and low COVID-19 hospitalizations."

The Yukon is currently doing better than that, which will leave Yukon citizens and business owners looking at what you can do under BC's step 4 and wondering why they could actually now travel out to British Columbia — which has a higher active case count and a lower vaccination rate — and do some of those things there but can't do them here now.

Moving to the next area, I would like to thank the minister for confirming that she has not yet met with the business community to discuss the type of information that they need to see for *A Path Forward* to provide certainty. I would encourage her to correct that quickly, because for Yukoners who are in the tourism sector or the outfitting sector or dependent on those who are, they are looking now with a sense of urgency at the question of whether or not they can have clients coming to the territory and, if so, when. They do not have the same clarity from government that BC has provided to businesses in similar sectors down there.

I would urge the minister to make it a priority to meet with organizations representing the business community, including all of the ones that I have mentioned, and listen to them. I know that the minister cannot meet with every single business owner, but the list that I gave was not that long and it would not take

that many hours to meet with them. All of those organizations represent business owners who are wondering whether their business can survive this year and are wondering what the future will mean for their family as a result — not to say that every single business that they represent is in that situation, but every one of those organizations represents some businesses whose owners are in that situation.

I would urge the minister to treat that seriously, sit down with them, and listen to them about their need to see a clear path forward for reopening. Hopefully, they will be able to save their businesses and have a positive future for them.

I want to move to comments that the Premier made during the election campaign about comprehensive rapid testing. The Premier, at the Council of Yukon First Nations party leaders' all-candidates forum on April 1, 2021, said a few things that were interesting. One is that he said: "Moving forward, we need to continue to ensure that Yukon businesses have the assistance they need. We are going to implement a comprehensive, evidence-based, rapid testing program." That, of course, was in reference to COVID-19. The video of that is available on the Council of Yukon First Nation's Facebook page, so the minister or others can view that if they wish. The Premier promised evidence-based, rapid testing. My question is simple: When and where? We know that the Yukon, like a number of other jurisdictions in Canada, has been criticized for having fast testing kits for COVID-19 and not using them. The Premier said that they would use them. The question is: When and where?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. The testing noted by the member opposite has been used in several situations in the territory. It has been used on occasion at mine sites in order for workers to be able to return there and participate in work activities as part of an alternative self-isolation plan. It has been used most recently as students have returned to the Yukon Territory — mostly students and some others, but primarily students coming back from university or post-secondary studies outside of the territory who have been permitted to leave self-isolation for the purpose of going to get a test and then, if that test is negative, being permitted to get their vaccine. So, they are not having to wait for that. So, the earliest possible opportunity for them to get a vaccine has been used, in some cases, in some long-term care facilities, for the purpose of ascertaining levels or negative tests with respect to COVID.

I can also indicate that the excellent uptake that we have had by Yukoners on the vaccine has meant that our need to use testing as has been done in some other jurisdictions has not been as acute. I can also indicate that the chief medical officer of health has continually been doing analysis, but is continuing to do analysis with respect to testing now, and we have been very successful in our testing to date.

Yukon's main testing stream uses the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control's gold-standard PCR testing technology. Samples collected in the Yukon are sent to the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control lab for processing and test results are generally available within 48 hours for that kind of testing — the rapid testing, the one that has been used

for instance with students returning — and they are able to get a response answer or a test result — if I could say that, in a way — has been rapid test, of course — so that if they have a negative test, they can proceed to get the vaccine, as I have said.

The chief medical officer of health has not, as of yet, recommended widespread asymptomatic testing, as it could create pressures on Yukon's testing ability and contact-tracing strategy without benefiting our ability to control the disease. I think that there are limitations with rapid testing as well, and evidence suggests that asymptomatic individuals will rarely produce a positive test result. It has to be carefully done and I think that we have been very successful. We have used it in places — on the recommendation of the health experts about how it can be used to better the experiences of Yukoners — again, the opportunity for students to be vaccinated early or others — mine sites allowing work and those kinds of things. So, that is where we are — although constantly being analyzed and determined how and when, if that is going to be the case, that the testing is increased or used for expanded scope.

Mr. Cathers: I would appreciate if the minister could provide some information on how many have actually been used. According to the federal website, it is indicating that zero test kits have been used, and we understand that there were thousands shipped to the territory, so we would appreciate that information. With that, I would be happy to take that through a letter or legislative return, if she doesn't have it at her fingertips.

I want to move to a few other areas, in the interest of the short time that we do have in this Sitting — recognizing it's a third of a normal Spring Sitting. That includes the area of wait times. I would like to draw the minister's attention to the information provided by the Hospital Corporation on November 19, 2020, in referencing page 1972 as well as page 1971. We had a good discussion about wait times, in which the Hospital Corporation CEO noted — and I quote: "Because we're physically constrained, wait times for accessing specialties, basically for most specialities, are not where we would like them to be from a benchmark perspective. But again, as I mentioned, we're at 100-percent capacity. To be able to address that would mean probably increasing physical space, and that would allow more visiting specialists to be able to come to the territory and see patients here."

I would again note that some of those specialists are not the responsibility of the Hospital Corporation so much as the department, but ultimately, what we're interested in — what Yukoners are interested in — is not the hospital or the department debating who is responsible for it. Yukoners want to see the government taking the lead and working with the hospital, with the Yukon Medical Association, with the YRNA and others involved and other specialists to determine what action can be taken to improve Yukoners' access to health care through a wait-time reduction strategy.

Again, in the interest of time — briefly referencing some of the information provided last fall from the Hospital Corporation — we learned, on page 1971, that the current wait time to see a visiting cardiologist is approximately five months, with 74 people on that wait-list as of last fall. We also learned that, in 2018, under the Liberal government, there were 350

people on the wait-list for cataract assessment, with wait times for referral to surgery of almost 40 months. By the end of 2019, the wait time for referral to surgery was down to 12 months — as a result, I might point out, of my colleagues and I pushing the government on this issue and the need to reduce wait times for those procedures.

What I really want to centre on is what the CEO told us when he said — and I quote: "... if we don't create a strategy that maintains this, those wait times will increase right back to where they were previous to this plan and this program."

Again, in that case, I am not even pressing the minister so much for an answer here today; I am just flagging the importance of taking action to reduce wait times for those services, specifically the ones I mentioned, but others as have been touched on by the CEO of the Hospital Corporation.

I want to now move to another area of an important service that has been unavailable in the Yukon since the start of COVID-19. I should note that this is one of the areas where Yukoners — with us having lower case counts and higher vaccination rates than British Columbia — do not understand why a service such as this would not be available here in the territory.

Spirometry services have been unavailable since the start of COVID-19 here in the Yukon, with urgent referrals being sent to Vancouver, as well as for some simple, routine testing. The wait-list, as we understand recently, was 595 non-urgent requisitions and growing at the rate of 30 to 40 per month. I have heard from constituents — and I know a number of my colleagues did — who were directly affected by this. A tender to provide services here locally was released on March 1, closed on March 31, 2021, and according to the project manager, the election was directly responsible for delaying the award of the contract, which has still not been awarded as of the last information we have. Can the minister provide an update on this contract, why it has been so delayed, and what they are going to do about it?

I would also note that, during the initial months of the pandemic, there was no communication between the department or the CMOH with the private respiratory service provider. They made a decision to close down on their own, and I would note that, at the time, as the MLA for one of the owners of that private company, I was cc'd on e-mails that went to the former Minister of Health and Social Services and received what can only be characterized as a late response that was a bit of a blow-off response, if you will pardon the informal characterization of it. It really didn't treat them seriously or respect the role that they had in providing for the health care needs of Yukoners.

Will this minister commit to doing better than her predecessor at improving communication and the working relationship with private service providers in this area, including the company that I made reference to in this area?

Also, just before I sit down, I want to briefly touch on another area, that being medical travel. We are pleased that the government did take action to increase the medical travel rates, which we had been calling for, for years, but I do have to point out to the minister, as I did earlier in either the budget debate

or the throne speech, that they made changes to the program in the Yukon — the in-territory travel subsidy — that I don't think they fully understood the implications of, because they cut funding for people in rural areas outside communities. I have heard from constituents of mine, especially seniors living in the Braeburn area who are directly negatively affected by this loss of support and who, to receive the health care services that they need to take care of themselves and live a long life and be able to stay in their homes for as long as possible, need to be able to access testing and other special services. Previously, through the in-territory travel subsidy — actually, changes that I instituted in 2006 — they were able to receive that support when travelling into Whitehorse. For someone on a fixed income, that amount can make a big difference. The amount they received, I would point out, is actually less than what any MLA or government employee would receive for traveling the same distance, but it made a big difference to them.

I just want to recognize that the current minister wasn't the minister when that decision was made, and I would just sincerely urge her to recognize that a mistake was made, it's negatively affecting Yukoners, including senior citizens, and I would urge you to just reverse that change and restore that support, particularly for seniors and others who are needing those services.

Directly related to the issue of wait times, I would just ask the minister what steps they are taking to respond to the request made by the Yukon Medical Association during the election as one of their highest priorities to work on improving and expanding the surgical services area at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that there are three areas to touch on. The first is wait times, and I'm happy to note that our government is committed to investing in service enhancements to reduce wait times for specialist consultations and surgeries. We are continuing to make investments that will allow Yukoners to access a responsive, high-functioning health care system.

To date, our investments have resulted in improved wait times for multiple specialist services, including ophthalmology, pediatrics, psychiatry, and orthopaedic surgery. We implemented a plan that successfully reduced ophthalmology wait times in the Yukon, bringing down wait times for cataract assessments from 37 months to nine months. Is that still too long? Quite likely, but improvements are being made, and we will continue to work on reducing wait times for Yukoners to have important health care services.

We have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to build on the successes of our resident orthopaedic program with the addition of a second orthopaedic surgeon, which has helped to further reduce wait times for orthopaedic consults and total knee replacements. I know personally a bit about this, having been a patient. My colleagues might remember that I was limping around in December. The services of the orthopaedic team here in the territory are second to none.

Health and Social Services, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the Yukon Medical Association are all exploring ways to reduce wait times for specialist services,

including increasing the frequency of visiting specialists, repatriating services to Yukon when appropriate, a more robust use of virtual technologies, and working on efficiencies to improve access — things like technology and health system planning. So, that work is, of course, underway. I note that the comments by the member opposite are, I think, addressed in that. It is important for all Yukoners to know what is being done by the Department of Health and Social Services to reduce wait times and to improve medical care here in the territory.

I can note that — with respect to the question regarding spirometry testing and the lung function tests — due to COVID-19, other Canadian jurisdictions, including British Columbia, reduced the services provided and limited them to urgent or emergency cases only, which was truly unfortunate for Yukoners. The next steps in the tendering process for the spirometry services are underway. The request was for a provider to develop and execute a spirometry program for the next three years. It is important to note that this is what is being sought.

I think I was asked — I will get to that in a second, about where we are in the process — the chief medical officer of health is currently working with the Department of Health and Social Services and reviewing the spirometry services here in the territory. We are assessing the risks of restarting the spirometry program now, given the COVID situation, but we are working to find a new provider here in the territory, which was mentioned by the member opposite. With respect to the March tender, I am told that the tender is in its final stage — sorry, the respondents to the tender are in the final stages of being reviewed and that should be awarded soon.

With respect to the medical travel comments and question, we will check to determine whether or not — clearly, some changes were made. They were described by the member opposite. They resulted in much better coverage for individuals who have to travel outside of Yukon for medical services. In particular, I'm very pleased and proud of the provision that an escort can also be provided with some compensation for needing to go. That's not something that was ever done before. As a matter of fact, we all probably know cases where not only was the escort not necessarily permitted to have compensation, but they weren't authorized to go. Clearly, the opportunity for us to change Yukoners' experience of medical travel is an important one.

I noted in my comments earlier that we have proposed in this year's budget \$1.5 million for the purpose of increasing the medical travel services. There were changes made to those individuals who were travelling from very close to Whitehorse — maybe Marsh Lake or Wolf Creek, those kinds of things — Wolf Creek is not a good example, but very close outside the city limits — but the circumstances mentioned by the member opposite had to do with Braeburn. I will look — I think Braeburn is a place where medical travel is still possible, but I stand to be corrected, and we will look into that. I would appreciate if the member opposite would encourage the individual — if there is an individual who is not getting that service — to contact me so that we might be able to determine the situation. As a result, I hope that we can look into that.

I don't have with me the parameters of where the line has been drawn, but the concept was that individuals who are living very close to Whitehorse and have to come for all of their services, including medical services, wouldn't be appropriate recipients of the medical travel opportunity, but those who live much farther than that would still be covered.

Again, I hope I can get information so we can determine that, and I will certainly be looking at the details of where the parameters of that program are.

Mr. Cathers: In the interest of allowing some time for the Third Party to ask questions, I will put together a few things here in my remaining questions, as we are short of time. One question that we pressed the former minister on repeatedly, and could never get an answer on, is what the total cost is of operating the former Centre of Hope, now known as the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. That is something that — even if government believes all of the programs there are valuable — Yukoners deserve to know what the total cost of any area is.

In the area of midwifery, I would just briefly touch on that and note that government, by bringing in regulations, has not brought in midwifery. They've brought in a gap in care. I have heard from constituents — as I know have some of my colleagues — who are affected by it and are very upset by it, as they prepare to have a child during that gap in coverage. I would urge government to actually come up with a solution — whether it's hiring midwives quicker or through contracts — to actually address that gap in service.

In the area of medical travel coordination that is referenced in the budget, I would ask the minister if she could identify how many people are being hired in association with providing that service and whether they're all in Whitehorse or whether any are in communities.

I would ask the government, as well, for two projects referenced in the budget — the secure medical unit, which we know was announced by the government and then delayed — what the status of that project is. In the area of the Meditech replacement project, now known as 1Health, I would ask the minister to clarify the current status of it. The Premier, at the CYFN party leaders' all-candidates forum made a statement that suggests that he thought it was already up and running, saying — quote: "We have 1Health established beforehand..."

In fact, we understand from what the hospital has on its website, as of this morning, that the new health information system is currently targeted for launching in June. As the minister will recall, we have been pushing for this project for over four years and I refer the minister, for her reference, to Hansard from May 15, 2017 on page 428.

I will leave it with that list of questions in the interest of providing some time for the Third Party.

Madam Deputy Chair, while the minister is getting information about that, just in the interest of time, I would also ask if the minister could either now, or with a legislative return, commit to getting back to us on the status of projects funded by THIF and what the changes have been in that area.

As well, in terms of the government overall, what are the total increases in terms of the number of employees, by branch? We have some information regarding that but have, in some

departments, seen a lack of clarity about whether positions were showing only the increase in permanent, full-time equivalent positions or all FTEs. Of course, all FTEs is the more accurate reflection of the increase in the cost of government overall.

I would just also ask if the minister could identify — we have seen a typical pattern, in the last years under her predecessor, of the government underbudgeting for social assistance in the spring, and typically, in period-7 variances, we would see a request for increased funding in that area. For example, looking at the period-7 changes for the last fiscal year, we had \$1.5 million identified under social assistance for Whitehorse.

Another area where we have yet to receive information from the member's predecessor is with the extended family care agreements. We see funding for it in this year's budget, as well as the increased funding requested last year, as in the previous year, but we have yet to receive clarity on what is actually being done with those agreements, what the parameters of them are, what level of support is provided to families under that — sorry, I missed in the area of social assistance, that amount, just comparing the year that is just wrapping up. The government appears to me to have underbudgeted by \$2 million for that area — \$1.5 million for the Whitehorse area, according to the handout they provided, and \$500,000 for regional.

It's not the first period-7 change that we've seen recently. It's a change that has been common, so it does leave me wondering whether we have a situation wherein we're going to see the government coming back with another increase of money that they actually reasonably expect to need.

Madam Deputy Chair, I would also ask about the money that has been provided for insured health, hearing, and vital statistics for projected growth — if the minister could provide more detail on partial operating and planning funding for primary health care reform in the Yukon.

We know that there was an issue with the government not doing the costing on the implementation of the 76 recommendations from the health review. We know that we heard very clearly from their panel members that they didn't know what it would cost. We believe that the announcement was premature and ill-advised, and I would begin by asking the minister if she is prepared to revisit that announcement by her predecessor.

We know that the government failed in their process, including failing to consult properly with key partners in health care delivery, including the Yukon Medical Association. I think it's important to emphasize that the government — especially considering some of the remarks that the Premier and the previous minister have made in the past regarding this point — doesn't seem to recognize that the YMA is not just a stakeholder to check the box and consult with, but physicians are integral to the delivery of health care across the territory, and for most Yukoners, physicians through privately owned medical clinics are providing a large portion of the primary health care services here in the Yukon.

So, we know, in particular, that the area of the commitment to polyclinics was made without adequately consulting with the people affected by it. The government had no understanding of

the costing of it. We know that the YMA has formally expressed concerns about the government accepting the report and about that recommendation with them. If government is planning on going down the road of buying out physician clinics, that is a multi-million-dollar bill that government doesn't even have a clear estimate for, and it seems to me like an irresponsible use of money to go down that road. It is very irresponsible to make major decisions such as accepting the 76 recommendations without costing out what the impact of those changes will be financially. If you don't know the cost of it and you don't know the logistical location, then you can commit to implementing it, but you really have no idea whether you can actually do what you have committed to.

With that — and I would also note that, when we asked the panel members — and my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, asked one of the panel members about the cost of implementing it. Back in October 2019 on page 1461, the Member for Watson Lake said — and I quote: "Just before I carry on with that line, I would like to go back to one of the four goals that the panel was addressing, which was fiscal sustainability —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Point of order

Deputy Chair: Member for Takhini-Kopper King, on a point of order

Ms. White: There is supposed to be a time-sharing agreement between the Official Opposition and the Third Party, and I believe that we have gone past that allotted amount of time.

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

Mr. Cathers: On the point of order, Madam Deputy Chair, I don't believe that there is an official time-sharing agreement, and when the NDP agreed to a shorter Sitting, that cut into the time that the Official Opposition has to ask questions. So, we are asking questions.

Deputy Chair: Member for Riverdale South, on the point of order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: On the point of order, I appreciate that it is not exactly on there, but I also think that there is a 20-minute — I mean, I appreciate that the question was finished, and then I was looking for some information, and then it started again, so I am just not sure if we're past that 20-minute limit.

Deputy Chair: Member for Riverdale North, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I just don't recall it happening in the 34th, but once a member sits down, generally speaking, another member stands up to speak, so I am not sure about the ability of a member to pop up after he, she, or they have ceded the floor.

And in the Committee of the Whole — as my friend —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Well, my point of order is that the Member for Lake Laberge ought not to have been recognized the second time.

Deputy Chair: I will take a moment to confer with the Clerk.

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: With regard to the party agreement to share time, that is not enforceable by the Chair.

With regard to the rest of the points raised, I will review Hansard and return with a ruling, if necessary.

At this point, I give the floor to the Hon. Ms. McPhee to answer the questions.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am very mindful of the time, and I expected to do this quite quickly, but I can answer at least three of those questions quite quickly.

The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter funding in this year's budget is approximately \$3.6 million. On the midwifery question, the Department of Health and Social Services has hired two midwives. They are both here in Whitehorse. They are working on setting up the program. There are currently no midwives in the territory to provide the services under the new act or regulations, but there is always a gap in doing that, having that come into effect, and we expect that it will be resolved — hopefully in the very near future.

1Health is expected to launch on June 1, and we are working with the Hospital Corporation and the physicians to prepare for that launch. I will sit so that more questions can come.

Ms. Blake: With respect to time, the one issue that I wanted to bring forward was regarding access to counselling supports for children and youth in the territory.

A concern that has come up from several of the communities is regarding the wait times that children and youth have to experience when in need of counselling supports and the question about availability of child and youth counsellors available in the communities in time of need and the need to support our children to have immediate access to counselling supports when they deal with trauma.

The question I have is: What are the current numbers of child and youth counsellors within Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services as well as with the Child and Youth Family Treatment Services? How much are those counsellors available in the communities? Also, what are the wait times for access to counselling for children and youth in the communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Madam Deputy Chair, a very important question was brought up earlier today in Question Period as well. I did provide some information about counselling services available in communities and primarily with respect to children and youth. We are trying to connect those counselling services to a school where hopefully they have a safe place and can access those services without much difficulty or a separate doctor's appointment or something at least to get connected to some services.

As I said earlier in Question Period, we will be looking at the mental wellness hubs and how they can be improved and whether there is an opportunity for making sure that we are

connecting with services in communities and certainly those provided by First Nations and governments and others.

I will provide the information directly to the member, or through a legislative return, with respect to the number of counsellors and wait times. I think that earlier today there was a question about positions moving from the communities into Whitehorse. That has not been the case. Individuals might have applied on jobs and moved, but it has not been the case that the positions have been moved, so those are remaining in the communities. Recruitment and retention have been issues, of course, during COVID and at other times, but life in the Yukon is great and an opportunity for individuals to come and experience, and that is certainly something that we will be working on for all areas of health services.

I'm going to sit quickly in the event that another question could come, but I will get back to the member opposite.

Ms. Blake: I just had a follow-up question regarding the mental wellness positions in communities. Can the minister confirm if all positions are fully staffed?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm not sure if they are all fully staffed, but it's something we can return the information to you on. As I said, recruitment and retention are issues. I wouldn't want to guess at a number today and say that yes, they are, or they aren't, but we'll get a number and a date and we'll provide that information to you. We're always looking for talented folks to provide these services across the territory, so there might be some postings or that kind of thing, but we'll provide that information.

I'm going to add that currently there is a 14-day wait time for counselling for children and youth to connect with a counsellor. I'm just going to check if it's in Whitehorse or across the territory, but — across the territory is the information we have.

Seeing the time, I move that you report progress, unless the member opposite has another question I can sneak in.

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 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

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, 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. 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. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled May 26, 2021:

35-1-1

Response to oral question from Ms. White re: mine closure security (Streicker)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 10

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, May 27, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin

DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, May 27, 2021**

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 change to the Order Paper. Motion No. 68, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition, was not placed on the Notice Paper, as it is out of order.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will proceed with the Order Paper.
Introduction of visitors.
Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of 2021 graduating class

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize the students graduating from high school in 2021. High school graduation is a very important milestone for every student, their families, and their school communities.

Graduation celebrates many years of hard work and dedication to learning, growing, both academically and personally. It marks the transition into the next stage of life, starting or continuing post-secondary studies, trades training, a career, or accomplishing personal goals.

This year's Yukon graduates share the unique experience of having spent two of their senior high school years under the restrictions of a global pandemic. They spent the last quarter of their grade 11 school year learning at home, and Whitehorse grads spent much of their final year in a half-day in-class learning model.

We are pleased that all high school students were able to safely return to full-time in-class learning in April and to finish the school year with their peers.

Even more exciting, Mr. Speaker, Yukon schools will be celebrating grads in person in 2021.

I would like to thank the students, parents, guardians, families, principals, teachers, graduation committees, school councils, and Yukon First Nations that have found ways to recognize and celebrate our 2021 graduates while following health and safety measures and making sure to protect the health and safety of all Yukoners.

I am so pleased to recognize the many accomplishments of this year's graduates. We have been collecting stories from grade 12 students who are planning fantastic futures in spite of what is going on in the world. Some of our amazing graduates include Ivy Moran of Teslin, who is heading to farrier college and hopes to launch a horse therapy program in Yukon one day; Nathan Easterson-Moore of Burwash, who will blend his training in culinary arts and his love of culture and language;

Aden Horbachewsky, who has been awarded the prestigious Schulich scholarship and will pursue a PhD in astrophysics; Selena Peters, who has been accepted into the prestigious University of Toronto bachelor of music program.

I would like to commend all our Yukon graduates for the incredible resiliency, perseverance, and optimism that they have shown in completing their last years of high school through such a difficult and challenging time. I look forward to seeing how our entire class of 2021 will continue to make all Yukoners proud as they move into the next stage of their lives and make their marks on this new and changing world that we are living in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to some outstanding and incredibly hard-working individuals: the graduating class of 2021.

First of all, to our high school graduates — you did it. No more homework, assignments, deadlines to meet, no more alarm clock — you can sleep in a little bit. Thirteen years of math, projects, book reports, teachers, and friendships. Remember the valuable lessons that you learned along the way and take them with you into your next chapter.

In my culture, my Asian parents drilled in my brain that the only way out of poverty is education. Follow your passions. "The world is your oyster" is what I say to my three children all the time. Remember to thank those who helped you to get where you are today. Most of all, give back to the community.

To the graduates of Yukon University and those who have completed their post-secondary studies outside of the Yukon, well done to you as you head on to further studies or into the workforce. Each of you has gained years of knowledge and experience that can only grow from here. Be your best selves, and never stop learning.

I would also like to give special compliments to our younger grads, as there are a number of milestones being celebrated across the territory. We have kindergarten graduates about to start their journey through grades 1 to 12 and grade 7 graduates about to make the transition from elementary to high school. To all, enjoy your graduation days and your graduation celebrations. Be safe in those celebrations, and the very best of luck to you in the future.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the high school classes of 2021.

Graduating from high school is always an accomplishment. This year, more than ever, I want to echo my colleagues in saying just how impressed we are by all of our grads. You have stuck with it through the last 15 months — a time like no other that has added new challenges and uncertainty to the already intense experience that is high school. I know that there are still a few hurdles left before you can breathe a sigh of relief, but you have come so far. You are so close, and we are all cheering for you. We are behind you as you take your final steps through high school.

I say “final steps”, but they are really the first steps of the next journey. I think one of the things that’s both terrifying and exciting about finishing high school is that your choices are suddenly wide open. There are a million paths forward, and they are yours to create. We are so excited for you. We are so excited to see all the incredible things that you will go out and do.

I’m not going to try to give you advice on what exactly that should be, because I never really liked getting advice on what I should do with my life. Anyway, you don’t need my advice. You know yourselves; you know what you want; you know what you need.

I am actually going to give you one piece of advice, and it’s really more of a request: Please, don’t be afraid to tell us, your political leaders, what it is you need. We want to hear your voices; we need your voices. As you navigate the world, tell us what’s working and what isn’t. For my part, I promise to listen.

We wish you all the luck and opportunity in the world. Congratulations to you all.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon Bike to Work and School Week

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to recognize Yukon Bike to Work and School Week, an annual event that showcases the many benefits of cycling and encourages those who don’t already to give it a try.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are renowned for being resilient folk, and nowhere is perhaps that more evident than among the territory’s cyclists. You would be hard-pressed to think of a more dedicated group of people. It can be in the dead of winter, a day that has yet to see the sun rise, and the temperature is solidly below minus 25 degrees, with epic ice fog setting a dramatic stage — yet there they are, the intrepid Yukoners, bundled up and making their commute by bike. This may be hard for some in warmer climates to comprehend, but it makes perfect sense to these Yukoners, because they understand, better than anyone, the wide-ranging benefits of cycling.

Riding your bike to work or school means one less car on the road and a smaller carbon footprint as a result. It means better physical and mental health. It means more money in your pocket because of fewer trips to the gas pump. It means, ideally, safer communities, with less traffic whizzing by on the roads.

As a government, we are doing what we can to support biking to work today and every day. We are incorporating more multi-use trails into all of our new transportation projects here in Whitehorse. We are also offering a 25-percent rebate subsidy for electric bikes, and we are already seeing strong uptake on that program.

We are closing unsafe accesses onto and off of the Alaska Highway, and we are installing new crosswalks at Hillcrest Drive, Burns Road, and Range Road to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists alike. In short, we are taking steps to make cycling an easier, safer option for more Yukoners.

More livable communities, a healthier planet, happier people — what’s not to love about cycling, Mr. Speaker?

As Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the famous creator of Sherlock Holmes and a Victorian cycling enthusiast, once wrote: “When the spirits are low, when the day appears dark, when work becomes monotonous, when hope hardly seems worth having, just mount a bicycle and go out for a spin down the road, without thought on anything but the ride you are taking.”

I couldn’t agree more. To those who already ride their bike to work or school, I applaud you. To those who are thinking about it, I encourage you. Do it for your health; do it for the environment; do it for the sheer enjoyment.

