



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## Index to **HANSARD**

October 1, 2020 to December 22, 2020

NOTE

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

	Issue Numbers	Page Numbers
Volume 14	40 - 56	1181 - 1702
Volume 15	57 - 73	1703 - 2215
Volume 16	74 - 89	2217 - 2695

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**ACTING SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS**

Re use of "ignoring the law," ..... 1638

**ADEL, TED** (see also ACTING SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS, DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, DEPUTY CHAIR'S RULINGS and DEPUTY CHAIR'S STATEMENTS)

Speaks on:

Bill No. 205 - *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21: Second Reading*, ..... 1238

Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, ..... 1389, 1945

Motion No. 237 - Re meeting or exceeding the targets in *Our Clean Future - A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*, ..... 2176

**ADJOURNED DEBATES**

Bill No. 205 - *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21: Second Reading* (Pillai), ..... 1252

Motion No. 212 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation

(Amendment to) (Time expired) (Cathers), ..... 1282

Motion No. 230 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Mental Health and Education Supports

During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Time expired) (McPhee), ..... 1316

Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon

(Amendment to) (Time expired) (McLeod), ..... 1413

(Amendment to) (Time expired) (Streicker), ..... 1646

Motion No. 237 - Re meeting or exceeding the targets in *Our Clean Future - A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*

(Time expired) (Gallina), ..... 1948

(Amendment to) (Time expired) (Frost), ..... 2184

Motion No. 350 - Re supporting *Putting People First - the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services* (Amendment to) (Time expired)

(Gallina), ..... 2456

**ASSENT TO BILLS**

Commissioner Angélique Bernard, ..... 1542, 1813, 2541

**BILLS** (see BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS and GOVERNMENT BILLS)

**BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS**

<b>No. 1 - <i>Act to Perpetuate a Certain Ancient Right</i></b> (Adel)	
Introduction and First Reading, .....	6
<b>No. 300 - <i>Act to Eliminate Daylight Saving Time</i></b> (Istchenko)	
Introduction and First Reading, .....	493
<b>No. 301 - <i>Act to Amend the Taxpayer Protection Act</i></b> (Cathers)	
Introduction and First Reading, .....	615
<b>No. 302 - <i>Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act</i></b> (Cathers)	
Introduction and First Reading, .....	2096
<b>No. 303: <i>Act to Amend the Taxpayer Protection Act (2020)</i></b> (Cathers)	
Introduction and First Reading, .....	2491

**CABLE, DAN** (see Clerk of the Legislative Assembly)

**CATHERS, BRAD**

Questions, oral:

1Health computer system, .....	2344
Access to information, .....	2520
Budget estimates and spending, .....	1226, 1290
Canada Border Services Agency investigation, .....	2074
Capital project funding lapses, .....	1773
<i>Civil Emergency Measures Act</i> implementation review, .....	2278
COVID-19 pandemic impact on education system, .....	1322
Emergency services in communities, .....	2397
Fiscal management, .....	1681, 1711
Fixed election dates, .....	1897, 1922
Government network services outage, .....	2159
Government of Yukon borrowing limit, .....	2307, 2309
Ombudsman request for information, .....	2429
Personnel costs, .....	1742
<i>Putting People First</i> report recommendations, .....	1895
Rural waste management, .....	1325
Safe Restart Agreement childcare funding, .....	1538, 1567
School busing, .....	1511, 1621
Yukon Hospital Corporation funding, .....	1983, 2043



**CATHERS, BRAD** (continued)

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 9 - <i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act</i> : Second Reading,	1204
Bill No. 10 - <i>Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading,	1211
Bill No. 11 - <i>Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015</i> : Second Reading, .....	1779
Bill No. 11 - <i>Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015</i> : Third Reading, .....	2133
Bill No. 12 - <i>Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1555
Bill No. 12 - <i>Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, .....	2076
Bill No. 13 - <i>Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1869
Bill No. 16 - <i>Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015</i> : Second Reading, ...	1816
Bill No. 17 - <i>Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1659
Bill No. 17 - <i>Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, .....	2104
Bill No. 204 - <i>Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20</i> : Second Reading, .....	1326
Bill No. 204 - <i>Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20</i> : Third Reading, .....	1498
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21</i> : Second Reading, .....	1229
Ministerial statements:	
2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy, .....	1591
Lastraw Ranch agricultural land lease, .....	1893
Mount Sima snow-making and electrical infrastructure upgrade, .....	2155
State of emergency in Yukon, .....	2248
Motion No. 212 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation, .....	1265, 1281, 2283
Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, 1390, 1636, 1934, 1941	
Motion No. 237 - Re meeting or exceeding the targets in <i>Our Clean Future - A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy</i> , .....	2163
Motion No. 345 - Re eliminating the annual federal excise tax increase on beer, wine, and spirits, .....	2054
Motion No. 350 - Re supporting <i>Putting People First - the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services</i> , .....	2434
Motion No. 359 - Re extending state of emergency, .....	2227

**CHAIR'S RULINGS** (see also Deputy Chair's rulings)

Re referring to members by name, .....	1578, 1903
Re relevance - debate, .....	1437

**CHAIR'S STATEMENTS** (see also Deputy Chair's statements)

Re referring to members by riding or portfolio not by name, .....	1578
Re witness having exceeded 5-minute limit for introductory statements, .....	2082

**CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Reads bills for Assent, .....	1542, 1813, 2541
Reports on Petition No. 2, .....	1318
Reports on Petition No. 3, .....	1507
Reports on Petition No. 4, .....	1861

**COMMISSIONER** (Hon. Angélique Bernard)

Assents to bills, .....	1542, 1813, 2541
-------------------------	------------------

**COMMITTEES, REPORTS OF STANDING**

Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, Standing Committee on	
22 <sup>nd</sup> report tabled (dated December 1, 2020) (Sessional Paper No. 57) (Adel), .....	2125
23 <sup>rd</sup> report tabled (dated December 17, 2020) (Sessional Paper No. 62) (Adel), .....	2487

**COMMITTEES, SPECIAL**

Civil Emergency Legislation, Special Committee on	
Motion establishing (Motion No. 212) agreed to, .....	2293
<i>Report of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly - Official Opposition and Third Party Membership of the Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation</i> (Sessional Paper 63) tabled.....	2490

**DENDYS, JEANIE** (see McLEAN, JEANIE)**DEPUTY CHAIR'S RULINGS**

Re referring to the absence of Members, .....	2500
Re repetition, .....	1663
Re unanimous consent (whether required for recess), .....	2352

**DEPUTY CHAIR'S STATEMENTS**

Re directing questions through the Chair, .....	1852, 1853
Re member whistling, .....	2500
Re relevance - line item, .....	2499, 2501
Re witness having exceeded 5-minute limit for introductory statements, .....	1965

**DEPUTY SERGEANT-AT-ARMS** (Joseph Mewett)

Introduction and welcome (Speaker Clarke), .....	1217
--	------

**DEPUTY SPEAKER'S RULINGS**

Re relevance - motion, .....	2169
------------------------------	------

**DIVISIONS**

Bill No. 9 - <i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act</i>	
Second Reading, .....	1206
Third Reading, .....	1813
Bill No. 10 - <i>Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)</i>	
Second Reading, .....	1212
Third Reading, .....	1778
Bill No. 11 - <i>Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015</i>	
Second Reading, .....	1780
Third Reading, .....	2134
Bill No. 12 - <i>Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020):</i>	
Second Reading, .....	1557
Third Reading, .....	2076
Bill No. 13 - <i>Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)</i>	
Second Reading, .....	1884
Third Reading, .....	2540
Bill No. 14 - <i>Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)</i>	
Second Reading, .....	1576
Third Reading, .....	1990
Bill No. 15 - <i>Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)</i>	
Second Reading, .....	1687
Third Reading, .....	1900
Bill No. 16 - <i>Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015</i>	
Second Reading, .....	1818
Third Reading, .....	2541
Bill No. 17 - <i>Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)</i>	
Second Reading, .....	1660
Third Reading, .....	2105
Bill No. 204 - <i>Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20</i>	
Second Reading, .....	1330
Third Reading, .....	1503
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21</i>	
Second Reading, .....	1554
Third Reading, .....	2540
Motion No. 212 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation, .....	2293
(Amendment to) (Negatived), .....	1278
(Amendment to) (Negatived), .....	2289

**DIVISIONS** *(continued)*

Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, .....	1945
(Amendment to) (Negatived), .....	1628
(Amendment to) (Negatived), .....	1643
(Amendment to) (Negatived), .....	1940
(Amendment to) (Negatived), .....	1944
Motion No. 268 - Re spending associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, .....	1750
Motion No. 271 - Re extending the maximum number of sitting days for the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1389
Motion No. 277 - Re supporting Mi'kmaq fisheries (As amended), .....	1521
Motion No. 283 - Re recognizing benefits of the local aviation industry	
(Amendment to), .....	1526
(As amended), .....	1530
Motion No. 297 - Re including the Yukon Historical and Museums Association in tourism recovery planning, .....	1758
Motion No. 346 - Re extending the wage top-up program for essential workers (Negatived), ..	2051
Motion No. 358 - Re rent-increase moratorium (Negatived), .....	2320
Motion No. 359 - Re extending state of emergency, .....	2239
(Amendment to) (Negatived), .....	2232
Motion No. 378 - Re appointments to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, .....	2374

**FILED DOCUMENTS**

27. Loss of Garbage Service Impacting Farmers and Other Businesses, letter re (dated September 8, 2020) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Cathers), .....	1185
28. Loss of Garbage Service Impacting Farmers and Other Businesses, letter re (dated September 8, 2020) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Community Services (Cathers), .....	1185
29. Whistle Bend Place care, letter re (dated October 1, 2020) from Patti McLeod, Member for Watson Lake, to Hon. Pauline Frost, Minister of Health and Social Services (McLeod), ..	1252
30. Streetlights on the Alaska Highway, letter re (dated September 29, 2020) from Patti McLeod, Member for Watson Lake, and Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Highways and Public Works (McLeod), .....	1252
31. Loss of Xplornet satellite services, letter re (dated October 6, 2020) from Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Highways and Public Works, to Allison Lenehan, CEO Xplornet (Mostyn), .....	1285

**FILED DOCUMENTS** *(continued)*

32. State of Yukon's tourism industry, letter re (dated September 22, 2020) from Hon. Sandy Silver, Premier, to Neil Hartling, Chair, Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon (McLean), ..... 1318
33. Discontinuation of Xplornet Communications services, letter re (dated September 9, 2020) from Currie Dixon, Leader of the Yukon Party, to Hon. Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Government of Canada (Cathers), ..... 1318
34. Request for 500 meter greenbelt buffer zone around Nygren subdivision, letter re (dated October 6, 2020) from Wladimir Makar to Wade Istchenko, Member for Kluane (Istchenko), 1351
35. Concerns on the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area, document re (Van Bibber), ..... 1381
36. Yukon Lottery Commission Annual Report 2019-20 (Streicker), ..... 1652
37. Continued funding for the Fireweed Community Market, letter re (dated October 30, 2020) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Mr. Pillai, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Cathers), ..... 1737
38. Excise tax on alcohol, letter re (dated November 24, 2020) from Currie Dixon, Leader of the Yukon Party, to Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance, Government of Canada (Istchenko), ..... 2038
39. State of Emergency Extension, letter re (dated November 24, 2020) from Peter Johnston, Grand Chief, Council of Yukon First Nations, to Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Community Services (Streicker), ..... 2218
40. "34th Sitting of the Yukon Legislature Private Members Motions as of 8-Dec 2020" prepared by Hon. Mr. Streicker (Streicker), ..... 2304
41. "Rent protections during COVID As of December 2, 2020" prepared by Hon. Mr. Streicker (Streicker), ..... 2304
42. *10-Year Renewable Electricity Plan Technical Report - December 2020 - Yukon Energy Corporation* (Pillai), ..... 2394
43. Improving support for Yukon's EMS volunteers, letter re (dated December 21, 2018) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Community Services (Cathers), ..... 2394
44. Yukon EMS Rural Coverage and Issues, letter re (dated February 19, 2019) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Community Services (Cathers), ..... 2394
45. Yukon EMS Rural Coverage and Issues, letter re (dated March 27, 2019) from Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Community Services, to Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge (Cathers), ..... 2394
46. Review of duplication in Yukon mining regulation - June 2020 (Pillai), ..... 2461
47. *Report of the Chief Electoral Officer to the Legislative Assembly - An Update on Territorial Election Readiness* (Speaker Clarke), ..... 2490

**FILED DOCUMENTS** *(continued)*

48. Partners for Children Program, letter re (dated December 10, 2020) from Tanja Westland, President, Network for Healthy Early Human Development Board of Directors, and Tara Wheeler, Vice-President, Network for Healthy Early Human Development Board of Directors, to Hon. Pauline Frost, Minister of Health and Social Services (Kent), .....	2495
49. <i>Workers' Advocate Office 2019 Annual Report</i> (McPhee), .....	2516
50. <i>Yukon Geographical Place Names Board 25th Annual Report 2019-2020</i> (McLean), .....	2516
51. <i>Report on French-language Services 2018-19</i> (Streicker), .....	2517
52. <i>Report on French-language Services 2019-20</i> (Streicker), .....	2517

**FROST, PAULINE**

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 14 - <i>Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020): Second Reading</i> , .....	1570, 1576
Bill No. 14 - <i>Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020): Third Reading</i> , .....	1988, 1990
Bill No. 204 - <i>Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20: Second Reading</i> , .....	1329
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21: Second Reading</i> , .....	1234
Ministerial statements:	
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, .....	2427, 2428
Canada-Yukon housing benefit, .....	1737, 1739
Eliza Building, .....	1951, 1952
Fortymile caribou harvest management plan, .....	2219, 2220
Housing initiatives fund, .....	2038, 2039
<i>Yukon Parks Strategy</i> , .....	1255, 1257
Motion No. 226 - Re increasing proportion of government jobs in communities, .....	1300
Motion No. 230 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Mental Health and Education Supports During the COVID-19 Pandemic, .....	1308
Motion No. 237 - Re meeting or exceeding the targets in <i>Our Clean Future - A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy</i> , .....	2183
Motion No. 268 - Re spending associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, .....	1744
Motion No. 277 - Re supporting Mi'kmaq fisheries, .....	1517
Motion No. 350 - Re supporting <i>Putting People First - the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services</i> , .....	2449
Motion No. 358 - Re rent-increase moratorium, .....	2315

**GALLINA, PAOLO**

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 9 - <i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act</i> : Second Reading,	1201
Bill No. 9 - <i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act</i> : Third Reading, ....	1811
Bill No. 13 - <i>Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1877
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21</i> : Second Reading, .....	1545
Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, .....	1627, 1943
Motion No. 237 - Re meeting or exceeding the targets in <i>Our Clean Future - A Yukon</i> <i>strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy</i> , .....	1946, 2161
Motion No. 257 - Re appearance of witnesses from <i>Putting People First</i> review, .....	1455
Motion No. 268 - Re spending associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, .....	1747
Motion No. 350 - Re supporting <i>Putting People First - the final report of the</i> <i>comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services</i> , .....	2456

**GOVERNMENT BILLS****No. 9 - *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act* (McLean)**

Introduction and First Reading, .....	1033
Second Reading, .....	1197–1206
Division, .....	1206
Committee of the Whole, .....	1212–1213, 1577–1580
Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title read and agreed to,	1580
Reported without amendment, .....	1588
Third Reading, .....	1808–1813
Division, .....	1813
Assent, .....	1813

**No. 10 - *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)* (Streicker)**

Introduction and First Reading, .....	967
Second Reading, .....	1206–1212
Division, .....	1212
Committee of the Whole, .....	1580–1585
Reported without amendment, .....	1588
Third Reading, .....	1777–1778
Division, .....	1778

**GOVERNMENT BILLS** *(continued)***No. 11 - Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015** (McPhee)

Introduction and First Reading, .....	936
Second Reading, .....	1778–1780
Division, .....	1780
Committee of the Whole, .....	1780–1784
Unanimous consent re revisiting clause 2, .....	1783
Reported without amendment, .....	1796
Third Reading, .....	2133–2134
Division, .....	2134
Assent, .....	2541

**No. 12 - Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)** (McPhee)

Introduction and First Reading, .....	936
Second Reading, .....	1555–1556
Division, .....	1557
Committee of the Whole, .....	1557–1561, 1605–1606
Reported without amendment, .....	1615
Third Reading, .....	2075–2076
Division, .....	2076
Assent, .....	2541

**No. 13 - Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)** (Silver)

Introduction and First Reading, .....	1255
Second Reading, .....	1868–1884
Division, .....	1884
Committee of the Whole, .....	2539
Reported without amendment, .....	2539
Third Reading, .....	2540
Division, .....	2540
Assent, .....	2541

**No. 14 - Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)** (Frost)

Introduction and First Reading, .....	1220
Second Reading, .....	1570–1576
Division, .....	1576
Committee of the Whole, .....	1598–1605
Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title read and agreed to, .....	1605
Reported without amendment, .....	1615



**GOVERNMENT BILLS** *(continued)*

Third Reading, .....	1988–1990
Division, .....	1990
Assent, .....	2541
<b>No. 15 - <i>Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)</i></b> (Streicker)	
Introduction and First Reading, .....	1285
Second Reading, .....	1685–1687
Division, .....	1687
Committee of the Whole, .....	1687–1690
Unanimous consent re deeming all remaining clauses and the title read and agreed to, .....	1690
Reported without amendment, .....	1702
Third Reading, .....	1899
Division, .....	1900
Assent, .....	2541
<b>No. 16 - <i>Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015</i></b> (McPhee)	
Introduction and First Reading, .....	1318
Second Reading, .....	1813–1818
Division, .....	1818
Committee of the Whole, .....	2525–2537
Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title read and agreed to, .....	2537
Reported without amendment, .....	2539
Third Reading, .....	2541
Division, .....	2541
Assent, .....	2541
<b>No. 17 - <i>Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)</i></b> (McPhee)	
Introduction and First Reading, .....	1285
Second Reading, .....	1658–1660
Division, .....	1660
Committee of the Whole, .....	1660–1674
Amendment proposed to clause 9 (McPhee), .....	1670
Amendment agreed to, .....	1670
Reported with amendment, .....	1674
Third Reading, .....	2103–2104
Division, .....	2105
Assent, .....	2541

**GOVERNMENT BILLS** *(continued)***No. 204 - Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20** (Silver)

Introduction and First Reading, .....	1185
Second Reading, .....	1326–1330
Division, .....	1330
Committee of the Whole, ... 1331–1348, 1358–1378, 1424–1443, 1455–1473, 1485–1497	
Reported without amendment, .....	1497
Third Reading, .....	1498–1502
Division, .....	1503
Assent, .....	1542

**No. 205 - Second Appropriation Act 2020-21** (Silver)

Introduction and First Reading, .....	1185
Second Reading, .....	1227–1252, 1542–1554
Division, .....	1554
Committee of the Whole, .. 1606–1615, 1690–1702, 1713–1733, 1759–1764, 1784–1796, 1818–1827, 1839–1844, 1884–1890, 1900–1916, 1958–1963, 1991–2004, 2016– 2033, 2059–2064, 2077–2081, 2105–2122, 2134–2151, 2196–2214, 2239–2244, 2254–2273, 2293–2302, 2320–2333, 2345–2364, 2374–2390, 2469–2474, 2498– 2514, 2537–2539	
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11 cleared or carried, .....	2201
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 7 cleared or carried, .....	2263
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 51 cleared or carried, .....	2269
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 27 cleared or carried, .....	2300
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 53 cleared or carried, .....	2333
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 8 cleared or carried, .....	2351
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 54 cleared or carried, .....	2384
Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 52 cleared or carried (Not granted), .....	2499
Reported without amendment, .....	2539
Third Reading, .....	2540
Division, .....	2540
Assent, .....	2541

**GOVERNMENT MOTIONS****No. 212 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation** (Streicker)

Notice, .....	1186
Debate, .....	1264–1282
Amendment proposed (Cathers), .....	1274
Amendment negatived (Division), .....	1278
Amendment proposed (Hanson), .....	1279

**GOVERNMENT MOTIONS** *(continued)*

Debate adjourned (Amendment to) (Time expired) (Cathers), .....	1282
Debate, .....	2283–2293
Amendment negated (Division), .....	2289
Motion agreed to (Division), .....	2293
<b>No. 213 - Re member participation in sittings of the House via teleconference due to COVID-19 during the 2020 Fall Sitting (McPhee)</b>	
Notice, .....	1186
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice, .....	1194
Debate, .....	1194–1195
Motion agreed to, .....	1195
<b>No. 214 - Re pairing of members for duration of the 2020 Fall Sitting (McPhee)</b>	
Notice, .....	1186
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice, .....	1195
Debate, .....	1196
Motion agreed to, .....	1196
<b>No. 215 - Re authorization for the Assembly to meet via video conference during the 2020 Fall Sitting (McPhee)</b>	
Notice, .....	1186
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice, .....	1196
Debate, .....	1197
Motion agreed to, .....	1197
<b>No. 257 - Re appearance of witnesses from <i>Putting People First</i> review (McPhee)</b>	
Notice, .....	1381
Debate, .....	1454–1455
Amendment proposed (Gallina), .....	1455
Amendment agreed to, .....	1455
Motion, as amended, agreed to, .....	1455
<b>No. 271 - Re extending the maximum number of sitting days for the 2020 Fall Sitting (McPhee)</b>	
Unanimous consent re moving motion without notice, .....	1388
Debate, .....	1389
Motion agreed to (Division), .....	1389
<b>No. 321 - Re Membership of Standing Committee on Public Accounts (McPhee)</b>	
Notice, .....	1800
Debate, .....	1807
Motion agreed to, .....	1807
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice, .....	1807

**GOVERNMENT MOTIONS** *(continued)***No. 322 - Re scheduling of the 2020 Fall Sitting** (McPhee)

Notice, .....	1800
Unanimous consent re moving motion without one clear day's notice, .....	1808
Debate, .....	1808
Motion agreed to, .....	1808

**No. 359 - Re extending state of emergency** (Streicker)

Notice, .....	2155
Debate, .....	2225–2238
Amendment proposed (Cathers), .....	2229
Amendment negated (Division), .....	2232
Motion agreed to (Division), .....	2239

**No. 378 - Re appointments to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators** (McPhee)

Notice, .....	2304
Debate, .....	2372–2374
Motion agreed to (Division), .....	2374

**HANSON, LIZ**

## Questions, oral:

Affordable childcare, .....	1355, 1420
Air traffic control services, .....	2042
Alaska Highway corridor upgrades, .....	2101
COVID-19 pandemic impact on education system, .....	1225
COVID-19 pandemic impact on Yukon tourism, .....	1741
COVID-19 pandemic - public servants working from home, .....	2073
Dawson regional land use planning, .....	1568
Government of Yukon auxiliary-on-call employees, .....	2342
Hospital staffing, .....	1452
Hospitalization related to youth alcohol consumption (Hanson), .....	1510
Information management and protection of privacy legislation, .....	1540
Legal aid funding, .....	2252
Paid sick leave rebate program, .....	2158
Secure medical unit, .....	2370
Shingles vaccine, .....	1805
Supportive housing for women and children, .....	2496

**HANSON, LIZ** (*continued*)

## Questions, oral:

Transitional housing for female inmates, .....	2193
Whitehorse Correctional Centre policy on safe physical contact with inmates, .....	1865
Whitehorse Correctional Centre rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates, .....	2223
Whitehorse Emergency Shelter services, .....	1324
Yukon Water Board wetlands hearing, .....	1683

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 10 - <i>Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1210
Bill No. 11 - <i>Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015</i> : Second Reading, .....	1779
Bill No. 11 - <i>Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015</i> : Third Reading, .....	2133
Bill No. 12 - <i>Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1556
Bill No. 12 - <i>Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, .....	2076
Bill No. 13 - <i>Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1879
Bill No. 16 - <i>Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015</i> : Second Reading, ...	1816
Bill No. 17 - <i>Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1659
Bill No. 17 - <i>Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, .....	2104
Bill No. 204 - <i>Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20</i> : Second Reading, .....	1328
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21</i> : Second Reading, .....	1550

## Ministerial statements:

Alaska Highway improvements, .....	1383
Government employees working from home, .....	2190
Kwanlin Dün First Nation community hub, .....	2010
Kwanlin Dün First Nation <i>Lands Act 2020</i> , .....	1565
Online procurement system, .....	1679
Representative public service strategic plan, .....	1920
Tourism relief and recovery plan, .....	2367
Tourism relief program, .....	1449
Xplornet continued service, .....	1771
Yukon aviation industry, .....	1802
Yukon Standard Time, .....	1653
Motion No. 212 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation, .....	1275, 1278
Motion No. 226 - Re increasing proportion of government jobs in communities, .....	1297, 1305
Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, .....	1627

**HANSON, LIZ** *(continued)*

## Speaks on:

Motion No. 237 - Re meeting or exceeding the targets in <i>Our Clean Future - A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy</i> , .....	2182
Motion No. 277 - Re supporting Mi'kmaq fisheries, .....	1520
Motion No. 283 - Re recognizing benefits of the local aviation industry, .....	1525
Motion No. 297 - Re including the Yukon Historical and Museums Association in tourism recovery planning, .....	1750, 1758
Motion No. 345 - Re eliminating the annual federal excise tax increase on beer, wine, and spirits, .....	2055
Motion No. 346 - Re extending the wage top-up program for essential workers, .....	2049
Motion No. 350 - Re supporting <i>Putting People First - the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services</i> , .....	2451
Motion No. 358 - Re rent-increase moratorium, .....	2313
Motion No. 359 - Re extending state of emergency, .....	2230, 2232
Motion No. 378 - Re appointments to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, .....	2373
Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 1, .....	1958

**HASSARD, STACEY**

## Questions, oral:

Alaska Highway corridor upgrades, .....	1743
Cannabis retail sales, .....	1418
Cannabis retail store, .....	1987
<i>Civil Emergency Measures Act</i> implementation review, .....	2278
Community banking services contract, .....	1623
COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding, .....	1921, 2220, 2368, 2465
COVID-19 pandemic contact tracing, .....	2340
COVID-19 pandemic impact on alcohol and drug services, .....	1258
COVID-19 pandemic impact on economy, .....	1223
COVID-19 pandemic impact on education system, .....	1353, 1594
COVID-19 pandemic impact on Yukon tourism, .....	1482
COVID-19 pandemic public health measures, .....	2040
COVID-19 pandemic - public servants working from home, .....	1655
COVID-19 pandemic - support for vulnerable communities, .....	1189
COVID-19 pandemic - Yukon highway border enforcement, .....	1954
COVID-19 testing, .....	2011
COVID-19 testing for children, .....	2310

**HASSARD, STACEY** (*continued*)

## Questions, oral:

COVID-19 vaccine, .....	2070, 2127, 2192, 2249
Dempster fibre project, .....	1894
Diesel energy generation costs, .....	1356, 1384
Fiscal management, .....	1680
Health care staff housing in communities, .....	1450
Hospital staffing, .....	1480
Panache Ventures return on investment, .....	1803, 1834, 1864
Parks strategy review of fees, .....	1570
Queen's Printer Agency and Central Stores services, .....	2523
Ross River School remediation, .....	1509
Secure medical unit, .....	1709, 1739
Semi-automatic AR-10 rifles purchase, .....	1986
Southern Lakes enhancement project, .....	1837
Yukon First Nation procurement policy, .....	2371, 2400, 2430, 2493
Yukon Liberal Party support for alcoholic beverage industry, .....	2098

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 9 - <i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act</i> : Third Reading, ....	1809
---	------

## Ministerial statements:

Alaska Highway improvements, .....	1382
Eliza Building, .....	1952
Energy supply and demand, .....	1536
Government employees working from home, .....	2189
Land development, .....	2069
Lobbyist registry, .....	1508
Online procurement system, .....	1678
Safe Restart Agreement, .....	1187
Wildfire management for Yukon communities, .....	1286
Xplornet continued service, .....	1770
Yukon aviation industry, .....	1801
Yukon Days, .....	2277
Yukon Resource Gateway project agreement with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, .....	2097
Motion No. 212 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation, .....	1280, 2289
Motion No. 226 - Re increasing proportion of government jobs in communities, .....	1299

**HASSARD, STACEY** (*continued*)

## Speaks on:

Motion No. 230 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Mental Health and Education Supports During the COVID-19 Pandemic, .....	1306
Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, .....	1407, 1628, 1931
Motion No. 277 - Re supporting Mi'kmaq fisheries, .....	1517
Motion No. 283 - Re recognizing benefits of the local aviation industry, .....	1525
Motion No. 345 - Re eliminating the annual federal excise tax increase on beer, wine, and spirits, .....	2056

**HUTTON, DON** (see also DEPUTY SPEAKER, CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE)

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 14 - <i>Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1573
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21</i> : Second Reading, .....	1240
Motion No. 230 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Mental Health and Education Supports During the COVID-19 Pandemic, .....	1313
Motion No. 277 - Re supporting Mi'kmaq fisheries, .....	1515
Motion No. 345 - Re eliminating the annual federal excise tax increase on beer, wine, and spirits, .....	2056
Motion No. 350 - Re supporting <i>Putting People First - the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services</i> , 2433, 2455	
Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 1, .....	1957

**ISTCHENKO, WADE**

## Questions, oral:

COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding, ..	1684, 1712, 1804, 1984, 2130, 2158, 2369
COVID-19 pandemic impact on economy, .....	1654
COVID-19 pandemic impact on Yukon tourism, .....	1192, 1290, 1483, 1509, 1569
COVID-19 pandemic public health measures for hospitality industry, .....	2282, 2468
COVID-19 pandemic self-isolation requirements, .....	1953
Haines, Alaska natural disaster relief, .....	2191
Moose management, .....	2074
Pharmacare coverage, .....	1897
Whitehorse Waterfront Trolley, .....	1387
Yukon Fish and Game Association funding, .....	2044



**ISTCHENKO, WADE** (*continued*)

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 14 - <i>Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020): Second Reading,</i> .....	1571
Bill No. 14 - <i>Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020): Third Reading,</i> .....	1988
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21: Second Reading,</i> .....	1236
Ministerial statements:	
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, .....	2428
Cannabis legalization update, .....	1417
Fortymile caribou harvest management plan, .....	2219
Marshall Creek subdivision development, .....	1320
Tourism relief and recovery plan, .....	2367
Tourism relief program, .....	1448
Youth Panel on Climate Change, .....	1221
Yukon economy, .....	2518
Yukon employment rate and economy, .....	1352
<i>Yukon Parks Strategy,</i> .....	1256
Motion No. 226 - Re increasing proportion of government jobs in communities, .....	1301
Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, 1409, 1633, 1928, 1944	
Motion No. 283 - Re recognizing benefits of the local aviation industry, .....	1530
Motion No. 297 - Re including the Yukon Historical and Museums Association in tourism recovery planning, .....	1755
Motion No. 345 - Re eliminating the annual federal excise tax increase on beer, wine, and spirits, .....	2051, 2058

**KENT, SCOTT**

## Questions, oral:

ATAC Resources tote road project, .....	2099, 2131, 2160, 2195, 2281
Auditor General report on education system, .....	1595
Consultation with school communities, .....	2464
COVID-19 exposure notifications in schools, .....	2041, 2071, 2194
COVID-19 pandemic - funding to reopen schools, .....	1258
COVID-19 pandemic impact on education system, ..1288, 1354, 1537, 1566, 1593, 1620, 1838, 1867, 1924	
COVID-19 pandemic impact on mental health, .....	1190
COVID-19 pandemic public health measures announcements, .....	2012
COVID-19 pandemic public health measures for hospitality industry, .....	2221
COVID-19 testing, .....	1956, 2015

**KENT, SCOTT** (*continued*)

## Questions, oral:

Diesel energy generation costs, .....	1321
Early learning and childcare programs, .....	2250, 2399, 2494
Francophone high school, .....	1657
Liard First Nation election, perceived interference by Yukon government, .....	1385
Mining industry collaborative framework, .....	1835
Mining sector development, .....	2524
Mining working group mandates, .....	1422
Mixed-use housing project, .....	1864
Ross River School remediation, .....	1357
School busing, .....	2306, 2341
School busing operations communication to parents, .....	1709
School capacity, .....	1511, 1925
School sanitization health concerns, .....	1512
Teacher recruitment and retention, .....	1772
Wood Street Centre School experiential programs relocation, .....	1287
Yukon Energy Corporation general rate application, .....	1806, 2432

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 13 - <i>Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020): Second Reading</i> , .....	1878
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21: Second Reading</i> , .....	1547

## Ministerial statements:

Le Centre scolaire secondaire communautaire Paul-Émile Mercier, .....	1619
Mayo-McQuesten transmission line, .....	1832
School council elections and honoraria, .....	1478
Yukon Energy Corporation general rate application, .....	1981
Yukon Energy Corporation grid-scale battery renewable electricity project, ..	2395
Yukon Energy Corporation's 10-year renewable electricity plan, .....	2491
Motion No. 212 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation, .	1276
Motion No. 213 - Re member participation in sittings of the House via teleconference due to COVID-19 during the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1195
Motion No. 214 - Re pairing of members for duration of the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1196
Motion No. 215 - Re Assembly meeting via video conference during the 2020 Fall Sitting, ..	1197
Motion No. 230 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Mental Health and Education Supports During the COVID-19 Pandemic, .....	1312
Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, .....	1404, 1639, 1643

**KENT, SCOTT** (*continued*)

## Speaks on:

Motion No. 237 - Re meeting or exceeding the targets in <i>Our Clean Future - A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy</i> , .....	2178
Motion No. 257 - Re appearance of witnesses from <i>Putting People First</i> review, .....	1454
Motion No. 271 - Re extending the maximum number of sitting days for the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1389
Motion No. 321 - Re Membership of Standing Committee on Public Accounts, .....	1807
Motion No. 322 - Re scheduling of the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1808
Motion No. 346 - Re extending the wage top-up program for essential workers, .....	2048
Motion No. 359 - Re extending state of emergency, .....	2235
Motion No. 378 - Re appointments to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, ...	2373
Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 1, .....	1957

**LEGISLATIVE RETURNS**

18. Response to Written Question No. 2 re: carbon price exemption for farm propane (Silver),	1185
19. Response to Written Question No. 22 re: website and visual identity costs for the Executive Council Office (Silver), .....	1185
20. Response to Written Question No. 11 re: website and visual identity costs for the Department of Finance (Silver), .....	1185
21. Response to Written Question No. 8 re: website and visual identity costs for the Department of Education (McPhee), .....	1185
22. Response to Written Question No. 12 re: website and visual identity costs for the Department of Justice (McPhee), .....	1185
23. Response to Written Question No. 16 re: website and visual identity costs for the Yukon Liquor Corporation (Streicker), .....	1185
24. Response to Written Question No. 23 re: website and visual identity costs for the French Language Services Directorate (Streicker), .....	1185
25. Response to Written Question No. 17 re: website and visual identity costs for the Department of Community Services (Streicker), .....	1185
26. Response to Written Question No. 13 re: website and visual identity costs for the Department of Environment (Frost), .....	1185
27. Response to Written Question No. 19 re: website and visual identity costs for the Yukon Housing Corporation (Frost), .....	1185
28. Response to Written Question No. 9 re: website and visual identity costs for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources (Pillai), .....	1185

**LEGISLATIVE RETURNS** *(continued)*

29. Response to Written Question No. 14 re: website and visual identity costs for the Department of Economic Development (Pillai), .....	1185
30. Response to Written Question No. 15 re: website and visual identity costs for the Yukon Development Corporation (Pillai), .....	1185
31. Response to Written Question No. 18 re: website and visual identity costs for the Department of Tourism and Culture (McLean), .....	1185
32. Response to Written Question No. 5 re: website and visual identity costs for the Women's Directorate (McLean), .....	1185
33. Response to Written Question No. 20 re: website and visual identity costs for the Public Service Commission (Mostyn), .....	1185
34. Response to Written Question No. 21 re: website and visual identity costs for the Department of Highway and Public Works (Mostyn), .....	1185
35. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 15, Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, <i>Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20</i> - breakdown of expenses (Frost), .....	1447
36. Response to Written Question No. 6 re: expropriations of placer and quartz mining claims (Pillai), .....	1477
37. Response to Written Question No. 7 re: Yukon resource gateway spending (Pillai), .....	1477
38. Response to Written Question No. 10 re: land withdrawals and staking bans (Pillai), .....	1477
39. Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: Ross River School remediation - bat infestation (Mostyn), .....	1477
40. Response to oral question from Ms. McLeod re: affordable housing - waitlist for social housing (Frost), .....	1506
41. Response to Motion for the Production of Papers No. 19 re: 22 Wann Road costs (Mostyn), ..	1590
42. Response to oral question from Mr. Hassard re: diesel energy generation costs (Pillai), ..	1618
43. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 204, <i>Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20</i> - Jersey barriers (Mostyn), .....	1737
44. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 204, <i>Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20</i> — variable message boards (Mostyn), .....	1831
45. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to Motion No. 297 re: including the Yukon Historical and Museums Association in tourism recovery planning - visitor exit survey results (McLean), .....	1892
46. Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: School capacity - Porter Creek Secondary School portable mould remediation (Mostyn), .....	2096

**LEGISLATIVE RETURNS** *(continued)*

47. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - overhead signs (Mostyn), ..... 2096
48. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 51, Community Services, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - correspondence (Streicker), ..... 2155
49. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - regional economic development exceptions (Mostyn), ..... 2218
50. Response to oral question from Mr. Hassard re: Semi-automatic AR-10 rifles purchase (Frost), ..... 2218
51. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - bison harvest (Frost), ..... 2218
52. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - water strategy (Frost), ..... 2218
53. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 204, *Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20* - Old Territorial Administration Building in Dawson City (Mostyn), ..... 2276
54. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - outfitter harvest quotas 2020-21 (Frost), ..... 2276
55. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - Mayo airport lease (Mostyn), ..... 2304
56. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - periodic motor vehicle inspector qualifications (Mostyn), ..... 2304
57. Response to Motion for the Production of Papers No. 21 re: Expenditures under “Operation and Maintenance - COVID-19 Response” in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* (Frost), ..... 2304
58. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 51, Community Services, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - construction projects for Old Crow (Streicker), ..... 2427

**LEGISLATIVE RETURNS** *(continued)*

59. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - new campgrounds (Frost), ..... 2427
60. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - special guide licenses (Frost), ..... 2427
61. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - wetlands strategy (Frost), ..... 2427
62. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to general debate on Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - anticipated royalties for placer and quartz mining (Pillai), ..... 2461
63. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - staff working from home (Pillai), ..... 2461
64. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - Beaver River regional land use plan (Pillai), ..... 2461
65. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to a ministerial statement re: Mayo-McQuesten Transmission Line (Pillai), ..... 2461
66. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to a ministerial statement re: land development (Streicker), ..... 2461
67. Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board before Committee of the Whole on November 10, 2020 (McLean), ..... 2491
68. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. McLeod related to general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - COVID-19 cell phone program (McLean), ..... 2516
69. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to general debate on Vote 54, Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - virtual familiarization tours (McLean), ..... 2516
70. Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of the chief medical officer of health as a witness before Committee of the Whole on December 17, 2020 - critical worker isolation requirements (Streicker), ..... 2517

**LEGISLATIVE RETURNS** (*continued*)

71. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - wildlife monitoring funds (Frost), ..... 2517
72. Response to Motion No. 390 re: explanation of delay on the St. Elias Senior Society's gathering place (Frost), ..... 2517
73. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - Robert Service Way bike crossing (Mostyn), ..... 2517
74. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - brushing budget (Mostyn), ..... 2517
75. Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation before Committee of the Whole on December 15, 2020 - thermal fuel consumption for electricity generation in 2020 (Pillai), ..... 2517
76. Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation before Committee of the Whole on December 15, 2020 - days rental diesel units ran in 2020 (Pillai), ..... 2517
77. Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation before Committee of the Whole on December 15, 2020 - litres of diesel consumed in 2020 (Pillai), ..... 2517
78. Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation before Committee of the Whole on December 15, 2020 - rental diesel costs in 2021 Yukon Energy Corporation general rate application (Pillai), ..... 2517
79. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - costs of inserting information in local publications (Pillai), ..... 2517
80. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - Southeast Yukon transfer payment agreement amount and annual allowable cut limits (Pillai), ..... 2517
81. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - cannabis trade regulations (Pillai), ..... 2517

**LEGISLATIVE RETURNS** *(continued)*

82. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - business nominee program (Pillai), ..... 2517
83. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - Memorandum of Understanding with Republic of the Philippines (Pillai), ..... 2517
84. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - Yukon community program (Pillai), ..... 2517
85. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - business incentive program rebates (Pillai), ..... 2517
86. Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation before Committee of the Whole on December 15, 2020 - Yukon Energy's 2021 general rate application (Pillai), 2517
87. Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation before Committee of the Whole on December 15, 2020 - Southern Lakes enhanced storage surveys (Pillai), . 2517
88. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - Whitehorse Emergency Shelter community safety planning (Pillai), ..... 2517
89. Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation before Committee of the Whole on December 15, 2020 - costs of planning proposed liquefied natural gas, diesel or blended-fuel plant (Pillai), ..... 2517
90. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - business relief program (Pillai), ..... 2517
91. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - Yukon essential workers income support program (Pillai), ..... 2517
92. Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* - paid sick leave rebate (Pillai), ..... 2517
93. Response to oral question from Mr. Hassard re: Panache Ventures return on investment (Pillai), ..... 2517



**LEGISLATIVE RETURNS** *(continued)*

94. Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation before Committee of the Whole on December 15, 2020 - detailed analysis of fuel choices considered for the 20-megawatt thermal facility (Pillai), ..... 2517
95. Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation before Committee of the Whole on December 15, 2020 - cost options for the 20-megawatt thermal facility (Pillai), ..... 2517

**McLEAN, JEANIE**

## Speaks on:

- Bill No. 9 - *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act*: Second Reading, .... 1197, 1205
- Bill No. 9 - *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act*: Third Reading, ..... 1808, 1812
- Bill No. 10 - *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)*: Second Reading, 1210
- Bill No. 10 - *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)*: Third Reading, .... 1777
- Bill No. 205 - *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*: Second Reading, ..... 1242
- Ministerial statements:
- Kwanlin Dūn First Nation community hub, ..... 2010, 2011
- Tourism relief and recovery plan, ..... 2366, 2367
- Tourism relief program, ..... 1448, 1449
- Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy, ..... 2338, 2339
- Motion No. 297 - Re including the Yukon Historical and Museums Association in tourism recovery planning, ..... 1752
- Motion No. 346 - Re extending the wage top-up program for essential workers, ..... 2049
- Point of personal privilege re: name change, ..... 1181

**McLEOD, PATTI**

## Questions, oral:

- Affordable housing, ..... 1451
- COVID-19 pandemic mandatory mask policy, ..... 2128
- COVID-19 pandemic - support for vulnerable communities, ..... 1222
- COVID-19 pandemic - Yukon highway border enforcement, ..... 1260
- COVID-19 testing, ..... 2253
- COVID-19 testing for children, ..... 2343
- COVID-19 vaccine, ..... 2102, 2157
- Early learning and childcare programs, ..... 2521

**McLEOD, PATTI** (*continued*)

## Questions, oral:

Food security, .....	1453
Hospital staffing, .....	1481, 1541, 1740
Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services, .....	1419
Psychiatric treatment in Yukon, .....	2431
Seniors' costs for long-term care and camping fees, .....	2497
Southeast Yukon forestry plan, .....	1624

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 9 - <i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act</i> : Second Reading, .....	1199
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21</i> : Second Reading, .....	1545

## Ministerial statements:

Canada-Yukon housing benefit, .....	1738
Housing initiatives fund, .....	2038
Motion No. 226 - Re increasing proportion of government jobs in communities, .....	1302
Motion No. 230 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Mental Health and Education Supports During the COVID-19 Pandemic, .....	1311
Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, .....	1411, 1625, 1630
Motion No. 268 - Re spending associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, .....	1744, 1749

**McPHEE, TRACY-ANNE**

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 9 - <i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act</i> : Second Reading, .....	1202
Bill No. 9 - <i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act</i> : Third Reading, .....	1810
Bill No. 11 - <i>Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015</i> : Second Reading, .....	1778, 1779
Bill No. 11 - <i>Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015</i> : Third Reading, .....	2133, 2134
Bill No. 12 - <i>Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1555, 1556
Bill No. 12 - <i>Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, .....	2075, 2076
Bill No. 16 - <i>Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015</i> : Second Reading, .....	1813, 1817
Bill No. 17 - <i>Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1659, 1660
Bill No. 17 - <i>Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, .....	2103, 2104
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21</i> : Second Reading, .....	1244

Ministerial statements:

Le Centre scolaire secondaire communautaire Paul-Émile Mercier, .....	1618, 1620
School council elections and honoraria, .....	1478, 1479