Applause

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party in celebration of Bike to Work Week and Bike to Work Day. Cycling is a viable means of transportation that offers real benefits to the community and oneself. Not only does cycling reduce traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, but it is also a fun way to get some exercise and enjoy the great outdoors. Riding a bike is an opportunity to access your younger self and to be reminded of that first taste of freedom as you rode away independently. That independence is harnessed on a daily basis by those folks who bike to work and school, no matter the weather. As plenty of Yukoners will attest to, there is nothing like riding a fat tire bike to work in the dead of winter.

Making it easier to get around without a vehicle can also contribute to more inclusive and accessible communities by providing an affordable way to get from one place to another. Whether you are riding for fun, working on fitness, or taking essential trips to work or to shop, you are part of the movement for safer streets, connected communities, a healthier planet, and happier people.

As the Yukon adopted *Our Clean Future*, we committed to increasing active transportation by continuing to incorporate active transportation in the design of highways and other Government of Yukon transportation infrastructure near communities.

Challenges that we are facing here in the capital city include cycling infrastructure that hasn’t always been designed with cyclists and a motorist population that views cyclists as annoyances as opposed to legitimate road users. We have all heard stories shared by Yukon cyclists who barely survived their commutes because they were not afforded the respect that they deserve on the road. Mr. Speaker, this isn’t a cycling problem; this is a motorist problem.

So, as we celebrate Bike to Work Week and Bike to Work Day, I encourage everyone to recognize the value that cycling brings to our communities and to work hard to make cycling in the Yukon a safer and more accessible activity.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have four legislative returns for tabling.

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling a copy of the British Columbia government's reopening plan, entitled *BC's Restart: A plan to bring us back together*. I had intended to table, as well, a copy of Prince Edward Island's reopening plan, but due to printer issues, I will send a link to members.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 301: Act to Amend the Taxpayer Protection Act — Introduction and First Reading

Mr. Cathers: I move that a bill entitled *Act to Amend the Taxpayer Protection Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge that a bill entitled *Act to Amend the Taxpayer Protection Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 301 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the Yukon government should follow the example of provinces, including British Columbia and Prince Edward Island, by releasing a reopening plan that includes clear dates and benchmarks for ending pandemic restrictions and returning to normal life.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to educate himself on the difference between riparian buffers that apply only to Crown land and his government's proposal to impose a riparian buffer on titled property beginning in the Shallow Bay area.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce a regulatory framework for psychology in the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada and the Chancellery of Honours, in recognition of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, to maintain the Canadian tradition of creating and awarding a jubilee medal to recognize Her Majesty's historic and

illustrious reign and also to honour deserving Canadian citizens who have made a significant contribution to their region or community during the COVID-19 pandemic or have otherwise made outstanding achievements that bring credit to Canada.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to encourage active transportation to and from Government of Yukon buildings by creating and maintaining proper year-round cycling infrastructure and storage facilities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that every Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services hub is appropriately staffed to meet the needs of residents, including:

- (1) a mental wellness and substance use counsellor;
- (2) a clinical counsellor;
- (3) a mental health nurse; and
- (4) a child and youth counsellor.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to include the licensing of psychologists in the regulations under the Yukon *Health Professions Act* with the intent to establish, monitor, and enforce standards of practice.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Mineral staking

Mr. Kent: Here are the things that we know. We know that the Liberals are letting the NDP co-write the new mining legislation and that it will be completed within 16 months. We know that the last time the Liberals let the NDP write policy for them, it turned into the disastrous rent control policy that one local economist has said is further left wing than Bernie Sanders.

We also know that the NDP posted on social media yesterday that they do not support free-entry staking and that it is time for it to go. What we don't know is if the Liberals will protect free-entry staking. While the mining industry is worried that this new legislation is going to get rid of free-entry, they have seen what happens when the Liberals take direction from the NDP.

Will the minister tell us if the Liberals will protect free-entry, or will they let the NDP get rid of it while they are writing our new mining legislation?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: During our last mandate, we rebuilt relationships that are essential to a positive mineral industry, and we will continue to strengthen those relationships to ensure that mining has a successful future in our territory. For a mineral industry to thrive in the Yukon in the long term, all stakeholders and affected parties need to work together. Building a successful future will take hard work, and we are committed to doing that hard work and doing it right.

I disagree with the Official Opposition's approach. I have been meeting with stakeholders, and I haven't heard a single miner who believes that fighting against First Nation governments in court is good for mining.

The mineral development strategy is the beginning of an important conversation that we need to have about the future of mining in our territory. I am happy to talk about this, as I have for the past several days. I am encouraged by the work that is ongoing with the mineral development strategy leading to successor legislation.

Mr. Kent: Earlier this month, the Yukon Chamber of Mines provided all three parties with a briefing document. The document states — and I quote: "Every other Canadian jurisdiction has some form of free-entry staking, and it is critical for our industry to be competitive".

Despite this, the Liberals are letting the NDP write the new mining legislation, and the NDP been very clear that they want to get rid of free-entry staking. The Liberals' silence on whether or not they will protect free-entry is creating uncertainty for industry.

The last time the Liberals let the NDP write their policies, they ended up being further left than Bernie Sanders, according to a local economist.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister just let industry know whether or not he is going to support free-entry? If he is not going to protect free-entry, then he should just let them know now so they at least know what is in store for their industry.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I am going to support is the conversation. That is what I am doing. That is what I have been doing all along. I have stood up here and I have talked about this.

For me, the Yukon Party seems to be stuck in the past, clinging to an old-school idea about mining. Things have changed. If we want to attract investment, if we want mining to be sustainable for the long term, we need to work with First Nations, we need to be environmentally responsible, and we need to ensure that local communities benefit from resource development. That is how mining will be successful and sustainable in the future. That is our vision for mining, and that is what we are working toward.

I would like to thank the Yukon Chamber of Mines. When I sat down and met with them, we had a very productive conversation. We talked about the future of mining. I think that we actually share a lot of common ideas about the future and how to make mining sustainable and positive here in the territory. That is a great conversation.

I am saying that I am going to have that conversation. We are going to have that conversation with Yukoners, with industry, with First Nation governments respectfully, and that is what we are going to do. I am really happy about that work, I am really proud of that work, and I am really looking forward to that work.

Mr. Kent: So, less than two years ago — in the fall of 2019 — the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources was asked whether or not he supported free-entry, and he gave, which for him is quite unusual, a very succinct one-word answer: Yes.

So, what has changed with this new minister? It is becoming more and more clear to Yukoners that the NDP is driving the bus for this government and that the Liberals are the junior partner in the coalition. The Liberals have handed over the pen to the NDP on the mining legislation, and they are going to ram it through in just 16 months. The NDP has been clear that their goal is to get rid of free-entry. The submission to the mineral development strategy panel from the Yukon Prospectors Association states that this action would greatly reduce certainty in investment in our mining industry.

So, what other policies are the Liberals going to let the NDP implement that will reduce certainty in investment for our mining industry?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am glad that the member opposite is talking about the mineral development strategy. I am really happy about the work of the mineral development strategy. It is great work, and it is the foundation upon which we will build toward successor legislation.

What I want to say is that I don't want to go backward in time to where we were — right now, we have three operating hardrock mines in the Yukon, and we have many projects working their way through the permitting process. We have some of the biggest players in the world investing in the Yukon right now.

I think that our government has restored confidence in this sector, and I believe that the right path is to start from the mineral development strategy, built upon the mining memorandum of understanding with First Nations, and to work toward successor legislation. I am really excited that we are there. I am looking forward to working with industry to create a positive future for mining here in the territory.

Question re: Individualized education plans

Ms. Van Bibber: The confidence and supply agreement between the Liberals and the NDP commits that the recent cancellation of individualized education plans for children who need additional support will be reversed. The agreement commits that all of those IEPs that were cancelled will be reinstated within 30 days. The deadline for this commitment is tomorrow.

Can the minister tell us if that deadline will be met?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I want to start by saying that our education system needs to support all students to thrive and unlock their full learning potential. This is our ultimate goal.

I have spoken a lot about the individualized education plans over the last couple of weeks in the Legislative Assembly. These are very important tools for our students, and they are, and will continue to be, legislated support for students in need of a special education program. We have been working with our partners — the New Democratic Party had a great briefing last week. Our educators and schools and administration are working individually with parents and students who may have been moved from an individual learning plan to give them the option to either move to a different type of plan or stay with the individual type of plan they are on right now.

We are working diligently. This agreement that we have with the New Democratic Party is very important. It's important to Yukoners, and it brings stability to our territory.

Ms. Van Bibber: I had asked if the deadline will be met, and the minister did not answer the question.

Last week, the minister told us that 62 students had been transitioned from IEPs to student learning plans. However, when the changes were brought to light in December by the Yukon Teachers' Association, the First Nation Education Directorate, the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, and Autism Yukon, it was reported that there had been 138 students transferred to SLPs.

Can the minister explain how many students have been reinstated to IEPs — as to the deadline tomorrow?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. The number 62 is correct. As we work through our Aspen system, there were 477 IEPs at the start of the 2019-20 school year; 62 plans were transitioned to student learning plans, with 38 in 2019-20 and 24 in 2020-21. No IEPs were transitioned into behavioural support plans, which is another type of plan that we have within the Department of Education.

There were 400 students with IEPs as of May 31, 2020.

An important fact for Yukoners to know is that an IEP is typically discontinued when certain things happen with students, such as they complete their educational program, they leave the territory, or by the request of a parent or guardian. There may be IEPs that have ended because of these circumstances. Our Department of Education and our schools are working closely with students and parents and talking directly with them and clearly working on a path.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you for that number. It will be interesting to hear if that number is what the NDP had in mind when they agreed to the CASA.

The minister has also said that there are no new resources to support these IEPs that have been reinstated. She told the House that there are no new educational assistants to support these reinstated IEPs. Can she provide us with some reassurance that IEPs will be properly supported despite the fact that there are no new resources and no new EAs in the budget?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Our education system needs to support all students to thrive and unlock their full learning potential, which is what our department thrives to do. It is vital that we meet the needs of individual students in a way that reflects the diversity of learning needs in our schools. We will continue to improve how we provide education to support all of our students. I know that this is a vision that's upheld by our educators.

In the past, there have been many plans and reports on these types of issues. I'm really looking forward to a number of reports, which are going to be released soon, around special education needs in the territory. I'm really looking forward to continuing to work with all of our partners to ensure that we have the supports in place for our students in all of their learning needs throughout the Yukon. I am looking forward to providing more information to Yukoners in a very short time,

within the next week, around some of these important discussions that we'll be having.

Question re: Robert Campbell Highway and North Canol Road maintenance

Ms. Tredger: In 2020, the Government of Yukon and the Ross River Dena Council signed an agreement in principle as part of the Yukon Resource Gateway project to upgrade the North Canol Road and for construction and resurfacing of the Robert Campbell Highway. Chief Caesar was quoted in the press release — and I quote: "Our community has been in need of improvements to the North Canol and paving for the Campbell Highway for many years."

He goes on to point out that theirs is the only community in the Yukon connected by road without a paved highway: "This important project will finally see our members have a safe road to drive to and from work, a road that helps ensure we are connected to opportunity."

Can the minister tell residents of Ross River whether this project has started and when it will be completed?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question. Yukon's road system is essential for connecting our communities and building our economy. Our government is making strategic investments to keep these vital links safe and open for business. For the 2021-22 fiscal year, we have more than \$54 million budgeted for highways and bridges.

Over the past couple of years, we have undertaken several upgrade projects to improve safety along the Alaska Highway, the territory's busiest transportation route. All bridges, large culverts, BST, and paved sections are assessed, evaluated, and rated annually or biannually to prioritize any improvement and investment decisions.

On average, we resurface 130 kilometres of BST and 10 kilometres of asphalt every year and clear 700 kilometres of highway right-of-way to improve driver visibility and road safety.

I will endeavour to get back to the member with respect to the specific Gateway project and ensure that you have that answer.

Ms. Tredger: I appreciate the minister getting back to me, because I'm not sure that hearing about improvements to the Alaska Highway is reassuring to the residents of Ross River, who still do not have a paved highway.

In the last month, the highway between Ross River and Faro had a substantial washout that closed access for over 24 hours. A temporary bridge was put in place. This highway closure is an indication of the condition of this neglected stretch of highway. For too long, the residents of Ross River have had to deal with this poorly maintained and dangerous stretch of highway. Anyone travelling it would know how bad that road can be.

Several years ago, Ross River residents watched as a stretch of the Robert Campbell Highway was improved for access to a mine site, while the highway between Faro and Ross River remained in the same poor shape. Can the minister share when the residents of Ross River will see real improvements to the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the member for that question. As I reported back to the House perhaps two weeks ago, the stretch that was washed out was repaired within, I think, about 48 hours, based on the incredible diligence and hard work of the staff of Highways and Public Works who were dispatched to that area to ensure that the services — the important artery — was re-established on the Robert Campbell Highway for both the residents of Faro and the residents of Ross River.

With respect to the Gateway project, six project agreements have been signed for seven components with Yukon First Nations to date, and that includes a portion of the Robert Campbell Highway. My understanding is that negotiations are ongoing with the Ross River Dena Council with respect to the ongoing improvements of the road between Faro and Ross River — and concede that work is required — but certainly, the respectful dialogue and negotiations are continuing with the Ross River Dena Council with respect to that stretch of highway, but funding has been secured for that portion of the Robert Campbell Highway, and Highways and Public Works looks forward to starting that project.

Ms. Tredger: The closure of the highway had an impact on the residents of Ross River. It meant that their only option was to drive to Watson Lake to access services outside the community. This is a huge detour for those who needed to travel to Whitehorse for medical or dental appointments or for business. Having to drive to Watson Lake to get to Whitehorse is time-consuming and certainly not appropriate in emergency situations.

What emergency measures are in place to protect the citizens of Ross River when their main road connection becomes unusable, like it did earlier this month?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you to the Member for Whitehorse Centre for the third question. In my second response, I indicated that we are grateful and blessed to have hard-working teams in various areas of the territory that are able to deploy and able to rectify washouts and rehabilitate washouts in a timely fashion. Luckily, with respect to this situation, the washout was rectified within somewhere between 24 and 48 hours. I take the member's point that, of course, a community could be isolated. The scenario that she has provided to the House today is not one of complete isolation. It is one of, admittedly, a significant detour.

We can certainly return to the Member for Whitehorse Centre through my colleague as to what emergency measures plans are in place if a community happens to be completely isolated, although that was not the scenario in this situation.

As I said, the hard-working and diligent staff at Highways and Public Works, with their equipment, were able to rectify and make the road passable within a short period of time to allow for the passage of goods and services.

Question re: Early learning and childcare program

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, since its inception, the Liberals have been referring to their new early learning and childcare program as "universal", which suggests that it is universally available to all Yukoners; however, we know that it is certainly not universal as it excludes over 1,000 Yukon

children for several reasons. One of those reasons is its uneven application in rural Yukon.

I would like to provide the minister with a few examples. First of all, take Ross River. There is currently no daycare or childcare program in that community. Because the Liberals' program only applies to licensed childcare spaces, parents and children in Ross River are left out. Can the minister tell us how she can call the Liberal program "universal" when it is not available to children in Ross River?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. Our government believes that all children should have access to affordable and high-quality childcare and early learning opportunities. We recognize that capacity is certainly a concern. Work is ongoing to provide more integrative, collaborative programs and services to better meet the needs of Yukon families. This certainly does include working with our rural communities.

We have made historic investments in childcare. Our new universal childcare program is making life more affordable for Yukon families, and we recognize that we have a lot of work to do with our rural communities, which we are endeavouring to do. Again, these investments are historic and a long time coming. This is something that our government has made a priority and will continue to do so as we move forward with all our partners throughout Yukon.

Mr. Dixon: The Minister of Education has said that affordable childcare should be available to all Yukon citizens, but it is not; that is the point.

Another example of rural Yukoners being left behind by the Liberals is in Dawson City. According to the minister's own numbers that she provided earlier this Sitting, there are 20 childcare spaces at the Little Blue Daycare, but the wait-list is 36 children. That means that, because of the way the Liberals have designed this program, the 36 kids who are stuck on the wait-list are out of luck. In some cases, we've heard that the wait time is over a year.

How can the minister claim that the Liberals' program is universal when so many families in Dawson City receive no benefit from this program at all?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Our government believes that all children should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning opportunities.

As I'm standing today to speak about universal childcare and the accessibility, I want to point something out to Yukoners. In 2002, the Yukon Party had a platform that said that they would ensure that Yukoners have access to quality affordable childcare services. They did not deliver on this. Our government has made historic investments into early childcare and early learning opportunities for Yukoners.

I had a chance to sit down with the folks at the Little Blue Daycare. I absolutely went over all of their concerns and there are a lot of needs in many of our communities — Dawson being one of them. Our intent is to work with them to ensure that we have all of the views of the community and all of the partners in one place to talk about what the needs are for Dawson while we keep in mind that we have communities — as the member

opposite has pointed out, like Ross River — without a lot of services.

Again, the Yukon Party had a chance to do this. They didn't deliver on it; we are.

Mr. Dixon: Digging 20 years into the past is cold comfort for those Yukoners who are on wait-lists or unable to access affordable childcare.

The minister said that affordable childcare should be available to all Yukon children — that's exactly what we are saying — and it's not right now.

Another example of rural Yukoners being excluded from the Liberals' so-called "universal" program is in Watson Lake. Parents from Watson Lake have informed us that a childcare facility in Watson Lake has chosen not to sign onto the new program because of their concerns with how it will interfere with their existing support through the rural childcare sustainability initiative. This means that, for some parents in Watson Lake, there is no support provided through the Liberals' new program, and it has essentially created a two-tier system for Yukoners.

How can the minister call the Liberals' program "universal" when it excludes so many Yukon children?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks again for the question. I take it that the member opposite did not like part of my answer around previous commitments that were made by the Yukon Party in previous platforms and were not able to deliver. The Yukon Liberals are delivering, and this is a high priority for us as a government. We will continue to work with our partners. We recognize the sensitivities and the differences between all of our communities.

I personally will be visiting Watson Lake to meet with all of our partners there to discuss what their concerns are. I'm well aware of what they are on paper, but my way of working with communities is to sit down with them and to really and truly understand, from their perspective and many perspectives, what their priorities are.

We will work with them and ensure that we are on the same page with all of our communities. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, as I have said over and over, our government believes that all children should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning opportunities. This is the best way to set them up for success.

We just had a tribute today to graduation. We want outcomes to be everything that they can be for all of our children.

Question re: Early learning and childcare program

Mr. Dixon: The Liberals' new childcare program has also created a number of unintended consequences here in Whitehorse as well. First of all, it seems that the new structure of the supports provided directly to operators has impacted a number of facilities' financial liabilities. The mandated increases to the early childhood educator pay, combined with the limit on increasing fees to cover the increased cost, has led some daycares to cut their programming.

Unfortunately, one of the first programs to go is the infant program because they are the most costly to operate. We have

heard from parents who have had to scramble to make alternative arrangements because operators have been forced to cut their infant programs due to the Liberals' plan.

What is the minister doing to ensure that there are an adequate number of childcare spaces available for infants here in Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We are working with all of our partners, our Yukon First Nations, and communities to enhance early learning and childcare programs in Yukon so that all children have accessible, affordable, and high-quality early learning and childcare opportunities.

We are continuing to work with all of our partners, and we will work with them to ensure that we have more spaces available for children and that we are meeting the unique circumstances of families.

I will continue to, as I have said in earlier answers today, work with all of our partners. I know that I have heard personally from a lot of families, when we were at the doors during the recent election, about how universal childcare and the commitment and investment that we are making in early learning childcare is making a difference in the lives of families and that this has allowed people to dream again, to look at different things that they can do within their life to make it better and to make life affordable for Yukoners. We will continue to work with all of our partners and the providers to ensure that we have it right.

Mr. Dixon: I agree that this program has made lives of some Yukoners better, but it has not made the lives of all Yukoners better, and certainly not all Yukon children. That is the issue — that this program is not truly universal. That is the issue.

There are a number of high-quality and popular childcare programs that are not licensed in Whitehorse. Under the Liberals' new system, such programs are unable to access funding, so the children who utilize them are unable to receive any benefit and are left behind.

Additionally, the Liberals' new program does not support parents who choose to deliver early learning and childcare themselves, and, of course, since the Liberals' new system has come into effect, we have heard that wait-lists here in Whitehorse have increased significantly. So, we know that there are hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of children who are left out and do not receive any benefit under the Liberals' so-called "universal" program.

I will ask the minister again: How can she assert that this program is universal if so many Yukon children cannot access it?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, our government is committed to high-quality childcare and as many early learning opportunities for children as possible. Since April 1, 2021, one new childcare centre has opened in Whitehorse, and three more centres have been licensed to substantially increase the number of spaces available for children. One new centre will be opened soon — this month. Education continues to administer the start-up funding program to support new licensed childcare programs to meet regulatory health and safety requirements, up to a maximum of \$10,000 annually.

Mr. Speaker, really, there is nothing in our program that dictates what kind of services a childcare operator can provide, and I think that it is really important that we are providing accurate information to Yukoners.

Our commitment is there to work with all of our providers to increase capacity. It is great news that more people want to get into the workforce. That is great news. We are providing opportunities for women to re-enter the workforce. That is going to be a huge part of recovery from COVID-19.

Mr. Dixon: I agree with the minister. It would be nice if more parents could enter the workforce, but unfortunately, because of the wait-lists and the way that the Liberals have structured this program, it is not truly universal and it does not apply to all Yukon children.

We have heard from some operators that there has been direction given for daycares to move toward comparative fees. In other words, the government is moving toward regulating and mandating how much private operators can charge for their spaces; however, we also know that all facilities have received this direction.

Can the minister tell us if she has directed her department to begin requiring childcare operators to charge comparative fees?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I thank the member opposite for bringing that information to the floor of the Legislative Assembly. If there are specifics that he would like me to follow up on as a minister, I will do that. I will make sure that all of the voices are being heard. This is not information that I have before me.

Again, we are working closely with all of our centres. As I said earlier, there are a number of new centres that are looking to open — and again, great news, Mr. Speaker, that more parents are looking to enter the workforce, whether it is for school, whether it is for work or other opportunities. I think that our investment, as the Yukon Liberal government, has absolutely opened a door for a lot of folks. The demand will continue to increase, and that is what we wanted to happen. We really want parents to get back into the workforce or to go to school and to dream again. I have said that a number of times, and I think that we are on the right track. I will continue to work closely with all of our partners and ensure that the voices of childcare providers are heard.

Please — to the member opposite — provide the information to me.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

Deputy Chair's ruling

Deputy Chair: I would like to speak to the point of order that was raised yesterday.

Yesterday, when Mr. Cathers was speaking during general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, Ms. White stood on a point of order.

The crux of her point of order was that a time-sharing agreement between the Official Opposition and the Third Party was not being observed. Mr. Cathers, the Hon. Ms. McPhee, and the Hon. Mr. Clarke also spoke to the point of order.

As referenced in my ruling yesterday, informal time-splitting arrangements between parties are not enforceable by the Chair.

During departmental budget debate in Committee of the Whole, the existing practice is for the Chair to recognize, in turn, the minister and then the respective critic.

Practically speaking, if a member asks a minister a question and resumes their seat, that member has completed their speech, and what should happen for meaningful debate is that the minister should be provided an opportunity to answer. Before delivering their response, the minister may take some time to confer off-mic with their advisors. This is not an opportunity for the member questioning the minister to ask further questions.

In my view, it does not contribute to a productive back-and-forth discussion, and additionally, it presents logistical difficulties for a member who has completed a speech and taken their seat to stand again to add further remarks before the minister has had an opportunity to respond to the member's preceding speech. In standing a second time before a minister has responded, the member is speaking while the minister's attention is actively engaged in formulating a response to the questions asked in the speech that the member has concluded.

In fairness, I would note that at times in Committee of the Whole, it has been a minister who has completed their remarks, resumed their seat, and then stood again to offer further remarks without the Chair having had the opportunity to recognize another member to respond to the speech that the minister had delivered.

Once a member or minister concludes a speech and takes their seat, the timer is cleared and reset for another 20 minutes, so — although this was not an issue with yesterday's successive speeches by Mr. Cathers — there is potentially a fairness issue at play in terms of a member or minister effectively having a 40-minute speech available before a speech can be offered in reply.

In sum, after a member asks a question and cedes the floor, they have ceded the floor, and unless they are seeking to be recognized on a point of order — and neither further debate nor

additional questions for the minister constitute a point of order — the minister should be afforded an opportunity to reply.

After the minister replies, the member can then ask further questions if there is time available. If further time is not available, the member can submit a written question or questions for the minister.

I thank the members for their attention to this ruling.

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members which to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Chair: The matter before Committee is Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would like to take the opportunity to introduce my officials from the Department of Highways and Public Works. To my right, I have Deputy Minister Paul McConnell, and to my left, I have the Deputy Minister of Transportation, Sherri Young. Thank you to them for their assistance today.

I am pleased to present the Highways and Public Works budget for 2021-22. As you know, Madam Chair, this department is new to me as a minister, and I continue to be impressed with the depth and breadth of work done in this department.

At its heart, our role is to make life better for Yukoners today and to move our territory toward a more prosperous, environmentally sustainable future. We work so that Yukoners can get to work and everywhere else they need to go so that we can build our communities and grow our economy.

As a department, we make sure the territory's roads, bridges, and airports are safe and efficient. We make sure goods and services are procured in a fair and transparent way, bringing economic opportunity to communities and to Yukon and First Nation businesses and value to Yukon taxpayers.

We implement new technologies to make government more efficient and more accessible to Yukoners, and we make public buildings more energy efficient so we can lower our greenhouse gas emissions and move closer to our clean future. This department's work is absolutely central to the growth and development of this territory.

Today, I'm going to outline what Highways and Public Works is doing to continue moving our territory forward.

I'll start with the Information, Communications and Technology Division — or ICT for short.

ICT supports delivery of services to the public and helps the government run better, whether that is by making sure that employees can access a virtual desktop while working at home during a pandemic or deploying new technologies to help us communicate more easily and effectively. This year, for instance, we have budgeted \$1 million in capital funding to replace government's current landline phones and to move to voice-over-Internet protocol, better known as VoIP. VoIP allows users to make calls over the Internet, rather than being tied down to a landline. There are many benefits to this system. It is flexible, portable, and multi-functional — and it will save taxpayers money, as the technology is a lot less expensive than our current phone service.

From the information highway, let us go to the literal highway and let's move on to transportation. Our road system is essential for connecting Yukoners to one another and supporting economic growth. We are making investments to keep these vital links safe and open for business — a responsibility that we take very seriously.

This year, we have allocated \$20 million to rehabilitate and rebuild portions of the north Klondike Highway, including the replacement of the Crooked Creek bridge and the rehabilitation of the Moose Creek bridge. To keep our roads clear, safe, and functioning, we will support the roadside safety program with \$3.2 million for brushing, barriers, line-painting, and more.

We will also continue to advance the Yukon Resource Gateway program. This is one of the most significant construction programs ever undertaken in the territory. Improving infrastructure to Yukon's most mineral-rich areas will set the territory on a course for a more prosperous future. This year, we will provide \$15.5 million to advance several Gateway projects, including the Carmacks bypass, the Nahanni Range Road, and the Campbell Highway reconstruction.

As many of you have surely seen, work continues to upgrade the Alaska Highway through Whitehorse. \$4 million will support the improvement to the Hillcrest Drive and Burns Road intersections. An additional \$600,000 will go toward the Alaska Highway improvements in Porter Creek and at the Robert Service Way and Hamilton Boulevard intersections. This work is part of our goal to increase public safety and to reduce the risk of collisions along the Alaska Highway.

Moving on to bridges — this year, we will see \$10.2 million put toward bridge replacement. The Big Creek bridge located west of Watson Lake will be replaced over a period of two years. This work will include realignment on either side of the bridge to improve safety.

As well, after nearly 70 years of service, work will begin to replace the Nisutlin Bay bridge in Teslin with design and geotechnical work starting this summer.

Yukon's aviation network is critical to life in the north. Our investment this year — a total of \$16.5 million — is focused on ensuring that our aviation infrastructure meets the needs of Yukoners, visitors, and industry alike. Investments in runways,

buildings, and facilities all across Yukon will improve safety and access to everything the territory has to offer.

On to Property Management — Highways and Public Works operates and maintains over 500 government-owned buildings, worth over \$1.6 billion. We also manage leasing for over 400,000 square feet of space used by Yukon government programs and departments. If that weren't enough, Property Management also provides building and grounds maintenance, cleaning, security services, and the energy management of our assets. To cover building maintenance this year, we have allocated \$9.4 million. This covers repairs and maintenance to ensure that buildings meet clients' needs as well as energy-efficiency and sustainability standards. This includes \$1.3 million to upgrade yard lighting and the student drop-off area at Golden Horn Elementary School, and another \$2.15 million to upgrade the vehicle traffic areas at Christ the King Elementary School and Holy Family School.

Moving on to building development, we have \$39.7 million budgeted this year for the design and construction of new facilities and buildings. This includes \$19 million to build a new health and wellness centre and a 10-plex housing unit in Old Crow. This important facility will replace the aging health centre, increase the number of affordable housing units, and create jobs in the community.

Under the building development program, we have also put forward \$10 million for building retrofits, 75 percent of which is funded by the federal government. As part of the building energy retrofit program, we are looking at more than 20 energy retrofits to reduce energy loss, which will help us meet our commitments under *Our Clean Future*.

We are working on a comprehensive set of renovations to the Old Territorial Administration Building in Dawson. Upgrades to the exterior, interior, and building systems are expected to add more than 20 years to the expected life cycle of that building.

We are advancing the green infrastructure program with an investment of \$3 million. The program supports energy retrofits and renewable energy projects with the goal of installing low-carbon energy systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Two new biomass projects are in the final stages of design work, with construction expected to begin soon. This spring, two large feasibility studies were awarded to evaluate biomass, solar, geothermal, and other renewable energy options at over 50 sites. We are also conducting energy audits on 20 percent of our buildings this year.

In Yukon, we know that Internet services are no longer a luxury; in our increasingly interconnected world, it is a necessity for a strong economy, quality health care, and dependable air travel. The territory currently depends on a single fibre optic line and, when that line goes down, Yukon is largely cut off from the digital world, as we saw just recently.

This year, we have \$20 million budgeted to build an 800-kilometre fibre optic line along the Dempster Highway from Dawson City, Yukon to Inuvik, Northwest Territories. This new line will connect Yukon to the existing Mackenzie Valley fibre link, creating a 4,000-kilometre continuous network that

will ensure that traffic can be run in the other direction if there is an issue at any point along the network.

The Dempster fibre line will enhance the participation of Yukoners and northerners more broadly in the digital economy and enhance access to government services. I look forward to the groundbreaking on this vital project this summer.

Madam Chair, our government is well on its way to meeting our commitments to Yukoners. We are investing in the roads we drive on, making sure that Yukoners get to where they need to go safely. We are improving airports across the territory, ensuring that our aviation infrastructure can support the air travel industry and economy for years to come. We are upgrading current facilities to be more energy efficient — among other needs — and building new facilities to meet the growing needs of Yukoners.

We are keeping Yukoners connected, whether it's accessing government services more easily online or building a new fibre optic line to ensure that a road construction incident in British Columbia does not plunge the territory into digital darkness. Each day, with every strategic investment we make, we are helping to build a stronger Yukon that works better for all of us.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for his opening remarks and I join him in welcoming the officials to the Legislature here today. I also wanted to thank them for the briefing they provided to us and the Third Party critic. Some of the questions that we asked at the briefing we will repeat so that we can get the minister on the record. Then there will be additional questions as well; I do have budget questions, of course, some policy questions, and specific project questions as we move through the afternoon here today.

The first question that I wanted to ask is with respect to the full-time equivalents. In the 2021-22 main estimates document that was provided at the budget briefing, it said the FTEs for — it looks like it's 2020-21, they are 774.82, but then there are no numbers for this current budget year. I'm wondering if the minister can either tell us how many additional FTEs are being hired or just give us the total number of FTEs for the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I've just been provided numbers. The numbers by division had to be added, but the numbers for this year, for 2021-22, I'm advised, are 774.82 full-time equivalent positions.

Mr. Kent: So, that's the number that I quoted, and perhaps I'm reading this briefing document wrong, but that's in the 2021-22 — I apologize. It does say 774.82. I guess my question then would be: How much of an increase is that over the 2020-21 budget year?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I had an opportunity to receive some information from my officials, but I will return to the member with that number.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that. I look forward to it.

I just wanted to dig into a few specific questions about this upcoming fiscal year. So, yesterday in Question Period when responding to a question from my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, the minister said — and I quote: "I am in the process of reviewing all of the major contracts that this

government will be committing to over the course of fiscal 2021-22, including things like the Carmacks bypass, the Dempster fibre project, the Whistle Bend elementary school, the Old Crow health and wellness centre, and the 10-plex.”

I’m curious how far along in that process the minister is and exactly how many major contracts he’s looking at reviewing.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. As the member opposite well knows, I am still in the early days of having the honour of being the Minister of Highways and Public Works. The projects that I identified yesterday are, I suppose, the largest — or among the largest — projects that I have been briefed on or been made aware of. I am sure that there are many more that will be brought to my attention during the course of the summer, but what I would say is — confirming basically what I said yesterday — that there are currently higher market costs for a wide range of construction materials, including wood products and other inputs.

While COVID-19 has disrupted supply chains and increased material costs, other factors — such as the freezing conditions in the southern US this past winter — are also impacting markets. Highways and Public Works is currently working with partners across government to assess the impact of these cost increases on the budgets for capital projects. Early indicators are that some projects may have higher costs than were estimated. Some have included higher contingencies to account for the current cost environment. If the project costs exceed the contingencies that are included in our cost estimates, we may need to consider budget revisions, and these will be brought forward within supplementary estimates.

At this point, it is still too early to estimate the overall impacts to the budgets, but we are watching very closely and assessing the markets for materials and individual projects.

Just to, I suppose, reinforce or emphasize what I said yesterday, these will not be unique considerations or circumstances to the Yukon or to a Yukon government. These will be challenges that will be faced by all 10 provinces, three territories, and the federal government on projects. I am interested to see what the analysis is, going forward, both on a national and perhaps even on a global level. But, yes, these analyses of the various projects across Yukon government will be ongoing during the course of this summer.

Mr. Kent: Again, yesterday, the minister said during Question Period that he is in the process of reviewing all of the major contracts that this government will be committing to over the course of this fiscal year. That answer yesterday led us to believe that this process had already started.

Is the minister now saying that the process has not started, or have any of these contracts been reviewed for some of these pressures that he talked about as far as cost pressures? I am just trying to seek some clarification, I guess, based on his answer yesterday — what he meant by “in the process of reviewing”? Is that work underway or has he not yet started it?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: What I would say to the member opposite is that, of course, it is early days. What I would say to clarify is that I have been made aware of the potential cost

pressures. Of course, I am going to be diving into the files over the course of the summer.

One of the member opposite’s questions was specific to whether certain projects have already been identified as having cost pressures. I would just repeat that the early indications are that some projects may have higher costs than were estimated. Some have included higher contingencies to account for the current cost environment. If the project costs exceed the contingencies that are included in our cost estimates, we may need to consider budget revisions and these would be brought forward within supplementary estimates.

I have also been advised that HPW and various departments have funding envelopes. We will make best efforts to work within our funding envelopes and to deliver as many projects as possible in a given fiscal year.

To answer your specific question, it appears that yes, some of the projects have included higher contingencies to account for the current cost environment.

Mr. Kent: I take it from the minister’s response then that the process of reviewing has not started, but he’ll be conducting that review in the summer months and we can regroup on that in the fall with the minister when we return to the Legislature.

One of the projects that he identified yesterday in Question Period as part of that response to my colleague was the Old Crow health and wellness centre and the tenplex that’s there. I do have some questions specific to that project and the award of that project.

Looking at a *Yukon News* article from March 18, it says that the Yukon government announced that Ketza TSL Construction had been awarded a \$44.9-million contract for that project. However, Wildstone Construction Group, who also submitted a bid, bid at a lower price of \$38.2 million.

Can the minister confirm both of those numbers for us and then also let us know what the pre-tender construction estimates were for that job?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question. Our government is making investments across the territory to build healthy, vibrant communities. We are building a new health and wellness centre and a tenplex housing unit in Old Crow. Design work is underway and construction will start this winter. The design/build contract for the centre and housing unit was awarded to Ketza Construction for \$44.8 million. The project was awarded using a value-driven procurement. These types of procurements look at a number of elements beyond price to ensure there is additional value for the community and the territory. In this case, the project team awarded points for the schedule, training plans, subcontracting plans, northern experience, and First Nation participation.

This project will replace the aging health centre, increase the number of affordable housing units, and create jobs in the community.

In addition, we are working with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation on the design of a healing room for the health and wellness centre as well as gathering other cultural and First Nation input into the overall design. Construction is set to start in the winter of 2021-22 for the thermal pile foundation and building construction is scheduled to begin in the spring of

2022. That is the information I have so far with respect to that project.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I am hoping that the minister can either let us know or commit to getting us the preconstruction estimates for that project. What were the cost estimates that were used to develop the budget? Then obviously the \$44.8 million — we are curious. We have heard that it is overbudget. We are curious as to how far overbudget that is. I am hoping that the minister can either give me that number or commit to getting it back to us.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I stated, I am new to the procurement and bidding process, but the information I have from the procurement team is that they do not ordinarily release pre-tender estimates. In any event, I will get back to the department and determine whether that is in fact the industry or government standard. If I am mistaken or if the department is mistaken, I will return to the member opposite, but that is the information I have from the procurement department.

Mr. Kent: If that is the case, that is a new policy that the Liberals have brought in and certainly further reduces the amount of openness and transparency when it comes to telling not only us but telling Yukoners how much they are budgeting for these projects. So, again, I know that there would have been pre-tender cost estimates done for this. We have heard ministers in the past say that they can't tell us what those are until after the jobs close. This job is closed; it closed on February 18, I believe. It was awarded in what I would call a record time — I think it was about three weeks — on March 11, the day before the snap election was called.

I will give the minister a chance to get back on his feet and let us know if this is a policy change — that they are no longer able to give us pre-tender construction estimates after the job is closed — because it is an awful lot less transparent and open than has been done in the past.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would just reiterate my response to the member opposite that I will return to him shortly with a complete response to his question about pre-tender cost estimates. My advice right now is that there has been no policy change, but I will return to the member as soon as I receive the information from the procurement department.

Mr. Kent: When it comes to the tendering of this particular project, as I mentioned in my previous question, it was a very quick turnaround. The bid closing date was February 18, and the bid was awarded Thursday, March 11. As the minister said earlier, this was a value-driven contract based on points and awards. That's quite a feat to get that out there — ironically, the day before the early election was called, but it was out there that day.

When my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, was asking questions of the new Minister of Community Services, or the predecessor in Highways and Public Works, about the Pelly pool earlier this Sitting, the minister said — and I'll quote from Hansard: "The Pelly pool is a very exciting project. I am happy to say that we are, of course, proceeding with it. It is an important facility to the community of Pelly. It was built back in — close to the 1990s, I think. It has been around for a long time; it is in need of replacement."

"The bid came in during the election, so the department had to extend the irrevocability period. With the election resolved, we have moved forward with the tender. We have reconfirmed the project and are in discussions with the low bidder, and we are working toward an award, so it is happening."

That closes the quote from the Minister of Community Services. Then, when I went and looked on the Bids and Tenders website, as I have mentioned, the Old Crow health and wellness centre and Yukon Housing Corporation templex project closed on Thursday, February 18 and was awarded on Thursday, March 11. The closing date for the Pelly pool — again, same closing date, Thursday, February 18, which was outside of the election period, so I'm not sure what the Minister of Community Services was talking about when talking to my colleague — and it wasn't awarded until Tuesday, May 18.

These are the two closest projects that I can find on the Bids and Tenders website. I'm just curious what process was used that allowed a value-driven contract, like this RFP for the project in Old Crow, to be turned around in less than a month, whereas the construction, which was a request-for-bids type, on the Pelly pool took three months to get awarded.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The member opposite will know that the entire contract with respect to the Old Crow health and wellness centre and templex was awarded at the end of the 34th Assembly, and I, of course, was not in Cabinet at the time. However, I can provide the member opposite the high-level answer that I received from the department, which is that it was indeed a competitive process. It was a value-driven contract and there was a formal evaluation of the tenders, using a fairness monitor. In consequence of that, the evaluations took place and the contract was let in the time frame indicated.

Any other questions about how that unfolded would be conjecture on my behalf.

Mr. Kent: Again, the winning bid was about \$44.8 million on this project — again, a request for proposals. I will just mention again that it closed on Thursday, February 18, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. and it was awarded on Thursday, March 11, 2021, the day before an election was called here in the Yukon. I mean, it begs the question — and recognizing, of course, that the new minister was not in Cabinet at the time, but we're curious.

First of all, I would like to know if the minister can point me to any other contracts of this size, complexity, and magnitude that have been turned around in such a short time frame — about three weeks from closing date to award. Again, the timing of the award date — Thursday, March 11, the day before the election was called — lends us to wonder if there was any political direction given to get the award out.

Can the minister confirm for us whether or not there was political direction? If he can point me to a project of this size and magnitude that has been turned around in three weeks' time, I would like to see it. As I mentioned, the closest one I could find was the Pelly pool, which took three months to award — and it was a request for bids, so obviously it was not as complicated and as expensive, probably, as this project in Old Crow. But again, we are curious as to if there was any

political direction and if he can tell me about a project of this size that was turned around from bid closing to award in three weeks' time.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: A few points have been brought to my attention. Firstly, ultimately there were two bids, and in consequence of that, the ability to process the bids was more possible — or could be expedited based on the fact that there were only two bids and not four or five or six bids.

This project — the Old Crow 10-unit mixed-use project and the health and wellness centre — were seen as being priority items for this community. As is noted by the manner in which the procurement proceeded — which took into account, as I mentioned previously, schedule, training plans, subcontracting plans, northern experience, and First Nation participation — I can point to the strong planning by the procurement authority in this process. Ultimately, that work was to proceed, or the work could proceed, in this construction season — or that the design work can proceed in this construction season. As I said, I was not in Cabinet during this process between February and March 2021. This is the information I have.

In our five-year capital plan, which has been provided to the Official Opposition, the estimated range of cost for both projects, if you add the range of the two projects together, you are certainly within the range of the successful bidder, which was Ketza Construction.

The addition of this infrastructure in Old Crow was overdue. We know that the community will benefit greatly from this leading-edge infrastructure, which, I understand, is designed for at least 30 years' worth of — I've just been corrected that it's up to a 60-year useful life for both projects, so certainly a very positive project. There was some urgency, but based on the fact that there were two bids and the fantastic work that was done by the procurement authority, the prior Cabinet was able to confirm this tender and this project — just to confirm for the record that the company is Ketza TSL.

Mr. Kent: Again, the question that I asked was whether or not there was any political direction given at the time to get this bid awarded the day before the election was called. I don't believe that I received a response, other than there was a Cabinet commitment.

I'm curious. Often projects of this size, or this large, would have to go also through a Management Board review process before it comes to Management Board. I mean — it's such a quick turnaround. I'm quite surprised that it made it through all of these steps in three weeks time, essentially.

I will just give the minister another opportunity to answer if there was any political direction given to officials in Procurement or Highways and Public Works or Health and Social Services or the Housing Corporation to get this project awarded and out the door prior to the call of the snap election on March 12.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would reiterate the praise I have for the fantastic work the procurement authority did with respect to this project and the important and game-changing infrastructure that Old Crow will receive within the next two or three years

— two years — and also say that I am not in a position to answer the other question that the member is asking.

Just to confirm for the record, I was not in Cabinet during the time he is asking.

Mr. Kent: Just to be clear, the new Minister of Highways and Public Works — with the former Minister of Highways and Public Works sitting about two metres away from him — will not deny that political direction was given with respect to getting this project out the door. That is what I heard. If he wants to stand up and clarify that, then —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Kent: Oh, pardon me, Madam Chair — I thought I had the floor.

If he wants to stand up and say that there was no political direction given, that is great. We would appreciate that. You know, we also appreciate that there has been an increase of \$536,000 and four additional staff for ATIPP and the one-government approach to ATIPP. I guess, if the minister is not going to answer the question, we will endeavour to find out if there was any political direction given on this three-week turnaround, from closing to award, on this project in Old Crow.

Again, of course, it jumped out at us because it was awarded the day before the Premier called an early election here in the territory. That is why we are asking that question. We have seen other projects that closed on that same date take three months to award. This one took three weeks. Of course, it is going to raise flags. It raises flags for us; it raised flags for one of the contractors, who went to the media. I referenced the media story earlier.

We will give the minister a chance to deny that there was any political direction given on this project. If he won't, then we will follow up through ATIPP, I guess, and see if we can find out anything there. It certainly does not give us any good feelings about the openness and transparency of this next version of the Liberal government in the 35th Assembly here.

I'm going to move on now though to another project that the minister referenced yesterday in his response to the Member for Porter Creek North that he is in the process of reviewing, and that is the Carmacks bypass.

The Carmacks bypass is part of the Gateway project. It looks to me — in reading this budget — the Gateway money is — for the minister's reference, we're on page 14-11 of the budget documents under Major Projects, \$15.5 million. I have a few questions about that overall funding envelope. Can the minister provide us a breakdown of which Gateway projects are funded on that line item and how much they are?

When I look back to the estimates from 2020-21, it was \$3.286 million, but only \$736,000 was spent. I'm curious as to why there was such a reduction in the amount that was forecast to be spent. Can he break down what is under those major projects in that \$15.5 million for this year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will stand up to address the insinuations, frankly, from the Member for Copperbelt South in his — I mean, I'm really shocked. I mean, this is a former minister of the Crown. He knows the proceedings in the House and he's asking somebody who was not at the table to answer questions. That's a really shockingly inappropriate way to ask

questions in the House. Of course, my colleague could not answer the questions posed to him because he wasn't at the table. But I can say, Madam Chair — I can say unequivocally for the members opposite that there was absolutely no political interference on that contract, so we can put that insinuation — that malicious insinuation — to bed right now.

I'm kind of shocked at the tactics of the Yukon Party, but I guess I shouldn't be. I can say that the Department of Highways and Public Works in their procurement efforts are absolutely running phenomenally well. That's why we were able to get these programs out in a competitive system. Frankly, Madam Chair, the thought that we were trying to make a decision politically is really more indicative of the mindset of the members opposite, rather than this Liberal caucus.

Mr. Kent: Well, what a performance, Madam Chair — what a performance. Once again, the former Minister of Highways and Public Works brings his political theatrics to the floor of the House. We asked a simple question that, of course, eyebrows were raised when this contract was closed on the 18th and awarded three weeks later — the day before the election. The minister stood and said unequivocally that there was no political direction to get this project out the door. That's good. We are pleased to hear that, because now we can compare that with any ATIPPs that we file with respect to this project and confirm whether or not there was political direction given.

The second part of my question was with respect to the Gateway project. If the minister needs me to repeat it, I will. Otherwise, I will give him the chance to answer that line breakdown on page 14-11.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We're at 14-11. The \$15.5 million that is allocated in this year's budget for the Gateway project and the rough numbers — the planning numbers — are as follows: \$7.5 million for the Carmacks bypass; Campbell Highway reconstruction, kilometre 335 to 414 — \$4 million; Campbell Highway reconstruction, kilometre 114 to 171 — \$1.54 million; Nahanni Range Road — \$1.5 million; North Canol Road — \$500,000; Silver Trail — \$310,000; and Freegold Road — approximately \$150,000.

As I referenced in Question Period today, depending on negotiations and discussions — hopefully collaborative discussions — which are ongoing with the Ross River Dena Council, it may well be that some of the Campbell Highway reconstruction funds might have to be reprofiled, but I will discuss that with my officials. We certainly do want to work collaboratively with the Ross River Dena Council in order to ensure that the project meets their requirements as well.

Mr. Kent: So, the \$7.5 million budgeted for the Carmacks bypass that the minister referenced — can he tell us where we are in the tendering process for that? I couldn't find a tender for that project when I looked on Bids and Tenders. If he could let us know exactly where we're at in the tendering process for that \$7.5 million, because it's obviously the largest amount, and it looks like there may be shovels in the ground according to the budget number that the minister gave us in this fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have had an opportunity to confer with my officials and am advised that the tender for this year's

work to be completed on the Carmacks bypass project is projected to be tendered within the next few weeks.

Mr. Kent: Can the minister confirm that, in the next three weeks — so, we'll say sort of the middle of June, middle of June to the third week in June — is that when the tender will go out, and then it will be posted and awarded after that? I guess the question that I'm trying to ask is: Is that when the tender will first be advertised for this job — in a few weeks, as he mentioned?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Madam Chair, in the spring of 2019, a project agreement for the Carmacks bypass component was signed with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The project includes the construction of a new road and bridge and has an estimated total capital cost of \$26.75 million. Planning, design, and environmental assessment of the Carmacks bypass is underway and nearing completion.

Right-of-way clearing has begun, which will support construction of the Carmacks bypass and the Nordenskiold River bridge.

A request for qualifications and request for quotes for the provision of construction services for the Carmacks bypass kilometre 0 to kilometre 5.1 was tendered in December 2020 and resulted in three qualified contractors. A request for proposals — RFPs — for the Carmacks bypass will be tendered, as I indicated, shortly — within the next few weeks. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2021.

The right-of-way clearing began in 2020 on the Carmacks bypass project. The contract was awarded to Cobalt Construction.

An application to YESAB for the geotechnical assessment component of the Carmacks bypass project was approved in January 2019 and is now complete.

The geotechnical assessment result supported an application for the full project, which was submitted to YESAB in May 2020, and the decision document was completed in December 2020.

I suppose, to answer the member opposite's question, three contractors were qualified after the request for qualifications was complete, and the tender will go out within the next few weeks — two weeks.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, if the tender does not go out for a few weeks — the minister mentioned that there were three companies that passed the request for qualifications and have been asked to submit bids on this. If the tender does not go out for a few more weeks — I mean, posting typically takes a month, and then an award — if it is straightforward, you can get that award out in three weeks, like you did with the Old Crow job.

There's not very much construction season left is what I'm saying. I'm curious what the delays were that led to the tender being let in June. Realistically, it's going to be difficult to spend \$7.5 million on this if you can't get that project awarded until the end of August or into September, given the length of our construction season, unless the minister has built that in or the department has built that into this \$7.5-million estimate.

We're curious when the minister foresees work being able to start on this project and if he believes that the entire \$7.5 million budgeted for it will be able to be spent this year.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have received some additional detail with respect to this project and can advise that the member opposite is fairly accurate with respect to how he sees the schedule for this summer unfold and that, in fact, the work will likely commence in late July or early August, involving initial construction activities in the first year of a two-year project, and that the department — given the fact that they pre-qualified these three qualified contractors, they will get to work. There is no concern at this time that the budgeted amounts — that the good work and the positive work on this Gateway project cannot occur in a timely fashion and that there is enough time in this season — starting in late July or early August, into the late summer/early fall — to conduct the work that is planned within this construction season. Also, I can confirm that this is a scheduled two-year project. The indications that I have are that the tendering process is on time and that the scheduling of the work that is to be conducted this summer has still been sequenced in the manner in which the department had planned to sequence it.

Mr. Kent: We will pass that information along to the contractors who have reached out to us about that specific project.

I have some other questions with respect to these numbers, but just in the interest of time, I am going to just ask one other question then about the envelope of projects — the \$15.5 million.

So, when the Gateway application was initially submitted to the federal government, there was obviously a significant federal government allotment or contribution. There was also a contribution from the Yukon government and then there was a contribution from industry. I believe that the initial number was in the range of \$107 million, which the private sector would be contributing — obviously a very different envelope of projects from the one that is before us today — but nevertheless, the minister's predecessor did confirm, when we asked him about it, that there was still a private sector contribution that was expected and that it was a similar number.

I'm curious, of this \$15.5 million, what is the private sector contribution to that? Rather than naming the specific mining company or companies that are going to contribute, where does the minister expect those dollars to come from?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Government of Yukon has signed six project agreements with the affected First Nations under the Yukon Resource Gateway program. Approved project agreements have an estimated total capital construction cost of \$251.45 million. Project agreements are announced when they are approved by Cabinet and signed by all parties.

We have worked hard to increase the flexibility of the funding to include additional roads as well as the ability to approach projects in phases. This way, we have more options to focus the available money on projects that are supported by First Nations and communities.

The Government of Yukon continues to work with First Nations in the spirit of reconciliation to develop projects that

have lasting benefits. We will continue to pursue additional agreements with Yukon First Nations while implementing the signed project agreements.

Road construction projects provide sustainable employment for Yukoners and significant opportunities for Yukon First Nations and employment training to strengthen our communities. With respect to the \$15.5 million that is budgeted this year for the major projects, I'm advised that, firstly, in the original Gateway agreement — the member was close, but I'm advised that at least \$108 million is potentially set aside for industry-private sector contribution.

But I can't confirm — with respect to the \$15.5 million that is budgeted for 2021-22 — that there is no private sector contribution for that — it is a joint Canada-Yukon funding agreement with respect to the various projects, which I outlined. Obviously, there is room — I certainly hope that there would be — for industry contribution going forward in future years on and in future projects.

Mr. Kent: Just to get the minister perhaps to restate — there is \$108 million of this \$251.45 million, and then is there an additional \$108 million that is from industry? Could he just confirm that for us? He said that he hopes that the industry will contribute. Can he confirm? Will he be making industry or holding industry to their commitment of \$108 million of the entire project envelope?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can clarify some of this, and I will certainly get back to the member opposite if there are any subsequent questions as I continue to familiarize myself with the ongoing Gateway project. Firstly, the \$251.45 million is for the number of approved projects. The total potential value — or total possible maximum value, I suppose — of the Yukon Resource Gateway program is \$468 million. The breakdown there is: federal government investment of up to \$247 million; a commitment from Yukon of up to \$112 million; and an industry commitment of \$108 million over the lifespan of the program. I am advised that it is cumulative, so you get to \$468 million by: the federal government, \$247 million; Yukon government, \$112 million; and industry commitment, \$108 million.

There is no legal obligation for industry to be involved in some of these projects, but it is thought that there could be larger projects in the Yukon where a big industrial partner or big company — it would be in their interests to want to partner with both the federal government and the territorial government on a cost-share basis for perhaps a road or some other infrastructure project where it would be financially beneficial, or financially attractive, to a private business partner to participate.

I will confirm this with the officials. It would appear, if federal funds and the territorial funds are exhausted, then they are exhausted.

So, yes, there are funds set aside for the future to engage private companies and industry to participate in Gateway.

So, to answer the member opposite's question, the estimated total capital construction cost that has been approved so far is \$251.45 million. The expenditure for this year on the projects, which I indicated to the House, is \$15.5 million. None

of those projects have private industry participation. The total amount of the \$468 million set aside for the Gateway program envisages or contemplates having an industry potential contribution of \$108 million over the lifespan of the program.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that response from the minister. I obviously don't have the Blues in front of me now, but we'll compare his response on that private sector contribution to the previous minister's, because I believe that, at the time, he was a lot more bullish on that private sector contribution. But again, we'll go back in Hansard and can revisit this in the fall with the minister and see what exactly has changed, if anything, with respect to that private sector contribution to the Gateway projects.

I wanted to talk about procurement for a little bit. A number of contractors in my riding and other ridings across the Yukon have reached out to MLAs in our office asking about the third-party rentals list. My understanding is that the third-party rentals list was due to be updated last March — so March 2020. It never happened at that time. The prices and the equipment that are in that third-party rentals list actually predates that by six months, so it goes back 18 months.

Obviously, contractors have purchased new equipment or sold existing equipment that is on that list. Costs have obviously gone up, as well, on an hourly basis, so I am curious if the minister can tell us when that third-party rentals list will be updated. As I said, the last update was 18 months ago, and my understanding was that it was due to be updated in March 2020.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I have received some information on the issue of third-party rentals lists, and I am advised that, consistent with the Member for Copperbelt South's information, the last price adjustments were in March 2020. I am advised that, at that point, new prices were set and the time frame to consider, or to implement or set new prices, is within a two-year time horizon from March 2020. If the member opposite requires more specificity, I certainly can return to him, but that is the information that I have — that prices were adjusted or set in March 2020 and that the process of assessing what new prices ought to be will be within two years from that date.