**McPHEE, TRACY-ANNE** (*continued*)

## Speaks on:

Motion No. 212 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation, .....	1275, 2285, 2290
Motion No. 213 - Re member participation in sittings of the House via teleconference due to COVID-19 during the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1194
Motion No. 214 - Re pairing of members for duration of the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1196
Motion No. 215 - Re Assembly meeting via video conference during the 2020 Fall Sitting, ..	1197
Motion No. 230 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Mental Health and Education Supports During the COVID-19 Pandemic, .....	1314
Motion No. 257 - Re appearance of witnesses from <i>Putting People First</i> review, .....	1454
Motion No. 271 - Re extending the maximum number of sitting days for the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1389
Motion No. 321 - Re Membership of Standing Committee on Public Accounts, .....	1807
Motion No. 322 - Re scheduling of the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1808
Motion No. 359 - Re extending state of emergency, .....	2230
Motion No. 378 - Re appointments to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, ..	2372, 2373

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

## Frost, Pauline

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Istchenko/White), .....	2427
Canada-Yukon housing benefit (McLeod/White), .....	1737
Eliza Building (Hassard/White), .....	1951
Fortymile caribou harvest management plan (Istchenko/White), .....	2219
Housing initiatives fund (McLeod/White), .....	2038
<i>Yukon Parks Strategy</i> (Istchenko/White), .....	1255

## McLean, Jeanie

Kwanlin Dūn First Nation community hub (Van Bibber/Hanson), .....	2010
Tourism relief and recovery plan (Istchenko/Hanson), .....	2366
Tourism relief program (Istchenko/Hanson), .....	1448
Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy (Van Bibber/White), .....	2338

## McPhee, Tracy-Anne

Le Centre scolaire secondaire communautaire Paul-Émile Mercier (Kent/White), .....	1618
School council elections and honoraria (Kent/White), .....	1478

## Mostyn, Richard

Alaska Highway Improvements (Hassard/Hanson), .....	1382
Government employees working from home (Hassard/Hanson), .....	2189
Online procurement system (Hassard/Hanson), .....	1678

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS** *(continued)*

Representative public service strategic plan (Van Bibber/Hanson), .....	1919
Xplornet continued service (Hassard/Hanson), .....	1770
Yukon aviation industry (Hassard/Hanson), .....	1801
Yukon Resource Gateway project agreement with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation (Hassard/White), .....	2096
Pillai, Ranj	
2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy (Cathers/White), .....	1590
Energy supply and demand (Hassard/White), .....	1535
Lastraw Ranch agricultural land lease (Cathers/White), .....	1892
Mayo-McQuesten transmission line (Kent/White), .....	1832
Yukon economy (Istchenko/White), .....	2517
Yukon employment rate and economy (Istchenko/White), .....	1351
Yukon Energy Corporation general rate application (Kent/White), .....	1981
Yukon Energy Corporation grid-scale battery renewable electricity project (Kent/White), .	2395
Yukon Energy Corporation's 10-year renewable electricity plan (Kent/White), .....	2491
Silver, Sandy	
Lobbyist registry (Hassard/White), .....	1507
Safe Restart Agreement (Hassard/White), .....	1187
Youth Panel on Climate Change (Istchenko/White), .....	1220
Yukon Days (Hassard/White), .....	2277
Yukon Forum (Van Bibber/White), .....	2305
Streicker, John	
Cannabis legalization update (Istchenko/White), .....	1417
F.H. Collins Secondary School track and field facility (Van Bibber/White), .....	1707
Kwanlin Dün First Nation <i>Lands Act 2020</i> (Van Bibber/Hanson), .....	1564
Land development (Hassard/White), .....	2068
Mandatory mask use in indoor public spaces (Van Bibber/White), .....	2126
Marshall Creek subdivision development (Istchenko/White), .....	1319
Mount Sima snow-making and electrical infrastructure upgrade (Cathers/White), .....	2155
Safe Restart Agreement COVID-19 funding (Van Bibber/White), .....	2462
Sate of emergency in Yukon (Cathers/White), .....	2248
Wildfire management for Yukon communities (Hassard/White), .....	1285
Yukon highway border enforcement agreement with Liard First Nation (Van Bibber/White), .....	1862
Yukon Standard Time (Van Bibber/Hanson), .....	1652

**MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED**

In recognition of Remembrance Day, ..... 1831

**MOSTYN, RICHARD**

Speaks on:

Bill No. 204 - *Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20: Second Reading*, ..... 1328

Bill No. 205 - *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21: Second Reading*, ..... 1552

Ministerial statements:

Alaska Highway improvements, ..... 1382, 1383

Government employees working from home, ..... 2189, 2190

Online procurement system, ..... 1678, 1679

Representative public service strategic plan, ..... 1919, 1921

Xplornet continued service, ..... 1770, 1771

Yukon aviation industry, ..... 1801, 1802

Yukon Resource Gateway project agreement with Little Salmon Carmacks First  
Nation, ..... 2096, 2098

Motion No. 226 - Re increasing proportion of government jobs in communities, ..... 1294

Motion No. 283 - Re recognizing benefits of the local aviation industry, ..... 1523

Motion No. 359 - Re extending state of emergency, ..... 2233

**MOTIONS** (see GOVERNMENT MOTIONS, MOTIONS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF PAPERS, MOTIONS IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS, MOTIONS OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY, MOTIONS RESPECTING COMMITTEE REPORTS, MOTIONS, WITHDRAWAL OF and PROCEDURAL MOTIONS)

**MOTIONS IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**No. 4 - Re appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board (McPhee)**

Moved, ..... 1839

Debate, ..... 1839

Motion agreed to, ..... 1839

**No. 5 - Re appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation (Streicker)**

Moved, ..... 1958

Debate, ..... 1958

Motion agreed to, ..... 1958

**MOTIONS IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE** *(continued)***No. 6 - Re appearance of witnesses from Yukon University** (McPhee)

Moved, .....	2077
Debate, .....	2077
Motion agreed to, .....	2077

**No. 7 - Re appearance of witnesses from Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation** (McPhee)

Moved, .....	2403
Debate, .....	2403
Motion agreed to, .....	2403

**No. 8 - Re appearance of Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health as a witness** (McPhee)

Moved, .....	2469
Debate, .....	2469
Motion agreed to, .....	2469

**MOTIONS OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY****No. 2 - Re COVID-19 vaccine distribution to the territories** (Cathers)

Unanimous consent to call motion pursuant to Standing Order 28 requested (Not granted), .....	2191
---	------

**MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS****No. 19 - Re medical travel** (McLeod)

Notice, .....	16
Debate, .....	97–118
Amendment proposed (White), .....	105
Debate adjourned on motion and amendment (Time expired) (Mostyn), .....	118
Removed from Order Paper, .....	1181

**No. 31 - Re north Klondike Highway** (Hutton)

Notice, .....	121
Debate, .....	190–214
Amendment proposed (Cathers), .....	202
Debate adjourned on motion and amendment (Time expired) (Kent), .....	214

**No. 113 - Re opposing the confiscation of firearms** (Istchenko)

Notice, .....	706
Debate, .....	794–798
Debate adjourned (Time expired) (Cathers), .....	798

**MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS** *(continued)***No. 226 - Re increasing proportion of government jobs in communities** (White)

Notice, .....	1220
Debate, .....	1292–1306
Amendment proposed (Mostyn), .....	1296
Amendment agreed to, .....	1300
Motion, as amended, agreed to, .....	1306

**No. 230 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Mental Health and Education Supports****During the COVID-19 Pandemic** (Hassard)

Notice, .....	1252
Debate, .....	1306–1316
Debate adjourned (Time expired) (McPhee), .....	1316

**No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon** (Adel)

Notice, .....	1318
Debate, .....	1389–1412
Amendment proposed (Cathers), .....	1402
Debate adjourned on motion and amendment (Time expired) (McLeod), .....	1413
Debate, .....	1625–1646
Amendment negated (Division), .....	1628
Amendment proposed (Hassard), .....	1630
Amendment negated (Division), .....	1643
Amendment proposed (Kent), .....	1645
Debate adjourned on motion and amendment (Time expired) (Streicker), .....	1646
Debate, .....	1926–1945
Amendment negated (Division), .....	1940
Amendment proposed (White), .....	1940
Amendment negated (Division), .....	1944
Motion agreed to (Division), .....	1946

**No. 237 - Re meeting or exceeding the targets in *Our Clean Future - A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*** (Gallina)

Notice, .....	1318
Debate, .....	1946–1948
Debate adjourned (Time expired) (Gallina), .....	1948
Debate, .....	2161–2184
Amendment proposed (Kent), .....	2179
Debate adjourned on motion and amendment (Time expired) (Frost), .....	2184

**MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS** *(continued)*

<b>No. 268 - Re spending associated with the COVID-19 pandemic</b> (McLeod)	
Notice, .....	1382
Debate, .....	1744–1749
Motion agreed to (Division), .....	1750
<b>No. 277 - Re supporting Mi'kmaq fisheries</b> (White)	
Notice, .....	1448
Debate, .....	1513–1521
Amendment proposed (Hutton), .....	1515
Amendment agreed to, .....	1517
Motion, as amended, agreed to (Division), .....	1521
<b>No. 283 - Re recognizing benefits of the local aviation industry</b> (Van Bibber)	
Notice, .....	1473
Debate, .....	1521–1530
Amendment proposed (Mostyn), .....	1524
Amendment agreed to (Division), .....	1526
Amendment proposed (Streicker), .....	1527
Amendment agreed to, .....	1527
Motion, as amended, agreed to (Division), .....	1530
<b>No. 297 - Re including the Yukon Historical and Museums Association in tourism recovery planning</b> (Hanson)	
Notice, .....	1618
Debate, .....	1750–1758
Motion agreed to (Division), .....	1758
<b>No. 345 - Re eliminating the annual federal excise tax increase on beer, wine, and spirits</b> (Istchenko)	
Notice, .....	2005
Debate, .....	2051–2058
Motion negatived (Division), .....	2059
<b>No. 346 - Re extending the wage top-up program for essential workers</b> (White)	
Notice, .....	2005
Debate, .....	2045–2051
Motion negatived (Division), .....	2051



**MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS** *(continued)***No. 350 - Re supporting *Putting People First - the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services*** (Hutton)

Notice, .....	2068
Debate, .....	2433–2456
Amendment proposed (Cathers), .....	2446
Debate adjourned on motion and amendment (Time expired) (Gallina), .....	2456

**No. 358 - Re rent-increase moratorium** (White)

Notice, .....	2155
Debate, .....	2311–2319
Motion negatived (Division), .....	2320

**MOTIONS RESPECTING COMMITTEE REPORTS****No. 1 - Re concurrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees** (Adel)

Notice, .....	1187
Notice to call motion as government-designated business (McPhee), .....	1926
Debate, .....	1957–1958
Motion agreed to, .....	1958

**MOTIONS, WITHDRAWAL OF**

## Cathers

Motions No. 15, 16, 68, 84, 144 and 148, .....	1181
Motions No. 102, 109, 264, 265 and 266, .....	1675
Motion No. 87, .....	1767
Motion No. 372 (not placed on Notice Paper), .....	2275
Motion No. 394 (not placed on Notice Paper), .....	2489

## Gallina

Motions No. 51 and 104, .....	1181
-------------------------------	------

## Hanson

Motions No. 95 and 164, .....	1181
Motion No. 105, .....	1445
Motion No. 341, .....	2515

## Hassard

Motion No. 54, .....	1181
Motion No. 132, .....	1675
Motion No. 374, .....	2365

**MOTIONS, WITHDRAWAL OF** *(continued)*

Hutton	
Motion No. 53, .....	1181
Istchenko	
Motions No. 160 and 161, .....	1181
Motion No. 390 (not placed on Notice Paper), .....	2489
Motion No. 368, .....	2515
Kent	
Motions No. 136 and 139, .....	1181
Motion No. 293 (not placed on Notice Paper), .....	1617
Motion No. 240, .....	2095
Motion No. 371 (not placed on Notice Paper), .....	2275
Motion No. 239, .....	2515
McLeod	
Motions No. 18, 19, 153 and 156, .....	1181
Motions No. 242, 243 and 244, .....	2095
Motions No. 241 and 366, .....	2515
Van Bibber	
Motion No. 142, .....	1181
White	
Motion No. 125, .....	1181
Motion No. 222, .....	1349
Motion No. 221, .....	1675
Motion No. 356 (not placed on Notice Paper), .....	2153
Motions No. 367 and 377, .....	2365
Motion No. 251, .....	2515

**NOTICE OF GOVERNMENT-DESIGNATED BUSINESS**

Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 1 to be called as government-designated business (McPhee), .....	1926
---	------

**NOTICE OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

Government private members' business	
Order of business for October 14, 2020 (McPhee), .....	1358
Order of business for October 28, 2020 (McPhee), .....	1597
Order of business for November 18, 2020 (McPhee), .....	1899
Order of business for December 16, 2020 (McPhee), .....	2401

**NOTICE OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS** *(continued)*

## Opposition private members' business

Order of business for October 7, 2020 (White/Kent), .....	1262
Order of business for October 21, 2020 (White/Kent), .....	1484
Point of personal privilege correcting motion number identified (Kent), .....	1484
Order of business for November 4, 2020 (Kent/White), .....	1713
Order of business for November 25, 2020 (White/Kent), .....	2016
Order of business for December 9, 2020 (White/Kent), .....	2282

**PETITIONS**

## No. 2 - Re Location of the music, art and drama (MAD) program (White)

Presented, .....	1285
Received, .....	1318
Response (McPhee), .....	1534

## No. 3 - Re Tagish River Habitat Protection Area (Van Bibber)

Presented, .....	1477
Received, .....	1507
Response (Frost), .....	1706

## No. 4 - Re Location of Wood Street Centre programs (White)

Presented, .....	1831
Received, .....	1861
Response (McPhee), .....	2067

**PILLAI, RANJ**

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21</i> : Second Reading, .....	1251, 1542
--	------------

## Ministerial statements:

2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy, .....	1590, 1592
Energy supply and demand, .....	1535, 1537
Lastraw Ranch agricultural land lease, .....	1892, 1894
Mayo-McQuesten transmission line, .....	1832, 1833
Yukon economy, .....	2517, 2519
Yukon employment rate and economy, .....	1351, 1353
Yukon Energy Corporation general rate application, .....	1981, 1982
Yukon Energy Corporation grid-scale battery renewable electricity project, .....	2395, 2396
Yukon Energy Corporation's 10-year renewable electricity plan, .....	2491, 2492

**PILLAI, RANJ** (*continued*)

## Speaks on:

Motion No. 212 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation, .	1277
Motion No. 226 - Re increasing proportion of government jobs in communities, .....	1303
Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, .....	1938
Motion No. 277 - Re supporting Mi'kmaq fisheries, .....	1519
Motion No. 283 - Re recognizing benefits of the local aviation industry, .....	1526, 1527
Motion No. 297 - Re including the Yukon Historical and Museums Association in tourism recovery planning, .....	1756
Motion No. 346 - Re extending the wage top-up program for essential workers, .....	2046
Motion No. 358 - Re rent-increase moratorium, .....	2316

**POINTS OF ORDER**

Re abusive or insulting language (Streicker), .....	1391
Speaker's ruling, .....	1391
Re accusing a member of unparliamentary behaviour (McPhee), .....	1932
Speaker's ruling, .....	1933
Re audio issue (audibility in Chamber of Member speaking) (Streicker), .....	1204
Speaker's statement, .....	1204
Re charging another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood (Cathers), .....	1364
Withdrawal of remark (Silver), .....	1364
Re clarification regarding the subject of the amendment (Cathers), .....	2230
Speaker's ruling, .....	2230
Re debating the Speaker's ruling (Cathers), .....	1502, 2285
Speaker's ruling, .....	1502, 2285
Re imputing false or unavowed motives to another member (Adel), .....	1410
Speaker's ruling, .....	1410
Re imputing false or unavowed motives to another member (Cathers), .....	1315
Speaker's ruling, .....	1315
Re imputing false or unavowed motives to another member (Pillai), .....	1499, 1872
Speaker's ruling (defers ruling), .....	1499
Speaker's ruling, .....	1872
Re incorrectly attributing type of committee (Hanson), .....	2285
Speaker's ruling, .....	2285
Re needless repetition (Cathers), .....	2291
Speaker's ruling, .....	2291
Re needless repetition (Hassard), .....	2286
Speaker's ruling, .....	2286

**POINTS OF ORDER** *(continued)*

Re off-mic comment ("Out and out lying") (Streicker), .....	2231
Speaker's ruling, .....	2231
Re referring to a matter before the courts (sub judice) (Cathers)	
Re orderliness of calling Motion No. 212 for debate .....	1262
Speaker's statement, .....	1263
Speaker's ruling, .....	1263
Re orderliness of calling Motion No. 387 for debate .....	2401
Speaker's statement, .....	2402, 2408
Speaker's ruling, .....	2422
Re referring to a matter before the courts (sub judice) (Gallina), .....	1934, 1935
Speaker's ruling, .....	1934, 1935
Re referring to a matter before the courts (sub judice) (Mostyn), .....	1407
Speaker's ruling, .....	1407
Re referring to confidential information from an in-camera committee meeting (McPhee), .....	1870
Speaker's ruling, .....	1871
Re referring to members by name (Cathers), .....	1903
Chair's ruling, .....	1903
Re referring to members by name (Kent), .....	1578
Chair's ruling, .....	1578
Re referring to members by name (McLeod), .....	2056
Speaker's ruling, .....	2056
Re referring to political parties by proper names (Cathers), .....	1276
Speaker's ruling (defers ruling), .....	1276
Re referring to the absence of Members (Cathers), .....	2500
Deputy Chair's ruling, .....	2500
Re reflecting upon a vote of the Assembly (Hassard), .....	2292
Speaker's ruling, .....	2292
Re relevance - amendment (Hassard), .....	1277, 1278, 2287
Speaker's ruling, .....	1277, 1278, 2287
Re relevance - amendment (White), .....	1297, 1943
Speaker's ruling, .....	1297, 1943
Re relevance - amendment (Gallina), .....	1300, 1935
Speaker's ruling, .....	1300, 1935
Re relevance - amendment (Cathers), .....	1642, 2287, 2288, 2455
Speaker's ruling, .....	1642, 2287, 2288, 2455
Re relevance - amendment (Hanson), .....	2232, 2285
Speaker's ruling, .....	2232, 2285

**POINTS OF ORDER** *(continued)*

Re relevance - amendment (McPhee), .....	1403, 1409
Speaker's ruling, .....	1403, 1409
Re relevance - bill (Hanson), .....	2271
Deputy Chair's ruling, .....	2272
Re relevance - debate (Silver), .....	1327
Speaker's ruling, .....	1327
Re relevance - debate (Mostyn), .....	1437
Chair's ruling, .....	1437
Re relevance - debate (Silver), .....	1500
Speaker's ruling, .....	1500
Re relevance - line item (Cathers), .....	2499, 2502
Deputy Chair's statement, .....	2499
Re relevance - motion (McPhee), .....	1271
Speaker's ruling, .....	1271
Re relevance - motion (Hutton), .....	1273, 2169
Speaker's ruling, .....	1273
Deputy Speaker's ruling, .....	2169
Re relevance - motion (Cathers), .....	2237, 2292
Speaker's ruling, .....	2237, 2292
Re requesting recess to draft an agreeable amendment (Silver), .....	1527
Speaker's statement, .....	1527
Re unanimous consent (whether required for recess) (Streicker), .....	2351
Deputy Chair's ruling, .....	2352
Re use of "deliberately exaggerating" (Streicker), .....	2167
Speaker's ruling, .....	2167
Re use of "gaslighting" (Pillai), .....	1937
Deputy Speaker's ruling (defers ruling), .....	1938
Speaker's statement, .....	1940
Re use of "ignoring the law" (Streicker), .....	1638
Acting Speaker's statement (Adel) (defers ruling), .....	1638
Re use of "unscrupulous" (Cathers), .....	2310
Speaker's ruling, .....	2310

**PRIVILEGE, POINTS OF PERSONAL**

Re change of name (last name changed from Dendys to McLean) (McLean), .....	1181
Re correction to motion number identified in Notice of Private Members' Business (Kent), ....	1484

**QUESTIONS - ORAL**

1Health computer system (Cathers), .....	2344
Access to information (Cathers), .....	2520
Affordable childcare (Hanson), .....	1355, 1420
Affordable housing	
(McLeod), .....	1451
(Van Bibber), .....	1453
Affordable housing and land development (Van Bibber), .....	1387
Air traffic control services (Hanson), .....	2042
Alaska Highway corridor upgrades	
(Hanson), .....	2101
(Hassard), .....	1743
Alaska-to-Alberta railway (White), .....	2495
ATAC Resources tote road project (Kent), .....	2099, 2131, 2160, 2195, 2281
Auditor General report on education system (Kent), .....	1595
Aviation investment strategy (Van Bibber), .....	1776
Budget estimates and spending (Cathers), .....	1226, 1290
Canada Border Services Agency investigation (Cathers), .....	2074
Canada-Yukon housing benefit program (White), .....	1774, 1866
Canada-Yukon housing benefit (White), .....	2072
Cannabis retail sales (Hassard), .....	1418
Cannabis retail store (Hassard), .....	1987
Capital project funding lapses (Cathers), .....	1773
<i>Child and Family Services Act</i> Review Advisory Committee recommendations (White), .....	1595
<i>Civil Emergency Measures Act</i> implementation review	
(Cathers), .....	2279
(Hassard), .....	2278
Community banking services contract	
(Hassard), .....	1623
(Van Bibber), .....	1597
Consultation with school communities (Kent), .....	2464
COVID-19 exposure notifications in schools (Kent), .....	2041, 2071, 2194
COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding	
(Hassard), .....	1921, 2220, 2368, 2465
(Istchenko), .....	1684, 1712, 1804, 1984, 2130, 2158, 2369
COVID-19 pandemic contact tracing	
(Hassard), .....	2340
(Van Bibber), .....	2014

**QUESTIONS – ORAL** *(continued)*

COVID-19 pandemic essential workers program (White), .....	2013
COVID-19 pandemic - funding to reopen schools (Kent), .....	1258
COVID-19 pandemic impact on alcohol and drug services (Hassard), .....	1258
COVID-19 pandemic impact on economy	
(Hassard), .....	1223
(Istchenko), .....	1654
COVID-19 pandemic impact on education system	
(Cathers), .....	1322
(Hanson), .....	1225
(Hassard), .....	1353, 1594
(Kent), .....	1288, 1354, 1537, 1566, 1593, 1620, 1838, 1867, 1924
(White), .....	1622, 1805, 1836, 2467
COVID-19 pandemic impact on mental health (Kent), .....	1190
COVID-19 pandemic impact on Yukon tourism	
(Hanson), .....	1741
(Hassard), .....	1482
(Istchenko), .....	1192, 1290, 1483, 1509, 1569
(White), .....	1191
COVID-19 pandemic mandatory mask policy (McLeod), .....	2128
COVID-19 pandemic public health measures announcements (Kent), .....	2012
COVID-19 pandemic public health measures for hospitality industry	
(Istchenko), .....	2282, 2468
(Kent), .....	2221
COVID-19 pandemic public health measures (Hassard), .....	2040
COVID-19 pandemic - public servants working from home	
(Hanson), .....	2073
(Hassard), .....	1655
COVID-19 pandemic rent freeze (White), .....	2193
COVID-19 pandemic self-isolation requirements	
(Istchenko), .....	1953
(White), .....	1955, 1984
COVID-19 pandemic - support for disability services clients (White), .....	1259
COVID-19 pandemic - support for vulnerable communities	
(Hassard), .....	1189
(McLeod), .....	1222



**QUESTIONS – ORAL** *(continued)*

COVID-19 pandemic - Yukon highway border enforcement	
(Hassard), .....	1954
(McLeod), .....	1260
(Van Bibber), .....	1923
(White), .....	1682
COVID-19 testing	
(Hassard), .....	2011
(Kent), .....	1956, 2015
(McLeod), .....	2253
COVID-19 testing for children	
(Hassard), .....	2310
(McLeod), .....	2343
COVID-19 vaccine	
(Hassard), .....	2070, 2127, 2192, 2249
(McLeod), .....	2157
(White), .....	2251
Crime rate statistics (Van Bibber), .....	2396
Dawson City infrastructure upgrades (White), .....	1539
Dawson regional land use planning (Hanson), .....	1568
Dempster fibre project (Hassard), .....	1894
Dental health care (White), .....	2431
Diabetes treatment	
(Van Bibber), .....	1867
(White), .....	1775
Diesel energy generation costs	
(Hassard), .....	1384
(Kent), .....	1321, 1356
Early learning and childcare programs	
(Kent), .....	2250, 2399, 2494
(McLeod), .....	2521
Emergency services in communities	
(Cathers), .....	2397
(White), .....	2369
Fiscal management	
(Cathers), .....	1681, 1711
(Hassard), .....	1680

**QUESTIONS – ORAL** *(continued)*

Fixed election dates	
(Cathers), .....	1897, 1922
(White), .....	1896
Food security (McLeod), .....	1453
Fortymile caribou herd (White), .....	1986
Francophone high school (Kent), .....	1657
Government jobs in rural communities (White), .....	1385
Government network services outage (Cathers), .....	2159
Government of Yukon auxiliary-on-call employees (Hanson), .....	2342
Government of Yukon borrowing limit (Cathers), .....	2307, 2309
Haines, Alaska natural disaster relief (Istchenko), .....	2191
Health care staff housing in communities (Hassard), .....	1450
Hemodialysis services in Yukon (White), .....	2280
Hospital staffing	
(Hanson), .....	1452
(Hassard), .....	1480
(McLeod), .....	1481, 1541, 1740
Hospitalization related to youth alcohol consumption (Hanson), .....	1510
Housing support programs (White), .....	2466
Inclusive and special education review (White), .....	2308
Information management and protection of privacy legislation (Hanson), .....	1540
Internet connectivity (White), .....	1224
Legal aid funding (Hanson), .....	2252
Liard First Nation election, perceived interference by Yukon government (Kent), .....	1385
Living wage and minimum wage (White), .....	1192
Macaulay Lodge closure (Van Bibber), .....	1422
Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services (McLeod), .....	1419
Mental health counselling services for children (White), .....	1512
Midwifery legislation (White), .....	1421
Mining industry collaborative framework (Kent), .....	1835
Mining sector development (Kent), .....	2524
Mining working group mandates (Kent), .....	1422
Mixed-use housing project (Kent), .....	1864
Moose management (Istchenko), .....	2074
Nurse practitioner staffing (Van Bibber), .....	1898
Off-road vehicle use (White), .....	1323

**QUESTIONS – ORAL** *(continued)*

Ombudsman request for information (Cathers), .....	2429
Opioid crisis (White), .....	2522
Paid sick leave rebate program (Hanson), .....	2158
Panache Ventures return on investment (Hassard), .....	1803, 1834, 1864
Parks strategy review of fees (Hassard), .....	1570
Personnel costs (Cathers), .....	1742
Pharmacare coverage (Istchenko), .....	1897
Psychiatric treatment in Yukon (McLeod), .....	2431
<i>Putting People First</i> report recommendations (Cathers), .....	1895
Queen's Printer Agency and Central Stores services (Hassard), .....	2523
Ross River School remediation	
(Hassard), .....	1509
(Kent), .....	1357
Rural waste management (Cathers), .....	1325
Safe Restart Agreement childcare funding (Cathers), .....	1538, 1567
School busing	
(Cathers), .....	1511, 1621
(Kent), .....	2306, 2341
(Van Bibber), .....	1261, 2224, 2253
School busing operations communication to parents (Kent), .....	1709
School capacity (Kent), .....	1511, 1925
School sanitization health concerns (Kent), .....	1512
Secure medical unit	
(Hanson), .....	2370
(Hassard), .....	1709, 1739
Semi-automatic AR-10 rifles purchase (Hassard), .....	1986
Seniors' costs for long-term care and camping fees (McLeod), .....	2497
Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit (White), .....	1710
Shingles vaccine (Hanson), .....	1805
Southeast Yukon forestry plan (McLeod), .....	1624
Southern Lakes enhancement project (Hassard), .....	1837
Supportive housing for women and children (Hanson), .....	2496
Tagish River habitat protection management plan (Van Bibber), .....	1386
Teacher recruitment and retention (Kent), .....	1772
Transitional housing for female inmates (Hanson), .....	2193
Wage top-up program (White), .....	2398

**QUESTIONS – ORAL** *(continued)*

Whitehorse Correctional Centre policy on safe physical contact with inmates (Hanson), .....	1865
Whitehorse Correctional Centre rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates (Hanson), .....	2223
Whitehorse Emergency Shelter services	
(Hanson), .....	1324
(White), .....	1568, 1656, 2129
Whitehorse Waterfront Trolley (Istchenko), .....	1387
Wood Street Centre School experiential programs relocation	
(Kent), .....	1287
(White), .....	1289
Yukon Energy Corporation general rate application (Kent), .....	1806, 2432
Yukon First Nation education (White), .....	2222
Yukon First Nation procurement policy (Hassard), .....	2371, 2400, 2430, 2493
Yukon Fish and Game Association funding (Istchenko), .....	2044
Yukon Hospital Corporation funding (Cathers), .....	1983, 2043
Yukon Liberal Party donations (White), .....	1451, 1481, 1923, 2100
Yukon Liberal Party support for alcoholic beverage industry (Hassard), .....	2098
Yukon Water Board wetlands hearing (Hanson), .....	1683

**SESSIONAL ORDERS**

Motion No. 213 - Re member participation in sittings of the House via teleconference due to COVID-19 during the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1195
Motion No. 214 - Re pairing of members for duration of the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1196
Motion No. 215 - Re authorization for the Assembly to meet via video conference during the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1197
Motion No. 271- Re extending the maximum number of sitting days for the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1389

**SESSIONAL PAPERS**

32. <i>Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from     Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (October 1, 2020) (Speaker Clarke),</i> .....	1185
33. <i>Report on Subsistence, Travel &amp; Accommodations of Members of the Yukon Legislative     Assembly 2019-2020 (Speaker Clarke),</i> .....	1185
34. <i>2019 Annual Report - Working to promote fairness, access &amp; privacy rights, and protect the     public interest - Yukon Ombudsman, Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner, Yukon     Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner (Speaker Clarke),</i> .....	1185

**SESSIONAL PAPERS** *(continued)*

35. *Report of the Chief Electoral Officer to the Legislative Assembly - 2019 Annual Report on Political Party Revenues - Annual Revenue Returns - Contributions Made To Political Parties - January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019* (Speaker Clarke), ..... 1185
36. *Seventeenth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees* (April 1, 2020) (Adel), ..... 1185
37. *Eighteenth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees* (April 30, 2020) (Adel), ..... 1185
38. *Nineteenth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees* (June 24, 2020) (Adel), ..... 1185
39. *Twentieth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees* (August 19, 2020) (Adel), ..... 1185
40. *Twenty-first Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees* (October 1, 2020) (Adel), ..... 1185
41. *Standing Committee on Public Accounts Fifth Report - Yukon Public Accounts 2018-19* (May 2020) (Hassard), ..... 1185
42. *Standing Committee on Public Accounts Sixth Report - Kindergarten Through Grade 12 Education in Yukon - Department of Education* (May 2020) (Hassard), ..... 1185
43. *Yukon Arts Centre 2019/20 Annual Report* (McLean), ..... 1318
44. *Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board 2019 annual report* (McLean), . 1318
45. *Financial Accounting Report - Government of Yukon - For the period of April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 - Mercer Marsh Benefits* (August 26, 2020) (Silver), ..... 1351
46. *Yukon College 2018-2019 Annual Report and financial statements* (McPhee), ..... 1351
47. *Department of Education Annual Report 2019* (McPhee), ..... 1351
48. *Cannabis Yukon Annual report - April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020* (Streicker), ..... 1416
49. *Yukon Development Corporation 2019 Annual Report* (Pillai), ..... 1416
50. *Yukon Energy 2019 annual report* (Pillai), ..... 1416
51. *Advocacy Trails — 2020 Annual Report — 10 Year Review*  
— Yukon Child & Youth Advocate Office (Speaker Clarke), ..... 1534
52. *Yukon Child Care Board Annual Report 2018-2020* (Frost), ..... 1564
53. *Yukon Heritage Resources Board Annual Report - April 1, 2019 - March 31, 2020* (McLean), 1618
54. *Yukon Public Accounts 2019-20* (Silver), ..... 1652
55. *Yukon Liquor Corporation Annual Report April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020* (Streicker), ..... 1652
56. *Yukon Hospitals Year in Review 2019-20* (Frost), ..... 1919
57. *Twenty-second Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees* (December 1, 2020) (Adel), ..... 2125
58. *Yukon Housing Corporation Annual Report - for the year ended March 31, 2020* (Frost), 2188

**SESSIONAL PAPERS** *(continued)*

59. Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board Annual Report 2019-2020 (Mostyn), .....	2276
60. Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board Annual Report 2019-2020 (Mostyn), .....	2276
61. Yukon state of the environment report 2020 - a report on environmental indicators (Frost), .	2461
62. Twenty-third Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees (December 17, 2020) (Adel), .....	2461
63. Report of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly - Official Opposition and Third Party Membership of the Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation (Speaker Clarke),	2490
64. Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators 2018-19 Annual Report (Speaker Clarke), ...	2516
65. Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators 2019-20 Annual Report (Speaker Clarke), ...	2516
66. Crime Prevention & Victim Services Trust Fund Annual Report 2019-20 (McPhee), .....	2516
67. Yukon Law Foundation Annual Report November 1, 2018 to October 31, 2019 (McPhee),	2516
68. Law Society of Yukon Annual Report December 31, 2019 (McPhee), .....	2516
69. Yukon Judicial Council Annual Report 2019 (McPhee), .....	2516
70. Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Annual Report 2019-2020 (McLean), .....	2516

**SILVER, SANDY**

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 13 - <i>Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1868, 1882
Bill No. 204 - <i>Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20</i> : Second Reading, .....	1326, 1330
Bill No. 204 - <i>Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20</i> : Third Reading, .....	1498, 1501
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21</i> : Second Reading, .....	1227
Ministerial statements:	
Lobbyist registry, .....	1507, 1508
Safe Restart Agreement, .....	1187, 1188
Youth Panel on Climate Change, .....	1220, 1222
Yukon Days, .....	2277
Yukon Forum, .....	2305, 2306
Motion No. 277 - Re supporting Mi'kmaq fisheries, .....	1518

**SITTING DAYS**

No. 40 October 1, 2020 (Thursday), .....	1181–1215
No. 41 October 5, 2020 (Monday), .....	1217–1252
No. 42 October 6, 2020 (Tuesday), .....	1253–1282
No. 43 October 7, 2020 (Wednesday), .....	1283–1316
No. 44 October 8, 2020 (Thursday), .....	1317–1348
No. 45 October 13, 2020 (Tuesday), .....	1349–1378

**SITTING DAYS** *(continued)*

No. 46 October 14, 2020 (Wednesday), .....	1379–1413
No. 47 October 15, 2020 (Thursday), .....	1415–1443
No. 48 October 19, 2020 (Monday), .....	1445–1473
No. 49 October 20, 2020 (Tuesday), .....	1475–1503
No. 50 October 21, 2020 (Wednesday), .....	1505–1530
No. 51 October 22, 2020 (Thursday), .....	1531–1562
No. 52 October 26, 2020 (Monday), .....	1563–1588
No. 53 October 27, 2020 (Tuesday), .....	1589–1615
No. 54 October 28, 2020 (Wednesday), .....	1617–1647
No. 55 October 29, 2020 (Thursday), .....	1649–1674
No. 56 November 2, 2020 (Monday), .....	1675–1702
No. 57 November 3, 2020 (Tuesday), .....	1703–1733
No. 58 November 4, 2020 (Wednesday), .....	1735–1765
No. 59 November 5, 2020 (Thursday), .....	1767–1796
No. 60 November 9, 2020 (Monday), .....	1797–1827
No. 61 November 10, 2020 (Tuesday), .....	1829–1858
No. 62 November 16, 2020 (Monday), .....	1859–1890
No. 63 November 17, 2020 (Tuesday), .....	1891–1916
No. 64 November 18, 2020 (Wednesday), .....	1917–1948
No. 65 November 19, 2020 (Thursday), .....	1949–1978
No. 66 November 23, 2020 (Monday), .....	1979–2005
No. 67 November 24, 2020 (Tuesday), .....	2005–2033
No. 68 November 25, 2020 (Wednesday), .....	2035–2064
No. 69 November 26, 2020 (Thursday), .....	2065–2094
No. 70 November 30, 2020 (Monday), .....	2095–2123
No. 71 December 1, 2020 (Tuesday), .....	2125–2151
No. 72 December 2, 2020 (Wednesday), .....	2153–2185
No. 73 December 3, 2020 (Thursday), .....	2187–2215
No. 74 December 4, 2020 (Friday), .....	2217–2245
No. 75 December 7, 2020 (Monday), .....	2247–2273
No. 76 December 8, 2020 (Tuesday), .....	2275–2302
No. 77 December 9, 2020 (Wednesday), .....	2303–2334
No. 78 December 10, 2020 (Thursday), .....	2335–2364
No. 79 December 14, 2020 (Monday), .....	2365–2391
No. 80 December 15, 2020 (Tuesday), .....	2393–2423
No. 81 December 16, 2020 (Wednesday), .....	2425–2457

**SITTING DAYS** *(continued)*

No. 82 December 17, 2020 (Thursday), .....	2459–2488
No. 83 December 21, 2020 (Monday), .....	2489–2514
No. 84 December 22, 2020 (Tuesday), .....	2515–2544

**SITTING LENGTH**

Government House Leader's report on, (McPhee), .....	1389
Motion No. 271 re extending the maximum number of sitting days for the 2020 Fall Sitting (agreed to), .....	1389

**SPEAKER** (see also **SPEAKER'S RULINGS**, **SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS**, and **UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE**)

## Introductions

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Joseph Mewett), .....	1217, 1829
Bell, Doug, .....	1829
Grabowski, Terry, .....	1829
Grossinger, Red, .....	1829
Novak, Joe, .....	1829
Tables documents, .....	1185, 1534, 2490, 2516

**SPEAKER'S RULINGS**

Re abusive or insulting language, .....	1391
Re accusing a member of unparliamentary behaviour, .....	1933
Re clarification regarding the subject of the amendment, .....	2230
Re debating the Speaker's ruling, .....	1502, 2285
Re imputing false or unavowed motives to another member, .....	1315, 1410, 1872
Re incorrectly attributing type of committee, .....	2285
Re needless repetition, .....	2286, 2291
Re off-mic comment ("Out and out lying"), .....	2231
Re referring to a matter before the courts (sub judice), .....	1407, 1934, 1935
Re orderliness of calling Motion No. 212 for debate, .....	1263
Re orderliness of calling Motion No. 387 for debate.....	2401
Re referring to confidential information from an in-camera committee meeting, .....	1871
Re referring to members by name, .....	2056
Re reflecting upon a vote of the Assembly, .....	2292
Re relevance - amendment, ..1277, 1278, 1297, 1300, 1403, 1409, 1642, 2232, 2285, 2287, 2288, 2455	
Re relevance - debate, .....	1327, 1500
Re relevance - motion, .....	1271, 1273, 2237, 2292
Re use of "deliberately exaggerating," .....	2167
Re use of "unscrupulous," .....	2310



**SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS** (see also Deputy Speaker's statements and Acting Speaker's statements)

Re acknowledging the Speaker, .....	1985
Re addressing remarks to the Speaker not to other members, .....	2293
Re audio issue (audibility in Chamber of member speaking), .....	1204
Re changes made in the Chamber to maintain a safe workplace in light of COVID-19, .....	1181
Re Child Day, National, recognition of, .....	1949
Re correcting the record; members can only correct their own record, they cannot "correct the record" of other members, .....	1756
Re excessive off-mic comments during debate, .....	1883, 2230, 2311
Re filing copies of social media content being referenced in debate, .....	1874
Re Ombuds Day, recognition of, .....	1317
Re proper form for rising to give oral notice of a motion, .....	1220
Re referring to a matter before the courts (sub judice)	
Re orderliness of calling Motion No. 212 for debate, .....	1263
Re orderliness of calling Motion No. 387 for debate.....	2406, 2408
Re referring to members by riding or portfolio not by name, .....	1240, 1543
Re reflecting upon a vote of the Assembly, .....	1942
Re Remembrance Day, recognition of, .....	1829
Re request for recess to draft an amendment, .....	1527
Re testing of the emergency alert system, .....	2040
Re time available to members to speak to a motion prior to proposing an amendment, .....	1516
Re Turner, Hon. John, remembrance of, .....	1181
Re use of "deliberately misleading," .....	2174
Re use of "gaslighting," .....	1940

**STANDING ORDERS, CHANGES TO** (see Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 1)**STREICKER, JOHN**

Speaks on:

Bill No. 10 - <i>Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, 1206, 1211	
Bill No. 10 - <i>Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, 1777, 1778	
Bill No. 13 - <i>Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1881
Bill No. 14 - <i>Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1574
Bill No. 14 - <i>Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, .....	1989
Bill No. 15 - <i>Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1685
Bill No. 15 - <i>Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, .....	1899
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21</i> : Second Reading, .....	1249

**STREICKER, JOHN** (*continued*)

Speaks on:

Ministerial statements:

Cannabis legalization update, .....	1417, 1418
F.H. Collins Secondary School track and field facility, .....	1707, 1708
Kwanlin Dün First Nation <i>Lands Act 2020</i> , .....	1564, 1566
Land development, .....	2068, 2070
Mandatory mask use in indoor public spaces, .....	2126, 2127
Marshall Creek subdivision development, .....	1319, 1320
Mount Sima snow-making and electrical infrastructure upgrade, .....	2155, 2156
Safe Restart Agreement COVID-19 funding, .....	2462, 2463
State of emergency in Yukon, .....	2248, 2249
Wildfire management for Yukon communities, .....	1285, 1287
Yukon highway border enforcement agreement with Liard First Nation, .....	1862, 1863
Yukon Standard Time, .....	1652, 1654
Motion No. 212 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation, .....	1264, 2291
Motion No. 226 - Re increasing proportion of government jobs in communities, .....	1299
Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, .....	1641, 1646, 1926
Motion No. 237 - Re meeting or exceeding the targets in <i>Our Clean Future - A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy</i> , .....	2180
Motion No. 268 - Re spending associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, .....	1749
Motion No. 283 - Re recognizing benefits of the local aviation industry, .....	1527
Motion No. 345 - Re eliminating the annual federal excise tax increase on beer, wine, and spirits, .....	2053
Motion No. 350 - Re supporting <i>Putting People First - the final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services</i> , .....	2453
Motion No. 358 - Re rent-increase moratorium, .....	2312
Motion No. 359 - Re extending state of emergency, .....	2225, 2236

**TERMINATION OF SITTING**

As per Standing Order 76(1), .....	2538
As per Standing Order 76(2), .....	2539

**TRIBUTES**

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, recognition of (McLean/Van Bibber/White), .....	2035
Aboriginal Veterans Day, National, recognition of (McLean/Van Bibber/Hanson), .....	1797

**TRIBUTES** *(continued)*

Addictions Awareness Week, National, recognition of (Frost/Van Bibber/White), .....	2007
AIDS Day, World, recognition of (Frost/Hanson), .....	2153
Air North, Yukon's airline, recognition of (McLean/Hassard/Hanson), .....	1650
Alexco Resource Corporation's geological mapping project, recognition of (Pillai/Kent), .....	2008
Aviation, 100 years of Yukon, recognition of (Mostyn/Hassard/White), .....	1254
Blue Feather Music Festival, recognition of (McLean/Istchenko/Hanson), .....	1769
Breast Cancer Awareness Month, recognition of (Gallina/McLeod/White), .....	1589
Buy Local November and Yukoner Appreciation Week, recognition of (Pillai/Istchenko/White), .....	1676
Canadian Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, recognition of (Mostyn), .....	2365
Canadian National War Memorial and Parliament terrorist attack, remembrance of (Istchenko/White), .....	1533
Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week, recognition of (Streicker/Hanson), .....	1735
Contact tracing team, health care professions, and essential workers, recognition of (Frost/Van Bibber/White), .....	2187
COVID-19 pandemic management efforts, Yukoners', recognition of (Silver/Hassard/White), .....	1182
Culture Days, recognition of (McLean), .....	1283
Denim Day and the Yukoners cancer care fund, recognition of (Frost/Van Bibber), .....	1563
Diabetes Day, World, recognition of (Frost/Van Bibber/White), .....	1860
Energy Efficiency Day, recognition of (Pillai/Cathers), .....	1283
Facilities management workers, recognition of (Mostyn), .....	1506
Farm Family of the Year, Yukon, recognition of (Pillai/Cathers), .....	1799
Fire Prevention Week, recognition of (Streicker/Cathers), .....	1349
Fireweed Heroes, recognition of (Silver/Van Bibber/White), .....	1380
Frost sisters' Canadian Junior Cross-Country Ski Championships 50th anniversary, recognition of (Streicker), .....	2125
Frost, Stephen, remembrance of (Frost), .....	1317
Girl Child, International Day of, recognition of (McLean/McLeod/White), .....	1350
Handwashing Day, Global, recognition of (Frost), .....	1415
Highways maintenance crews, recognition of (Mostyn/Hassard), .....	2426
Human Rights Day, recognition of (McPhee/McLeod/Hanson), .....	2336
IncubateNorth, recognition of (Pillai), .....	1917
Indigenous Disability Awareness Month, recognition of (Frost/Van Bibber/Hanson), .....	1703
Innovation Week, Yukon and Innovation Week, Canadian, recognition of (Pillai/Istchenko/Hanson), .....	1917
Intersex Day of Remembrance, recognition of (McLean/White), .....	1798