Mr. Kent: We will follow up with the contractors who have reached out to us. So, I guess, just to confirm, the minister has mentioned that the next adjustments won't be until March 2022 — if he can just confirm that for us, because I think there will be a lot of interest and perhaps some advocating by those contractors to the department to advance that time frame, just given the increased costs and changes that have been made to their equipment lists in the last while. Again, the information that was provided to us is that it hasn't been updated. It was supposed to be updated last March, but that never happened. So, again, recognizing that the minister may have to get back to us on that, we would appreciate the information on when that exactly was last updated, and the next schedule, so that they can more accurately reflect the costs that they have.

I wanted to ask a couple of questions about the First Nation procurement policy. We understand that aspects of it have been postponed from coming into effect until the fall. We were told

at the briefing that part of it was the bid value reduction piece and the other part was the verification piece.

Can the minister give us an update on where we are at with those two issues? Obviously, the First Nation procurement policy was something that was quite contentious. It was certainly an election issue for many of us and came up at many doorsteps for those of us who have contractors in our riding and telling us what their concerns were with it.

The previous minister got quite a rough ride on this one. It was a bit of a known goal on his part, because he did not properly consult with the business community prior to making that announcement last fall, and that was spelled out in letters and conversations with the contracting community that have been made public and have gone into the local media.

That said, we're curious about where this is at, going forward. The verification process to determine — I'll let the minister explain to us where we're at in the verification process and where we're at in the bid value reduction process as well.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I think it may have been on day one in this position when I had my first meeting on the First Nation procurement policy with some members from the Yukon Contractors Association, and I certainly look forward to ongoing meetings after the House rises. I would agree with the member opposite that it's important to get this right.

The member opposite will also know that now there is an industry working group, and there is significant First Nation representation and representation from many long-standing Yukon businesses.

I am advised that meetings have occurred as recently as yesterday. Three weeks ago, I was advised that there are weekly meetings of at least two hours. We anticipate that the consultation with First Nation businesses, First Nation governments, and other Yukon businesses will continue to occur over the summer.

The Yukon First Nation procurement policy will strengthen outcomes for Yukon First Nation people in businesses by providing opportunities for Yukon First Nation governments, businesses, and people to participate in territorial procurements. The majority of the policy is now in effect. We will continue to work with the business community on bid value reductions and on the verification process, which will be implemented on October 4, 2021. Through this policy, the Yukon government commits to providing Yukon First Nation businesses with increased opportunities to participate in Yukon's economy, ensuring that procurement processes are undertaken in accordance with the Yukon First Nation final agreements and advancing reconciliation, renewing the relationships with Yukon First Nations, and respecting treaty and aboriginal rights.

Our government has listened to Yukoners and has phased implementation to ensure that Yukon businesses, Yukon First Nations, and Yukon government employees have time to prepare and so that the required tools and templates are readily available.

We have established an industry working group to assist with the phased implementation of the policy. The industry working group provides a forum for interested stakeholders to

provide input and advice and support of the implementation of the policy. The working group has broad representation from the business community and industry associations.

We are establishing a monitor and review committee which will be responsible for monitoring and assessing outcomes of the policy and providing advice and recommendations to the Yukon government for continuous improvement. This committee will have representatives from First Nation governments, local industry, and the Yukon government.

What I would say is that getting the issue of bid value reduction and the verification of First Nation business status — it is important that we get this right.

As I said previously in my comments, there's a strong cross-section of individuals from various businesses, First Nation development corporations, and First Nation governments who are part of this process.

I hear the member opposite's comments, but this is where we're at right now, and we're certainly optimistic that there will be a transparent, usable, effective program or policy in place by, or perhaps even in advance of, the October deadline.

Chair: With respect to the time being 4:00 p.m., 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.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Kent: Before the break, we were talking about procurement. We talked about the third-party rentals list and a couple of aspects of the First Nation procurement policy that we have been hearing about.

I did want to also touch on the process of publicly opening bids for certain projects when they close. It was previous practice. It was changed by the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works at some point during the Liberals' previous mandate. We have heard from many contractors the problems that this creates for them in not knowing whether or not they are the low bid and recognizing that, even being the low bid, it might not be the successful bid on some of these price-driven contracts, but still, when you have contractors bidding on multiple contracts, it's nice if they can find out as soon as possible.

I'm just curious if the new minister knows why the previous minister made that decision to stop that practice of opening the prices on price-driven contracts and if he intends to revert to that practice, which has been asked for by many contractors during the election campaign and throughout the 34th Assembly after it was changed.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Government of Yukon now posts construction tender bid prices as quickly as possible once the tender has closed.

Between April 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020, I'm advised that our government issued 59 requests for bid tenders for construction projects. Of those, 58 percent of prices were posted in one to four days, and 28 percent, or 17 projects, took five or more days to post. Of the remaining 14 percent, or eight projects, seven projects were cancelled. In these cases, prices were not posted, and one project received no bids.

In the case of where there is a delay, it is often because bids come in overbudget and it is necessary to seek approval for additional project funding.

We post bid prices as soon as bids are reviewed for compliance and we confirm that the project can proceed with the budget in place. When prices are not posted and projects are cancelled, the Yukon government has an opportunity to retender, sometimes immediately, which can save time and money.

Our government is ensuring consistency and integrity by completing the compliance review of all public tenders before sharing bid prices — a move that greatly improves accuracy in recording bid prices and protects supplier pricing.

As I said in previous comments prior to the break, I look forward to meeting with the Yukon Contractors Association in the near future, and other interested parties, and I can certainly hear from them as to what their experiences have been with respect to the system that I have outlined. I will certainly educate myself on the issue, and like I said, I can listen to the contractors and any concerns that they may have. I would certainly ask the member opposite — if he wishes and if he could, he can direct contractors and companies to the Department of Highways and Public Works, or to me, for them to express their concerns or any suggestions that they may have for making this process — in their view — fairer, more streamlined, and more transparent. But in any event, I have set out how it is currently being dealt with, with a view toward ensuring consistency and integrity by completing the compliance review of all public tenders before sharing bid prices — a move that greatly, I am advised, improves accuracy in recording bid prices and protects supplier pricing.

I will be meeting with the Contractors Association and any other companies, persons, individuals, or representatives who the Member for Copperbelt North may wish to refer to my department.

Mr. Kent: So, that issue was one of the questions that the Contractors Association put to the three parties at the debate that happened during the election. I know that they are quite anxious to revert to the previous practice. I'm sure that the minister will hear that, not only from them, but we had asked the previous minister about it as well on a number of occasions and got the same statistics essentially as the new minister just gave us. How that works on the ground for them — well, it doesn't work on the ground for them.

Again, I am hoping that the new minister has an open mind when it comes to changing back to the way it was done, rather than just continuing on in this way.

Another serious issue for the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works was the closure of Central Stores and the Queen's Printer Agency. The new minister will recall, in his time as Speaker during the previous Legislative Assembly, the fact that the gallery had a number of public servants in it. They were told — it was even past the eleventh hour — that these changes were coming. The previous minister gave them little to no warning that it was happening and made a number of claims on the floor of the Legislature about cost-savings.

In a legislative return that we received on October 30, 2019, from the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works to the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin, he said that net savings from closing Central Stores would be \$1.231 million and that net savings from closing the Queen's Printer Agency would be \$360,000 for a total net of \$1.591 million. Is the minister able to confirm these numbers that we were provided with a couple of years ago? Perhaps he could give us updated cost-savings from the previous minister's hasty decision of closing down these two government agencies — Central Stores and the Queen's Printer.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The return that the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin received was in late October of 2019 and just predicated by a few months the onset of COVID. I am advised that COVID has complicated matters, but I can advise that Supply Services branch has realized some savings and that they are providing a number of the services to other branches of government.

I've also been advised that other branches of government will have realized some savings since October 2019 as well, but concede that it will require some work to identify the savings on a department-by-department basis. But as with a lot of issues of spending and savings, the last 14 or 15 months of COVID have certainly impacted on operations.

There is work to be done to analyze this process as to — what I've been told is that savings have been, and continue to be, realized, but obviously we would want to be in a position to be able to quantify those savings. We'll make best efforts to do so in the next while.

Mr. Kent: It would be helpful, then, if the new minister could return to us with a comparative legislation return, or however he intends to proceed, that has personnel savings and indirect and direct costs — essentially laid out like that legislative return was so that we can compare what the previous minister told us to what is actually occurring on the ground as far as cost-savings that were promised by the closure of those two government agencies.

I want to take the minister back — and I'm going to cede the floor in 15 minutes or so to the Member for Whitehorse Centre, the NDP critic. But I want to take the minister back to page 14-11 on the capital vote under Transportation. I think that he mentioned this during his opening remarks. We received information at the briefing about the \$4.6 million for the Alaska Highway. Is there any capital money being allocated to the north Alaska Highway — so the Shakwak piece, or the piece from Haines Junction to the US border near Beaver Creek?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can confirm that there is \$1.8 million that has been allocated for capital expenses for

BST overlay at various locations between Haines Junction and Beaver Creek.

Mr. Kent: The other highway that's not mentioned here is the Dempster Highway. What are the capital expenditures for the Dempster Highway? Obviously, there is no major construction or reconstruction projects on the Dempster, but are there any capital expenditures that are in some of these other line items that are referenced here for the Dempster Highway?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: With respect to work on the capital, funds that have been set aside for capital work on the Dempster Highway, I can advise that the total amount of \$1.675 million is broken down as follows: work on small culverts — \$75,000 in the capital budget; gravel resurfacing — \$1.1 million in the capital budget; and some work to improve stability and approaches at the Engineer Creek bridge — approximately \$500,000; which gives you a total of \$1.675 million — all work projected to be completed this summer.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for those numbers and the numbers with respect to the north Alaska Highway as well.

The large overhead signs that have been installed — one in my riding and one in the riding of the Member for Lake Laberge — one by KARA Speedway and the other one out by Cobalt's yard on the Alaska Highway — can the minister tell us what the final costs were for those four signs and when they will be activated?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Madam Chair, I thank you for the opportunity to talk about the intelligent transportation system signs. Highways and Public Works continues to expand its intelligent transportation system program to serve Yukon's transportation data collection needs. This system uses a number of technologies — including traffic counters, road temperature sensors, and cameras — to collect information on road conditions and weather in order to improve safety and efficiency for all road users.

Part of this program includes the use of digital message boards that display known hazards to travellers and information about road closures and construction. Eventually, this data will also feed into our 511 platform, which means that Yukoners will have accurate, reliable road condition information to plan any trip. When complete, these signs will be connected to our 511 system, which will allow us to display known hazards like washouts, road closures, extreme weather and other weather events to the travelling public.

We will also be able to participate in programs like AMBER Alert. I'm advised by my officials that both signs are active right now, but the way they operate is that the signs show nothing unless there is something of note, as I have indicated — unless there is something that should be communicated to the travelling public. In my briefings previously, that is how they are most effectively deployed in the rest of Canada.

Through the federal national trade corridors fund, the Yukon government is receiving \$6.9 million to invest in modernizing Yukon's intelligent transportation system technologies between now and 2028. Highways and Public Works, as part of the national trade corridors fund agreement, is supplementing this funding by investing a further \$2.4 million in support of the program. Intelligent

transportation systems help infrastructure owners by collecting, synthesizing, and disseminating data for strategic investment for transportation planning.

We have expanded the dynamic message systems network to a total of 35 signs. These include trailer and permanent messages, and we have recently installed four new cantilevered variable message boards. Those are the signs that the Member for Copperbelt South was asking about in both the riding of Copperbelt South and in the riding of Lake Laberge.

If there are no messages on the signs, it is because we have adopted the Transportation Association of Canada's *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada* recommendations, which indicate that, if there are no adverse road conditions to report, the signs should be left blank.

The road weather information system program has expanded its network by 15 sites in 2020, for a total of 20 stations across Yukon's transportation network. These stations provide real-time information on meteorological and road conditions, which informs maintenance response and Yukon's 511 traveller information system for safe trip planning. Traffic safety within Yukon's communities has been reinforced with the deployment of speed radar boards along primary highways. These devices provide visual cues for highway speed-limit changes, which improve safety for the community.

To recap then, these signs are active, although they may not appear to be very active because they may not say anything right now, but I think I have indicated as to why that is.

The cost of the signs is approximately \$1.8 million, which is cost-shared at 75/25 percent with the federal government.

Mr. Kent: I would like to thank the officials for attending with the minister today. This will be my final question. I do have a number of other questions, but unfortunately, given the short length of this Sitting, we won't have a chance to ask them. So, my apologies to colleagues as well who had a number of constituency questions. We will have to follow up with letters to the minister and hopefully get a chance to get responses over the summer months.

I guess I just have a final question before I turn it over to the Member for Whitehorse Centre — again, with those large signs — do the signs have cameras in them or radar — the large ones? He mentioned radar signs — I think that they were smaller ones, or maybe portable ones; I'm not sure. I'm just curious if those large overhead signs have cameras or if they are radar-equipped. With that, I will let the minister answer and then turn the floor over to the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Madam Chair, I have been able to confirm through my officials that the four new cantilevered variable message board signs along the Alaska Highway within the City of Whitehorse are one-way information signs only and that they do not have cameras.

Ms. Tredger: Madam Chair, I would also like to extend my thanks to the officials for joining us today. It is very helpful to have them here.

My first question is about Yukon government buildings that are currently empty. My understanding is that, right now, Macaulay Lodge is empty. We have asked in the past about whether it could be used as temporary housing, because we

know that social assistance is spending huge amounts of money housing people in hotels. We were told it could not be, because it is going to be torn down. I wondered if the member opposite could elaborate on why it is going to be torn down, what the plans are for the lot, and what the time frame is on those changes.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Highways and Public Works has a variety of ways to identify if a building should be repurposed, sold, or demolished. These include: assessing the building portfolio every five years to determine building condition and safety risk; investigating issues raised by client departments or identified by building maintenance workers; and consulting with departments annually to determine their space requirements for their programs.

When a government department vacates a building because it no longer meets their program needs, a future-use options analysis is completed to determine the best use of the building going forward. The final decision for the future of a building is based on a business case that considers the full picture and a complete financial analysis.

All demolition projects are scored and prioritized using a scoring matrix prior to being proposed for demolition. Demolition projects are prioritized based on factors such as: health, safety, and liability; the value of the land in question; and Highways and Public Works' capacity and readiness for subsequent projects at the site.

Macaulay Lodge opened in Riverdale in 1969 and was the only long-term care home in Whitehorse for many years. A recent building condition assessment of Macaulay Lodge indicated that the building is not suitable for repurposing due to its current condition. I can advise that, over the course of the last few years, there have been a number of assessments at Macaulay Lodge that have reached the same conclusion: that it was, or is, cost prohibitive to bring the lodge back up to current and modern acceptable standards for occupation.

Macaulay Lodge is in my riding, and I had the honour to attend there, from time to time, between 2016 and when it closed to meet with constituents. It appeared to be serviceable but, of course, I'm no expert. Ultimately, it was obviously, or is, showing its age.

I agree with the Member for Whitehorse Centre that this government and all MLAs are interested in pursuing issues of additional apartment-type complexes. Macaulay Lodge is on fairly substantial land, so it certainly would have value, but it does appear — from all the assessments that have occurred over the last three or four years, plus the reports and what I provided from Highways and Public Works — that unfortunately the next step for Macaulay Lodge is demolition.

Ms. Tredger: I certainly don't dispute the department officials who say that it needs to be demolished. I guess my question is when that decision was made and how long it has been sitting empty. Part of the reason I ask is because it appears that it has been heated through the winter, and I wonder what the cost of maintaining an empty building that is to be demolished is and why that money is being spent that way.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As anticipated, Macaulay Lodge is now in care and maintenance. It is at a level where it is meeting

safety standards but at the lowest level to meet safety standards and hopefully to incur the minimum utility costs. One could refer to it as being “winterized”.

We will have to review the Highways and Public Works budget for that line item and determine a plan for the demolition, so I cannot advise the member opposite as to the timing of the proposed demolition. However, we should be in a position to provide the member opposite with the rough bill for the utilities that are currently being expended to avoid things like, primarily, pipes freezing. My deputy minister advises that most of the services to that building are being shut down at this time.

We are looking at demolition. It needs to be planned and funded, and then a schedule should be made available.

Ms. Tredger: I have one final question on Macaulay Lodge. Since it needs to be demolished, I am wondering what the cost of demolish it will be. I understand that the member opposite doesn't have a timeline on demolition, but given that we are in a housing crisis and we are putting immense effort into trying to find new lots and trying to find new spaces, I wonder if he considers it a priority to make that space available for housing or other purposes.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have conferred with my officials on this. We are still in a position, with respect to Macaulay, that it will require — it is called a “demolition design” and that takes into account the age of the building and all of the potential environmental and building product liabilities that exist.

As I said before, yes, I think that it is a valuable and not insubstantial piece of real estate that could certainly be repurposed. I will return to you — or I will return as soon as we are able to determine what a time might be for the demolition schedule and certainly once I find out what a possible budget is for this. It could be a not insubstantial project.

Ms. Tredger: I would also like to talk about the building that was previously Takhini Haven. It has been sitting empty for two years. I'm wondering what the plans are for this building.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I'm advised that there are currently discussions ongoing between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice with respect to the appropriate use of the Takhini Haven going forward. That's what I'm advised.

Ms. Tredger: I'm wondering, over the last years and going until those discussions conclude, what Highways and Public Works' role is in maintaining that space and what the cost is to maintain that space while it's empty.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, it's a similar answer to the answer about Macaulay. As part of Highways and Public Works' responsibility for the portfolio of our buildings and the maintenance of our buildings, we would be in a position to determine what is being spent with respect to the utilities. We'll endeavour to provide that answer.

Ms. Tredger: So, there are two buildings that are sitting empty right now that we have spoken about. I'm wondering how many more YG buildings are sitting empty right now and what the plans for them are.

We have talked about costs. We don't have numbers, but I think we can imagine that it's a pretty appreciable cost to maintain buildings that are sitting empty, as well as the cost in missed opportunities to be dealing with some of the pressing issues that we have. So, I'm wondering, yes, how many buildings are empty right now and what the plans are.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I do not have the answer as to the number of vacant buildings that the Department of Highways and Public Works is responsible for maintaining and for care and maintenance, but I will endeavour to return.

I would just point out, as I likely did in my prior comments, that — and I'm sure that it will become quite apparent to me over the course of the summer — there are competing priorities, as there are competing priorities in all departments, but certainly there are competing priorities in the Department of Highways and Public Works because, although it certainly costs money and resources are brought to bear to keep buildings in care and maintenance for a period of time, it also costs money — not insignificant funds need to be resourced, accessed, and budgeted for in order to demolish some of these buildings, like Macaulay Lodge.

In the preamble of the member's comments in the previous question, she contended that Macaulay Lodge was a potential asset. Unfortunately, it is not an asset. It is now a liability, and it is something that has to be costed going forward. That is not part of housing stock currently that can be repurposed in any useful way to alleviate or ameliorate the issue of the constraint on housing supply. That is just a building that Highways and Public Works is responsible for, and it will have to be dealt with in an appropriate manner — budgeting all the potential additional costs and environment liabilities.

Takhini Haven is certainly an asset. It is not an old building, so it can certainly be used. I would anticipate that our government, at some point in the not-so-distant future, will find a useful purpose for that building.

I will be interested to find out the rundown of the 500 buildings that Highways and Public Works is responsible for maintaining. You are building, maintaining, demolishing — the life cycle of buildings, which I am sure the talented people at Highways and Public Works are dealing with on a weekly, monthly, or annual basis. So, yes, we should make the best use of the housing stock that the territorial government has for the maximum number of people.

Unfortunately, Macaulay is not in that category. I would say that Takhini Haven is. As I said, I will make best efforts to get back to the Member for Whitehorse Centre with some of that information.

Ms. Tredger: I can certainly appreciate that there are competing priorities; however, I have certainly heard over and over again that people's number one priority is housing. I have heard the government talk about housing being a priority for them. It is hard to then see buildings sitting empty for years that could be used and then hear talk about competing priorities.

I would like to move on to a different topic on buildings, and that is the energy retrofitting. The member opposite mentioned in his opening remarks that there are plans to do energy audits on 20 percent of Yukon government buildings,

and I also understand that there is money in the budget to do energy retrofits. I am wondering how the department goes about assessing the overall energy efficiency of its buildings. I am asking this because we have some very specific targets to meet in terms of *Our Clean Future*. I want to know what impact the retrofits are going to have on our overall carbon emissions and how that's being evaluated. I'm curious about how many upgrades are going to be done this year, how many are left to do, and what the impacts of those upgrades will be.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Government of Yukon has secured over \$120 million to implement energy-efficiency initiatives throughout the Yukon. Thanks to a joint investment with Canada, we are able to dedicate this funding for energy-efficient retrofits for residential, commercial, and institutional buildings. Being more energy efficient is our first line of action in addressing increasing demands for energy. Our retrofit incentives allow Yukon homeowners, businesses, and institutions to upgrade insulation, improve window quality, and draft-proof their homes and places of business.

To date, our retrofit programs are delivering measurable benefits by relieving pressure on our energy-generation needs, reducing our collective greenhouse gas emissions, and creating green jobs that stimulate Yukon's economy. The retrofit program is open to Yukon First Nation governments, municipalities, businesses, local industries, and homeowners who want to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings and residences.

The Government of Yukon successfully negotiated numerous funding agreements with the Government of Canada to support energy retrofits. These agreements resulted in \$120 million in funding over four fiscal years, from fiscal year 2019-20 to fiscal year 2023-24, ending on March 31, 2024, which is an average of \$30 million per year. The total funding amount includes federal and territorial contributions.

This funding is available across government departments, specifically for energy-efficient retrofits of existing buildings in Yukon. The funding breakdown over four years, by designated recipients, is — I'll get back to you on that.

There was a question about the standards that are being followed, and they are the ASHRAE standards, which stands for the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers.

In addition, there is a green infrastructure program, which is a multi-year capital investment program to reduce carbon emissions from government buildings across the territory. The program supports energy retrofits and renewable energy projects with the goal of installing low-carbon energy systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and we look forward to continuing our work with industry and other levels of government to develop new energy projects.

Three buildings are currently heated by Yukon government's two biomass facilities: the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, the Dawson City water treatment plant, and the Dawson City waste-water treatment plant. The two new biomass projects are in the final stages of design work. Construction contracts will be prepared for this summer, with the expansion of the biomass system at the Whitehorse

Correctional Centre to include the aforementioned Takhini Haven and the Yukon Young Offenders Facility and the installation of dual-fuel biomass systems at Elijah Smith Elementary School in Whitehorse.

There is a lot of housing stock in the older residential areas of Whitehorse that need attention, and they need attention over the course of the next years. We heard that loud and clear at the door as well. I know that this is the case in the community of Riverdale and you would also have it in some of the other communities like Takhini, Crestview, and Hillcrest. We know that the combination of residential heating systems, the outer envelope of the buildings, and transportation account for the vast majority of efforts that our government is going to have to make to reduce greenhouse gases and to reach goals that have been set.

That is a bit of a summary of where we are and where we would like to be going, but, of course, there is more work to be done, but the housing stock — both the commercial and private housing stock in Whitehorse and some other communities — will be a significant focus of our attention on this file going forward.

Does the Member for Whitehorse Centre have perhaps one final question?

Ms. Tredger: I appreciate that. I'll keep my last question short.

We spoke earlier, during Question Period, about the projects on the Robert Campbell Highway. I understand that there is money budgeted for that highway. I would specifically like to know if that money will be used to make improvements on the section between Faro and Ross River and if that's enough money for it to be entirely paved.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the final question. Yes, there are dollars in this budget, and it is a portion of the highway between Faro and Ross River, and it is the bitumen treatment.

The final answer is that we continue to work with the Ross River Dena Council. The project work will be proceeding through the Yukon Resource Gateway program funding once we have worked out all the details with the Ross River Dena Council, as required in our project agreement.

Seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

The following legislative returns were tabled May 27, 2021:

35-1-2

Response to oral question from Mr. Cathers re: road maintenance — North Klondike construction near Gravel Lake (Clarke, N.)

35-1-3

Response to oral question from Ms. Clarke re: Whistle Bend school (Clarke, N.)

35-1-4

Response to oral question from Mr. Cathers re: road maintenance — Takhini River Road (Clarke, N.)

35-1-5

Response to oral question from Ms. McLeod re: camping fees (Clarke, N.)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 11

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, May 31, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun

DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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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
Monday, May 31, 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 victims of residential schools

Speaker: If we would all remain standing, please. Before we begin proceedings today, I ask that the House join me in acknowledging the deaths of 215 children whose lives were cut short while attending the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

This disturbing discovery likely won't be the last discovery of this kind in Canada, and it reminds us of the terrible toll that residential schools took on our indigenous communities. These 215 children had their whole lives ahead of them when they were taken from their homes and placed in that school.

We will never know how their lives could have been lived, who they might have fallen in love with, or whether they would have children and grandchildren of their own. All of that has been lost. This is something that should never be repeated and never be forgotten.

I would ask all of you to join me in a moment of silence for these 215 indigenous children and for all those lost to residential schools.

Moment of silence observed

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes to the Order Paper.

The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper at the request of the member: Motion No. 24, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

In addition, the following motion was not placed on the Notice Paper as it is out of order: Motion No. 75, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Under Introduction of Visitors, the Chair would like to introduce Annette King, the Child and Youth Advocate; Christopher Tse, who does their systematic analysis and communications; and Julia Milnes and Iris Binger, who are the child advocacy caseworkers.

Applause

Ms. White: I ask my colleagues to join me today in welcoming a group of very special people here: Adam and his son Lennox are here today to see the tabling of a petition. We

thank you and, of course, your supports who are here with you today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further visitors to be introduced? Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Indigenous Peoples Day

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise today in recognition of the 5th anniversary of National Indigenous Peoples Day as a statutory holiday in Yukon. June 21 is an important holiday for all of us here in the territory. It coincides with the summer solstice — the longest day of the year — which is significant among indigenous people throughout the country and around the world. For Yukoners, it's a time to celebrate indigenous music and dance, stories and art, heritage and history in our respective communities. It is also an opportunity for us to immerse ourselves in the ways of knowing and doing that are woven into the landscape that we call Yukon.

This government properly recognized National Indigenous Peoples Day as an official holiday in 2017. Five years later, we find ourselves engaged in strong relationships with First Nation counterparts. We meet regularly at the Yukon Forum and through its various committees to collaborate on joint issues and priorities. More often than not, we're able to present a united voice to the Government of Canada. Much work definitely lies ahead of us, but we can proudly say that there has been momentum in Yukon's journey toward reconciliation.

Yukon First Nations and transboundary nations play a critical role in the governance, economy, and well-being of Yukon. Together we are improving the lives of Yukoners, creating vibrant, healthy communities built on diversity and inclusion.

I look forward this year to joining Premier Horgan and the Daylu Dena Council in Lower Post, BC for the demolition of the residential school in that community. I spoke this morning with Deputy Chief Harlan Schilling to share in the planning of this historic and profound day coming up. The school has stood as a constant reminder of past trauma for members of the Daylu Dena Council and many others as well. On that day, as we are today, we will be thinking of those affected by the recent tragic and horrific findings at the Kamloops residential school. This is a painful reminder of what indigenous people in Canada have suffered. It is up to all leaders to take initiatives and make meaningful progress in the journey toward reconciliation. Recognizing the unjust treatment that indigenous people in Canada have faced, as well as the challenges experienced today, is a critical step in doing better as a nation.

We are very fortunate to be able to celebrate the countless contributions that indigenous Canadians make to this country each and every day. I hold my hands up to the incredible heritage, language, art, and other aspects of indigenous culture that we have in our daily lives. In this spirit, I encourage all Yukoners to take part in celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21, 2021.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize National Indigenous Peoples Day, celebrated each year on June 21. This is Yukon's 5th anniversary of National Indigenous Peoples Day being officially celebrated as a statutory holiday.

We have long recognized June 21 as a celebration of indigenous culture, tradition, and contributions. This day holds much more significance to those First Nation Inuit, and Métis who can express the importance of reconciliation and community building through cultural celebration. Throughout the country and across the Yukon, celebration of culture, art, music, food, and stories will be shared. It also provides an opportunity for conversation, to be able to tell children and remind adults about the history, customs, and issues that are relevant to the first peoples.