**TRIBUTES** *(continued)*

Les EssentiElles 25 <sup>th</sup> anniversary, recognition of (Streicker/Van Bibber/White), .....	2393
Library Month, Canadian, recognition of (Streicker/Van Bibber), .....	1415
Lions Clubs International, recognition of (Istchenko), .....	2154
MADD Canada's Project Red Ribbon campaign, recognition of (Mostyn/Hassard/White), .....	1675
McLaren, Charles, remembrance of (Streicker/Cathers), .....	1617
Mental Illness Awareness Week, recognition of (Frost/McLeod), .....	1253
Movember, recognition of (Adel), .....	1767
Northwestel Festival of Trees, recognition of (Gallina/Kent/White), .....	2065
Orange Shirt Day, recognition of (McPhee/Van Bibber/Hanson), .....	1183
Order of Yukon inductees, recognition of (Gallina/Van Bibber/White), .....	2303
Persons Day, recognition of (McPhee/White/Van Bibber), .....	1446
Persons with Disabilities, International Day of, recognition of (Frost/McLeod/Hanson), .....	2275
Poverty and Homelessness Action Week, recognition of (Frost/McLeod/White), .....	1476
Radon Action Month, recognition of (Frost/McLeod), .....	2067
Ramshackle Theatre, recognition of (Streicker), .....	1532
Remembrance Day, recognition of (Silver/Istchenko/White), .....	1829
Restorative Justice Week, recognition of (McPhee/Cathers/White), .....	1891
Royal Canadian Legion's poppy campaign, recognition of (Silver/Istchenko/White), .....	1649
Safe at Home Society and Housing Day, National, recognition of (Frost/Van Bibber/White), ..	1980
Salvation Army Christmas kettle campaign, recognition of (Istchenko), .....	2394
Senior Safety Week, National, recognition of (Streicker/Van Bibber/White), .....	1767
Skilled Trades and Technology Week, National, recognition of (McPhee/Kent /White), .....	1705
Small Business Week, recognition of (Pillai/Istchenko/Hanson), .....	1476
Smith, Annie, remembrance of (McLean/Van Bibber), .....	2489
Snider, Aldene, 90 <sup>th</sup> birthday, recognition of (Van Bibber/Frost/White), .....	1531
Teachers' Day, World, recognition of (McPhee/Kent/White), .....	1218
Thurmer, Tynan, recognition of (Frost), .....	1445
Tolerance, United Nations International Day for, recognition of (McLean/White), .....	1859
Transgender Awareness Week and Transgender Day of Remembrance, recognition of (McLean/Istchenko/White), .....	1949
Violence Against Women, National Day of Remembrance and Action on, recognition of (Streicker/Istchenko/White), .....	2217
Volunteer Day, International, recognition of (Streicker), .....	2247
Waste Reduction Week, recognition of (Streicker/Istchenko), .....	1445
Waters, Joy, and Neufeld, David, remembrance of (McLean/Cathers/Hanson), .....	2095
Whitley, Gerry, remembrance of (White), .....	2425

**TRIBUTES** *(continued)*

Wills Month, recognition of (McPhee/Cathers), .....	1735
Winter solstice, recognition of (Streicker), .....	2459
Women's History Month, recognition of (McLean/McLeod/Hanson), .....	1217
Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two- spirit+ people, recognition of (Gallina/Van Bibber/White), .....	2335
Yukon Art Society, 50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of, recognition of (McLean/Van Bibber/Hanson), .....	1505
Yukon Chef Collective, recognition of (Pillai/Istchenko/White), .....	1379
Yukon Fish and Game Association, recognition of (Istchenko/Frost), .....	2459
Yukon Geoscience Forum awards, recognition of (Pillai/Van Bibber), .....	2036
Yukon Geoscience Forum, recognition of (Pillai/Hassard/White), .....	1979
Yukoners during COVID-19 pandemic, recognition of (Frost/Hassard/White), .....	2515

**UNANIMOUS CONSENT**

Bill No. 9 - <i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act</i>	
Re deeming all clauses and the title read and agreed to, .....	1580
Bill No. 11 - <i>Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015</i>	
Re revisiting clause 2, .....	1783
Bill No. 14 - <i>Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)</i>	
Re deeming all clauses and the title read and agreed to, .....	1605
Bill No. 15 - <i>Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)</i>	
Re deeming all remaining clauses and the title read and agreed to, .....	1690
Bill No. 16 - <i>Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015</i>	
Re deeming all clauses and the title read and agreed to, .....	2537
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21</i>	
Re deeming all lines in Vote 7 cleared or carried, .....	2263
Re deeming all lines in Vote 8 cleared or carried, .....	2351
Re deeming all lines in Vote 11 cleared or carried, .....	2201
Re deeming all lines in Vote 27 cleared or carried, .....	2300
Re deeming all lines in Vote 51 cleared or carried, .....	2269
Re deeming all lines in Vote 52 cleared or carried (Not granted), .....	2499
Re deeming all lines in Vote 53 cleared or carried, .....	2333
Re deeming all lines in Vote 54 cleared or carried, .....	2384
Motion No. 213	
Re moving motion without one clear day's notice, .....	1194

**UNANIMOUS CONSENT** *(continued)*

Motion No. 214	
Re moving motion without one clear day's notice, .....	1195
Motion No. 215	
Re moving motion without one clear day's notice, .....	1196
Motion No. 271	
Re moving motion without notice, .....	1388
Motion No. 321 - Re Membership of Standing Committee on Public Accounts	
Re moving motion without one clear day's notice, .....	1807
Motion No. 322 - Re scheduling of the 2020 Fall Sitting	
Re moving motion without one clear day's notice, .....	1808
Motion of Urgent and Pressing Necessity No. 2 re COVID-19 vaccine distribution to the territories	
Re debating (Not granted), .....	2191

**UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE**

"break the law" withdrawn (Cathers), .....	1500
--	------

**VAN BIBBER, GERALDINE**

## Questions, oral:

Affordable housing, .....	1453
Affordable housing and land development, .....	1387
Aviation investment strategy, .....	1776
Community banking services contract, .....	1597
COVID-19 pandemic contact tracing, .....	2014
COVID-19 pandemic - Yukon highway border enforcement, .....	1923
Crime rate statistics, .....	2396
Diabetes treatment, .....	1867
Macaulay Lodge closure, .....	1422
Nurse practitioner staffing, .....	1898
School busing, .....	1261, 2224, 2253
Tagish River habitat protection management plan, .....	1386

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 10 - <i>Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1209
Bill No. 10 - <i>Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, ....	1777
Bill No. 15 - <i>Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1686
Bill No. 15 - <i>Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, .....	1899

**VAN BIBBER, GERALDINE** *(continued)*

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 205 - *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21: Second Reading*, ..... 1239

## Ministerial statements:

F.H. Collins Secondary School track and field facility, ..... 1707

Kwanlin Dün First Nation community hub, ..... 2010

Kwanlin Dün First Nation *Lands Act 2020*, ..... 1565

Mandatory mask use in indoor public spaces, ..... 2126

Representative public service strategic plan, ..... 1920

Safe Restart Agreement COVID-19 funding, ..... 2462

Yukon Forum, ..... 2305

Yukon highway border enforcement agreement with Liard First Nation, ..... 1862

Yukon Standard Time, ..... 1653

Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy, ..... 2339

Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, ..... 1405, 1634, 1927

Motion No. 283 - Re recognizing benefits of the local aviation industry, ..... 1521

Motion No. 358 - Re rent-increase moratorium, ..... 2314

**VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF**

Allan, Grant (Pillai), ..... 2035

Allen, Doris (Frost), ..... 2125

Austin, Chuck (Streicker), ..... 1617

Bailey, John (Frost), ..... 1317, 1445

Baker, Edith (McLean), ..... 2489

Baker, Emilie (White), ..... 1283

Balmer, Liam (Frost), ..... 1531

Barton, Brad (Pillai), ..... 1797

Bauberger, Nicole (McLean), ..... 2489

Beattie, Laura (Hanson), ..... 2425

Bekar, Bryce (Istchenko), ..... 2459

Bell, Doug (Speaker Clarke), ..... 1829

Bidrman, Eva (Streicker), ..... 1649

Bill, Doris (McLean), ..... 2489

Bill, Doris (Streicker), ..... 1563

Blais, Jean-Sebastien (McPhee), ..... 1617

Blattner, Helen (Istchenko), ..... 2153

Bond, Jeff (Pillai), ..... 2035

**VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF** *(continued)*

Bond, Sullivan (Pillai), .....	2035
Bourcier, André (Streicker), .....	2393
Boyde, Jim (Frost), .....	2125
Boyde, Pam (Frost), .....	2125
Brais, Melanie (Cathers), .....	1253
Brammer, Felicity	
(McLean), .....	1797
(White), .....	1182
Brar, Carman (Streicker), .....	1415
Breckenridge, Iain (McLean), .....	1649
Brown, Kim (McLean), .....	1649
Bruton, Bill (Frost), .....	1979
Campbell, Luke (McLean), .....	2489
Champagne, Marc (McPhee), .....	1617
Charlie, Greg (McLean), .....	1649
Charlie, Lenna (McPhee), .....	1703
Chief, Charles (Streicker), .....	1563
Cinq-Mars, Silken (McLean), .....	1649
Cleghorn, Christine (Frost), .....	1445
Colpron, Maurice (Pillai), .....	2007
Cook, Andrew (Silver), .....	1182
Cook, Jason	
(McLean), .....	1797
(White), .....	1182
Corley, Blair (Streicker), .....	1617
Coulthard, Lucy (Streicker), .....	2247
Craig, Kristina (Frost), .....	1979
Curlew, Frank (Streicker), .....	1649
Curtis, Dan (Streicker), .....	1564, 2065
Davy, Suzan (McPhee), .....	1703
Densmore, Peter (Streicker), .....	1617
Dittani, Birju (McPhee), .....	2335
Dixon, Chris (Streicker), .....	2217
Doering, Gary (Istchenko), .....	2153
Domay, Shania (White), .....	1182
Dorward, Ross (Streicker), .....	1617



**VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF** *(continued)*

Dory, Émilie	
(McLean), .....	2035
(Streicker), .....	2217, 2393
Dumaine, Maryne (Streicker), .....	2393
Eikland, Greg (Mostyn), .....	2425
Emery, Kassia (Mostyn), .....	2365
Emery, Michel (Mostyn), .....	2365
Emery, Sasha (Mostyn), .....	2365
Fidler, Brian (Streicker), .....	1531
Forward, Karen (Van Bibber), .....	1563
Fred, Alfie (McLean), .....	2489
Frost, Bertha (Frost), .....	1317
Frost, Shirley (Frost), .....	2125
Gallant, Mike, and grade 10 science class from Vanier Catholic Secondary School (Pillai), ...	1787
Gallina, Sarah (Gallina), .....	1589
Giangrande, Peter (McLean), .....	1797
Gingell, Judy (McLean), .....	2489
Gingell, Judy (Streicker), .....	1563
Gingell, Rick (McLean), .....	2489
Grabowski, Terry (Speaker Clarke), .....	1829
Green, Heather (McLean), .....	2095
Greenshields, Aaron (White), .....	1283
Greenshields, Kevin (White), .....	1283
Gregory, Brendan	
(McLean), .....	1797
(White), .....	1182
Grossinger, Red (Speaker Clarke), .....	1829
Gulstad, Lou (White), .....	1182
Gwyne-Thompson, Michael (Streicker), .....	1531
Hall, Jennifer (Pillai), .....	1475
Hand, Samantha	
(McPhee), .....	1703
(Pillai), .....	1917
Hanna, Wade (Streicker), .....	1617
Hansen, Daniel (McLean), .....	1797
Hartland, Samson (Pillai), .....	1979, 2035

**VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF** *(continued)*

Hartling, Neil (Pillai), .....	1475
Hill, R. J. (Van Bibber), .....	1563
Hitchcock, Gord (Frost), .....	1445
Holloway, Josephine (McLean), .....	2489
Hopkins, Gabriel (McLean), .....	1797
Houde-McLennan, Ketsia (Streicker), .....	2217
Hougen, Craig (Pillai), .....	1475
Huberschwerlen, Walter (Istchenko), .....	2459
Johnstone, Lorelee (Pillai), .....	2035
Kishchuk, Paul (Pillai), .....	1475
Klock, Dana (Van Bibber), .....	1563
Kobayashi, Denny (Pillai), .....	1475
Krueger, Alia (McLean), .....	1797
Lalena, Guin (Streicker), .....	1531
Lassen, Moira (Streicker), .....	2217, 2247
Lavallee, Alfie (Frost), .....	2125
Laybourne, Dionne (Pillai), .....	1797
Lebeau, Camille	
(McLean), .....	2035
(Streicker), .....	2217
Lechuga, William (Pillai), .....	1917
Leef, Ryan (Streicker), .....	2217
Leonard, Mieke (Streicker), .....	1415
Leslie, Amanda	
(Kent), .....	1859
(Pillai), .....	2007
Ley, Aislyn (Pillai), .....	1797
Ley, Dietrich (Pillai), .....	1797
Ley, Emerson (Pillai), .....	1797
Ley, Mario (Pillai), .....	1797
Luxion, Mona (Frost), .....	1979
Lyons, Stephanie (Istchenko), .....	2459
MacLean, Doug (Streicker), .....	2065
MacLeod, Annabelle (McLean), .....	1797
Macrae, Mairi (Streicker), .....	1415
Manekin Beille, Lauren (Pillai), .....	1917

**VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF** *(continued)*

Matear, Maggie (McPhee), .....	2303
Mechan, Kate (Frost), .....	1979
Mewett, Joseph	
(Silver), .....	1649
(Speaker Clarke), .....	1829
Michaud, Louise (Streicker), .....	1415
Mills, Stephen (Silver), .....	1317
Moreau, Manon (Streicker), .....	1649
Nelson, Vida (McPhee), .....	2335
Neufeld, Andrew (McLean), .....	2095
Neufeld, Erin (McLean), .....	2095
Neumann, Rick (Mostyn), .....	2425
Nielsen, Rick (McLean), .....	1649
Njootli, Effie (Frost), .....	2125
Njootli, Effie (McLean), .....	2489
Njootli, Garry (McLean), .....	1649
Nolan, Dianne (Frost), .....	1979
Nolan, Kerry (Frost), .....	1979
Norman, Sharon (Streicker), .....	1617
Novak, Joe (Speaker Clarke), .....	1829
O'Donnell, Xander	
(McLean), .....	1797
(White), .....	1182
Orban, Darrell (Streicker), .....	1531
Ordish, Matt (Streicker), .....	1649
Paquin, Greg (Mostyn), .....	2425
Parker, Taryn (Streicker), .....	1415
Peart, Ed (Pillai), .....	1979, 2007
Pemberton, Mike	
(Pillai), .....	1475
(Silver), .....	1182
Picard, François (Hanson), .....	2425
Pitt, Deborah (Streicker), .....	1617
Power, Nancy (Streicker), .....	2393
Price, Kirk (Pillai), .....	1797

**VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF** *(continued)*

Reed, Rylee	
(McLean), .....	1797
(White), .....	1182
Reynolds, Chris (Streicker), .....	1617
Rider, Chris (Hanson), .....	2425
Ritchie, Saxon (Istchenko), .....	2459
Rogan, Telek (White), .....	1283
Rouble, Patrick (McPhee), .....	1703
Russell, Sharon (Streicker), .....	1617
Ryan, Benjamin (McLean), .....	1649
Ryan, Debra (McLean), .....	1649
Sahid, Ziad (Pillai), .....	1917
Sanchez, Carlos (Mostyn), .....	1675
Schmidt, John (Streicker), .....	1617
Selbee, Lana (Pillai), .....	1917
Sharp, Dave (Mostyn), .....	1253
Shevchenko, Dan (Mostyn), .....	2425
Shewen, Chuck (Istchenko), .....	2459
Simpson, Susan (Pillai), .....	1475
Sloan, David (Streicker), .....	1415
Sloan, Mary (White), .....	1283
Smarch, Kalea (McLean), .....	2489
Smarch, Larry (Frost), .....	1979
Smith, Andrew (Streicker), .....	1649
Smith, Dianne (McLean), .....	2489
Smith, Georgian (McLean), .....	2489
Smith, Kathie (McLean), .....	2489
Smith, Shirley (McLean), .....	2489
Snider, Aldene (Frost), .....	1531
Snider, Grace (Frost), .....	1531
Sparling, Joe (McLean), .....	1649
Spicer, Drew (McPhee), .....	2335
Stick, Jan (Hanson), .....	2425
Stratis, Linda (Hanson), .....	2425
Struc, Chris (Streicker), .....	1415

**VISITORS, INTRODUCTION OF** *(continued)*

Sutton, Gord (Istchenko), .....	2153
Taggart-Cox, Lucas (White), .....	1283
Tetlich, Glenna (Frost), .....	2125
Tetlich, Joe (Frost), .....	2125
Thompson, Michael (White/Streicker), .....	1283
Thrall, Brad (Pillai), .....	2007
Tourigny, Josée (Mostyn), .....	2365
Turner-Davis, Tim (Streicker), .....	1617
Usher, Sarah (Frost), .....	1531
Van Delft, Fred (Streicker), .....	1617
Veniat, Edwine	
(McLean), .....	1797
(Streicker), .....	2217
Walton, Freda (Streicker), .....	1415, 1531
Walton, Susan (Streicker), .....	1415, 1531
Weatherbee, Sonya (McLean), .....	1505
Whitley, Mary (Hanson), .....	2425
Wickenhauser, Joe (McLean), .....	1797
Wilkinson, Hilary (Hanson), .....	2425
Wojtowicz, Peter (Cathers), .....	1349
Wooding, Geoff (Istchenko), .....	2459
Woodruff, Emily (Streicker), .....	1531
Workman, Shelby (Mostyn), .....	2425
Young, TamaraLyn (Streicker), .....	1617
Yu Shott, Melissa (Streicker), .....	1415

**WHITE, KATE**

## Questions, oral:

Alaska-to-Alberta railway, .....	2495
Canada-Yukon housing benefit, .....	2072
Canada-Yukon housing benefit program, .....	1774, 1866
<i>Child and Family Services Act</i> Review Advisory Committee recommendations, .....	1595
COVID-19 pandemic essential workers program, .....	2013
COVID-19 pandemic impact on education system, .....	1622, 1805, 1836, 2467
COVID-19 pandemic impact on Yukon tourism, .....	1191

**WHITE, KATE** (*continued*)

## Questions, oral:

COVID-19 pandemic rent freeze, .....	2193
COVID-19 pandemic self-isolation requirements, .....	1955, 1984
COVID-19 pandemic - support for disability services clients, .....	1259
COVID-19 pandemic - Yukon highway border enforcement, .....	1682
COVID-19 vaccine, .....	2251
Dawson City infrastructure upgrades, .....	1539
Dental health care, .....	2431
Diabetes treatment, .....	1775
Emergency services in communities, .....	2369
Fixed election dates, .....	1896
Fortymile caribou herd, .....	1986
Government jobs in rural communities, .....	1385
Hemodialysis services in Yukon, .....	2280
Housing support programs, .....	2466
Inclusive and special education review, .....	2308
Internet connectivity, .....	1224
Living wage and minimum wage, .....	1192
Mental health counselling services for children, .....	1512
Midwifery legislation, .....	1421
Off-road vehicle use, .....	1323
Opioid crisis, .....	2522
Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit, .....	1710
Wage top-up program, .....	2398
Whitehorse Emergency Shelter services, .....	1568, 1656, 2129
Wood Street Centre School experiential programs relocation, .....	1289
Yukon First Nation education, .....	2222
Yukon Liberal Party donations, .....	1451, 1481, 1923, 2100

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 9 - <i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act</i> : Second Reading, .....	1199
Bill No. 9 - <i>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act</i> : Third Reading, ....	1811
Bill No. 10 - <i>Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1209
Bill No. 10 - <i>Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, ....	1777
Bill No. 13 - <i>Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1882
Bill No. 14 - <i>Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1572
Bill No. 14 - <i>Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, .....	1989

**WHITE, KATE** (*continued*)

## Speaks on:

Bill No. 15 - <i>Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)</i> : Second Reading, .....	1687
Bill No. 15 - <i>Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)</i> : Third Reading, .....	1899
Bill No. 205 - <i>Second Appropriation Act 2020-21</i> : Second Reading, .....	1246

## Ministerial statements:

2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy, .....	1592
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, .....	2428
Canada-Yukon housing benefit, .....	1738
Cannabis legalization update, .....	1418
Eliza Building, .....	1952
Energy supply and demand, .....	1536
F.H. Collins Secondary School track and field facility, .....	1708
Fortymile caribou harvest management plan, .....	2219
Housing initiatives fund, .....	2039
Land development, .....	2070
Lastraw Ranch agricultural land lease, .....	1893
Le Centre scolaire secondaire communautaire Paul-Émile Mercier, .....	1620
Lobbyist registry, .....	1508
Mandatory mask use in indoor public spaces, .....	2127
Marshall Creek subdivision development, .....	1320
Mayo-McQuesten transmission line, .....	1833
Mount Sima snow-making and electrical infrastructure upgrade, .....	2156
Safe Restart Agreement, .....	1188
Safe Restart Agreement COVID-19 funding, .....	2463
State of emergency in Yukon, .....	2249
School council elections and honoraria, .....	1479
Wildfire management for Yukon communities, .....	1286
Youth Panel on Climate Change, .....	1221
Yukon Days, .....	2277
Yukon economy, .....	2519
Yukon employment rate and economy, .....	1352
Yukon Energy Corporation general rate application, .....	1982
Yukon Energy Corporation grid-scale battery renewable electricity project, ..	2395
Yukon Energy Corporation's 10-year renewable electricity plan, .....	2492
Yukon Forum, .....	2305
Yukon highway border enforcement agreement with Liard First Nation, .....	1863

**WHITE, KATE** (*continued*)

## Speaks on:

## Ministerial statements:

<i>Yukon Parks Strategy</i> , .....	1257
Yukon Resource Gateway project agreement with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, .....	2097
Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy, .....	2339
Motion No. 212 - Re establishing a Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation, 2284, 2289	
Motion No. 213 - Re member participation in sittings of the House via teleconference due to COVID-19 during the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1195
Motion No. 226 - Re increasing proportion of government jobs in communities, 1292, 1297, 1306	
Motion No. 236 - Re supporting the state of emergency in Yukon, .....	1626, 1641, 1940
Motion No. 257 - Re appearance of witnesses from <i>Putting People First</i> review, .....	1455
Motion No. 268 - Re spending associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, .....	1747
Motion No. 271 - Re extending the maximum number of sitting days for the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1389
Motion No. 277 - Re supporting Mi'kmaq fisheries, .....	1513, 1517, 1520
Motion No. 321 - Re Membership of Standing Committee on Public Accounts, .....	1807
Motion No. 322 - Re scheduling of the 2020 Fall Sitting, .....	1808
Motion No. 346 - Re extending the wage top-up program for essential workers, 2045, 2050	
Motion No. 358 - Re rent-increase moratorium, .....	2311, 2319

**WITNESSES BEFORE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

## Chief Medical Officer of Health

Brendan Hanley, Chief Medical Officer of Health, .....	2474–2487
--	-----------

*Putting People First* review

Bruce McLennan, Chair, .....	1458–1473
Greg Marchildon, Committee Member, .....	1458–1473

## Yukon Development Corporation

Justin Ferbey, President and Chief Executive Officer, .....	2408–2422
---	-----------

## Yukon Energy Corporation

Andrew Hall, President and Chief Executive Officer, .....	2408–2422
---	-----------

## Yukon Hospital Corporation

Brian Gillen, Chair of Board of Trustees, .....	1963–1978
Jason Bilsky, Chief Executive Officer, .....	1963–1978



**WITNESSES BEFORE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE** *(continued)*

Yukon University	
Maggie Matear, Interim President, .....	2081–2094
David Morrison, Chair of Board of Governors, .....	2081–2094
Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board	
Mark Pike, Chair, .....	1844–1857
Kurt Dieckmann, President and Chief Executive Officer, .....	1844–1857

**APPENDIX A***(Bill No. 204 - Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20)*

General Debate, .....	1358–1367
Detailed breakdown of vote discussions:	
Health and Social Services, .....	1367–1378, 1424–1443, 1455–1458, 1485–1493
Highways and Public Works, .....	1493–1497

*(Bill No. 205 - Second Appropriation Act 2020-21)*

General Debate, 1606–1615, 1690–1702, 1713–1733, 1759–1764, 1784–1796, 1818–1827, 1839–1844, 1884–1890, 1900–1905	
Detailed breakdown of vote discussions	
Community Services, .....	1905–1916, 1958–1963, 2134–2151, 2264–2269
Economic Development, .....	2105–2122, 2254–2263
Education, .....	2403–2408, 2505–2514
Energy, Mines and Resources, .....	2202–2214, 2301–2302, 2320–2333
Environment, .....	2016–2033, 2498–2504
French Language Services Directorate, .....	2299–2300
Health and Social Services, .....	2352–2364, 2384–2390, 2537–2538
Highways and Public Works, ...	1991–2004, 2059–2064, 2239–2244, 2270–2273, 2293–2299
Justice, .....	2345–2351
Tourism and Culture, .....	2374–2384
Women's Directorate, .....	2077–2081, 2196–2202
Yukon Development Corporation, .....	2469–2474





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 57

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Tuesday, November 3, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

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#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Tuesday, November 3, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to help me welcome a few guests who are here today for one of the tributes: Dr. Patrick Rouble, who is the new president of Skills/Compétences Canada National Board; Samantha Hand, the executive director of Skills Canada Yukon; Suzan Davy, the director of training and programs at the Department of Education; and Lenna Charlie, who is the industrial training consultant at the Department of Education.

Thank you for being here.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Indigenous Disability Awareness Month

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Drin gwiinzii; good afternoon. I rise in the House today to recognize Indigenous Disability Awareness Month. In 2015, the Province of British Columbia, together with the BC First Nations Summit and the Métis Nation of British Columbia, dedicated the month of November to recognizing indigenous people with disabilities. The following year, the Council of Yukon First Nations as well as the Province of Saskatchewan and the Assembly of First Nations also officially proclaimed the month.

These proclamations are important ones because they recognize the ongoing intergenerational effects that European contact and colonialization has had on indigenous peoples across this country, including the history and legacy of residential school systems. According to the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society, the disability rate among indigenous Canadians is approximately 30 percent — a rate that is two times higher than the general population.

Indigenous communities, families, and individuals face many challenges and barriers. These can include reduced economic and job opportunities, lack of adequate housing, education inequity, geographical remoteness, transportation issues, and limited community supports and services. These factors can affect access of indigenous people with disabilities to the health and social services that would enable them to reach their full potential and lead healthy, productive, and happy lives.

Indigenous people also face another major obstacle: the social stigma associated with some form of disability. Removing these barriers and inequities so that indigenous people with disabilities can access the care and support they need is an essential step toward advancing reconciliation.

Here in Yukon, we are working to address these systemic issues. The Department of Health and Social Services has moved away from the old medical model that required a disability diagnosis before providing services. We are breaking down barriers by providing support to anyone who can demonstrate a disability regardless of whether or not there is a medical diagnosis. We have brought together people with lived experience, community members, government departments, and NGOs to collaborate and identify the work that is needed to improve the lives of all Yukoners with disabilities.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, advancing reconciliation is a foundational element of *Putting People First*, the independent expert panel's final report. Specifically, the report recommends mandatory cultural safety and humility training and a continuous education process for all health and social service providers, managers, and leaders. In response to this recommendation, Health and Social Services is working with Yukon First Nations to develop mandatory cultural safety training for Health and Social Services and Yukon Hospital Corporation staff which will begin to roll out in the spring of next year.

To quote *Putting People First*: “Cultural humility is a continuous process of self-reflection used to understand the personal and systemic biases that affect our interactions with others.” This approach will improve health outcomes for indigenous Yukoners — in particular, those with disabilities. I would like to say mahsi' cho to all Yukon First Nation governments for their collaboration and guidance as we move this important work forward. I would also like to thank the many Yukon community organizations that provided valuable supports and services to people with disabilities, including the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, Inclusion Yukon, Teegatha'Oh Zheh, Challenge Disability Resource Group, Options for Independence, Autism Yukon, and the LDAY Centre for Learning.

As we recognize Indigenous Disability Awareness Month, I encourage all Yukoners to reflect on their own biases and to acknowledge themselves as learners when it comes to understanding the experiences of people with disabilities.

Mahsi' cho, Mr. Speaker.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November as Indigenous Disability Awareness Month in Canada. The British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society, or BCANDS, created this awareness month to draw national attention to the barriers facing indigenous people living with a variety of disabilities. BCANDS is an award-winning, indigenous, not-for-profit, charitable society that supports the unique and diverse barriers in First Nation communities. This is the only

organization of its kind in Canada, and it assists people across the country.

These barriers include but are not limited to poverty, lack of coordination between federal, provincial and territorial governments in relation to areas of responsibility, limited access to supports due to remoteness, transportation, and accessibility to health services.

Often, data collected and distributed on disabilities affecting Canadians is done about entire populations across provinces and territories; however, according to Statistics Canada, rates of disability among First Nation people living off-reserve and Métis were higher than for non-indigenous people across all age groups and geography.

In 2017, 30 percent of First Nation people living off-reserve and 30 percent of Métis had one or more disabilities that limited them in their daily activities. There is limited research on disability types among indigenous people, but disabilities most frequently reported are chronic health issues such as back pain, hearing impairment, vision problems, learning disabilities, and cognitive or mental health issues.

We acknowledge and applaud the BCANDS for their work on this important initiative. Their contribution of face masks and pins in commemoration to members of the House is appreciated and will raise awareness. The fact that this society is able to assist indigenous Canadians to overcome some of the barriers is commendable. The people who are helped will in turn bring significant contributions to communities across Canada.

I look forward to the expansion and recognition of Indigenous Disability Awareness Month across Canada. Again, thank you to the wonderful work of BCANDS and to all the other organizations that work jointly with us to better lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Applause*

**Ms. Hanson:** On behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party, I am pleased to join in recognition of November as Indigenous Disability Awareness Month. As we've already heard today, conservative estimates from Statistics Canada indicate that there are more than half a million indigenous persons of all ages living with a disability across Canada.

Here in Yukon, the prevalence of a disability among indigenous Yukoners, combined with challenges such as income inequity, limited access to resources and infrastructure, lack of access to transportation, discrimination — often outright racism — presents continued obstacles.

You know, at times it appears little has changed in the 40-plus years since my first visit as a social worker with a family in a Yukon First Nation community where the husband was a childhood polio survivor.

Childhood polio survivors in major urban centres faced daunting challenges. A small community in north-central Yukon faced huge odds trying to respond to the care needs of this person and his family. At about the same time, it became clear that there were different — I would say discriminatory — practices when it came to care for First Nation Yukoners with intellectual and/or physical disabilities. Families talked about

children and other family members who were somewhere; they didn't know where. Over several years, visits were paid to institutions and group homes outside of the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have to remind this Assembly that there was no Jordan's Principle. Equity of care and connection to family and community were not high on either the Yukon or federal governments' radar. There was resistance from both to repatriating and reconnecting people who, by rights, should have been living in Yukon close to family in familiar surroundings.

Over the years, the lived experience of indigenous Yukon citizens has evolved, often at great personal cost. In a society that devalues and sometimes punishes differences of any kind, women especially faced many barriers. One such woman was Judi Johnny. Many in this House will remember Judi. Her persistence made her difficult to forget. Judi was a First Nation citizen from Smith Sound, BC, who made Yukon her home. She was confined to a wheelchair for the last 25 years of her life. She had post-polio syndrome, cerebral palsy, and arthritis. Despite the serious challenges her physical health posed, Judi said — and I quote: "I've been disabled all my life, that's just a physical sense, because I've hardly ever thought of that as a major inconvenience, I thought of trying to get the services as an inconvenience, but not my disability..."

Try she did. She was adamant that she and all disabled people should have access to restaurants, stores, sidewalks, and public spaces. She was especially passionate about the importance of improved public transport for people living with physical disabilities. The number of calls that I got, along with mayors and other politicians, over the years about the challenges that she and others faced trying to use public transit to get to and from medical appointments or meetings was evidence of her persistence.

Judi believed that disability should not be a barrier to engagement with community. From her initial involvement in the mid-1980s with DisAbled Women's Network Canada to serving on the Status of Women Council, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Yukon Council on DisABILITY, Second Opinion Society, the Whitehorse Food Bank, the Whitehorse Public Library, the Yukon Association for Community Living, and Yukon Learn, Judi believed that her voice mattered. With her trademark red flag flying above her motorized scooter, Judi loved showing up where people least expected a disabled person to be.

She knew that by making her voice heard, others living with disabilities would recognize that they have rights and that they have a right to have those rights respected. Judi dealt with systemic racism throughout her life. Imagine being told that government would not approve additional oxygen because you had used your allotment for portable oxygen bottles. When she most needed that help, that was the response.

Mr. Speaker, Judy's death in February 2015 reinforced our understanding that there are people in our midst who sometimes irritate us because they challenge the systems that govern us. They are the people who take risks, sometimes surprising themselves at the risks that they take, and who realize that they

do have a voice and that they have both a right and an obligation to engage in civil society.

Judi Johnny, a disabled indigenous woman, challenged us, as citizens and as politicians, to live up to principles, such as equality, through equitable access to services. Just as Judi Johnny never took the easy way out, in her honour and through her, in honour of all disabled indigenous people, nor should we. As we mark Indigenous Disability Awareness Month, we are challenged to see that making a difference with and for disabled individuals is about more than words. We're called to listen and to act.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of National Skilled Trades and Technology Week**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon government to pay tribute and recognition to National Skilled Trades and Technology Week 2020. It takes place this year from November 1 to 8. This event is sponsored and organized by Skills/Compétences Canada.

Congratulations to the vice-president of Skills Canada Yukon, Dr. Patrick Rouble, for his election as president of the Skills/Compétences Canada national board. It is always so valuable when Yukoners take on the challenge of becoming the voice of national organizations.

This week we recognize and celebrate tradespeople, technicians, and technologists who provide essential services to our communities. They build our buildings, bake our cakes, pave our roads, improve our bandwidth, fix our faucets, cut our hair, design our clothes, repair our cars, electrify our homes, and prepare amazing and innovative food — to just name a few. If we didn't properly appreciate and understand the critical role of these skilled workers and how they play in every corner of our territory before now, the last seven months have made that perfectly clear.

As with so many events, the National Skilled Trades and Technology Week activities look different this year. Throughout this week, virtual activities and events will take place to raise awareness and highlight the critical role of tradespeople in our Canadian society and economy.

In recognition of this year's many challenges, the theme for this week's celebration is "Digital". During this week, Yukon youth have a chance to participate in many activities. There is an online social media challenge to bake cookies with a digital theme; there is a sewing workshop hosted by YuKconstruct's Makerspace; a 3D game development workshop with YuKconstruct; and an inventor's academy series focused on graphic design hosted at Yukon University — all projects and experiences involving unique skilled trades and technology that youth may not have thought about or experienced before.

These experiences will showcase careers that are personally and financially rewarding and really offer unique opportunities. More than 400 trades are designated by provinces and territories — 56 of those are red seal trades that comply to national standards and examinations.

Approximately one in five employed Canadians work in the skilled trades. Encouraging youth to consider trades or a

trades career will help our economy thrive and prevent a shortage of these highly skilled workers.

I would like to take a moment to thank the many people who support Yukon students to explore careers in the skilled trades. They include Yukon parents, our businesses and makers, Yukon University, secondary school teachers, Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, and the Department of Education's apprenticeship and trades certification unit staff. I would like to recognize Vernon Beebe — who couldn't be here today but I understand is listening online and is the industrial training consultant — and, of course, volunteers. This is also the time of year when we usually celebrate apprenticeship graduates and their amazing accomplishments. So, I would just like to take this moment to congratulate the 32 recent Yukon apprenticeship graduates who received their certification recently and wish them every success in their careers.

Let's remember this week to recognize and to thank all of our tradespeople for keeping our communities and economy moving and for making our lives better through their hard work and innovation.

Thank you. Merci. Shaw nithän.

*Applause*

**Mr. Kent:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November 1 through 8 as National Skilled Trade and Technology Week in Canada. This event aims to promote awareness around the opportunities that are presented to those who enter skilled trades and technology. This year, Skills Canada is planning to host activities virtually to encourage and educate students, parents, and others about the different opportunities that trades and technology have to offer. The theme for this year is "Digital", focusing on one of the essential skills used in so many trades and technology professions. Digital skills enable the use of a number of evolving technologies and are ever-changing in our fast-paced technological world.

From simpler devices such as cash registers and basic office software to more technical tools and applications, learning to comprehend input, analyze, and communicate through the use of digital technologies will be useful across all professions. We are fortunate here in the Yukon to be home to individuals, organizations, and institutions that focus solely on getting people into trades and technology.

Skills Canada Yukon does such an amazing job throughout the year promoting skilled trades and technology to youth as they move toward choosing an education and career path. The organization offers such experiences to Yukon youth as school presentations, workshops, and the Territorial Skills Competition, which unfortunately was cancelled for this year due to the pandemic.

Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, or YWITT, offers programming opportunities to high school-aged girls to allow them to try out different trades to see whether one might be a good fit for them. The organization offers bursaries and opportunities to women furthering their education in the trades and technology, making access easier.

I would also like to mention that the Yukon is home to an incredible and innovative career training facility, the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, or CNIM. Located at Yukon University, CNIM offers industry training on-site and via their mobile classrooms and simulators. Students gain invaluable and customizable programming suitable for a number of mine-related professions.

To all our skilled tradesmen and tradeswomen across the Yukon: Thank you for following your passions and getting into truly fulfilling careers. Your skills are needed and appreciated across the territory.

For youth who would like to find out more about trades and technology, chat with a teacher or get in touch with Skills Canada Yukon or YWITT to find out more on how to get involved and hopefully find your place in trades and technology.

I would like to thank and recognize a number of individuals — of course, Dr. Patrick Rouble, president of Skills Canada and part of the Skills Canada Yukon Board of Directors; Gerry Quarton, president of Skills Canada Yukon; and Samantha Hand, executive director for Skills Canada Yukon; as well as President Linda Benoit and executive director Brenda Barnes from YWITT. Both of these organizations made time for me earlier this fall to discuss their priorities, plans, and challenges during the pandemic. Their work and dedication to youth in helping them to find their way into trades and tech is much appreciated.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** On behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus, I stand to recognize National Skilled Trades and Technology Week. Although 2020 will have a different look and format, Skills Canada's ultimate goal has not changed, and that's to create an increased awareness of the rewarding and lucrative career opportunities in the trades and technology sectors.

This year's activities will be hosted on virtual platforms across the country using fun, engaging formats that will educate everyone who is interested about skilled trades and technology career choices.

We're lucky in Yukon to have two NGOs fully engaged in the trades and technology fields. Skills/Compétences Yukon encourages, supports, and promotes skilled trades and technologies to Yukon youth. They engage youth in elementary and secondary classrooms across the territory through skills clubs, hands-on workshops, and in-school presentations. They showcase trades and technology training in exciting and creative ways. Imagine skateboard building and *Chopped*-style cooking competitions. They support teachers and volunteers to offer content that engages and inspires the students. This week, they are hosting a heap of activities to introduce young people to trades and technology. We thank them and all of their volunteers and mentors for their continued support and involvement.

Yukon Women in Trades and Technology is an industry leader, forging partnerships with local businesses and tradespeople to expose young women to the possibilities of a career in the trades or technology sectors. This year, since the

last week of October, every Monday until mid-December, YWITT is facilitating an eight-week afterschool program called "Power Up". These skilled trade sessions are held at various locations around Whitehorse. The weekly sessions explore carpentry, plumbing, electrical, tiling, and fabrication technology as well as other offerings.

We thank Skills/Compétences Canada for knowing how important it is to expose folks to skilled trades and technology. We wish to express our appreciation for the teachers, tradespeople, parents, educators, workers, employers, and volunteers who are part of the skilled trades and, of course, the students who take part in National Skilled Trades and Technology Week. We wish every success to the youth of today in building tomorrow's future.

*Applause*

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 3 — response

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I rise to respond to Petition No. 3. This petition is calling on the Government of Yukon to ensure that dock access for the Tagish River waterfront lot owners is built into the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area management plan.

I thank those individuals who have taken the time to sign the petition and take part in the public meetings to review the draft management plan. Establishing the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area and a management plan for it is a commitment under the *Carcross/Tagish First Nation Final Agreement*. The planning process started in 2015 by a steering committee with representatives from the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, the Government of Yukon, and the Government of Canada, with participation by the Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council and the Tagish Local Advisory Council.

In developing the draft plan, the committee held eight community events, sent a questionnaire to residents, and conducted interviews with citizens. The committee heard concerns regarding shoreline water use, disturbance to swans and other wildlife, and access to the Tagish River. The steering committee considered these concerns when creating the draft management plan. The draft plan balances the diverse natural, social, and cultural interests in the Tagish River area and takes a unique approach in braiding traditional knowledge and storytelling to form the basis of the plan.

The steering committee hosted public meetings of this draft plan and its 33 recommendations throughout October. These meetings were well-attended and generated constructive dialogue, including potential options for the waterfront access. These were not easy discussions. This is a special area, and people are passionate about how it will be managed in the future. That is exactly why a management plan needs to be established and why establishing that plan must respect the



process established in our agreements for having these conversations and moving forward together.

Now that the public engagement period has ended, the steering committee will consider the suggestions that it received and will work to recommend a final management plan to the government for approval. While I appreciate the concerns raised by the Tagish River waterfront property owners, the Government of Yukon will not pre-empt the work of the steering committee, nor will it dictate terms of the final draft management plan. The Government of Yukon has committed to a collaborative planning process, and we believe that it is important to support the steering committee in conducting its work through the proper process.

I would like to once again thank the steering committee for its dedicated work. The committee has demonstrated exceptional intergovernmental collaboration while navigating these challenging issues. Mahsi'.

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to review its policy regarding school operations in extreme weather events in order to:

- (1) prioritize staff and student safety;
- (2) ensure that Government of Yukon directives do not contradict directives from First Nation or municipal governments; and
- (3) reflect the impact that climate change has on extreme weather events in Yukon.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### F.H. Collins Secondary School track and field facility

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The F.H. Collins track and field facility was finally completed this year. We're very proud to have a sporting asset of this calibre in our community. At the end of the summer, I had the privilege of commemorating its grand opening, along with partners from Athletics Yukon, the Yukon Soccer Association, and F.H. Collins. I was lucky enough to break in the track with Darby McIntyre during the first unofficial race on the new track. Congrats to Darby who beat me soundly.

Mr. Speaker, the new track is an eight-lane, 400-metre, rubberized track built to international standards. It also features shot put, steeplechase, pole vault, two long-jump pits, one high-jump pit, an area to play volleyball or tennis, and our first artificial turf soccer pitch — the first outdoor pitch north of 60.

Community recreation infrastructure like this helps bring people together. An outdoor complex such as this one provides a safe, spacious place for people to connect with each other and get fresh air and exercise while staying safely distanced. The

amount of use that the facility has already seen illustrates what an important asset it is. The track has already evolved into a community hub. This track and field will be instrumental in attracting future tournaments and games to the Yukon, and it will allow our elite athletes to become more competitive when they go outside of the territory.

I would like to thank the people who helped advocate for this facility, including Athletics Yukon, the Yukon Soccer Association, schools, and other organizations. Thank you to Dave Stockdale who has been instrumental in Yukon soccer and other sports for his vision and drive. Thank you also to Don White, head coach for Athletics Yukon, for continuing to push for opportunities for Yukon athletes. These partners and others initiated planning for a complex in 2014.

Thanks to the hard work of these organizations, our Sport and Recreation branch, and our Infrastructure Development branch, we secured federal funding and provided our own Government of Yukon contributions to build this new facility.

Sidhu Trucking was responsible for construction and Associated Engineering did the design of the facility, and both did a fantastic job. Thanks to ATCO Electric for helping us to move power lines to allow for the regulation-sized track and field.