From the forming of our country, the Government of Canada, along with agencies such as the churches, controlled every aspect of Indian lives. The *Indian Act* is still in force today. June 21 is the day that indigenous communities can stand together in strength and resilience. The Yukon Party Official Opposition joins those across the country who are horrified at the discovery of the remains of 215 children that have just been discovered on the traditional territory of the Tk'emplúps te Secwépemc First Nation near Kamloops, BC.

Our hearts ache for those whose lives were taken much too soon by actions that are nothing less than deplorable. Our thoughts and prayers go to the families of those children who were victimized. We mourn the victims of the heinous actions of abuse — verbal, mental, physical, and sexual — committed at residential schools across the country. These schools operated from the 1920s to 1996, and children were forced to attend; it was not a choice. These were the formative years for the children who had nothing else to compare with. Their birth families even became strangers when they returned. We stand with and support the survivors, and we believe their stories.

There is not one part of our country, Canada, that has not been affected by the residential school system. We cannot hide this history, and we should never gloss over the horrors that happened in them.

The use of power to abuse must always be questioned, and that is our job. We cannot and should not try to erase history, but we must continue to learn and not let a tragedy like residential schools ever happen again.

We thank the Whitehorse citizens who took time yesterday and on Sunday afternoon to mourn the lives lost near Kamloops and to acknowledge the impacts of residential schools on all First Nations. It was powerful and it was moving.

A 24-hour national Indian residential school crisis line is available for former students and those affected. The number is 1-866-925-4419. Locally, support is available by contacting the Committee on Abuse in Residential Schools, or CAIRS, in Whitehorse at 1-867-667-2247.

Summer solstice, or the first day of summer, is a day chosen to celebrate, as it is the longest day of the year, especially in the north. In parts of Yukon, we are blessed with light for most of 24 hours or the maximum amount of light of

the whole year. Let us pray that this light will open eyes to the plight of many of our people. Don't judge, as we never know another's story.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP in recognition of the 5th annual holiday of National Indigenous Peoples Day in Yukon. This has been a hard week for our country but an especially hard week for indigenous Canadians who have carried the weight of the residential school system on our shoulders. That weight should not be ours alone.

One of the passages from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report that draws me back time and time again has to do with history and youth. The Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners have said — and I quote: "... we believe that reconciliation is about respect. That includes both self-respect for Aboriginal people and mutual respect among all Canadians."

All young people need to know who they are and from where they come. Aboriginal children and youth searching for their own identities and places of belonging need to know and take pride in their indigenous roots. They need to know the answers to some very basic questions: Who are my people? What is our history? How are we unique? Where do I belong? Where is my homeland? What is my language, and how does it connect me to my nation's spiritual beliefs, cultural practices, and ways of being in the world?

They also need to know why things are the way they are today. That requires an understanding of the history of colonization, including the residential school system and how it has affected their families, communities, their people, and themselves.

The work done by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to listen to and honour the experiences of families and survivors laid out a vision for Canada. Getting to the truth was hard, but getting to reconciliation will be harder. It requires that the paternalistic and racist foundations of the residential school system be rejected as the basis for an ongoing relationship. Reconciliation requires that a new vision based on a commitment of mutual respect be developed. It also requires an understanding that the most harmful impacts of residential schools have been the loss of pride and self-respect of aboriginal people and the lack of respect that non-aboriginal people have been raised to have for their aboriginal neighbours. Reconciliation is not an aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one.

I reflect on the power and strength of all indigenous communities. Despite the federal government policies that were created to eradicate indigenous peoples in Canada through the forced removal of our people from our families, our communities, our culture, our ceremonies, and our language, we are still here.

As indigenous people in this country, we still hold all of what was to be taken from us as a people. Even if that knowledge was sleeping just below the surface of our memories, we still hold what is sacred to who we are.

When you look to our communities, you see great efforts directed at revitalizing who we are. We are waking up those internal memories of our ancestral ways. There is great power and strength that is coming with our new generation of children and youth. They are not afraid to stand up to speak our truth, nor are they afraid to speak our language, sing our songs, or dance our dances.

Our children and youth are encouraging us to build our pride in who we are as indigenous people. They remind us daily that we are accountable to their future. Today we have our culture, our ceremonies, our language, our children, and our way of doing things. Indeed, this is a cause for celebration on National Indigenous Peoples Day in Yukon.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling the report by the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate, entitled *Review on School Attendance in the Yukon: What Is, What Could Be*, dated May 2021.

Are there any further documents for tabling?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling the 2020 Department of Education annual report, which is required under section 5(h) of the *Education Act*.

I also have for tabling the Yukon University annual report for 2019-20 and the audited financial statements for 2019-20, which is required under section 53 of the *Yukon University Act*.

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

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have for tabling a legislative return that is a response to a question asked by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King back on May 20.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 1

Ms. Tredger: I have for tabling a petition calling on the Government of Yukon to immediately incorporate a climate change lens into all decision-making processes for policies, programs, and projects. This must include greenhouse gas emission numbers — also, in consultation with the promised Yukon climate leadership council launch, the promised information and social marketing campaign so that Yukoners can make informed climate-related decisions to help us meet the Yukon's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent over 2010 levels by 2030.

Petition No. 2

Ms. Blake: I have for tabling a petition that reads:
To the Yukon Legislative Assembly:
“The Petition of the undersigned shows;

“That caregivers for a child or children with a disability can include parents, guardians, and other relatives.

“That parents who are caregivers of a child or children with a disability often take significant financial losses to fulfill this role.

“That many parents would prefer to care for their child or children with a disability themselves, rather than outsource a subsidized non-familial caregiver.

“That there is currently a shortage of nurses in Whitehorse, which affects the quality of care provided to a child or children with disabilities.

“That the Yukon Government does not include parents in its policy to provide financial compensation to caregivers of children with a disability.

“Therefore, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to expand the scope of Children’s Disability Services to include equal financial support for parents who are full time caregivers to a child or children with a disability.”

Speaker: Are there any further petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Notices of motions.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Liberal government to recognize that there have been less than seven days of debate on a \$1.8-billion budget and only two departments have concluded debate by taking the following action: introducing a motion to extend this Sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the Liberal government to reverse their plans to increase camping fees for Yukon senior citizens.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to respond to the recent horrific discovery of 215 children buried at the Kamloops Indian Residential School by:

(1) acknowledging the ongoing harm of genocide faced by indigenous people through residential schools and the ongoing toll that it takes on survivors and their families;

(2) supporting the investigation of residential school sites in the Yukon as directed by First Nation governments;

(3) addressing the need of survivors and their families who have been retraumatized and are struggling due to a lack of services by immediately providing emergency mental health supports in every Yukon community;

(4) acknowledging that the current gap in services to First Nation citizens is one of the ways that colonialism still impacts indigenous people to this day;

(5) implementing each call to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including “closing the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in a number of health indicators such as: infant mortality, maternal

health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic diseases, illness and injury incidence, and the availability of appropriate health services.”

Speaker: Are there any other notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Old Crow wellness centre contract

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, on February 18, the tender for the \$40-plus-million Old Crow wellness centre closed. Then, just three weeks later, in what seems to be record time for a project of this size, the contract was awarded on March 11. I’m sure that it’s just a coincidence that this was just one day before the snap election call.

A March 18 *Yukon News* article states that the company that lost the bid — and I quote: “... alleges that staff with the Department of Highways and Public Works explained during a debrief with the company that they were urged to make a quick decision on the project.”

Last week, we asked the Liberals who urged the public servants to make the quick decision on this \$40-plus-million contract whether or not there was any political involvement. In response, the Minister of Community Services gave a bombastic denial of any political involvement.

Could the current Minister of Highways and Public Works confirm that there was no political involvement in rushing this \$40-plus-million contract out just one day before a snap election call?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from the member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

I would reiterate my response from Committee of the Whole on Thursday afternoon — that I was not in Cabinet at the time of the decision-making — but I would also note for the record that all members are deemed to be honourable and any inference to the contrary could be deemed to be out of order.

Our government is making investments across the territory to build healthy, vibrant communities. We are building a new health and wellness centre and a tenplex housing unit in Old Crow. Design work is underway, and construction will start this winter. The design/build contract for the centre and housing unit was awarded to Ketza TSL Construction for \$44.8 million. This project was awarded using a value-driven procurement. These types of procurements look at a number of elements beyond price to ensure that there is additional value for the community and the territory.

In this case, the project team awarded points for the schedule, training plans, subcontracting plans, northern experience, and First Nation participation. This project will replace the aging health centre, increasing the number of affordable housing units, and create valuable jobs in the community.

Mr. Dixon: We have an e-mail here from public servants stating that on March 10 — just one day before the contract was

awarded on March 11 and just two days before the snap election call — the Liberal Cabinet met and signed off on a new implementation plan for the Old Crow wellness centre. So, it would appear that just two days before the snap election call, the Liberal Cabinet signed off on a quick decision to get a \$40-million contract out the door. It should be noted that this contract was for the community of Old Crow, a riding that the Liberals knew that they were going to have difficulty getting re-elected in. In fact, they ended up losing that seat.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are hoping that the Minister of Community Services can tell us: Why did he say that there was no political involvement in this contract when the Liberal Cabinet met on this exact topic just one day before the contract was awarded and just two days before the snap election was called?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition. I would reiterate the response that I had in my first response, which is that all Members of the Legislative Assembly are deemed to be honourable and inferences to the contrary are out of order. The member opposite will well know that — as per his familiarity with the Standing Orders from his time in the Assembly from 2011 until 2016 and his brief re-entry into the Assembly and with the rules that we govern ourselves by and the submissions that are made and the criticisms that are levelled in this Assembly. He can certainly brush up on the Standing Orders during the summer.

We are working with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation on the design of a healing room in the health and wellness centre, as well as gathering other cultural and First Nation input into the overall design. Construction is set to start in the winter of 2021-22 for the thermopile foundation. Building construction will begin in the spring of 2022.

We are very excited to provide this important and valuable infrastructure to the community of Old Crow and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

Mr. Dixon: I would remind the Member for Riverdale North that he’s the Minister of Highways and Public Works now and not the Speaker anymore.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask him to pay attention to the content of my question.

Here is the timeline. On February 18, the tender closed for this project. On March 10, the Liberal Cabinet met to discuss a new implementation plan for the project. One day later, the contract was awarded. The next day, the Liberals called the snap election. Then, on March 18, the *Yukon News* reported on allegations that public servants said that they were urged to make a quick decision on this \$40-million contract.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works please tell us who urged the public service to make a quick decision on this \$40-million contract? Will the Liberals agree to publicly release the Cabinet documents related to their discussion on this project so that Yukoners can know why this project was rushed out just one day before the snap election?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the final supplementary question from the member opposite.

I'm wondering whether the Leader of the Official Opposition, through his questions today, is indicating that the Yukon Party is not interested in this project — that it somehow is not a valuable piece of future infrastructure for the community of Old Crow and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

Highways and Public Works is responsible for the procurement and management of both of the projects — both the health and wellness centre and the templex. A combined procurement was used for the two facilities in order to simplify construction and community resource demands, mobilization and demobilization, and to decrease the costs of both projects by realizing the benefits of economies of scale and shared resources. Stantec architecture and engineering has completed the conceptual design and will act as the owner's advisor for Highways and Public Works during the design and construction of both facilities. A land lease has been negotiated with the Vuntut Gwitchin government and was signed this spring.

For the 2021 fiscal year, we have budgeted more than \$19 million for the project. The total estimated project budget is approximately \$52 million. We expect to complete construction of the templex in 2022 —

Speaker: Order.

Question re: Yukon Resource Gateway project

Mr. Kent: On June 22, 2017, the federal and Yukon governments approved nearly \$470 million in funding for the Resource Gateway project. That was almost four years ago. Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us how much of that \$470 million has actually been spent in the past four years?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will return to the Member for Copperbelt South with the exact amount of funds that have actually been expended on the Gateway project to date.

Mr. Kent: That project was originally approved as having the private sector contributing over \$108 million of the cost. Can the minister confirm if the private sector is still contributing \$108 million? How much private sector money has been spent on this project to date?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can advise, as I advised the member opposite on Thursday afternoon, that the total potential participation of the private sector of the total funding envelope available is \$108 million. I will return to the member opposite and to the House with the amount of private participation that has occurred to date of that \$108 million, but the total amount is \$108 million.

The Government of Yukon signed a six-project agreement with the affected First Nations under the Yukon Resource Gateway program. Approved projects have an estimated total capital construction cost of \$251.45 million so far. Project agreements are announced when they are approved by Cabinet and signed by all parties.

We worked hard to increase the flexibility of the funding to include additional roads as well as the ability to approach projects in phases. This way, we have more options to focus the available money on the projects that are supported by First Nations and communities.

The Government of Yukon continues to work with First Nations in the spirit of reconciliation to develop projects that have lasting benefits. We continue to pursue additional agreements with Yukon First Nations while implementing the signed project agreements. Road construction projects provide sustainable employment for Yukoners, significant opportunities for Yukon First Nations, and employment training to strengthen our communities.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister if he could return that information he promised today in a letter over the summer rather than us having to wait until the first week in October for the fall session to resume.

In 2020-21, there was \$3.286 million budgeted for this project, yet the government is estimated to be spending only \$736,000 of that money. Can the minister update us on what projects will be worked on this summer as part of the Resource Gateway project? When will that work start? Will the full amount of \$15.5 million that is in this year's budget be spent this year?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the member opposite. I can provide additional detail to the member opposite, as well, in the letter responding to the funding for the private sector.

Yes, the majority of the money that we spent this summer is for the Carmacks bypass project. In the spring of 2019, a project agreement for the Carmacks bypass component was signed with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The project includes construction of a new road and a bridge and has an estimated capital cost of \$26.75 million, I believe, over the course of two years — two construction seasons. Planning, design, and environmental assessment of the Carmacks bypass is underway and nearing completion. The right-of-way clearing has begun, which will support construction of the Carmacks bypass and the Nordenskiold River bridge.

A request for qualifications for the provision of construction services for the Carmacks bypass kilometre 0 to kilometre 5.1 was tendered in December 2020 and resulted in three qualified contractors. The request for proposals for the construction of the Carmacks bypass will be tendered shortly. Construction is scheduled to begin later in the summer of 2021. We are very excited for this project to proceed this summer, as I know is the community of Carmacks and the —

Speaker: Order.

Question re: Wolverine mine reclamation

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years, Yukoners have watched the Wolverine mine go into receivership and now sit virtually abandoned. The mine itself is filled with water and requires full-time water treatment and maintenance to protect the surrounding environment.

Yukoners know this story well. A mine operation goes bankrupt, abandons the site, and the public is left to pick up the tab, but unlike other mines, Wolverine mine was permitted after devolution, and any costs for maintenance or reclamation after the company deposit is spent falls to Yukoners, not on Canada.

Will the minister tell Yukoners: What are the ongoing protective measures at the Wolverine mine, and how long does the Yukon government expect to be responsible for them?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We continue to regularly inspect the Wolverine mine site to ensure that it meets existing standards for human safety and the environment, and we are taking action to address elevated water levels within the tailings storage facility by increasing water treatment capacity on-site and allowing the ongoing discharge of clean water to the environment.

I will say that what we are doing right now is that, in April of this year, PricewaterhouseCoopers initiated a court-approved sale process for the mine site. Selection of the successful bidder will occur late in the summer of 2021, and while the transfer of this site is dependent on the issuance of required authorizations, we are hopeful that there will be a successful bidder on the site and the taking over of both — the liabilities and the opportunities of the site.

That is the work that we are doing right now. We are making sure that the mine is safe for now and that the remediation takes place right now. We have put out the mine for sale, and we hope to close that this summer.

Ms. White: Maintaining the environmental safety of this mine site for years and years will be costly. It requires full-time staff to monitor the water treatment plant and a variety of other tasks to protect the environment, and that is just to keep the contamination from spreading. We are not even talking about future remediation costs.

Current care and maintenance and future plans for the mine site remain unclear. Will the minister tell Yukoners what the plan is if the mine is not sold, and at what point will the government consider remediation if no one is willing to resume mining operations because of the environmental liabilities?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I will say is that we will, of course, take responsibility for the mine site if the mine is not sold; we will ensure that the site is kept safe environmentally if it is not sold.

I will note that the mine itself does have a liability, but it also has opportunity; there is value there. We anticipate that there will be some interest in the mine. I won't speculate on what happens should the mine not sell, because that work will be ongoing up until that point, but what I will say is that, of course, as a government, we will be responsible for the site.

I will say, as well, that we believe that there were mistakes made previously in collecting security for the site. We believe that the oversight caused the risk that we face today, and we will be responsible to follow up from that, even though it was not under our watch that the security was not retained by the government. It is our responsibility to make sure that the mine is safe for Yukoners.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer.

Most abandoned and contaminated mine sites in the Yukon are a federal responsibility, but Wolverine is different. Since it happened after devolution, it is entirely the Yukon's responsibility.

Without the ability to hold past companies responsible, it will fall to the Yukon government to maintain the mine in its

current condition or to develop a plan to permanently close and reclaim the mine site. Yukoners will be on the hook for the cleaning up of this mess that has been left behind. The security deposit paid by the mine is nearly spent. If the mine does not sell, how much are Yukoners going to have to pay, once the security deposit runs out, to maintain the mine site in its present state and to complete reclamation if no new operator takes over the site?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, again, I am not going to speculate on the amounts because the department has not come to me yet with that fulsome analysis. I think they are working diligently and have put the mine up for sale. I think they have advised me that they believe that there is value in the mine, so that is what we will follow right now.

I have already acknowledged that this mine is the responsibility of the Yukon government. I have acknowledged, as well, that there were, what I believe to be, mistakes made earlier in not securing the full security for this mine. It is a complicated situation going through the courts. I appreciate that.

What I am saying to Yukoners right now is that we will make sure that the mine site is cleaned up. It is our responsibility. The best way to do that is to sell the mine and to sell both its liabilities and its opportunities to an interested mining company, and we will work to do that right now.

Question re: Mental health services in rural communities

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, last week I stood in this House and asked the minister why three mental health nurse positions in rural communities were moved to Whitehorse. The minister could not answer the question. Mental health hubs are understaffed and staff are overworked. Nurses are burned-out, and residents have nowhere else to turn for help. Without the right supports, people are more likely to struggle with their mental health. Mental health is an essential service for all Yukoners.

I would like to ask the minister again: Why were three mental health nurse positions moved from mental wellness hubs in communities to Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. As I indicated last week when I stood to address this issue, that is not the information that I have; it is not accurate. The information I have been given is that no mental health nurse positions have been moved out of communities. Individuals may have moved, intending to get another job in a different location, and that may be the issue, but I am attempting to confirm the details of that, as I promised to do last week. I am fully intending to provide that information to the member opposite. I don't have the same information that she clearly has. I'm urging her to give that information to me so I might figure out where the distinction is.

Community-based mental health services are a priority for this government. Since the creation of the mental wellness hubs, we are now providing mental wellness support workers and counsellors providing services throughout Yukon in Yukon

communities. We continue to provide accessible mental health and substance use supports for Yukoners.

I'm happy to continue when further questions come.

Ms. Blake: The former Member for Mayo-Tatchun, Don Hutton, shared his concerns with this government repeatedly about the rate of addiction and mental health issues in Yukon communities, but his concerns were not heard by this government. After years of being ignored, Mr. Hutton left this government. Without proper staffing in our communities, the government will not address this crisis.

Can the minister tell Yukoners what specific steps have been taken to facilitate the recruitment of mental health workers in Yukon communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government continues to provide accessible mental health and substance use supports to Yukoners for Yukoners. Those services include utilizing positions such as mental health nurses in the most effective and efficient ways. Many clients requiring specialized services provided by mental health nurses travel frequently between Whitehorse and their home communities.

Ideally, a mental health nurse is able to see clients both in the community where they live and in Whitehorse. In doing so, they are able to provide coordinated support for clients as it relates to psychiatric and opioid treatments, follow-up medication monitoring and administration.

Our community-based mental wellness and mental health services are a priority for this government.

Ms. Blake: Mental health in communities is not a new issue at all. The gap in health services for First Nations is rooted in colonialism and low staffing at mental health hubs is just another ripple effect. As a social worker, no matter which position I have worked in and no matter who I was meeting with, I have had the same discussion on making mental health a priority. At every table I have sat at, I have heard the same promises, but Yukoners who live in communities are still struggling.

It is something that was highlighted in the meeting between the three northern Yukon First Nation chiefs who named mental health and substance abuse treatment as a top priority. If the minister won't listen to the advice of her previous colleague, will she listen to the northern chiefs and provide adequate mental health resources to communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member opposite for the opportunity to speak about mental health services in communities and the importance of those services being provided throughout the territory. I also appreciate her comments about meeting with the northern chiefs. My colleague and I spent a full day with them last Friday in Dawson. We had extremely fruitful and frank conversations and we touched on many issues that cross both the portfolios for which I am responsible and those of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Prior to the creation of the mental wellness and substance use hubs, mental health nurses had to travel throughout the territory in an effort to have a full caseload. It remains true that mental health nurses — due to the specialized services that they provide — have low caseloads when located just in one

territory. Staffing of mental wellness hubs is an ongoing process, given normal attrition rates, which might be — as I have said — some of the comments made in the first question — community-based mental health services are a priority for this government. Since the creation of the mental wellness hubs, there are now mental wellness support workers and counsellors throughout the Yukon — not something that was the case before the hubs were designed.

Question re: Energy capital project expenditures impact on ratepayers

Ms. Van Bibber: Over the past number of years, Yukoners have been subjected to steadily increasing power rates. The Liberals' decision to rent diesel generators from Alberta or to cancel construction of a planned thermal generation plant have created costs that are making ratepayers suffer. The government has recently announced several new large capital energy projects, including the battery storage project here in Whitehorse.

Can the minister tell us how much that project will cost? How much will be expected to be paid by ratepayers? When does he anticipate the rate application for these costs to come forward?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will work to get the specifics that the member has asked about for the battery project and hopefully provide them when I get back up on my feet.

What I can say is that the battery project is a great project for our baseload power because it will help us to shift the daytime peaks to the evenings. It will make all renewables that we have on the system more effective. One of the things that it will do is it will help to reduce four of the rented diesel generators once that battery is fully in place. It's the largest battery that I know of north of 60 and may be one of the largest battery systems in Canada.

It's a great project and it's why we think it's a mistake to invest in another thermal plant. We think that would be wrong because what we want to do is move toward a renewable energy future broadly. This is a critical step within that.

I will work to get the answers for the member opposite.

Ms. Van Bibber: Earlier this year, the government stated that the new battery storage project would cost \$31 million. On May 4, the Yukon Energy Corporation appeared before the Yukon Utilities Board to testify on their application to build the new battery. During that hearing, it was revealed that the cost of the new battery could skyrocket as high as \$41 million. If that were to happen, ratepayers could be on the hook for \$25 million to be paid for by massive increases to their electricity bills.

Can the minister tell us how much our power rates would have to increase to pay for this?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think that the battery project is an excellent project. I think that it is very cost-effective and I will — as I said earlier — look to try to see what the assessment is for the impact on rates, but I don't think that we should be talking today in a way that says this is a bad project; I think that it is a great project. I am just a little surprised that the members opposite don't see it as a great project, because I thought —

when they ran in the election — that they adopted the full 10-year plan for Yukon Energy — the renewable energy plan. This was the first piece of that plan, so if they are concerned about it, I am surprised now, because during the election, what I heard them say was that they were all in support of it.

I am in support of the battery project. I think that it is going to be a great project for Yukoners and I will work to get the specific information across. I think that it is fair to say that the battery project is going to help to shift the load from daytime peaks into the evening and that is going to be good for our system across the board.

Ms. Van Bibber: I had asked for the costs of those projects skyrocketing. That information came straight from the May 4 transcript of the Utilities Board hearing on that particular topic.

Another large energy project that is underway is the Mayo-McQuesten power line.

Can the minister tell us how much of the cost of this project will be carried by ratepayers and when that rate increase will come into effect?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Actually, I have not stood up in this Legislature and said that the battery price is going up; that was the member opposite who said that. When I have talked with the Development Corporation, they have not —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: The member has the floor.

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

When I have talked with the Yukon Energy Corporation, they have not flagged to me their concern that the costs are going up exorbitantly or — to use the word from the member opposite — I have not heard anything about costs “skyrocketing”. I am happy to go off and get those costs — also for the McQuesten transmission line. But let's be clear, Mr. Speaker: What we need to do is to have a renewable energy economy. We need to shift the energy economy to renewable sources and that is through Yukon Energy and our electricity grid. So, these are all positive projects — whether that is for Yukoners or whether that is for Yukon industry — and it is a smart move for the future.

I will happily get across for the members opposite what the individual costs are and what we anticipate to be any change, if any, to rates. We are working hard to use our infrastructure dollars to pay for much of this. I think that one of the members opposite talked about using it like we would invest in roads, in a way in which we build that infrastructure for all Yukoners and not put it on the rate base.

So, I will work to get the details of the answer.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move, without notice, a motion to rescind the May 17, 2021 Order of the House adopting Motion No. 4 that provides for the House to sit a maximum of 11 sitting days in the 2021 Special Sitting.

Unanimous consent to move without notice a motion to rescind an Order of the House

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of the House to move, without notice, a motion to rescind the May 17, 2021 Order of the House adopting Motion No. 4 that provides for the House to sit a maximum of 11 sitting days in the 2021 Special Sitting.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has not been granted.

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 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

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a 10-minute 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.

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22 — continued*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Public Service Commission

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just to begin with, I would like to welcome to the Legislature our new Public Service Commissioner, Mr. Paul Moore, and Ms. Loretta Boorse, who is our Acting Director of Finance and Administration. I don't know if this is her first time here in the Legislature, but it's her first time with me, so I welcome them both. Thank you for a chance to speak about the Public Service Commission, which, of course, delivers a range of government-wide human resource programs and services.

I just want to start off by acknowledging that, over the past year, the public service has consistently risen to the challenge and ensured that services to Yukoners were maintained while simultaneously managing the response to the pandemic. At the

start of the pandemic, the public service activated its pandemic plan, which aims to ensure the business continuity of government. Under that plan, the Public Service Commission set up the human resource management committee, which is under the emergency measures — the overall full group.

The emergency response had, for example, units that we were more familiar with publicly, like the COVID response unit, but it also had our human resource management committee. This was professionals across the public service who coordinated the quick reassignment of employees so that essential programs and services would not be interrupted and to implement human resource processes and policies to meet the ever-changing needs of the organization.

One clear example of this that I had first-hand experience with was our borders, because we needed to have professionals from across our public service who could deal with enforcement and even conflict situations. We pulled from Environment, from the Liquor Corporation, and from Energy, Mines and Resources, and we moved people over. It was this group that did that.

The team played, and continues to play, a key role to support the Yukon's pandemic response.

In terms of our approach to human resource management, the Public Service Commission and the human resource committee continue to be guided by the vision of the *People Plan*. By recruiting and retaining the right people and fostering a culture where employees feel safe, respected, and empowered, the Yukon Public Service will be diverse and engaged and will embrace innovation to deliver positive outcomes for all Yukoners.

In 2021-22, we will continue our work to deliver the services that Yukoners rely on while ensuring that all public servants are safe and supported. Working from home was one of the first and most significant actions taken by the public service to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 back in March of last year. Based on the experience of the organization over the past year, a new remote work policy will be implemented in the months ahead that enables flexible work arrangements where they make sense for the employees' positions and departments.

There has been recent interest across the territory in providing the opportunity for Government of Yukon employees to live and work in Yukon communities outside of Whitehorse where it makes sense for the employer and employee. An updated remote work policy will be one way to facilitate this, and we are committed to exploring this further. I believe that was the subject of a motion here in the Legislature earlier.

The new policy and employee supports will incorporate the changes in technology that enable effective communication and collaboration while keeping employee health and safety front and centre in any remote work arrangement. As the pandemic has demonstrated, psychological health and safety is an important part of well-being at work. To combat feelings of isolation or loneliness when working remotely, we encourage blended work arrangements and support teams to stay in regular communication and occasionally attend training meetings and social activities in the workplace. Health and safety checklists

for remote work have also been created to aid employees and supervisors to assess the remote workplaces for any potential hazards or risks. This checklist includes guidance for checking in regularly and maintaining routines and boundaries to maintain a healthy work/life balance.