Now our partners at the sporting organizations plan to use this track to take sporting in our community to the next level. Athletics Yukon plans to register this track to the International Association of Athletics Federations' standards so that the track can be used for national track and field competitions in the future. The new complex will also provide Yukon with the opportunity to host national events and major games in the future, such as the Canada 55+ Games and the Western Canada Summer Games. It also opens up opportunities for Paralympic sports and allows Yukoners to train locally on a world-class facility.

Ahead of the opening two months ago, I spoke with Jessica Frotten. She said — and I quote: "I remember when I was first getting started in Para athletics and having a facility to train at home was a dream. To see a state of the art facility accessible to all is a dream come true! I want to send out an earth shaking thank you to all the builders and the drivers behind this. A lot of thought and work has gone into making this facility accessible to everyone. Sport for all! I can't wait to come get my first laps in at home!"

We look forward to bringing people together from around the world to compete here in the Yukon when conditions allow.

Our government has always been committed to building healthy, thriving communities that are wonderful places to work and live. I am very proud that our government played a part in the construction of this new, great addition to our community.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this today. I appreciate the minister updating us on an announcement that he made at the beginning of September. We, too, agree that this sport facility will be a big benefit to the community, and Yukon athletes will benefit from it.

We are happy to see it finally completed and look forward to years of community benefit associated with it. Thank you to all the sport groups and Yukon athletes who worked so hard and played a part in getting this across the finish line.

**Ms. White:** Today in speaking about the new track and field at F.H. Collins, there is one person who I know has been involved since the beginning and has followed the construction very closely every step of the way. My dad, Don White, is a runner and has been a running and track and field coach for as long as I can remember. He is currently a director of the board of Athletics Yukon, a board where he has sat since 1987. I have adapted his speech from the opening ceremony to respond to today's ministerial statement.

For him and others like him, it had always been a dream and a hope that, one day, we would have a real track to train and compete on here in Yukon.

When he first began running at F.H. Collins in 1985, there was a paved track on the upper bench where the parking lot now sits. The track was maybe 400 metres around, maybe four or five lanes wide, with frost cracks, hills and steep bumps. It was replaced with a gravel track that was six lanes wide, plagued with mud in the spring and subject to rutting by eager young men who wanted to race around an oval in trucks. It was maintained by volunteers with Athletics Yukon. It was a 400-metre track, but as measured in lane 2 and not lane 1 as required.

With the construction of the existing F.H. Collins Secondary School, Athletics Yukon volunteers measured, marked and mowed out a 400-metre track on the grass field on the lower bench. The power line that used to run adjacent to the track impeded the configuration of the track. The track was really long and really skinny. A gravel track was subsequently built on the site, and permission was received from Yukon Electrical to encroach on the powerline right-of-way, but the track was still really long and really skinny. It measured the required 400 metres around, but that was on the cement curve marking the inside of lane 1, but not where athletes run in lane 1.

When the volunteer Yukon Outdoor Sports Complex Association started planning for an outdoor sports complex that would incorporate two soccer pitches with a track facility, it was the first time that groups other than Athletics Yukon began looking at developing a facility such as what we have here today. This is what he said: "Thank you to all of those who served on that volunteer board for your foresight and determination to build that facility."

When the new track was being discussed, Athletics Yukon always pressed for it to meet the World Athletics specifications. The requirement is for a minimum of eight lanes with a 400-metre distance measured 30 centimetres into lane 1. The main reasons for this are that we wouldn't be able to hold any certified competition on the track if it was shorter than 400 metres in lane 1, and we couldn't hold any event other than local, regional and school meets on the track if it didn't have a minimum of eight lanes. This track, with its synthetic coating, starting lines for all of the running distances, lane lines, markers

for the placement of hurdles, steeplechase barriers, water jump, and finish line — also with its horizontal jump pits, pole vault box, area for the high jump pit, and a shot put throwing area — meets most of the requirements for Athletics Yukon to host a territorial, a national, and even an international competition. As he points out, we still need a site to throw the discus, hammer and javelin on. He hopes that this will be in phase 2.

At the time of the opening ceremony, Athletics Yukon and F.H. Collins had already begun using the track for practices and training purposes. It is his hope that they will be able to attract more athletes to join them, running, jumping, and throwing in Yukon. Yukon athletes will now not arrive at a national competition having never worn a pair of racing spikes, never run on rubber, thrown in a real shot put circle, or long jumped in a sandpit. He goes on to say that there are a few things that they need yet and a whole lot of equipment, but, as of today, he says that we are so far ahead of where we were when this project started. So, Mr. Speaker, he waited 35 years for this track, and I can assure you that he and others at Athletics Yukon are pumped about it.

So, I have a few questions for the minister: Why are the lights on at night illuminating the track in the middle of winter? How will the track and field be protected for now and into the future from misuse?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, I would like to thank members opposite for their support for this really important project for the territory. It is a new standard for us — a new moment to note.

It's tough, when looking earlier this week or yesterday when we got like two feet of snow on top of that track — but one of the reasons that we have this artificial field and this track is because in the springtime, when we start putting our students and athletes on the tracks, they're just so eager to get on those fields that they destroy them right away. What we need is something like this — an artificial turf that will allow athletes to get out there and play early in the spring while saving our grass pitches just for a little bit longer until we get into the spring and that ground gets a little more unfrozen.

I'm just so excited that we have something that is so inclusive and that it's going to be for all Yukoners. I just love the phrase "sport for all".

I will happily check on the questions from the member opposite about lights. I do know that there has been a committee struck that is working on how to get as much access as possible to the track and the field while protecting it over the long term. I know that, when we first made announcements about the track and field opening up, we did some work to talk to the public to educate them about how to keep the track over time.

So, just a quick note I can say for all Yukoners — please don't take your dogs on the track. It's not a place for them to go to the washroom.

Mr. Speaker, I am so happy for the Yukon. I thank all the members of this House for showing their appreciation and support for this — just a moment to mark for the Yukon.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Secure medical unit

**Mr. Hassard:** So, we've heard from several members of the medical community about an incident at the secure medical unit at the hospital here in Whitehorse. A psychiatrist at the unit was assaulted by a patient.

Staff who use the space had indicated previously that their workspace was not safe. The result of this incident is that contracted psychiatrists will no longer provide services at the Whitehorse General Hospital until safety issues and conditions in the secure medical unit are addressed.

Can the minister tell us if she was aware of this and what she's doing to resolve it?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Yes, I was made aware of the incident. We are certainly looking into it and meeting with the CEO of the Hospital Corporation and the department to look at rectifying the situation after looking into the matter.

**Mr. Hassard:** The new emergency department was constructed with additional upstairs space for future development. It was always our understanding that this shelled space was intended to be used for the badly needed new secure medical unit. Now we know that the Yukon Hospital Corporation has been asking this government for the funding needed to develop this new space, but unfortunately the government has refused.

Will the minister commit today to providing the funding needed to develop a new secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** That's absolutely not correct. We have been working with the Hospital Corporation on a secure medical unit. We have been working on a design model. I'm happy to say that we have a plan in effect and that is to look at completing the project that the previous government started and left a shell of a facility. We're now incorporating some models and that's being done in collaboration with the Hospital Corporation.

**Mr. Hassard:** We recognize that the government provided planning money to the Yukon Hospital Corporation a year and a half ago and that planning work is done. Now the Yukon Hospital Corporation is looking for the funding to actually begin the development. It's clear that this space is needed. So, why did the minister not include funding for the new secure medical unit in this year's budget?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The secure medical unit, as presented to the department by the Hospital Corporation, was to look at the establishment of the new secure medical unit and looking at the business model. Certainly, I took the time that was necessary and provided the Hospital Corporation the resources in this year's budget to look at planning and design. The Hospital Corporation provided the department with a business case for review.

As part of that, we have secured the resources in the capital planning exercise. I am doing that in collaboration with my colleague from Highways and Public Works and the Hospital

Corporation. The facility is being planned, but it also is in the stages of being finalized to move forward to development.

### Question re: School busing operations communication to parents

**Mr. Kent:** The overnight snowstorm this past weekend caused many problems for those in the southern part of the territory. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Yukon government's municipal maintenance crews for their efforts in getting things moving yesterday.

However, the first official message to parents regarding school operations didn't come out until 9:38 a.m. yesterday morning — so, approximately an hour after school started.

Can the minister explain why there was such a delay in getting information out to families about what was happening at schools yesterday morning?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The situation with respect to buses and schools yesterday, of course, was unusual. It was certainly an unusual weather event here in the territory. Communication responding to those sorts of situations is absolutely key. Standard Bus — who I would like to take the opportunity to thank — was working extremely hard, as they do every day. They are currently under new management, and I want to thank them for the work that they do every day and especially on days like yesterday. It was certainly weather that no one can predict.

The Department of Education was working with the bus company as early as 7:00 a.m. when buses started to get rolling and information was available that there would be difficulties — which routes were delayed. We indicated to parents that they should review My School Bus Monitor. Information was provided to the Deputy Minister's office before 7:30. The Education team was fast at work. Schools were to remain open and buses that were able to provide service to students were doing so. Of course, some of them were late and the school openings for some places were late as well, and we thank all the parents and students for their patience in responding to an extremely unusual weather event.

**Mr. Kent:** So, the minister mentioned that communication is the key, yet that first official e-mail didn't come out until 9:38 a.m. With 511yukon.ca advising that highways in southern Yukon were closed for portions of the day yesterday, many parents who reached out to us were left wondering about afternoon school bus services for students.

We contacted the minister's office to seek clarification and the response was that, if parents wanted updates, they should listen to the radio and that each school would be e-mailing the parents. But it wasn't until 3:03 p.m. — after school ended, in many cases — that there was a note to parents saying that buses would be delayed and students may not be let out at their normal stop depending on road conditions. This left many parents scrambling to figure out how their kids would get home and where they would be dropped off.

Why did the message come out so late in the day — in some cases, minutes before students would be getting on their buses?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The health and safety of our students is always our first priority and our schools offer safe places for students during extreme weather conditions and every day.

The situation involving yesterday's school bus delays, the Department of Highways and Public Works issues around road clearing, and the City of Whitehorse issue around road clearing were changing minute to minute. The information was provided to individual parents by their schools. The My School Bus Monitor website was updated as well. There were many parents speaking to the administrators and the teachers at the school getting up-to-date information with respect to how that proceeded.

I should also indicate that communication came from the Department of Education to local media between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. yesterday morning. There were some issues, of course, because teachers and principals couldn't quite make it to their school as well. There was a number of things happening in real time. I'm not sure that the member opposite is correct about the timing of an official e-mail, but nonetheless, communication was made much sooner than that to parents and to individual families. We appreciate all of their patience in dealing with yesterday's situation.

**Mr. Kent:** As a parent, I will provide the minister with a copy of that e-mail that came out yesterday morning at 9:38 a.m.

We also heard that teachers in schools were told not to speak to the media about what was happening at their individual schools. From what we understand, this direction was sent out prior to any official communication with parents. In fact, the first communication with parents, as I mentioned, appears to have come out at least an hour after students would have arrived at school. It appears it was more important for the Liberal government to not get a bad news story than it was to inform parents and students of what was happening at their schools.

My question for the minister is: What changes to emergency communications protocols is she going to implement as a result of what happened around school openings and busing yesterday?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I didn't know that snowstorms could be quite so political. Nonetheless, parents are best placed to determine whether they will send their child to school, but it remains essential that school buildings be open during extreme weather conditions to provide safe shelter for those arriving at the building and for those students who may have nowhere else to go if parents have to go to work. The health and safety of our students is always our first priority, and our schools offer safe places for students during extreme weather conditions.

The situation yesterday morning involved a number of moving pieces. School buses were, on occasion, getting stuck in snow. Communication back to the central office, and therefore on to parents, may have been slower than we had wanted it to be, but nonetheless, everybody approached the situation with patience and as an opportunity to determine what is best for their particular family.

Teachers — I would like to the opportunity to thank them for not only making it to school but for putting their students first in the priority of how the safe place could be dealt with and

how schools are, in fact, a safe place. Teachers and administrators worked extremely hard to get to schools, including to Golden Horn, where there was difficulty with the road plowing — and the opportunity for students to arrive at those safe places — many thanks to the students and teachers.

#### **Question re: Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit**

**Ms. White:** The staff at Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit provide seniors with information on a variety of services, such as extended health care benefits, pharmacare, the pioneer utility grant, Yukon Capability and Consent Board, and the Yukon seniors income supplement. These important services support Yukon seniors to receive the assistance they need to encourage aging in place.

In the 2016-17 budget — the last time statistics with regard to numbers of seniors were included in the budget document — there was a caseload of 60 and close to 300 consultations. We know that these numbers could have only grown with our aging population. Can the minister confirm if the offices of Seniors' Services/Adult Protection will be moving? If yes, what is the timeline for that move?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The supports that are provided to seniors come from a number of areas. Moving seniors support — I don't think that's the objective. I think the objective is to ensure that the services that we provide within each one of the departments are meeting the needs of our seniors.

So, the aging-in-place document — which over 1,200 Yukoners participated in and gave critical feedback on — was to look at ensuring efficiencies across the government as we look at supported senior efforts.

Yukon Housing Corporation has provided significant supports to seniors through our various seniors units. As well, we have Health and Social Services that provides critical essential services for home care and such. We are working collaboratively on ensuring that we bring the best possible services to our seniors in a collaborated approach.

**Ms. White:** The question was specifically about Health and Social Services and the Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit.

So, is the unit moving, and if so, when is it moving? The Seniors' Services/Adult Protection office is currently located on the main floor of a building that has ample parking, is on public transit routes, and has no stairs to climb and no elevator to rely on. In other words, it's accessible.

Moving this program to the second floor of adult services does not meet any of these criteria. Parking is next to impossible with government workers, businesses, a school, and clients all jockeying for parking spots. Offices for seniors on the second floor of a building with few accessible parking spots makes no sense, even with an elevator.

Why is this government moving a program for seniors from a fully accessible building to this new location?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can certainly speak to the services that we provide to Yukoners.

We have not made any decisions yet. It is certainly not about parking spaces; it is really about providing adequate,

appropriate services to our elders and our senior population in the Yukon to ensure that they have the best services possible where they reside, and that means looking at services and supports in rural Yukon communities as well.

That means not always looking at it through a Whitehorse-centric or an urban-centric lens; we have to look at ensuring that we provide adequate and appropriate services to all Yukoners, and that means we want to ensure that we look at elevating services to our seniors, providing the best means possible by collaborating within the departments and ensuring that seniors certainly are well-supported as defined for us in the aging-in-place submission and any feedback that we have received through that process.

**Ms. White:** The Whitehorse offices of Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit are vital to many seniors. Being able to go to an office that is accessible, doesn't require lining up out the door, and has accessible parking and public transit close by are important when considering services for seniors. There is no information about the upcoming move on the Yukon government website.

Can the minister tell Yukon seniors when and how they will be notified of the move and whether or not other groups providing services to seniors have been informed of this move?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I am certainly not going to make any decisions on the floor of the Legislative Assembly or commit to any such thing. The work that is being done right now, as I indicated in my previous comments — no decisions have been made. As we look at the aging-in-place document and the recommendations, it is to look at ensuring that we provide the best possible supports. That means that we want to look at the supports that we have available right now and look at evaluating whether or not an office even should be moved. I think that it is really about ensuring that we provide the best supports. We certainly want to ensure accessibility and mobility. That is part of what we consider when we speak about home first, about home care, and about supports to seniors where they reside, and that means bringing the supports and services to the individuals in their home communities as well.

### Question re: Fiscal management

**Mr. Cathers:** Before the start of this pandemic, this Liberal government had a spending problem. Despite claims of sound financial management, their actions were to grow government spending and increase the size of the public service by 568 full-time equivalent positions. To put that into context, they hired the equivalent of a small town larger than Mayo or Carmacks.

The Premier blew through the surplus, depleting the Yukon's total net financial assets from over \$274 million at the start of their term to less than \$172 million today. Yukoners are over \$100 million poorer since the Liberals took office.

I will again ask the Premier a simple question: Where did that \$100 million go?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** It is very hard to hear the member opposite. I heard a question, but I didn't hear the end of it. I apologize for that. I do know that the member has been up a few times trying to convince people that, under our leadership,

we are not in a better financial situation. I completely disagree. We are one of only two jurisdictions in Canada with positive GDP growth through the COVID-19 pandemic. This is thanks to our sound financial management and the strong support to the economy over the last four years.

We are focused on getting projects out the door and completed. We think that this is something that is extremely important and something that the previous government very much struggled to do. We are taking advantage of significant federal funding that is currently available to invest in Yukon's future. We are doing that by working in partnership with Ottawa to get the flexibility that Yukon deserves when it comes to capital projects, when it comes to base-plus funding, when it comes to the unique circumstances of the north. When it comes to growth of FTEs — if that is part of the question, as well — I will take our record compared to the Yukon Party's record on that any day.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier can be in denial all he wants, but the facts are the facts. Yesterday he dodged our questions and used the excuse that it is a complicated issue. He is choosing to toss around arcane terms and use talking points designed to confuse Yukoners, but I will make it simple: Government revenue last year grew by a healthy margin of \$75.8 million, which works out to almost \$1,900 per person in the Yukon. That is the growth in revenue that year: \$1,900 per person. Despite that, the Liberal government blew through it all and spent money even faster. Their spending was out of control before the pandemic.

How far into the red is this Liberal government planning to go, and how long will it take for the Yukon to enter a total net debt position?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** The only person who is trying to mislead right now is that statement from the member opposite. The Yukon Party borrowed significantly against the Yukon's debt as they were leaving office. Yukon's current debt level is \$228 million. It's \$228 million, Mr. Speaker. The Yukon Party borrowed \$201 million of that. The remainder — let's do some simple calculations — \$27 million is all we have borrowed so far. The member opposite yesterday even tried to confuse it further by talking about net financial assets and net financial debts as if that had something to do with borrowing — again, trying to confuse by using all the language that he said in his preamble.

We are committed to working with First Nation partners on infrastructure priorities and we are investing in communities. We are investing in a way that respects the decisions of Yukon communities which they are making for themselves.

When it comes to the amount of borrowing that this Yukon government has done, the member opposite can look no further than his own offices for the \$200 million that was borrowed. \$201 million of the \$228 million that had been borrowed by this government is all from his previous government.

**Mr. Cathers:** There is a problem for the Premier. That is simply not true. All one needs to do is check the Public Accounts to see that he is understating the amount that the Liberal government borrowed. The Premier has tried to blame

their increased spending on health care costs, but I have to remind him that last year his Cabinet increased spending across government by \$81.5 million. That is more than the entire budget for the Hospital Corporation. So, the Liberals' increased spending cannot be blamed on health care. They blew through our financial assets, they added 568 full-time equivalent positions to government, and last year revenue grew, but they increased total government spending by even more than that. The Liberals were already spending beyond our means when the sun was shining; now winter has arrived, and they've blown the bank account.

How far into the red is the government planning to go and what's the timeline for returning to a balanced budget? Or does the Premier just plan to leave that problem for future generations to fix and pay the bill for?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this year, we were in a surplus position. Because of the pandemic, we are now in a supplementary budget of about \$30 million to \$31 million of a deficit now with lots of recoveries from the federal government.

The opposition can't have it both ways. On the one day, they say that we're spending too much money; the next day, they say that we're not spending enough. So, which one is it? It depends on which day that the member opposite speaks.

Our budget commitments to money and to capital projects and to the Public Accounts — they're there, and they show that we are spending the money that we committed to, whereas that didn't happen in the past.

We committed to the projects in our mains. The Public Accounts prove that we are sticking to those commitments. We're getting out the door the capital projects that we promised — not like the opposition — big talk on the mains and when the Public Accounts came out, we saw that they didn't commit to the projects that they said they were going to spend to. All talk, no action — the members opposite.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Yesterday, I asked a question about the cancelled events fund. The fund program expired on July 31. We asked the government if they would extend this fund to cover off the remainder of the year. The minister responded with: "Send us an e-mail and maybe we'll reimburse." So, despite the fact that the program doesn't exist any longer, there is no formal application and there are no formal criteria. If you send the Liberals an e-mail, maybe they'll send you cash. Generally, you need to have a program in place with set criteria to provide oversight to the taxpayers as it's their money that is being sent out.

So, how is this informal e-mail process for government cash good governance?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Let's just be clear on the facts: First of all, what was mentioned yesterday by the member opposite was that — was there going to be a way to offset costs for personal events such as weddings? That was the example. We also have something that was coming down the line, which was geoscience. We have to make sure that they still have an

opportunity to make sure that they can pull their event off and it is helped to raise funds. My response at that time was that we are funding and helping to fund the geoscience conference in its virtual format. I met with the Chamber of Mines in the last week and a half or two weeks, and they were thankful for that commitment and they said it was critical in ensuring that this event happened.

When it came to personal weddings, we hope that people are seeing what's playing out right now with this pandemic. We're not going to be able to offset the personal costs that people incur if they're planning their wedding. Hopefully, now they've seen what has been happening over the last number of months — and in many cases, they're pivoting to something that works within the protocols — but for those companies that are out there, if they are seeing a decrease in revenue and they want to be in a break-even state and make sure that they sustain their business, they have to look no further than the business relief program, which we have extended. It is a program that has been looked upon across this country as an effective way to continue to support the private sector. I look forward to questions 2 and 3.

**Mr. Istchenko:** The minister actually said: "Hey, if you want your event reimbursed outside of the expired program or outside of any existing application criteria or oversight, just send us an e-mail or put it in writing." Giving out taxpayers' money based off informal e-mails did not seem like appropriate governance or oversight.

So, a question for the minister: How much funding have the Liberals given out based on simply getting an e-mail?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I'm happy to stand and speak to the questions from the member opposite today around the event cancellation fund — which was exactly that — it was about events that were cancelled in immediate time. I mean, we had a number of really large events. It was unplanned that these events would have to be cancelled due to a global pandemic.

While I'm on my feet, I would like to just talk about some of the other funding that went out to organizations. We at Tourism and Culture and other departments extended funding for all of the events that were planned within the Yukon, such as the Dawson City Music Festival, the many, many arts festivals — Adäka; all of the festivals received their funding. We knew that they would not be able to go ahead with their plans for these events due to the restrictions, so we allowed for them to have the funding and plan for virtual events or other ways to have these events.

Now, we know that there were a lot of businesses impacted. As the Minister of Economic Development just said, we have the Yukon business relief fund for that.

**Mr. Istchenko:** These are the minister's words — the program expired on July 31 — and for the minister, there are still events being cancelled — so we asked for the program to be extended to cover after July 31. The minister said that if you want taxpayers' money, just send us an e-mail.