The Public Service Commission is also leading some key initiatives to enhance the range of well-being supports available to our employees. Extended health benefits and the employee assistance program have traditionally been government's main well-being supports to employees. The Public Service Commission is expanding available services in the employee and family assistance program to include more proactive support and more workplace-based supports. Positive feedback on the enhanced resiliency workshops offered during COVID-19 and advice from leading research have highlighted a need for more workplace-based team supports and more proactive investments in employee mental fitness.

The Public Service Commission consulted with branches that have exposure to trauma or stressful work, considered input from the Yukon Employees' Union during the last round of collective bargaining, and conducted a survey of employees to understand employee needs and interests.

Moving on, the Public Service Commission's Diversity and Inclusion branch will also continue to implement initiatives under the *Breaking Trail Together*. The Yukon government's plan to develop a representative public service was launched in 2020. This will include the continuation of the 18-month hiring preference pilot where, as an employer, we give preference to indigenous applicants, with a priority for Yukon First Nation candidates on all competitions. That pilot commenced in October of last year and, as we get closer to the end of the period, we will be assessing the effectiveness of it to determine next steps.

In terms of our approach to our work, our department recognizes that people are our government's most important resource and is striving to create a culture across Yukon government where every employee is empowered to contribute to their full potential. The Public Service Commission will work, through ongoing collaboration and building strong relationships, to create a seamlessly integrated human resource community across government, and we will continue to shift toward a solution-focused, adaptive, and principle-based human resources culture.

There is much that I could add about the budget, but I will stop there and respond to questions from members opposite and look forward to the debate today.

Ms. White: I am happy to be here today to talk about the Public Service Commission, something that touches every single Yukon government employee — also to welcome the officials here in their capacity. Of course, Mr. Moore, in his new position — how exciting to have you here.

There is a news article out today, entitled: "Yukon civil servants give mixed reviews to branch set up to help them". It has to do with a recent survey and report that was completed by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing branch looking at Yukon government's system for helping workers with disabilities and

long-term health problems and about where they are in Yukon government.

So, my first question is: Will this completed report that was filled out by more than 300 government employees be made public?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Originally, when we developed the report, we weren't thinking about it in terms of sharing it publicly, but there is no reason for us not to. I will ask the department to look through it. I have not looked through it yet, but I just want to make sure that, when we are dealing with employees' responses, the report is maintaining the privacy of our employees, but I'm happy to table it here in the Legislature so that people can see it.

I'll just make a couple of comments. We carried out the survey proactively, looking to try to deal with what is a very challenging topic and how we can improve on the service that we provide for our employees to support them as they face challenging situations. That was the intent. So, I'm happy to table it. I will ask the department to make sure that it is as open as it can be while maintaining employee privacy.

Ms. White: I guess the challenge I have — so maybe the minister could table it in the fall or maybe just make the link publicly available on the yukon.ca website. The reason why I highlight the challenge is that this is the first line of the CBC news article: "A survey obtained by CBC News reveals numerous complaints about the Yukon government's system for helping workers with disabilities and long-term health problems." The reason I highlight that is that it means that there is a news outlet that has access to information, or a survey that was completed by government, and is talking about the shortcomings, and here I am, an elected person in the House whose responsibility is to look at the Public Service Commission, and I don't have access to that report. I'm just highlighting it. I look forward to having access to that.

There were things included in the news report that were taken from the survey, including challenges. I just wanted to know what concrete steps are being taken to address the issues — and there are many of them — one being navigating the Canada Life benefits provider.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, just to be clear, I have not seen the results of the survey as of yet. I will happily share them, but I just want to acknowledge that, any time we're talking about disabilities, they are naturally stressful for staff, and maybe even for their colleagues, as people try to navigate through a challenging situation. There could be very private or personal information to those staff, and I think it's fair to say that we know that it's a stressful time for our staff and we expect that they could have concerns.

That's why we conducted the survey — it was exactly to find those things out and to try to address them.

We worked with the Yukon Employees' Union. We also worked with our insurer — which is, I think, Canada Life. We worked with the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. So, the work was not just us as a department; it was in collaboration with people who are looking to make this system better.

The Leader of the Third Party asked about something concrete that was done. I asked for some of those very things. Here is an example: We worked with our insurer, Canada Life, to have a collaborative approach to some of the early intervention supports. The purpose of this is that, if you can get those supports to our workers early — or the clients of Canada Life — if we can streamline that system so that they can get those supports early, then that may prevent them from needing longer term disability supports. The idea is to reach people as soon as issues are identified in order to achieve better outcomes for everyone. That is an example of one of the steps that came out of the survey.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. The reason why I started with that is that there is a significant number of folks who said that they had a hard time navigating Canada Life, which is the government's benefits provider, and that it is challenging.

Other comments included things like — again, this is from the news article, because I do not have access to the report yet — that often it seemed that the branch was there to help management get people back to work, but they were not interested in knowing how the person was dealing with things. How does the minister plan on making sure that there is a shift of the focus so that the focus is more on the individual and their needs and away from just making sure that management has the ability to get people back to work — making sure that when we are getting people back, they are in the best shape — whether physically or mentally — as they can be as opposed to just checking a box on their forms?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I really have only had very preliminary conversations with the commissioner about this, but what I will say is that my first conversations were really focused on improving outcomes for employees. I think that this is one of those times that naturally also aligns with better outcomes for the public service broadly and thus the public broadly.

I appreciate that there were concerns raised by people. I just want to again acknowledge that it was us, as a public service, who sought this out in order to try to improve the situation. That feedback has come in. My work with the commissioner has been proactive, and I have never heard anything from him about just checking a box. What we're told is that, if people get back to work sooner, they usually have better outcomes — so this is also about those employees.

Now, you don't want to rush things, but you do want to assist people, where possible. Just acknowledging that there were — I think that we had several hundred people who filled out the survey — because we decided to look back over the past several years — the past four years or so — and we have roughly 100 staff each year who work with this branch and unit. At any one time, we might have 40 or 50 people who we are serving. Over time, it's important to get that feedback from people in order to make the program work better for them.

I have nothing concrete that I can say today, except that all the interaction that I've had with the commission to date leads me to believe that they're working constructively and

supportively of our public service, and I don't believe that will change.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. When the minister spoke about the diversity inclusion branch, one of the questions I have is: What kind of training is made available for staff around working with folks with disabilities?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will endeavour to get a specific response about the training for colleagues about how we work in support, inclusively, of people who have disabilities. I don't have an answer in front of me today, but I'll work to get that answer.

Ms. White: I appreciate that and it's absolutely okay. It is mostly highlighting the reality that folks in different offices and, of course, across government — both those with disability and those in support, or allies of those folks with disability — it is about learning to make sure that we can do a better job.

I have had a really hard lesson with a friend in a wheelchair — trying to push them around downtown in the middle of winter — to realize that things that were viewed as accessible are actually not that accessible, depending on the situation. So, there are lots of lessons about trying to figure that out, and in some cases, I would say that — for example, having certain government health offices on the top floor of a building where the elevator sometimes goes down is an example of how we are not fully supporting folks with disability. That is not this department.

The question is: How many auxiliary-on-call workers are now included on the books of the Public Service Commission?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just touch a little bit on the policy framework around disabilities and return-to-work services. There is an accommodation process and we have a policy framework which aligns with the employer obligation defined by the *Human Rights Act* case law and our collective agreements and best practices. It includes a guiding document supporting policies under our *General Administration Manual*, accommodating employees with disabilities, substance use and impairment, and corporate health and safety and guidelines on complex cases, mental disabilities, substance use disorders, and returning to work and accommodation. Again, I don't have the specifics about training for colleagues; I will work to get that.

With respect to the question on auxiliary on call — I believe that the question is: How many employees? What I understand our total to be today is 863. That is generally on a small, downward trajectory. In 2017-18, the total I have was — sorry, pardon me, Madam Chair — I was giving unique employees. Let me just go back and get that number. It is a 902 count, which is 863 unique employees. Going back to 2017-18, the number was 974; 2018-19, the number was 932; in 2019-20, the number was 955; and this past year was 902.

Ms. White: Do those 863 individuals who are auxiliary on-call workers with the Yukon government have access to paid sick days?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The answer to that is no. Of course, auxiliary-on-call employees are members of the Yukon Employees' Union, and their terms and conditions of employment are covered under that collective agreement. Some of the terms and conditions of employment are similar to those

for regular employees, while others are different to better fit the unique role of auxiliary-on-call employees and what role they play in the public service.

So, although they're not entitled to paid sick leave, auxiliary-on-call employees do receive additional compensation in lieu of health and welfare benefits and leave entitlements.

The thing to also recognize is that our auxiliary-on-call employees sometimes are people who are seeking to become full-time employees, but some of them are not. Some of them actually choose that type of employment, because it fits better with their lifestyle and interests of work. There is a range of reasons they might have, and they are part of the collective agreement.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you to my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, for letting me jump in here. I would like to start by thanking the minister for his opening remarks, but I also wanted to thank the officials for the excellent briefing that I and a few colleagues received — I believe it was two weeks ago. We appreciate the information that was provided there.

At that time, there was a commitment by officials to return with a number of statistics and pieces of information that we had requested then, so I'm sure that will make its way to us in due course. I know it hasn't yet, but I had a number of questions about some of the statistics related to the implementation of the First Nation preferential hire, as well as some of the overall numbers for the territory's public service.

There are a few questions that I have that I would like to ask now of the minister. Over the course of the last number of years, the employee engagement survey has been an important tool for gauging the public service and their engagement with their employer. I believe the last one was in 2018. I would give the minister the opportunity to correct me if I'm wrong about that. When was the last employee engagement survey? When is the next one scheduled?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The last full survey was in 2018. The next one is contemplated for this fall.

Mr. Dixon: Just for clarification, my understanding was that it was to occur every two years. I'm wondering why an employee engagement survey didn't happen in 2020.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm advised that it was largely due to COVID. There were a couple things. I know, for example, when we put out our well-being survey, we did extra work around COVID. We noted that it would be a unique year and it's hard to see it in a pattern of years. It was both, I think, to do with the pressures of COVID itself on the commission as well as with wanting to make sure that the survey would not be an anomaly and that we wouldn't just sort of like point to it and say, well, we're not sure if that's because of COVID or that's because of the broader engagement of the public service. But what I do note is that when we did the survey of well-being, we actually focused on employees as well and their response during COVID as part of that well-being survey.

Mr. Dixon: Moving on to a separate issue, my understanding is that the employee assistance program has a new contractor. I would like to give the minister an opportunity to give us an overview of the transition from one provider to

the next and a little bit about what that transition is going to mean for employees.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: As the Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned, supporting employee well-being is a crucial part of our work toward creating an engaging and inclusive workplace experience. The employee and family assistance program offers our employees and their families access to professional health and well-being services to help them respond to the mental and emotional stressors that life and work present.

There was a competitive bid process, and the contract for the program has been awarded to a new provider: LifeWorks by Morneau Shepell. The new contract commenced at the beginning of this month, May 1, 2021. The program will now include some new things: coaching and advisory services for all employees, in addition to the traditional service of psychological counselling.

I can get up and go into a little more detail if the member wishes. I am happy to talk further.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, in particular, my question was related to the procurement of that service. Can the minister tell us when that was tendered and when it was awarded and if the First Nation procurement policy applied to that tender?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I do not know whether the First Nation procurement policy was part of that tender or not. I am asking the department if they can track down that information for me. If I get that information while I am still up on my feet during this session, I will give it afterwards. I will work to get the dates for when the contract was awarded.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for that commitment. I appreciate it.

Moving on, last year during the height of the pandemic, the former minister issued a directive regarding stay-at-home work, or having employees work from home. I am wondering if the current minister can tell us if that directive — I believe it was in May or perhaps a little bit earlier — was the only directive issued of that nature or if there have been subsequent directives to public servants regarding work from home, or if that is something that is left to individual deputy ministers to handle for their respective departments.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, we have only issued the one directive, and I think it came out earlier than May. I'm working to get a date. I think it was fairly early; it might have been in March or April. But whenever that directive came out, underneath that directive, we issued — if you like — refinements, or additional guidelines. So, we issued new guidelines in the fall of last year. My understanding is that today is the last day for that directive, and it lapses as of today.

Mr. Dixon: I hadn't realized that the directive lapsed today. So, does that mean that, as of tomorrow, I suppose, all government employees should be working from their places of work, their offices, their desks, or wherever it is, other than their homes?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Pardon me, Madam Chair — I'm standing to correct myself. It is the guidelines that end today, not the directive itself.

Mr. Dixon: So, just to be clear then, there is still a standing directive for all government employees to work from home — is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, the answer is no. People are not required — so, I'll just read this out: "The shift to many employees working from home was one of the first and most significant actions taken by the public service to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 back in March of last year."

In December 2020, we issued guidance directing more employees to work from home as a short-term public health measure based on the recommendation of the Yukon's chief medical officer health. This guidance ends on May 31, 2021 — today.

When the guidance ends, the working arrangements during the COVID-19 directive remain in place. Similar to when it was first implemented last June, this directive supports ongoing work-from-home arrangements where it makes sense while also supporting the gradual return of employees to the workplace where required to meet operational needs.

As of two or three weeks ago, 10 percent of the government employee workforce was approved to work from home, either full or part time. It's not required. It is supported, and it's where it works in terms of both us, as the employer, the employee and their situation, and the responsibilities of that position, whether it is public-facing or not.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for that explanation. While I was sitting down, I realized that the date of the original directive was March 18. I can save both me and the minister the time of looking that up. I did want to follow up on that, though.

Based on what the minister just said, my understanding is that currently 90 percent of Yukon government employees are working from their place of work and not from home. I just want to have that clarified by the minister.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: That is correct — 90 percent are working at their workplace.

Madam Chair, you have to understand that, with the 10 percent — I met with a branch the other day and I asked to talk to those employees who are working from home, and I just did a really quick straw survey of them. Some of them are working full time at home, some are working half time at home, and some are occasionally at home. So, that 10 percent includes employees who are also working at the office some of the time. I don't have an exact breakdown in hours, but those are the employees — the percentage of employees — who work part time or full time at home.

Mr. Dixon: Just to clarify again then, a directive was issued on March 18 that — a work-from-home directive was issued on March 18. Guidelines were issued later on in the fall. Those guidelines have ceased now. Does the minister anticipate another directive of any kind, either to direct people back to work or any new direction by way of a directive that they're contemplating?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, no we do not anticipate a change, issuing a request to employees to go back to work from home. Now, all of that is predicated on that we continue to move in the direction that we have been moving as a territory — that we continue to see improved health outcomes for the

Yukon. The Yukon is doing very well in our response to COVID-19 and so long as that goes in this positive direction that we have been going in, we don't anticipate new guidance or even a new directive. On the other hand, what we are working toward — and we have been working based on the experience that we have had over the past year — is a remote-work policy. I know that the commission has been working to develop that policy and — as I said in my opening remarks — it talks about how to support people — in particular, not just to work from home but how to support work taking place in our communities. It is one of those policy pieces that we will use and learn from.

There is a technical side to it — for example, how people can work remotely — and I think that our information technology branch with Highways and Public Works has worked to support workers to be able to stay linked up digitally. There was a lot of work at the beginning of the pandemic to support that, so now we have more of that support broadly. Also, the work toward creating redundancy in the fibre network will help to support that and the policies and work plans that are developed by the departments and supported by the Public Service Commission.

So, I don't anticipate us going back to directing our employees to work from home, but I do look at us working to support more remote work and that sort of work of the future.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you to the minister for that explanation. Briefly, the context of my question is that — I think that it is fairly well understood that the significant number of public servants who attend their work physically by going to their office or their place of work is a significant economic generator for the community. Oftentimes, public servants — particularly in Whitehorse in the downtown core — are shopping, buying lunch, having coffee, et cetera, and their absence during COVID was notable to many in the private sector. Many of those proprietors of hospitality businesses — restaurants, bars, coffee shops, et cetera — that remained open throughout COVID certainly noticed the absence of public servants.

Also, for those who didn't have the opportunity to work from home in the private sector, there was a certain amount of consternation about those working for the public service being able to work from home when they did not have that luxury.

The reason I ask is that we certainly appear to be on the trend of everyone going back to work. In the private sector, people have been back to work in their entirety for some time, and we often field questions about why government employees aren't back to work as well. That's the nature of my question, just so the minister can understand.

That's why I wanted to ask that — whether there was a directive in place to be at the office or going back to work. Perhaps the minister could just respond to that, given the context I provided. Does he anticipate that, going forward, we would see a significant number of Yukon government employees move to working from home, as a way of either saving the cost of having physical office spaces or keeping people removed from the downtown core or the centralized parts of communities around the Yukon?

If he is looking at that — and the minister talked about this being the future of work — I would just sort of caution him — not caution, but I would offer an alternative point of view that public servants are an important lifeblood for our communities and having them circulate around the community and attend places like the downtown core adds some important economic lifeblood to our communities. That's something that I think the minister should consider, going forward. I'll give him a chance to respond to that.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I really do appreciate the perspective, and I think it is one that we need to be considering at all times.

I will also note, though, that part of what affected our businesses — like our cafés, coffee shops, restaurants, or licensed establishments — was that people were not wanting to be — it was not just about where they worked; it was also about where people felt safe. I think it is important that we sort of parse out where those effects lay.

If we have people who are working in our communities — you know, effectively, they are working in the towns — even if they are working from their home, that is pretty close to the heart of the community, typically.

In that sense, I think it could be a positive for our communities. Anyway, I think it is a good point. I do not want to belabour it. I just think that we should put it in the context of the situation that we have here. It really has not been about how we save money. What drove it originally was how to keep Yukoners safe, and I know that there were conversations by the Business Advisory Council about how to make sure that public servants were still using their economic power to help support our local businesses, but, of course, under COVID, we saw that some businesses like restaurants were more heavily affected than some businesses like selling outdoor equipment — whether that be motorized or not. Those businesses did very, very well.

COVID has been unfair. I think that we worked — not the Public Service Commission, but now I am referring to us as a government — to encourage Yukoners to support local businesses. I think we do have to make sure that our downtown core here in Whitehorse remains vibrant as well. I think that it is an important piece to look at. I think there can be a balance — how to make sure there is enough support in the Whitehorse downtown while also supporting our communities and spreading that economic power around the territory for all of our businesses.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for sharing the time. I apologize for my quick departure and instantaneous return.

When I was asking about auxiliary-on-call employees and access to paid sick leave, the minister said that there was a percentage that was included in the hourly wage to make up for that. The reason why I was asking the question about auxiliary-on-call employees is that, when the Yukon government came out with the COVID sick pay, it was an ability for employers to access funding from the Yukon government to cover employees without paid sick days.

One of the reasons why I'm highlighting this — although the minister has given an answer of how Yukon government

deals with it — is that, for individuals who sometimes work in longer contracts without it actually being like a term position — so it's not a signed contract — they may work multiple days a week, and it may be on a regular schedule, but they don't have the same privileges as others, which is the ability to be sick. Whether they themselves are sick or whether their family member is sick, if they don't go to work, they don't get paid.

I know that at some point there will be another negotiation with the Yukon Employees' Union, which is also the union representative for these employees. I just want to highlight that — although it might be similar to vacation pay where, in the case of the average employee in the territory, I think it is four percent that is paid for that vacation pay — it doesn't actually address the concern of: if you don't work, you don't get paid.

I think that, if COVID has shown us anything in the last year, it's that if people have a flu or a sickness, we actually don't want them to share that with others. That is, I realize, a statement without a question, but there are reasons why I was asking that. I just wanted to put that on the floor, and I do look forward to having further conversations about that, knowing that the minister feels a lot the same way I do, which is that people get sick and we don't want them at work, and how we make that happen is different. He can always add comments to that.

One of my last questions actually has to do with respectful workplaces. I just want to know how many individuals have logged complaints with this branch? It's hard to say because I can't say for 2021-22 because we're just at the beginning, but if we just look back at — let's say in the last year — how many complaints were lodged with the respectful workplaces?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, to speak just briefly to the auxiliary-on-call question, I completely understand that COVID has presented an unexpected and different perspective on the reality that we all face.

My understanding is that the next collective agreement will be negotiated in the coming year or so. This may well be a topic — and we are happy to entertain it as a topic — of discussion and negotiation. I think we always have done our best to support our employees broadly. I think that, in order to understand, you would have to get right down into the individual departments and how they were working in support of all of their employees, including auxiliaries on call.

With respect to the respectful workplace policy, the note that I have here with colleagues — I don't have the numbers of how many times it was used over the past year for dispute resolution or other concerns that were raised, so I would have to ask the department to dig out a number for the member opposite.

Ms. White: I appreciate that and, to be honest, I probably don't need an exact number. It was mostly the curiosity of how that department and how that branch is being used. I think that it is really important — we all know that, as humans, sometimes conflict arises, and my understanding is that the Respectful Workplace Office is a place that you can take that when you reach kind of the end.

Another question that I have about the same branch is: Is there a breakdown of the types of complaints that are being

made? The reason I'm asking about a breakdown is, if complaints are highlighting systemic problems, either within policies of the Yukon government or different practices, is there the ability of the Respectful Workplace Office to make recommendations to change things — operationally or on a broader scale?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The respectful workplace policy came into effect in 2013, and I know that there was an evaluation that concluded in December 2018 that took a look at the Respectful Workplace Office processes and whether they were effective at addressing workplace conflict and disrespectful conduct while also identifying areas for improvement.

So, the Respectful Workplace Office steering committee accepted these recommendations in the evaluation report and continues to oversee the implementation of restorative processes to address workplace conflict and disrespectful conduct. They developed a three-year work plan that started last year and is running for two more years to follow up on the recommendations.

At the highest level, I see that, yes, there was a feedback mechanism to talk about how to improve. I don't know the answer on a more immediate level, whether someone identifies something. I am sure, informally, that exists, but what I don't know is whether or not there is a process to provide that feedback mechanism.

I will ask the commission to let me know what processes are in place around when something is identified and how it is relayed back to the various departments, or the units or branches, to see if there's something — clearly, sometimes the conflict may not indicate anything that was systemic, but sometimes it might indicate something that is more systemic, in which case I will ask what mechanisms we have in place in order to provide that feedback and look for that continuous improvement cycle.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission?

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 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, 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 10, Public Service Commission, 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 \$55,618,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$43,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$55,661,000 agreed to

Public Service Commission agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a five-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): 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. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Tourism and Culture

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would just like to begin by welcoming our officials today. Deputy Minister Val Royle is here with me today, and I would like to especially welcome Kate Olynyk, who is here as our acting director of Finance — first time here. Welcome.

I will just start by sharing some words that were prepared by the department and then we can get into general debate.

Madam Deputy Chair, it is my pleasure to introduce the Department of Tourism and Culture's main estimates for 2021-22 fiscal year.

This department continues to play a key role in advancing the commitments to Yukoners made by our government to support our enduring priorities. At the Premier's direction, this portfolio is tasked with: overseeing the implementation of the seven priority action plans for the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*; developing a strategy that supports Yukon's creative and cultural industries and enhances their role in our economic future; providing leadership to the work of the Yukon Forum in developing a clear process for managing the territory's cultural heritage, including archaeological, palaeontological, and cultural artifacts, and the planning of a heritage resource centre for the conservation and protection of those same artifacts.

I am proud to report that — through the hard work of my predecessor, the Hon. Minister McLean, and department officials — all of these items are either completed or significantly underway.

The department continues to implement the priority actions from the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*, and the creative and cultural industry strategy will begin implementation this fiscal year.

We are making progress in our work with the heritage working group in partnership with the Council of Yukon First

Nations, and functional planning for a heritage and arts collections facility is underway.

The Department of Tourism and Culture also continues to play a key role in providing COVID-19 support and relief for the hard-hit tourism and cultural sectors.

Throughout 2020 and in the early days of 2021, Yukon, along with the rest of the world, experienced changes and challenges on a scale we have never encountered before. Those challenges persist today, and while we are all making the best of the situation, I cannot deny that it has been hard and it has taken a toll on everyone.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our economy, our social well-being, and our communities. The Yukon tourism sector has been truly decimated, and the creative and cultural sectors have also been very deeply impacted.

Travel restrictions and gathering limitations have significantly changed the realities of these two areas of our economy and society. The people who work in both tourism and culture are our neighbours and our friends. They are part of our communities and have chosen to make their life here in Yukon and contribute to a thriving, healthy, and diverse society. It is truly heartbreaking to see such amazing businesses, events, individuals, and organizations struggle and lose so much.

The government is committed to doing whatever it can to help these sectors get through this extremely challenging time. I am very proud of the Department of Tourism and Culture for their responsiveness and swift action in reacting to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic — adapting plans, programs, and funding to support our tourism and cultural sectors.

Across government, the requirement to do things differently and be more flexible became our new reality. Although it was a challenging time of uncertainty and constantly changing circumstances, we also celebrated many successes — a great number of which we were in partnership with other governments, departments, organizations, and stakeholders, and I would like to share some of these with you today.

First of all, in our area of culture. To support the cultural sector and other organizations, the government immediately allocated \$1.8 million for temporary support for events funding. Tourism and Culture took over administration of this fund from Economic Development at end of the summer last year. I am pleased to share that the entire amount was expended in support of accommodation and service providers who lost money due to cancelled events.

It was also announced last spring that the department would honour all existing funding agreements for organizations and projects. This applied to museums and cultural centres, as well as arts facilities, individual artists, and non-profit organizations.

Beginning in spring 2020, the Department of Tourism and Culture's funding streams were also enhanced with additional funds, expanded eligibility, and extra intake dates to help offset the effects of COVID-19 across the arts sector. To date, the Government of Yukon has provided \$425,000 in additional arts

funding to help mitigate the situation for this important sector. This includes \$150,000 that was made available through the On Yukon Time program. This program was adapted for 2020-21 to fund art projects which interpreted or responded to the pandemic and its impact on Yukoners. The funding was split between the April and October intakes.

Awards of up to \$2,500 were available for individuals and up to \$5,000 for businesses, not-for-profits, or collectives.

We also doubled the Advanced Artist Award from \$75,000 to \$150,000 in both April and October.

The arts fund was increased to \$625,000, with an additional April intake for \$125,000, and applicants could apply for 100 percent of project costs. We doubled funding to \$60,000 for the annual call for submissions to the Yukon permanent art collection to purchase artwork on behalf of all Yukon.

Tourism and Culture, along with Economic Development, also contributed funding for the “Not Close, but Personal” remote concert series, which featured 23 talented Yukon musicians from April to June 2020. Not only did this provide income for those performing, it provided an amazing experience that brought us together in a time of isolation.

I also want to highlight *Creative Potential, Advancing Yukon’s Creative and Cultural Industries*, Yukon’s first-ever strategy to support and grow these important industries — not only for the positive contribution to the economy but for the integral role in shaping and expressing Yukon’s unique identity.

The department has also been engaging with the sectors since 2019 to develop the plan, and its relevance takes on another level of importance during COVID-19 and post-pandemic recovery planning. We included this strategy in our election platform, and we have included funding in this budget to get implementation underway in this fiscal year.

A key element of this strategy will be some strategic objectives to help the sector rebuild and recover from the pandemic and ultimately reach new heights. I’m excited by the possibilities that the implementation of the strategy will provide for the sector. My colleagues and I will be reviewing the final strategy soon, and I look forward to the public release in the near future.

I would also like to highlight efforts to support the tourism sector. The department fast-tracked the establishment of the Yukon tourism advisory board, which has been invaluable in advising both me and my predecessor, Minister McLean, throughout the pandemic response. Our front-line staff at the visitor information centres and the Beringia Interpretive Centre were reassigned to support the COVID-19 border control initiative, bringing their skills and knowledge to help inform and greet those from outside the territory as they transited through.

We have also developed advertising campaigns to encourage Yukon staycations and the safe exploration of our own territory, as well as to attract visitors from the BC, NWT, and Nunavut bubble last summer. We increased the tourism cooperative marketing fund — the TCMF — by a million dollars and expanded the scope of eligible businesses, projects,

and activities to help support Yukon tourism-related businesses promote themselves locally, nationally, and globally.

I’m very pleased to share that the enhanced TCMF was very well-received. To date, we have approved approximately \$1.6 million in funding for 200 applicants and we are pleased to be able to maintain the program at an enhanced level again in 2021-22.

The department was also a partner in funding the Elevate program, which provides mentoring and advice to help businesses respond to COVID and prepare for recovery. Administered by the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, this popular program has had significant uptake from the sector and we will be contributing funding again in 2021-22.

In collaboration with the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board and other tourism stakeholders, we developed the tourism relief and recovery plan. This important guiding document comprises 19 actions over the next three years for a \$15-million investment for relief and recovery for the tourism sector. The plan grew from the values and pillars of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*, and it’s flexible and responsive to ensure that supports for relief and recovery are meeting the needs of the sector.

Under the *Tourism Relief and Recovery Plan*, in working with our colleagues in Economic Development, we launched two important relief programs as supplements to the existing Yukon business relief. First was the tourism accommodation sector supplement, or TASS, and the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement, TNASS. As well, the culture and tourism non-profit organizations sector supplement was established to provide funding relief to non-profit organizations in the tourism and culture sectors, such as museums and arts organizations. This fund was administered by our partners at the Yukon Historical and Museums Association. These relief funds are meant to help the visitor economy remain solvent and to sustain businesses and organizations through the pandemic. This government is committed to supporting the tourism sector for the duration of the pandemic. We recently announced the extension of the TASS and TNASS to September 30, 2021.

When it’s the right time once again to welcome visitors, our goal is to return the territory to 2019 levels of tourism employment and revenue in Yukon within three years, but the reopening of tourist visitation cannot come at the cost of the health and safety of Yukoners and our communities. That is why we are working with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon to support the sector in adopting standardized protocols for the protection of visitors and residents. We continue to follow the guidance and the advice of the chief medical officer of health and the government’s reopening plan as we begin easing restrictions. At the same time, we look forward with great hope and optimism to the further easing of restrictions that can be made possible by the amazing job that Yukoners have done in embracing vaccination. Yukoners’ hard work and our willingness to pull together in the interest of our entire Yukon community will allow us to enjoy a great Yukon summer.

I would now like to provide some details from the 2021-22 budget as we continue to prepare for the road to recovery. For

the main estimates, the Department of Tourism and Culture has identified an estimated budget of \$39.2 million. This is a 25-percent increase over last fiscal year's main estimates. This budget will enable the Department of Tourism and Culture to continue its important work of: overseeing funding resources and supports for the arts, museums, and First Nation cultural centres; the provision of visitor information services across the territory; support for tourism development and the marketing of the territory as a year-round travel destination; archaeology and palaeontology sites and collections, as well as the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre; geographical place names; the management, development, and interpretation of Yukon's heritage and historic sites; and Yukon government's archival programs.

I will begin by first providing an overview of the subsequent details of our operation and maintenance budget, followed by capital.

The operation and maintenance budget estimate for this fiscal year is \$36.1 million, which is the majority of our budget. This is an increase of \$7.4 million from the previous year's estimate, largely due to COVID-19 response and support. This includes almost \$11.73 million in personnel expenditures for the almost 110 full-time equivalent positions, which is an increase of one full-time position in the department.

The programs and services delivered by the knowledgeable, dedicated, and passionate staff of the department contribute to Yukon's economy and also aid in maximizing the social and cultural benefits to Yukoners and visitors. Key changes in O&M this year include \$6,475,000 for COVID-19 response. This is new from the 2020-21 estimates and will go toward implementing the actions in the tourism relief and recovery plan to provide the ongoing COVID relief for tourism businesses, as well as to position Yukon's tourism industry to rebound in the time frame.

As I stated earlier, this plan was developed to be flexible and allows focus to shift back and forth from relief to recovery as circumstances require. In this fiscal year, funds will be allocated toward initiatives such as the creation of a one-window service into Yukon government for tourism businesses, operationalized right now through the funding navigator positions with TIAY to address immediate and priority needs of industry; support for industry adoption of standardized safe travel protocols for the protection of visitors and residents; continuation of the Elevate tourism program; continuation of the COVID-19 adaptive tourism cooperative marketing fund program; enhanced marketing of Yukon as a destination in key markets; and investment in a place brand for Yukon as a whole, known as the "Yukon Story". I think that both opposition parties have also been briefed on that concept.

Madam Deputy Chair, next I would like to mention a \$240,000 net increase to advance three of the department's initiatives in the *Our Clean Future* plan. The Historic Sites unit in the department's Cultural Services branch will undertake several initiatives that support climate change mitigation adaptation: \$50,000 will go toward evaluating potential options for the generation and use of renewable electricity at remote historic sites co-managed by the Government of Yukon and

Yukon First Nations by 2022; \$25,000 is allocated this year to work collaboratively with First Nations and the Inuvialuit to begin to document information from historic sites and culturally important places at risk due to climate change; and \$90,000 is allocated to complete the framework for measuring sustainable tourism and a system to track greenhouse gas emissions from tourism.

This work is being carried out by the industry services unit in the Tourism branch and fulfills one of the goals in the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. Work on this initiative is supported by the creation of a new position in the department.

Again, the next key change is the \$300,000 net increase for the implementation for the first year of the new creative and cultural industry strategy. As I mentioned earlier, this will enable first-phase implementation to begin work on actions aimed to support post-pandemic recovery while also contributing to Yukon's broader economic recovery and well-being.

The final strategy document is still under review, and I will be able to share more details in the near future.

Again, a \$137,000 net increase for advancing the work plan and priorities for the heritage working group is included in the 2021-22 main estimates, and the heritage working group was formally established as part of the Yukon Forum process. Its membership comprises representatives from self-governing First Nations who collaborate and work together on shared priorities in this area. In partnership with Council of Yukon First Nations, this funding will be used for a dedicated position to manage work plan implementation.

Again, our capital budget estimates are \$3.1 million for 2021-22. This is an increase of \$451,000 over the previous year's estimates. Among this year's key projects are a number of initiatives to take place at Yukon Archives to help improve Yukon Archives' work of acquiring and preserving Yukon documentary heritage, including Yukon government's records. The projects planned are the installation of new shelving to expand capacity and storage for oversized archival and published materials, which represents an increase to \$700,000, and the completion of the replacement elevator project, which has a budget of \$200,000 this year, representing a net decrease of \$100,000 from the previous year.

Again, we will invest \$500,000 for the regularly scheduled rebuild of the Travel Yukon website. This represents an increase of \$200,000 from last year. The updated site will be especially important for attracting and providing relevant information for post-COVID-19 travel as well, as visitors plan future trips and continue to dream about a vacation to this beautiful territory.

Next, we have \$145,000 for the tourism visitor survey, and the survey is undertaken periodically and will provide updated statistics on Yukon's tourism and visitors, which is invaluable for marketing purposes, understanding, of course, that consumer behaviours and desires are critical as we prepare the tourism industry to rebound and rebuild.

However, given the highly unusual tourism seasons last year and this year, this initiative will look different than in the

past, and I will be able to share some more details about that soon.

At the Yukon Beringia Interpretative Centre, \$90,000 is earmarked for ongoing exhibit renewal work, as well as \$38,000 for the new theatre equipment. As members of the House may recall, the department launched a new Beringia movie produced by local filmmakers this past year. Improved equipment will complement the screening of this wonderful educational program for all centre visitors.

So, this concludes my overview of the Department of Tourism and Culture's 2021-22 budget estimates. I look forward to addressing questions and providing additional detail during the upcoming debate. In closing, I want to state that I, like many of you, are looking forward to a return of what we took for granted as normal everyday life and the freedom to travel. The final stretch of the pandemic, in many ways, may be the most difficult. We have been living through this for more than a year, and the economic, mental, and emotional realities have taken their toll, but I remain hopeful and positive, and I want to stress the importance of continued discipline and patience as we need to continue following guidance and restrictions.

The vaccination of Yukon's population is certainly a major milestone. It provides hope that we are getting closer to the end of COVID-19, but we are not quite there yet. We are still in a pandemic — living, working, and adapting to this instability, which will continue for a bit longer. The work of the department is integral in this, and I want to thank the department staff for their continued efforts, empathy, and dedication during this time. Thank you for the exceptional timing for my first speech from Tourism and Culture.

Ms. Van Bibber: I thank the minister for his opening remarks and welcome the staff here as well.

I have just a couple of quick questions on the seasonal tourism staff. Can the minister please confirm whether all seasonal tourism staff were hired back for this 2020-21 season?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, staff were recalled on May 1.

Ms. Van Bibber: During the briefing, it was mentioned that some of the staff were going to be tasked with other duties, aside from their regular roles at the visitor reception centres. Can the minister elaborate on what other duties this would include during this summer?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'll touch on three key areas where individuals are either doing training or taking on other duties. First, we do have staff who are going through some bilingual training in French. Some of our VIC staff are dealing with emergency communications, and some of the VIC staff will be helping out some of the private sector operators who are building packages that will be part of the Great Yukon Summer.

There are a number of different — using their expertise to help us out in a number of different areas.

Ms. Van Bibber: The government has been working through the years with the Friends of the Yukon Permanent Art Collection to find a home for that collection. Could the minister give us an update on the progress of that find?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, just to touch on — the Government of Yukon is committed to representing plurality of

the visual art practice in Yukon and to maintain, conserve, exhibit, and interpret the Yukon permanent art collection for the enjoyment of Yukon people. Early on, we touched on — in the preamble to our budget or some of the opening comments — we have just gone through another increase and the importance of acquiring more of that local art.

In 2021, we'll be celebrating the 40th anniversary of the creation of the Yukon permanent art collection. The Yukon permanent art collection is held in trust by the Yukon government for the people of Yukon. It's an important and growing collection of over 475 works of art that reflect the Yukon's artistic identity.

The Government of Yukon is committed to caring for this valuable collection and ensuring that, at any given time, one-third of the collection is on display in over 30 locations in public and government buildings around the territory. The collection was established in 1981 and represents a survey of art-making in Yukon. The works of art span many artistic media and styles, including a range of beading and carving styles particular to Yukon First Nations.

Each year, the Yukon government provides the Friends of the Yukon Permanent Art Collection with an annual purchasing budget for new acquisitions. Artwork is selected through a call for submissions and an arm's-length jury process.

The annual budget for new acquisitions is \$30,000, but we've just touched on the fact that we doubled that, taking into consideration the impact that the arts community has had because of COVID. In response to the 2021 call for submissions, proposals for 147 works by 68 artists were received. Selections will be announced quite soon.

Particular to the storage need, the department is working on maximizing the existing storage space at the Yukon Arts Centre by modifying it to accommodate a compact 2D artwork storage system with increased capacity. In the meantime, a portion of the 2D artwork from the collection is stored at the Yukon Archives, which has affected access to the collection and impacted the collection rotation program.

The storage requirements for YPAC must meet or exceed the Canadian Conservation Institute's class A guidelines for climate control, inventory, and security. Work to install the compact 2D storage system had been delayed in 2018 due to some water pressure issues. The Yukon government and the City of Whitehorse have been working to resolve this issue; however, further evaluation is still required. If construction again moves this year, it's expected to accommodate a further two years of collection. A long-term storage solution for the collection — we're still looking to address.

The Arts Heritage Centre is in the five-year capital budget. It's a \$25-million project. We have been in discussions. In my previous role, I sat with Minister McLean to look for a potential partnership with First Nation governments to see if there were some synergies that could be applied. We're still endeavouring to have those discussions and look for a spot. It would be fair to say — and to be respectful to the department as a whole — it's not only for the permanent collection that we're coming up with a solution for this, but really there have been challenges for a long time around the collections. I know that the

individuals who work in the department are absolutely so passionate about what they do. We do have world-class collections — not just our permanent art collection, but from anybody who has watched what has happened over the last number of years, really, concerning the ice patches — every year, we're continuing to find some really exceptional items.

Again, part of my goal is going to be to work with the deputy minister and the department to identify the proper infrastructure. That was the good work that was started by Minister McLean. She was extremely passionate at the Management Board table and the Cabinet table around this item and has fiercely looked to get support and has started that process, which I appreciate and want to thank her for.

Again, we will be looking to get this building in place; it is much needed. We have to be respectful of this amazing collection that we have.

Ms. Van Bibber: Can the minister provide an update on the conversation that the department has had with Holland America around the potential plans of the cruise ship traffic resuming, should the Canada-US borders open?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There have been weekly discussions with the department, and that is going to be ongoing. I can report back to the Assembly. I was having discussions as recently as today, this morning, with individuals in the private sector who are extremely impacted by what has happened. We have closely watched the different approaches, whether it be the approach, of course, by the State of Alaska — we have watched, listened, and contributed where we can at the national tourism tables. We had a call last week with the tourism ministers, as well as the federal minister. The Yukon senator, Senator Duncan, has been doing great work in ensuring that, in bilateral discussions — whether it be at the Senate or even in Senate committee meetings — there is an understanding of the uniqueness that we are experiencing now with our high vaccination rates and the impacts that have occurred and, of course, understanding that there has been some work done at the state level in Alaska. I think that folks who have followed this would know that there is normally a need for a cruise ship to stop in a Canadian port, and now there has been this move that has been made to forego that and still have those ships — I guess I could use the word “legally” — enter ports in Alaska.

We're watching that and voicing, where we can, the importance of understanding that the Yukon is in a very unique situation. As well, I think the MP is continuing to do that good work, and we're usually on Friday calls with TIAY.

A series of organizations — the Wilderness Tourism Association and the Outfitters Association — have also been doing extensive work ensuring communication. I know that the Premier, where appropriate, has been working hard on behalf of the Yukon to ensure that folks are safe but also speaking at larger national tables about the reality that we're in right now.

Everybody is appropriately working on this, and with the cruise ships, we're waiting to see. We know that they're taking bookings for later in the summer. Folks today whom I spoke with in the industry said that, if those decisions were made at the federal level and those borders opened, then I think that at least some of our operators are looking to be involved in

delivering the service, but there is a lot that we have to wait to see rolled out.

Again, I give that much detail because I think it's appropriate, and I want the member opposite to know that everybody is truly working very hard to ensure that, when the moment is right — and we see those borders open — folks will be ready to go.

Part of that is the important work that has been done with TIAY and in making sure we have those standards in place and ensuring that our smaller communities are comfortable and ready, because, as folks know, small communities like Carcross, in a normal year, have about 100,000 individuals coming through their downtown core. So, even if it's a small number this year, it was so important to make sure that we're having a constant dialogue and we're speaking with those municipality and First Nation leaders in our communities.

A couple of other pieces that are important — we have been informed that Holland America will not open the Westmark in Dawson this year, so that's an important signal. Again, we're waiting this month to see what happens at the federal level concerning the US border opening or a potential extension.

Ms. Van Bibber: On to the Great Yukon Summer, the idea to have packaged tourism experiences and rebates — how and when did the government notify businesses? Was it through consultation or surveys? How did businesses become aware of how to hook into the Great Yukon Summer?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it is important to know that there has been an ongoing dialogue, and that dialogue started really in March and April of last year. It has been continuous. At an organizational level, we have continued to have conversations with TIAY and our chambers, with our advisory groups — whether it be the Business Advisory Council, which we worked with a large portion of last year and then went back on occasion to have discussions with leaders in that area, mostly who were focused on the tourism side of things. We also were looking to ensure that we understood what the needs are. In each particular case, what we heard going into last year — some of the key points and, I guess, some of the pillars of this were how cash-starved our tourism operators were and how absolutely impacted they were.

We knew, going into this particular summer, how important it was for them to begin to staff up and to get cash flow because, as we know, if we see the federal government make a significant decision with the United States, we want individuals to have as much potential lead time to hire folks and to get ready. But also, it was important for the Yukon government going into Q1 of 2021 — we were watching to see what was happening. The conversation about the variants was flowing, and we were trying to understand when the right time was to do two things: to see what was going to happen in this market — in the Yukon market — and the department appropriately was monitoring other provinces and territories to see how they were spending their external marketing budget. Today we have seen some folks jump out, and that has cost them because they don't have the flexibility, and they spent a lot of dollars in the national market, and even the international

market, marketing their home province or territory, and now they are in a position where it is in lockdown. So, it is really trying to get that right.

The consultations that were done on the Great Yukon Summer were with TIAY, YTAB, the Wilderness Tourism Association, the Yukon Convention Bureau, as well as Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association, and the Yukon Heritage and Museums Association as well.

As well, we had a workshop this morning with folks. There were over 50 people in attendance at the workshop. We have packages — 10 more were added on Friday morning, I think.

It is also important to say that the packages — we have operators who are already producing packages as well. The operators who are sort of used to that — and we are trying to encourage, enhance, and support others to do that work as well.

When you look at other sectors — the airline sector — because we had restrictions last year, we probably had less than between 40 and 50 percent of our normal clients coming into the Yukon for the outfitting industry. Because of that reduction, some of the folks who make a lot of their money in the summer flying for tourism outfitting didn't have that opportunity. Part of this is key in that sector. Those individuals, when they are flying people in — say they are going on a multi-day paddling trip — we are supporting them as well. We know that some folks have booked and they have already spoken to these particular companies, and they are going to be able to receive a rebate.

We also know that people are really excited about this opportunity, and they are now seeing more business activity. Folks are being very innovative in their ideas. Again, there is a very extensive list of folks whom we spoke with before the announcement — private sector folks who have already built packages and are moving quickly to add packages. At the workshop this morning, 50 people attended — going back to some of those first questions asking about our human resources, trying to ensure that the human resources of the department are best used at this particular time to enhance this offering that is coming up for the Great Yukon Summer.

Ms. Van Bibber: The minister just said that there were 10 more packages brought forward today. Could he also tell us how many packages have signed up to the program to date? Is there a specific number of packages needed to begin the program, or are you just going to go with what you get for the deadline? Is there a deadline?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to clarify. My comment was that there were 10 more added on Friday, not today. There were over 50 packages that were already available on travelyukon.com before this. We launch on June 4. As we move toward the end of the week, we're going to be taking packages in.

Some of our senior leaders in the department — their mindset was that companies or operators who are quite accustomed to building packages — we let companies put up to seven packages on the site. Some of the early indication is that we could have somewhere around 250 to 300 packages; we'll see. I think that some of those will be unique. I had individuals reaching out to me today, and they have some pretty

neat ideas of things that they can do — not your normal offering. I won't get ahead of their announcements — but just checking and testing out to see what we thought.

Again, I think we're going to see significant opportunities and packages. We'll continue to add them. June 4 is when we're saying we're going live, but if folks, throughout the months of June or July, learn from what they're seeing of other clients or if they can fill a need and they can add a package — we want as many opportunities for the private sector and as many packages of great experiences as possible.

What we're trying to ensure is — the number one key here is that we are trying to ensure that we fast-track a recovery for our tourism operators. They have been dramatically impacted. I call on anybody who is listening in today: Please — if you are in a position financially where you can afford to purchase a package, please do that. If you have family members in the Yukon who you can educate, or friends, please do that.

For all Members of the Legislative Assembly, this is not a partisan issue. This is about — we have all, in this House, stood up. Everybody has understood the impact to this particular sector, and that's something that I might even be calling upon my colleagues and both opposition parties to help me share and educate. I'll be reaching out after the session to see if you're comfortable in a role of just ensuring that this program moves forward this summer and we get as much funds — again, as people go out and they enjoy a much-deserved experience, they're also going to become extraordinary ambassadors of these products and they're going to be able to — as we move forward, that's going to help us with our rebound. They're going to be selling this to their friends, families, and others from across the country and abroad.

Ms. Van Bibber: I believe you answered the next question for me by saying that eligible businesses can submit packages throughout the summer.

I do know that for part of this Great Yukon Summer, consumers with receipts can get a 25-percent rebate. Does the company that offers packages get any rebate? What does the government anticipate the cost of the rebates will be?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The benefit that goes to the business — we don't have a rebate, but what we are offering is marketing supports. We put a \$2,000 price tag per company. We think that there are a couple good benefits from that exercise. For one, some of our local companies — whether they are the marketing or art department in a newspaper or they are a small advertising group, boutique firms — we probably have a half dozen to a dozen organizations. They have also been impacted over the last year.

We're bringing Yukon businesses — that's where we're focused on — these Yukon businesses that are going to be on a preferred vendor list. Then we're looking for anybody who is putting packages on — to provide them with up to \$2,000 to offset their cost of their campaign. So, you know, multiple objectives that we're going to be executing on with that particular — we think that's a great benefit. What we hope is that, through that relationship this summer, there is the potential for that firm or that group or that company to continue to work

with the operator as they move forward. We think that there are some really neat synergies that can be built there.

We're looking at a projected cost of \$1.25 million; that is what we're looking at. Based on our methodology that we've used in-house — which is really about taking a look at the demographic, understanding the price point that we're looking at — but what we've also done is — because the packages that meet the criteria for the rebate are on the Yukon tourism site, part of what it gives us an opportunity to do is that we can then define which companies are providing which packages, which then gives us a more efficient way to identify who to speak with around what the uptake has been on the packages.

My hope is that we go through — I'll be working with Val and Kate — and we'll be understanding, as we get into mid-summer, going back to see what the uptake has been so we can see if we have to revise what our estimates have been. We can see if we have identified an appropriate number in our line item for this.

We think that we are going to have to potentially adapt if we see that but, right now, we're going to monitor — which we have done from the start — our economy to see. Again, the benefit is \$2,000 for design of ads or campaigns, and there is also up to \$15,000 that's available under our TCMF to place ads — so a very significant amount of money. We now provide that here in the Yukon. There has been a lot of work done in the department lately to look at our own market.

The department has budgeted \$200,000 to promote the Great Yukon Summer overall. That's our largest in our destination campaigns that we have done. We think that there are a lot of good pieces. We're going to try to ensure that we're as supportive as possible to folks who are doing this. Inevitably — and it's probably a question that's coming — now that we have this campaign moving out the door — now, the department and the experts in the department are coming, and we're having discussions about when to activate our bigger campaign. We're starting to see some blue sky across the country and internationally. There's a lot going on. We're going to be focused on this, and our hope is that we will dovetail this appropriately, we get this activity, and then mid to late summer, we'll see a larger number of clients — and of course we'll be getting our marketing out with Cossette and Aasman to get that activated.

Ms. Van Bibber: That was my last question, so I will thank the officials again and turn it over to my colleague from the Third Party.

Ms. Blake: Tourism industry leaders at the TIAY noon Zoom meeting on Friday expressed the need for outhouses at rural tourist attractions like Mendenhall. When will the government commit to providing and maintaining this crucial infrastructure for our tourist sites and rest stops on our highways year-round?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to thank the Member for Porter Creek North. I like to speak about tourism and, of course, having questions from somebody with such an extensive background in the tourism sector, so I appreciate the questions.

Yes, it did come up — absolutely. I think the sad truth is that something that seems to be such an easy undertaking — to

put a piece of infrastructure in — has somehow, over many years, become an extremely complex endeavour. What I mean by that is that it seems that there are multiple departments that all have a hand in identifying, ensuring, permitting, and putting an outhouse in place. I can happily say that this morning I met with multiple colleagues on this important topic, and they have committed to work with me and I have committed to work with them. I think it would be really efficient if we could ensure that one department could identify, budget, and make the calls on this. We've had a lot of things happen, specifically in the Southern Lakes, on this topic. When individuals come from Skagway from time to time, they also move through British Columbia and then back into the Yukon, and they sometimes make a stop in British Columbia before they get back into the Yukon, even though that's the traditional territory of Carcross/Tagish First Nation. If there is not the infrastructure in place, they become creative in finding other means to look after things, and when that happens, of course, it's not the appropriate way to deal with things. We've heard that from Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

That is something that I'll be working on this summer. I have to say that I have seen amazing carpenters like Bret Heebink and others who have gone out and done some exceptional stuff. Maybe we can get creative and we can install something that has an artistic flair and solves this very important problem.

The four departments, yes — we normally have to have Environment, Highways and Public Works, Tourism and Culture, and Community Services that are all coming together to figure this out. It is an issue at the deputy ministers of tourism committee. I could say or not say — we think that Highways and Public Works will be a fantastic group to lead this, and we will be conferring with them later this summer.

Ms. Blake: At the TIAY noon meeting, it was also noted that the Great Yukon Summer plan will not succeed in supporting all Yukon businesses that rely on tourism.

What will the government do to support those businesses that are overlooked or not eligible under the Great Yukon Summer plan?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I was on that call, and I know that there was a policy person from the Third Party who was on that call. I don't remember that exact theme, but I would say — I want to be respectful to the question. I think that when you are building public policy, you always try to meet your objective and ensure that it positively impacts as many people as possible. That is not always the case.

When I think about this sector, what we have tried to do is have a multi-pronged approach, using a series of tools. So, you're right — when we think about this sector, we think about accommodation, but we also have to think about the hospitality sector as well as some of the other operators. I think that you are absolutely correct. This is one of a multitude of undertakings.

Again, we identified \$15 million last year. The majority of that was in last year's budget and this year's budget — there is about \$2.5 million in next year's budget. Really, those are things — I want to be quick so that we can get to the next

question. Again, providing tourism sector leadership, rebuilding confidence and our capability within the sector — recovery for the tourism industry operators — so many things, 19 key initiatives. We saw last week that we had that ability to open up seating in our bars and restaurants, so we think that this is positive. They are going to be at full capacity.

I don't want to underscore the impact that this industry has had, but I have to say that, as a person who has spent lots of time understanding that model — working and in ownership situations — I have to say that I am very pleased to see — and I think that folks can see for themselves that a lot of the hospitality, at least in Whitehorse — now that the session is concluding, I will have more time in a series of communities, seeing what's playing out as well.

I am sure that there is more impact there, but we are seeing good support by Yukoners for our restaurants. You're going by, and you're seeing lineups. We have a new restaurant that just opened. It was six weeks to get a reservation in a restaurant in Whitehorse. That's, yes, maybe limited seating compared to others, but that's something you would hear in Vancouver, New York, or Toronto or something like that.

We have seen multiple restaurants open in 2021, and that says something. They're opening and they're doing well, so I think that part of the sector is in good shape or moving toward good shape — not to say that there aren't some that are still impacted.

But whether it's continuing to work with those folks who may not be touched by this, on the Elevate process — we have seen companies do some pretty extraordinary things on their way to adapt to what has happened.

We didn't get to touch on it, but we're very excited about the events. So, as the member opposite stated, some of those folks should be caught up in a positive way by the events. We had 42 events that were already being undertaken this year and supported financially. We have gone back with \$250,000 to say, "Would you like to expand?"

Today, people are reaching out, ready to do events. Those could be cultural events. Please, in your own ridings and communities, whether it be in Old Crow or other spots, let the individuals in those ridings — if there are businesses or organizations that want to host things, let us know. We have up to \$15,000 per organization that we can do.

When you have events downtown or you have events in a community, all of that has those ancillary benefits that go to some of those other organizations.

I share that with you because I want Yukoners to know that we are taking a very comprehensive view of this sector, and we are trying to do our very best to understand the plight of those folks and the challenges but also the pathways that will provide them with a full recovery and, in the future, an expansion of their business model.

Ms. Blake: With schools being finished in two weeks and families trying to find further summer holidays, I just have a question regarding the packages that you mentioned earlier. When will the information — and if it is posted on the website, I apologize — be provided on the website for families?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: On June 4 — the information is very substantial for Yukoners to make an informed decision on a multitude of opportunities that they can undertake on their own or with friends or with their families as they start to do their planning.

Again, we know that there has been some flexibility applied to our restrictions to Yukoners, but please — whatever your decision is for the summer, I plead with you: At some point this summer, make sure — if you are in a financial position to do it — that you spend some money with our operators. They are in dire need of that cashflow. They enhance our quality of life here so much. Those are folks who go to the local grocery store, who volunteer their time or contribute financially to our sports programs and our entire ecosystem here, which becomes a very healthy positive community. Please take that opportunity. I appreciate the member opposite touching on the fact that people are just concluding their school year and parents are making their decisions on spending. This is a great place to spend some of those funds on summer activity.

Ms. Blake: As other provinces and territories begin accepting international tourists who have one vaccine dose, will our government consider doing the same thing? Also, how are we going to verify their vaccination status?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Of course, I cannot speak about some of these potential situations at this point. What I can share is that the Yukon was out of the gates ahead of other jurisdictions last week. I am happy to report — from what I have been informed of by my Cabinet colleagues and the technical briefings — that it went quite smoothly. For anybody this weekend who had an opportunity — there are two destinations that sort of compete when you think about the per capita percentage of our economy that goes to tourism, and the other one that was right on our heels was Prince Edward Island. I know that the Premier there announced that they are using a similar system. They are looking at what we are doing. I know that the Premier has done a great job of not only informing the table of premiers and First Ministers — and he has worked with the Council of the Federation — but he has also been there — Premier King — to reach out to him if they needed to look at the model.

We believe that we're going to continue to see more opportunity for an appropriate exchange of information. We know that, at the federal level, we're seeing the early sign of a system at the national level and then for international travellers. What we're hearing is that we'll get an update at the Tourism ministers' table in a couple weeks. We think that's going to be a really significant piece of information that we're going to be able to understand to make some decisions on.

Again, I apologize to the member opposite — feeling that I'm holding back — but these are hypothetical scenarios that may happen, so we're going to hold off on jumping into that foray. But at this particular time, we think that our system is working well. We're watching where the federal government is on their international borders and, all the while, voices from the Yukon are there. We're amplifying what we're hearing from the sector. The sector is saying, "Please, when it's time and it's

safe, we need to get that border open, because it means so much to us."

Ms. Blake: Yukon is a great destination for travelling families. However, children below the age of 12 are not being vaccinated against COVID-19. Will we allow families with vaccinated parents and unvaccinated young children to visit the Yukon without quarantining and bring money into the pockets of our tourism industry?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: At this time, we're staying by the restrictions that are in place — the current restrictions — which, as the member opposite has touched upon, would exclude those younger travellers. The Minister of Health and Social Services has been in a consistent dialogue with the chief medical officer of health. I know that they are taking a look at the data that's coming in around youth travellers.

Will we see some flexibility around the corner? We're hoping so, but that's going to depend on the data and what's being said at the national table of chief medical officers and with the national officer. We think that it could be a possibility, but we're going to have to hold off for now on any further information on that.

Ms. Blake: My next question is: What is the situation with Condor Air from Germany to Yukon? Will we see the service that brought many tourists to Yukon on a weekly basis return?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Sorry, can I just have the question repeated?

Ms. Blake: My question was: What is the situation with Condor Air from Germany to Yukon? Will we see the service that brought many tourists to Yukon on a weekly basis return back to providing service?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: As of this time — and I am sure that one of the things that has led to conversations around it is that Condor — I think that they have been pretty open, even last year, toward trying to take bookings. Certainly, they are taking bookings for 2021, but they are offering refunds if borders don't open.

Again, we are waiting to see what is going to happen with the international borders. I know that the department is reaching out to Condor so that the deputy minister and I can have a discussion with their chief executive officer just to get a sense from them of where they are going to go. We should have more information — but, again, they are booking. The perspective I am getting, from watching what they are doing — because I am not going to speak on behalf of Condor — is that they are contemplating flights at the latter part of the summer or later in this year.

We are hoping to see some of those restrictions reduced and we think that, in the Yukon, with the vaccination rates the way they are, people now have that opportunity to sign up their children. I urge anybody who has that opportunity for children to do that. I did that today, over lunch — to make sure that there are lots of openings, even for the first couple of days that are available. Again, that is what we are waiting to see, but our sense is that Condor — as soon as those borders are open, they seem like they are ready to make the move to fly back into the Yukon.

Ms. Blake: In the Liberal platform, was there support for the mountain music festival to take place in fall 2021, with MacBride Museum?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I know that the organization at this time is concluding a report. They received some funding in the last fiscal year to undergo some of that work.

We're also waiting for them to conclude that. We know that there are other organizations across the Yukon too that can be supportive in this.

There are a couple things that I would like to share. There have been some questions around that partnership, and I think that it's important that this concept — there have been a number of individuals who have been behind that, and they came to government a number of years ago with an unsolicited proposal with a really good concept and an idea. The easiest way to speak to the model is to look at some of the stuff that happens in other jurisdictions where they have these shoulder-season festivals that really spread out the tourism season and hit some of our smaller communities. So, that is the concept, and we're waiting to see what this report is going to provide us with — insight and understanding of costs and operations.

Again, I have had a number of organizations either reach out through a surrogate or directly to me that want to be at the table and have some discussions about this.

So, today, Arts in the Park has now kicked off. We had planned to do a tribute today because that is another significant piece. I see that Music Yukon is working with the MacBride Museum on the delivery of that. So, you're seeing MacBride Museum now do a bit more work there. But just today — based on what the feelings were over the weekend — and I think how all of us were impacted about some of the news out of British Columbia — we just felt that it was better to speak to and celebrate Arts in the Park at another time — not today. But you'll see that MacBride Museum is also working with them.

I am more than happy to share more information. We're excited about this undertaking. We think that it can grow year over year, and there are a lot of great organizations in their home communities — whether that is Dawson City, Haines Junction, or Watson Lake — and, over time, we can have something where there is some really significant amount of activity happening.

I know that, even in the early stages, Air North, Yukon's airline — I'm hearing that they are pretty excited about bringing in packages, even as early as this fall — and hotels, as well, coming together. So, we think that there is a really good opportunity there, and we're looking forward to the leadership that we're seeing already from MacBride Museum — and then partnering as well with other organizations that have great expertise in this area.

Ms. Blake: My next question is if the department is supporting other music festivals in Yukon, like the Dawson City Music Festival or the Kluane Mountain Bluegrass Festival in Haines Junction, with similar funding.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, the member opposite gives me a great opportunity to say that, if you have a festival or a concept that you're looking at, we actually have funding this year. We have up to \$15,000 for funding of these events. We

also have 42 events that we are funding. To answer that question, we are providing funding that's really significant and, in many cases, much greater. We haven't identified in this year's budget a dollar figure yet toward the fall undertaking; that's important.

I think the question was: Are you providing similar funding to others? We don't have a number yet, but I will say that we have: \$30,000, the permanent collection; the Dawson City Arts Society, \$425,000; Dawson City Arts Society Culture Quest, \$157,000; Northern Cultural Expressions, \$345,000; Yukon Arts Society, \$82,000; and Yukon Arts Centre, \$891,000.

We also have money for the Old Fire Hall and also the obligations around the wharf, \$175,000; All-City Band Society, \$25,000; Association franco-yukonnaise, \$20,000; Blue Feather, \$27,000; Whitehorse Community Choir, \$30,000; Dawson City Music Festival Association, almost \$60,000; Guild Hall Society, \$100,000; Gwaandak Theatre Society, \$64,000; Heart of Riverdale, \$50,000; Jazz Yukon, \$33,000; Junction Arts & Music Society, \$32,000; Longest Night Society, \$18,000; Nakai Theatre Ensemble, \$62,000; Northern Lights School of Dance Society, \$28,000; Rotary Club of Whitehorse, \$10,000; Village of Mayo, \$8,000; Whitehorse Concerts, just over \$39,000; Yukon Bluegrass Music Society, \$28,000; and Yukon Film Society, \$89,000. We do have a very strong record of providing contributions to many different musical associations.

My hope is that, through the planning process, we really want to lean on the folks in Dawson City because we want this to be a territory-wide undertaking, and we also really want to gain support, hopefully, from folks in Haines Junction. Those existing organizations that have a phenomenal track record over the years — we want to be working with them.

So, again, our starting point was to look at a concept which was a territory-wide undertaking, and we're building off of that unsolicited proposal that we had a number of years ago with some great ideas. Again, we are looking to expand our shoulder season.

It's not an easy undertaking because I can tell you — from working in the private sector and trying to build events — it can be difficult. I've had that opportunity. We have always been looking for it in the Yukon. We know that we can have exceptional northern lights at that time of year. It's a beautiful time of year to travel our highways. We know that north Yukon — in your traditional territory — is just exquisite at that time of year. So, how do we get some people to stay a little bit longer, how do we get people in our communities, and how do we celebrate all of the talents — and also ensure that those positive impacts to our artists continue — not just for the summer or winter but that they actually have some great opportunities in the fall as well?

Ms. Blake: For a number of years, the MacBride Museum was looking for property tax relief from the City of Whitehorse. Discussions also took place with Tourism. Can the minister update us on what support and remedies the Tourism branch is considering for the MacBride Museum?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: While the situation between the MacBride Museum and the City of Whitehorse regarding

property taxes was not the responsibility of the Government of Yukon, we want the museum to succeed. MacBride Museum is a venerated Yukon museum, housing important artifacts and offering valued community programming. We have worked with MacBride Museum on an agreement for services that meets the value of the tax payments. The outstanding tax bill of \$217,407 was paid in late February, concurrent with a signed agreement. Services by MacBride Museum over a three-year period include: additional free-entry days for Yukoners; heritage video vignettes for display at government facilities, such as our visitor information centres; new art showing and sales opportunities for Yukon artists; and winter- and shoulder-season tourism experiences. Again, I think that those are some key points.

I know that on June 28, 2020, Minister McLean had sent a letter to MacBride Museum suggesting arrangements. We are quite happy that there is an opportunity to remedy what was a pretty sensitive situation. We have this very amazing new upgrade to MacBride. Again, I'm happy that we could come to an agreement and to be provided with that value back so that we can continue to expand the good work of the department.

Ms. Blake: So, my next question is: What will happen after the three-year timeline?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There are a number of pieces that are going to come together to have a sustainable path forward. The first is that we're looking at working with MacBride to provide a winter experience. There have been times when they have stayed open. My understanding is they're one of the only museums that does that and provides that opportunity for folks for an experience. We're seeing our winter tourism begin to expand. That was the trend that we were seeing before last year. We know that is an important part of the sector's potential for expansion. We're looking at having a TPA in place — an agreement in place — to cover that on it forward. Then there are grants that are available, I think, through the City of Whitehorse that they'll be looking to apply for to be able to offset that. That's a two-pronged approach going forward.

Ms. Blake: With respect to time, I'm going to ask two questions. My first question is: Will the Tourism department pay to cover these outstanding taxes? Will the Tourism department continue to cover the future property taxes?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just to clarify, the balance that was there, we have. We have covered that existing balance and we are in a position where there is a series of services in value that we will be recouping for paying that tax bill.

Moving forward, we want to continue to see pieces from the sector — museums such as MacBride, which is just an absolutely exquisite building and beautiful space — it can be very important toward our winter delivery. With that, we are looking at a potential agreement for that continued and expanded winter service. That is \$50,000 per year. Of course, we are looking to ensure that MacBride will apply for the community grant from the City of Whitehorse for the other amount of tax relief — which I think is up to \$50,000.

We believe that, moving forward, there is a good remedy in place. What I would say for individuals who are out there — we have an obligation to the taxpayer to ensure that we are

receiving value, because the department stepped into the space to remedy the situation. It is not normally their responsibility. I think what we have seen is an eloquent solution to a challenging and sensitive situation. I think that they have done a really good job of looking forward to having more services provided, which falls into the department's bailiwick — but also supporting MacBride to leverage grants that many organizations throughout Whitehorse use.

Ms. Blake: Madam Deputy Chair, I just had a question in regard to the advertisement campaign for the territory. I haven't seen it yet, but I just had a question. Does the advertisement include highlighting local First Nation tourism businesses in the communities?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I believe we are talking about the overall campaign we have. We are looking at when we are going to activate our bigger campaign. You are seeing some things on Facebook. There are some very strong ads there that are really, I would say, pretty macro in theme. Some of the ones I have shared are talking about getting out and paddling this summer or making sure that you get out and support our local tourism operators.

We work with the Yukon First Nations tourism team. This week, to give an example, Haines Junction will be the location of our first festival — and so, basically, as we go into this new reality that begins on Friday, I know that our department has reached out to support where we can. It is not so much that we have identified particular operators, but our sense is that, from a thematic perspective, it also would support those folks. I can tell you that one of my dream trips is to go to Old Crow. I don't know if it is going to happen this year, but I want to go down the river with Paul and I want to support that organization — what an amazing bucket-list trip to be able to go down the river. Hopefully, the US border is open at the time and we can go see family and friends in Fort Yukon, but I think overall what we are talking about is really ensuring that we — in a broader sense, we are talking about all of our tourism operators.

We do fund our First Nation partners at the First Nations Culture and Tourism Association — \$300,000 to work with them on indigenous, domestic — in Canada — and international advertising. It is a pillar, and you have probably heard my colleague, Minister McLean, talk about that a lot. We are absolutely going to continue to be supportive there.

On our call last week, British Columbia is really seeing uptake in interest with their First Nation products that their companies are putting out — their First Nation tourism products. I know that in Ontario, Minister MacLeod, as soon as possible, is doing a tour of it. So, we know how important it is — even at a national level — and commend those people, like Harold and Meta Johnson out there, who are so far ahead of the curve, or folks like Chuck Hume — you name it. Years ago, we were doing this, so we'll continue to support the new operations, as well as those existing operations, and make sure that we are continuing to provide the support to the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association so that they do have the opportunity to make sure they bolster the products that their members are providing.

As well, the deputy minister has just mentioned that Megan Jensen — there is a short film about Carcross/Tagish First Nation territory and more things that we are trying to support so that people know about those extremely unique experiences that they can have in the Yukon.

Ms. Blake: My last question — I was just curious if there are any training opportunities in place for our youth, considering that high school is coming to an end and we have young people finishing off their post-secondary for the summer. Is there training programming in place to attract youth to the tourism industry? If so, what training opportunities are available? How many youth can you hire?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: To give appropriate information for this answer, I do want to come back to the member opposite, because I know of certain undertakings by the Department of Education. They have some great initiatives that they're undertaking in supporting a wage subsidy that then, in turn, is benefitting local youth. But I want to be able to make sure that I have that in a fulsome answer that's not just one or two examples. What I will do is I will work with advanced education, the Minister of Education, to see which of the current agreements in place are specific to tourism and how many youth are being provided that opportunity. If there are other things, we'll try to do a quick scan across government to see if there are others.

For us, I would like to thank our STEP students who are at the department. I know that they're already on-site doing really important work. I know, for at least one or two of those individuals, they're undertaking work that is absolutely aligned with their post-secondary area of study and have passion. I know that the department is providing those opportunities to Yukon youth, but we'll make sure that we get a broader sense of what all the opportunities are.

Again, thank you for your questions. I do look forward to hopefully having an opportunity to go to Old Crow and to go down the Porcupine with local entrepreneurs from the community that you represent.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture?

Seeing none, we'll 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 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. White 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 \$36,084,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$3,080,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$39,164,000 agreed to

Department of Tourism and Culture agreed to

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to thank the officials. I want to thank the director of finance, Ms. Kate Olynyk, who is here today, as well as the deputy minister, for coming in and providing support. Thank you for very much — and for all the work that they have undertaken this spring. They have been extremely busy. We have asked a lot, and they have risen to the occasion, so I want to thank them.

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a five-minute recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Deputy Chair: The matter before Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Justice

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am just welcoming our director of finance, Luda Ayzenberg, and John Phelps, our Deputy Minister of Justice, who are joining me here today. Thank you to them for their support here today but also for getting to this place with the Department of Justice budget.

I will take an opportunity to note some of the key financial implications of the Department of Justice's main operation and maintenance and capital budget for 2021-22 fiscal year. I will take the opportunity to do that this afternoon because I think it is important for Yukoners to know the numbered items that are in that particular document and the opportunity to highlight those expenditures.

I also note, in the event — I am looking at the time; there is not terribly much time for questions. I encourage colleagues to provide those questions to me, and I will be happy to answer them and have the department provide the information that they may seek.

I will highlight some budget items that support our innovative approach, Madam Deputy Chair, with negotiations to access to justice agreements, the establishment of the new restorative justice unit in the Department of Justice, our efforts for improving services and supports for those in contact with the justice system, our approach to quality and responsive policing services, and for some infrastructure and IT

investments. The estimates outlined in the 2021-22 budget consist of capital investments of just under \$2.7 million and operation and maintenance expenditures of \$77.7 million.

Over the last year, I have had the pleasure of collaborating in this role with our government, Yukon First Nation governments, the RCMP, independent agencies, and Yukon communities on really a variety of initiatives that are making our territory a safer and healthier place to live and our justice system more accessible and easier to navigate.

Our strategic investments enable us to continue to build relationships with our partners to support good governance, encourage innovation, foster safe communities, and support culturally relevant services. The Government of Yukon recently approved a new approach and a new mandate for negotiations with Yukon First Nation governments on justice-related matters.

I'm taking some time to note this because I think it's an incredibly important change in approach. This new approach is based on the recognition and respect for First Nation jurisdiction, governance, and legal principles. It provides new opportunities for collaboration and partnership and it promotes incremental and capacity-building initiatives.

In August 2020, the Department of Justice established a new negotiations, collaborations, and partnerships branch within Legal Services. This new branch has corporate responsibility to negotiate administration of justice matters with First Nation governments and to develop the corporate strategy for justice-related matters with First Nation governments. We have earmarked an ongoing increase of \$654,000 for the 2021-22 fiscal year to resource the Government of Yukon's participation in administration of justice agreements and justice-related negotiations with First Nation governments and the Government of Canada.

This new mandate is our commitment 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.

It is a shift that we hope will allow Yukon First Nation governments to come to the table, either seeking the negotiation of a complete administration of justice agreement or even particular issues that might come under that umbrella, depending on their interests and capacity and their plan forward for their own governments.

Additionally, our government recently approved the creation of an integrated restorative justice unit in order to improve restorative justice service delivery, increase engagement with Yukon First Nation governments, and better support community-designed and community-led restorative justice initiatives.

Again, this is a new unit and priority work for the department that I'm very proud of. I know that the people at the Department of Justice are equally proud to see this work proceed.

This new unit, created in November 2020, combines youth justice from the Department of Health and Social Services and adult justice resources from the Department of Justice to provide seamless program delivery across the territory.

We have directed an ongoing increase of \$451,000 for the consolidation of restorative justice services within the Department of Justice in a two-year pilot project that will support the development of a restorative justice strategy and action plan with Yukon First Nation governments. This funding supports a one-government approach to restorative justice service delivery, improves front-line service delivery, and builds capacity for restorative justice services within communities and with communities.

Yukoners have the right to live in safe and healthy communities and it is our goal to protect Yukoners and respond to the needs of victims. We know that experiencing sexualized violence has serious traumatic and long-lasting impacts on victims, families, and communities. We want Yukoners to be safe and to feel safe. We want victims to feel supported. We knew, to achieve this, that we would need to address the barriers that have historically made victims feel that they do not have options.

The sexualized assault response team — also known as SART — is a comprehensive, multi-agency response to the issue of sexualized violence in the Yukon. I know that perhaps some critics in this Legislative Assembly would say that we have heard about this before, but it is a continued priority for our government and it's incredibly important that it is a long-term initiative for the Government of Yukon and that it be properly funded.

SART is a victim-centred, low-barrier model of support that incorporates the components that we know are needed. Work and implementation of the SART required many components across four broad areas: victim services, clinical or medical services, mental health services, and support in navigating the legal system. Our department will be contributing \$250,000 in 2021-22 from the operation and maintenance budget toward this important work.

Hosted with Victim Services, and the importance of Victim Services work within the Department of Justice, is included the Family Information Liaison unit. It is known across Canada as FILU. It works to provide a centralized, coordinated mechanism for family members of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people to access information related to their loved one's case from governments and agencies such as the coroner, the police, and medical services. We have a time-limited increase of \$285,000 that has been given to this unit in this budget. It is recoverable from the federal government.

I would like to turn our attention to Court Services. The department continues to invest in technology and training that improves how people participate in court matters. A total of \$35,000 is earmarked for the full replacement of the holding cell surveillance system in the existing law courts cellblock, including relocation of the system's control unit.

An increase of \$70,000 has been directed to support the purchase of specialized equipment to enhance the quality and

reliability of the audio, video, and recording systems in the court rooms. This initiative will enhance access to justice, particularly for vulnerable witnesses, remote witnesses, and observers. We have certainly learned that, during COVID-19, remote appearances are an integral part of the court's plan and hopefully operations into the future.

The Department of Justice strategically collaborates with the RCMP to ensure a professional, efficient, and effective territorial policing service. Through open dialogue and a strong relationship, we continue to address emerging policing needs. We are very sensitive to the pressures on the RCMP and other service providers. Several years ago, we worked closely with the RCMP and created a full-time, three-person historical homicide unit for a three-year pilot project. A one-year extension of \$442,000 for the territorial policing services budget is included in the operation and maintenance budget to support the work of this unit into 2022. We want families who have lost their loved ones to be able to find closure and those responsible to be held accountable.

An ongoing increase of \$226,000 has been directed to fund the RCMP to meet increasing mobile radio system costs. The RCMP's use of the mobile radio system is essential for public and police officer safety. Since the RCMP are the contracted territorial police service, the Government of Yukon funds 70 percent of all territorial policing costs and 48 percent of the RCMP costs related to the First Nation policing program, which includes 17 officers. An ongoing increase of \$93,000 has been earmarked in this budget for the updated First Nation policing agreement.

The RCMP and the Department of Justice are undertaking a careful analysis of policing infrastructure in order to ensure that the investment in detachment facilities is guided by the best evidence available. The evidence includes up-to-date reporting on building conditions, assessing policing demands, and looking at the best means of advancing capital construction opportunities. We need to ensure that smart, strategic capital investments are paired with operational priorities and realities.

In anticipation of future work, the capital budget has \$2.27 million earmarked for the expenses associated with detachment facilities. Through the territorial police service agreement with Canada, the governments of Yukon and Canada cost share the operation of the territorial police service at 70 percent from the Government of Yukon and 30 percent from the Government of Canada. The Department of Justice will continue to work closely with the RCMP to make sure that the policing facilities are meeting the demands of the RCMP. This is work that is ongoing and continuing.

Moving on, a few of the other expenditures included in this year's budget are a department-wide increase for the collective agreement of \$369,000. We have also earmarked an increase of \$766,000 for pandemic management support across the department and courts. We have also directed an increase of \$125,000 for the *Our Clean Future* project. *Our Clean Future* prioritizes work in a number of areas that meet up with the Department of Justice, including a review of the *Public Utilities Act*. This increase in funding will provide policy support and resourcing for the completion of this work.

Also included in the 2021-22 budget is an increase of \$158,000 in time-limited funding for initiatives under the federally funded countering gun and gang violence action fund. In the 2018-19 fiscal year, the Department of Justice started a five-year agreement with Public Safety Canada to make \$2,250,735 of funding available to the Government of Yukon under the countering gun and gang violence action fund. This funding is 100-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada. This five-year agreement enables the Department of Justice to augment policy support, increase investigative and intelligence capacity for the safer communities and neighbourhoods unit — also known as the SCAN unit — and offer support to community-based service providers to help prevent, deter, or divert citizen involvement with organized crime.

The Department of Justice has earmarked a number of small expenditures related to IT projects and building our infrastructure in that way. The budget allocates \$50,000 in funds to renew the system for optimal performance to ensure the required level of building safety and security at the Law Centre.

The second IT project is to update and replace video surveillance equipment at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, which is now at the end of its lifecycle. An increase of \$50,000 earmarked for this capital budget will be used to fund a project manager to begin work on scoping the upgrade process to ensure operational impacts are mitigated in preparation for the scheduled 2022-23 budget system upgrade. The video surveillance system is a key security requirement of the facility to ensure the safety of staff and inmates. Failure of this equipment would result in a lockdown of the facility. In 2022-23, in that fiscal year budget, there is \$250,000 budgeted to upgrade the system.

This capital budget also includes an increase of \$35,000 for the replacement of multi-function copiers at the Department of Justice, which are beyond their life. Finally, an increase of \$45,000 is allocated in this budget to replace the end-of-life equipment and purchase new security, kitchen, dental and medical unit equipment at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. It is required for day-to-day operations to be safe and up to date. These capital investments are key to our operations.

In closing, I would like to thank the Legislative Assembly for the opportunity to speak to the main operation and maintenance and the capital budget for the Department of Justice and the important work that the staff and public servants do. Many members of the public, we hope, never come into contact with the justice system, but if and when they do, I am pleased to say — and proud of the work that has been done under the direction of the leadership of the department —

Deputy Chair: Order, please.

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(1)

Deputy Chair: The time has reached 5:00 p.m. on this, the 11th sitting day of the 2021 Special Sitting.

Pursuant to Motion No. 4, adopted on May 17, 2021, the provisions of Chapter 14 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon

Legislative Assembly shall apply to the 2021 Special Sitting in the same manner as if it were a Spring or 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 bill now before Committee of the Whole should be called.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The government directs that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be called at this time.

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Deputy Chair: The Committee will now deal with Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

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. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be deemed read and carried.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Silver that all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be deemed read and carried. As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Count

Deputy Chair: The Chair will ring the bells and conduct a count.

Bells

Deputy Chair: All those in favour of the motion please rise.

Members rise

Deputy Chair: Would all members opposed to the motion please rise.

Members rise

The results are nine yea, eight nay. The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that you report Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Premier that the Chair report Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, without amendment.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Deputy Chair: I think the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,357,100 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$434,298 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,791,398 agreed to

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to

Schedules A, B and C agreed to

Title agreed to

Deputy Chair: As the government bill identified by the Government House Leader has 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

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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.

Pursuant to Motion No. 4 adopted on May 17, 2021, the provisions of Chapter 14 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly shall apply to the 2021 Special Sitting in the same manner as if it were a Spring or Fall Sitting.

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. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be called for third reading at this time.

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 201, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Premier that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, 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. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

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

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

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 201 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 201 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: *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21; Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021); First Appropriation Act 2021-22.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bills as numerated by the Clerk.

Thank you for your work this Sitting. I hope that you can get some rest after a busy spring. I hope to see some of you at events this summer. It looks like it is going to be more face to face, which, I am proud to say, I am looking forward to.

I invite you to visit Taylor House to see our exhibits on our second floor, and also, you are welcome to join us on August 14 in Dawson City for the Commissioner's picnic for some food, games of bocce and croquet, and reading from the Yukon Story Laureate.

Thank you again for your work and enjoy our Yukon summer.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Before I adjourn the Special 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 the 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 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.

As well, I would like to also take this opportunity to thank the team at Hansard for their timely and accurate service and all the other background staff and contractors who kept this operation going. I would also commend the hard-working civil servants who deliver service to Yukoners and support to all of us as members in our work. I wish Members of the Legislative Assembly all the best for the coming summer.

This has been a particularly hard year for Yukoners because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are now experiencing the beginning of the end of the restrictions that the pandemic has forced us all to endure.

I hope that all of us can look forward to a more normal rest of the year as we begin vaccinations for our older children and wait patiently for vaccinations to be approved for our younger children. I hope that you all spend time with your loved ones, with extended family and friends, and with your constituents this summer.

On a more personal note, I would like to give my deepest thanks to all the members of the House for being patient with me in my role and to the colleagues for providing me with support in carrying out the duties of the Speaker of the House.

Over the summer, I will be enjoying spending time with my constituents in the Mayo-Tatchun riding and then, in the fall, I will look forward to getting back with all of you to continue the very important work that we have ahead of us. Thank you very much.

As the House has, pursuant to Motion No. 4, reached the maximum number of sitting days permitted for this Special Sitting, it is the duty of the Chair to declare that the House now stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled May 31, 2021:

35-1-6

Review on School Attendance in the Yukon: What Is, What Could Be — Yukon Child & Youth Advocate Office — May 2021 (Speaker Harper)

35-1-7

Department of Education Annual Report 2020 (McLean)

35-1-8

2019-2020 Annual Report — Yukon University (as of May 2020) Yukon College and audited financial statements (McLean)

The following legislative returns were tabled May 31, 2021:

35-1-6

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 201, First Appropriation Act 2021-22 — third party rental list (Clarke, N.)

35-1-7

Response to oral question from Ms. White re: fetal alcohol spectrum disorder action plan (McPhee)

The following written questions were tabled May 31, 2021:

Written Question No. 8

Re: compensation for placer and quartz mining claim holders (Kent)

Written Question No. 9

Re: successor resource legislation (Kent)

Written Question No. 10

Re: land withdrawals and staking bans (Kent)

Written Question No. 11

Re: individualized education plans (Kent)

Written Question No. 12

Re: Yukon Resource Gateway project (Kent)