So, what criteria are these informal e-mails reviewed under? Who will determine if these informal e-mails meet the criteria?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we put these programs in place very quickly to respond to the needs of our Yukon businesses. We provided them within that time frame. We have also put in place programs like the Yukon business relief fund. We also put in place the accommodation fund just a week and a half ago.

These are all programs that are supporting businesses. Businesses know the reality of what is happening today, and folks are planning for events that follow the chief medical officer of health's recommendations and some of the guidelines that have been put in place. Again, we are putting out all of the funding that we have planned for events.

I am not sure where the member opposite is receiving complaints, but I would really recommend that he have those businesses or folks who are raising these concerns get a hold of the departments so that we can help them. There are a lot of programs that are out there. I think that the member opposite should be concerned about helping those businesses and getting them to the right place.

**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 item standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, November 4, 2020. It is Motion No. 268, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, November 4, 2020. It is Motion No. 297, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

**Speaker:** 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 (Mr. Adel):** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I believe that I answered the last question from the member opposite, but I do want to take the opportunity of these 12 minutes to go back to continue on my notes here in response to questions that the member opposite asked about this budget in our previous year's supplementary budget on October 8 — again, questions that were asked during debate of *Supplementary Estimates No. 3* from 2019-20 that were more pertinent to this debate and conversation.

For example, there was a question from the member opposite about if there was money in EMR for Trans Canada Trail management. Was it spent? Yes, the forest management branch has spent the projected increase of \$29,000 through a partial funding agreement with Trans Canada Trail to implement the Trans Canada Trail agreement.

He went on to ask a question about the money that was included in the agricultural regional collaboration partnership agreement — was it spent?

Mr. Deputy Chair, the Agriculture branch added an additional \$71,000 in funding to cover operation and maintenance costs under the agricultural regional collaboration partnership agreement. Additional funding through the regional cooperation partnership agreement supported a joint review of agricultural legislation undertaken through a partnership between our government and the Government of the Northwest Territories — \$49,000 of this funding was spent in 2019-20.

In the 2019-20 Supplementary No. 2, EMR requested \$20,000 for First Nation strategic alliance for the Gateway agreement — was that spent? The answer to that question is yes. Energy, Mines and Resources has spent the additional \$200,000 allocated for the First Nation Gateway project agreement.

To date, the Yukon government has spent \$2.57 million in eligible expenses under the Yukon Resource Gateway Project funding. The government has signed four project agreements with Yukon First Nations for projects with total estimated capital costs of \$164.7 million. The eligible expenditures to date are in the areas of project agreement negotiations, implementation, pre-engineering, geotechnical investigations, environmental assessment, and preliminary design.

I was asked if I could tell the member opposite what I would do to solve the issue around farmers collecting carbon rebates and how farmers obtain a carbon fuel tax rebate.

The Yukon government actively supports farming in the territory through various programs and services — one of which is the tax exemption program for fuel usage in the operation of commercial farming in Yukon. The Department of

Finance and the broader government interpret legislation in conjunction with the latest decisions across Canada, where there is a process for individuals to apply for reconsideration.

Again, Mr. Deputy Chair, there is more to that, if you'll just bear with me for a second. It is the federal government that does determine who is exempt from paying the carbon levy. Of course, we have lobbied for particular exemptions and rebates, but farmers are exempt from paying the federal carbon levy on gasoline and lighting fuel oil used in farming operations. That is on submission of federal tax form K402, which is the fuel charge exemption certificate for farmers. The federal rationale for this exemption was to avoid increasing food prices. The federal government did not include propane in this exemption, as the member opposite has asked.

We have discussed in the past that a comprehensive review of federal, provincial, and territorial governments is due by 2020-23 to establish the approach to carbon pollution pricing, including expert assessment of the stringency and effectiveness that compares carbon pollution pricing systems across Canada. This really will provide an appropriate time and venue to present and represent the interests of all Yukon stakeholders at that time. We are looking forward to that review.

I was also asked by the member opposite — again going back to the 2019-20 budget, the budget contained \$5 million for the Yukon diverse fibre line — and was that money spent? Again, it was not a question I was prepared to answer when we were debating *Supplementary Estimates No. 3*, which was about two specific departments and not the Yukon diverse fibre line. I am happy to report that, in 2019-20, \$2.81 million was spent on the project at that time for that budget year.

Another question was about how the budget contained \$600,000 for historic sites — was that money spent? With regard to the \$601,000 referenced around historic sites — including Fort Selkirk and Fortymile — \$498,000 was spent as one of the latest figures for that allocation.

I was asked about how the budget contained \$1 million for the secure medical unit — what is the status of this unit? Was the money spent? What is the status of the project? Has it lapsed or has it been spent? Has the government approved the business case plan? Again, this question was asked in the Legislative Assembly today, and \$1 million has been transferred to the Hospital Corporation for this project.

Another question was — the budget contained \$1.7 million for youth initiatives. Was this spent? The answer to that, Mr. Deputy Chair, is yes. Over \$1.7 million has been spent to support youth initiatives across the territory. Included in those funds was more than \$1.5 million that was paid directly to youth-serving organizations through transfer payment agreements. Some of those agreements and organizations are: the Association franco-yukonnaise, \$25,000; BYTE — Empowering Youth Society, \$274,000; Boys and Girls Club of Yukon, \$277,000; Heart of Riverdale Community Centre, \$198,000; and the Youth of Today Society, \$271,000.

I was also asked — the budget contained \$3 million for portable classrooms. Was this spent? The \$3 million for portable classrooms was included over two years. The 2019-20

budget contained \$2 million for this project. Of that amount, \$1.156 million was spent.

I think the final question from that day that was not answered — or was not specific to the Supplementary No. 3 estimates — was — the budget contained \$58 million for social supports and mental health services. Was this spent? If so, how much of that? Mr. Deputy Chair, the 2019-20 main estimates included \$58 million for social supports and mental health services. This was increased to \$63.08 million in the supplementary estimates. In 2019-20, \$64.89 million was spent on social supports and mental health services.

The member opposite did go on to ask some further questions, so we do have a couple questions from November 2. I think I still have some time left here, so I might as well get into some of these before we get to some new questions.

This is from the member opposite: Can the Premier tell us which lines from which departments that he is referring to when he's talking about increasing funding to Yukon Hospital Corporation compared to the Public Accounts, page 199, schedule 9? Yukon Hospital Corporation funding is less than the growth of government for the same fiscal year — that was the question.

That question was answered in the House, but I can reiterate that if the member opposite wants me to, but that question was answered in the House.

Also, what was the rate of increase for Yukon Hospital Corporation funding in all years of this government's mandate? That was also answered in the House, but I could reiterate if the member opposite wants me to reiterate.

I'll wait. There's a long answer here for an extended-family care agreement question. I will leave that to supplement answers to supplement questions.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate those answers.

I'm going to begin, first of all, with the issue that the Premier raised regarding the impact on farmers of the carbon tax, as well as changes that the government has made in reinterpreting their own rules and policies pursuant to the Yukon's legislation around fuel tax rebates.

I have to point out to the Premier that the reason I keep raising this matter — and am going to keep raising it until it's resolved — is that the act itself has not changed. However, the government, under his Department of Finance, has chosen to reinterpret the rules as they pertain to farmers applying for the fuel tax back. That has resulted in excluding some activities that used to be eligible. This is a direct cost to farmers and to farmers who are providing services to other farmers who own land but don't own equipment. There is a simple solution. It's to change it back to the way it used to be, but this continues to be an issue and is entirely caused by this government, under this Minister of Finance, reinterpreting the rules, and it's directly costing my constituents and other Yukon farmers.

As well, in the area of the carbon tax and for farmers overall, we continue to have the problem that the entire carbon tax rebate structure — while government has continually argued, "Don't worry — farming is exempt" — the reality is that farmers have no way of getting back their carbon tax paid in what the government classifies as the "indirect carbon tax



costs". When you're bandying about all these terms, people can get lost in terms that don't necessarily make obvious sense to the average person, but I'm going to simplify it. What the "indirect carbon tax cost" means is that, if a farmer goes and buys fencing, feed, building materials, and a number of other things or if they ship equipment up the highway, they pay a carbon tax on those items.

Their costs have increased as a result, but they have no way to get a refund for it. While this Liberal government and the federal Liberal government can claim that they are creating an exemption for agriculture, in reality, the structure that they have established means that farmers pay more costs in carbon tax and don't have a way to recover that. With the Liberal government's insistence on proceeding with an increase to the carbon tax rate, this problem has become worse this year than it was the year before. This continues to be unacceptable and inconsistent with either the territorial government or the federal government actually living up to its commitments to support our agriculture sector.

Additionally, in the area of the fact that farmers are using propane for heating barns and other farm facilities, they can't get a carbon tax rebate back. Again, that is something that is directly affecting Yukon farmers, including my constituents who are paying an additional cost — an additional tax created by government on their usage of propane to heat their barn. In one case, I would point out that this is a facility that is being used to directly contribute a significant portion of locally produced food to Yukon grocery stores. They, as a farm, are directly and significantly contributing to the Yukon's increased production of local food, but instead of thanking them for that and supporting them, government is, in fact, taxing them for heating their building to keep their animals warm. That is an additional, unnecessary, and inappropriate cost that is not fair to my constituents and other farmers affected by it.

I may not get more of an answer from the Premier at this point, but I'm going to again advise him that the reason I keep raising these issues that are directly affecting farmers in my riding and elsewhere throughout the Yukon is that every month that this government fails to take action to solve the problem is another month that they are out of pocket.

Every time they pay a carbon tax on fencing, on feed, on building materials, and other supplies, that is money that is out of their pocket and it makes it harder for them to balance the books. Government can use all the talking points they want, but it comes down to the simple question: Are they solving the problem?

In a similar area — in that it is a government-created problem — we have the loss this year of commercial waste disposal for Yukon farmers in my riding, as well as on the south side of town. I wrote to two ministers about this; I expressed the concern. I noted that there needed to be the ability — the importance of having this waste disposal service — to the ability of farmers to operate. Government, to their credit, did do something, but it didn't go far enough to actually solve the problem. They did reach agreement with the City of Whitehorse to allow commercial waste haulers to haul garbage in from outside the city limits and dump it in the Whitehorse facility.

I would just remind the Premier and others that, in the absence of that agreement, the way the system would operate is that the garbage would still ultimately be ending up in the Whitehorse landfill — it would just take a side trip to facilities like the Deep Creek solid waste facility first. In the case, for example, of my constituents down the Hot Springs Road, it would literally mean that the garbage would take a 40-mile side trip before ultimately ending up in the Whitehorse facility. That would be an increased cost to the farmers, it would be increased fossil fuel emissions, and it would achieve literally no good whatsoever for either the Yukon territorial government or the city.

So, the problem is that the agreement the Yukon government has reached with the city still doesn't prevent the instability in the rates and the unpredictability in the rates that the commercial waste haulers are charged for dumping the garbage. Meanwhile, we have a situation that farmers are then not receiving this service because waste haulers can't offer a predictable fee.

Government can choose to do as they have and say that is really an issue for the city, but ultimately — especially considering all the money that this Liberal government wastes in other areas — if the agreement just isn't providing stability and predictability, ultimately the structure is not there to establish the conditions for success of our agriculture sector.

There are several different models that they could choose to reach in agreement with the city, for the Yukon government to provide — whether through financial assistance or some other way — there are a number of different models, such as the one in the Member for Klondike's — the Premier's — own riding with the arrangement with the Quigley landfill. There are other different models that could be reached.

My objective is not to pigeonhole the government on which model they need to choose, but it is simply to say that if you are actually serious about supporting our agriculture sector, they need access to waste disposal and they need to be able to do that at predictable, affordable rates. If they can't do that — the two governments involved in dealing with it might have tried, but they simply are not recognizing what the business community — the farming sector — needs to succeed. If they are serious about wanting to set up the conditions for success, they need to take the additional step of coming up with a model that actually works for farmers and market gardeners. I hope that the Premier has understood the point in that regard.

I am going to move on to the issue of debt. I would just remind the Premier that, today in Question Period and yesterday during general debate, he made misstatements of the facts regarding government debt. Since I have the Blues from yesterday, he said yesterday, on page 1692: "Out of the outstanding amount, our government is responsible for just over \$20 million of that debt. The rest, of course, was incurred under the Yukon Party."

Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, that is simply factually not true. I would table a copy from the Public Accounts showing what the total debt was in March 31, 2017, just after the Premier and his colleagues took office. There is the tail end of the overlapped year between the Yukon Party and the Liberal government and

a year, as well, where the Premier can't very well dispute the numbers contained in these Public Accounts because he is the one who tabled them in the Legislative Assembly. They were duly audited by the Auditor General.

On page 51 of the Public Accounts from 2017, it shows that the total debt as of March 31, 2017, was under \$200 million. The amount shown is \$193,522,000 as of March 31, 2017. I will table that for the record.

I would note then, if we go to the current Public Accounts, that the number that we see on page 62 of these Public Accounts is total debt under the Premier as of the end of the last fiscal year of \$228,435,000. So, in fact, that's \$34.9 million. That's not \$20 million. It's \$34.9 million. The Premier should know that's a fairly significant difference and a fairly significant misstatement.

In fact, where he may have got his notes wrong is that this Liberal government added almost \$20 million in new debt in the last fiscal year compared to the year before. We still haven't seen a breakdown of all of these new debts. We see there are some additional amounts under the Yukon Development Corporation that we still don't have full disclosure for, but that's a gross misstatement of the Premier in terms of the debt by this Liberal government. Now that I have corrected him on that, I would hope that he will correct his speaking notes in the future so that he's not in danger of deliberately misleading the Assembly with his statements.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I want to move on to another area, and that is regarding the Hospital Corporation. As we debated yesterday and for the reference of Hansard and any listening, I'm referring to page 1691 of the Blues from yesterday afternoon. We've had significant debate throughout this term about the adequacy of funding for the Hospital Corporation. This began in the spring of 2017 when I criticized the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services for the lack of funding for the Hospital Corporation. The minister at the time confirmed — which is shown in Hansard — that they provided the hospital with only a one-percent increase in core funding for that fiscal year.

So, on November 2, yesterday, I asked the Premier: "... a very important question — how much has the core funding for the Hospital Corporation increased during this mandate? We know that it went up one percent during the first year. What has been the actual rate of increase or decrease in each of the years that this government has been in office?"

I am pleased that the Premier actually did finally provide us with some breakdown from his numbers where he noted, in fact, according to what he advised us on page 1691, that over the past five years, there has been an increase of only 10 percent. I will quote: "... a 10-percent increase in core funding..."

Now, the Premier stated — and I quote as well: "The total budget for the Yukon Hospital Corporation for 2020-21 is \$81.3 million for its core operations and other requirements. This an 8.6-percent increase over the 2019-20 mains. The increase of 8.6 percent includes: increases in core funding for two fiscal years of about five percent..." The Premier went on to then list other items.

I would point out the fact that the Premier noted that there are increases in funding for two fiscal years of about five percent. When you take a look at that total 10-percent number and add up those increases, it does show you how little the budget was increasing before that period of time. It points to, as well, why the hospital has been under the strain that it has had, which has led to some of the situations that we've seen breaking out in news coverage last month and this month.

My point, at this point in time, is not to spend a lot of time continuing to debate the funding situation of the past, but again to emphasize to the government that, especially now that they are in a pandemic, they need to treat this area more seriously and need to ensure that the hospital receives the core funding that it needs. We should never be in a situation, as we've seen repeatedly throughout this government's time, where the hospital — a vital part of our health care sector — is seeing its budget grow at less than the general rate of growth across government. Typically, when funding is well balanced, health care increases at more than the general rate across government, but we've seen the opposite under this Liberal government, and that is part of why we see the pressures in health care that we do.

Again, as I mentioned earlier today in Question Period, it's important to recognize, for context, that when the government is blaming health care costs for the overall increase in spending across government, last year, according to the audited Public Accounts, spending across government increased by \$81.5 million, and that's more than the entire budget for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. When the increase across general government is more than the amount spent on the hospital itself, it's very disingenuous to suggest that health care spending is the primary cost of the increased rate of spending.

Ultimately, we've seen a very unusual narrative by the Premier earlier today when he was suggesting that the Yukon Party added too many employees to government during his time — but apparently his solution is then to add 568 new positions — which, by the admission of the government, through the numbers that they told us they are adding this year — 118 positions — added up with the numbers that the Premier told us on March 21, 2019, that being — and I quote: "... the total growth of FTEs by the end of the fiscal year will be 450..." — that growth of 568 positions, in real terms, is comparable to adding a town larger than Mayo or Carmacks to the government payroll and giving everyone positions.

What is additionally concerning with this is that we have heard multiple reports from within government of an increasing number of positions where the employees actually don't even live in the territory — and this includes management positions and director positions. The employees argue that they are primarily absent from the territory or partly absent from the territory for long stretches of time. That is a concern both in terms of the ability to operate and the fact that their paycheque is simply flowing south of the border and is not staying in the Yukon and stimulating the Yukon economy through seeing them buy their goods here in the territory. It is not supporting the local economy.

I hope that has addressed those particular parts. I do want to move on to another area, which is the issue of water licences. The Premier confirmed yesterday that there were a number of placer miners who are currently waiting for water licences. The Premier advised us — and I quote: “Currently, there are 17 licences before the board. Six of these were submitted in mid-to late summer and have not been processed yet. The remaining 11 have been before the board for longer. These longer timelines are due to proponents’ non-responses for information requested. Others are on pause due to wetlands issues and matters currently being explored with this hearing in the public interest, as we saw last week.”

So, my question for the Premier with regard to those placer miners who are waiting for a licence — many of whom are his constituents — and the unspecified number of others who are on pause due to wetlands issues: How many applications are we talking about and how many years have these applicants been waiting?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** That was a lot. I will do my best to answer the questions that he asked.

We will go all the way back to the questions about the changes that the member opposite is inferring happened under the *Fuel Oil Tax Act*. Under the FOTA, an exemption permit may be issued for commercial purposes and activities conducted with the intention of earning income. As the FOTA does not explicitly provide the definitions for each use — including farms, in this case — we used the federal government’s interpretation, which is based on the latest and most relevant court cases, to guide our approach through these exemptions. The member opposite may make it seem like we are changing policy on the fly — no, we are following legal cases right across Canada — so let’s put that to bed right away. Hopefully, the member opposite stops with that narrative. We will see.

When it comes to support for the agricultural industry, I will, of course, let the minister responsible have an opportunity to talk about the amazing work we have done, pre-COVID and during COVID, to support the agricultural industry. Also, when it comes to recycling or landfill discussions — the Minister of Community Services, again, when he comes up on his specific department, would love the opportunity to correct the record from what we heard from the member opposite and clarify the work that he and his department are doing with the municipality.

In areas of recycling and in areas of tipping fees — the previous government was way too shy to even tackle those because they knew it was a tough decision. They decided to just abdicate the responsibility therein. We, on this side of the House, are happy that we are making tough decisions that are necessary and important, and they are the right things to do. I will leave that up to the Minister of Community Services when he gets on the floor in Committee of the Whole in his specific department to address the specific questions from the member opposite.

We do agree that we need to support our agricultural industry. We need to support our farmers. Through the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of

Community Services, I will leave it to them to explain the multitude of services and help that this government provides to these extremely important industries.

Where do we go from there? We will go now to the carbon tax exemptions for farmers.

“Was the farmer using propane?” — that was the title of the letter that we received from the member opposite, the MLA for Lake Laberge, to which we responded.

In that response, we identified, again, that the Government of Canada introduced the carbon pricing and they did that as a way to address climate change through the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* to meet emission reduction targets under the *Paris Agreement*. Provinces and territories agreed to the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change*, which outlined the principles for pricing carbon pollution.

We went on, as well, to respond to the member opposite’s questions to inform him that the federal government, through its *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* — they charge a carbon levy on all fuel consumed in the territory, period. Canada also provides exemptions from carbon pricing under certain definitions — defined conditions. Exemptions are available through the use of an exemption certificate. The exemptions are limited to the operation of farm machinery for the purpose of farming. We attached to our response to him the federal tax form that I mentioned earlier, the L402, which is the fuel charge exemption certificate for farmers. Specifically, the GGPPA provides that a registered distributor can deliver exempt gasoline or light fuel oil to farmers at a farm if the fuel is used exclusively in the operation of eligible machinery or eligible farming activities.

Now, there are a few activities that are not covered by the exemption provided by Canada. Those are: barn heating for any purpose; crop drying — some farmers use propane for crop drying; residential heating; and also fuel that is used in licensed vehicles.

As we have discussed in the past, a comprehensive review of the federal, provincial, and territorial governments is due for 2020-23, of the federal carbon-pricing mechanism to establish the approach for carbon pricing moving forward, assessing the stringency and the effectiveness compared to carbon pollution pricing systems right across Canada.

The debate at the Council of the Federation at that time was based upon — I believe that British Columbia already had a model and already had their targets established — and looking at the comparison to the federal government — whether or not one would be a more appropriate mechanism or a more effective or stringent pricing mechanism. We should really compare systems to make sure that its purpose is served.

What I will say is that during that review — I wouldn’t mind working with the member opposite when it comes to specific types of rebates or exemptions that we feel would be something that we could put in that consideration. I mean, when you take a look at — these are carbon exemptions for farming and if one of those things that is not covered is something like barn heating for any purpose — well, I think that should be part

of the debate: Why? Let's push that. Let's push that for Yukon farmers. I will reach out to the member opposite.

Again, this would be something that happens in 2022-23 — so who knows where we all will be at that time? But I will make a commitment to the member opposite that if we are still in government in 2022-23 during the review — the federal review — then I would absolutely relish the opportunity to work with both opposition members and both opposition parties to establish — based upon the protocols and based upon reasons — why we feel that there should be certain other exemptions or rebates for our farming community.

I think that we answered the question there as far as any perceived changes and why those changes would have happened based upon litigation — federal and other provinces and territories — that type of thing. We've spoken about the fact that it is the federal government that does determine who is exempt from paying for the carbon levy. We explained to the member opposite why certain things are exempt and certain things are not — so I think we have answered his question when it comes to carbon pricing.

I will add though, Mr. Deputy Chair, that our Tax Administration branch is working with the Agriculture branch so that we can further develop our approach to Yukon farmers. That's some great work that's going on. I will again leave that to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to expand upon.

Let's go into the conversation about debt. What we've established from both sides of the House is that the lion's share of the debt that we currently have in the Yukon has been established by the Yukon Party.

Let's talk about long-term debt when it comes to the Yukon Development Corporation. That debt has increased over the years. We know of examples of the funded projects on their line of credit — which is part of that debt from the Yukon Party — the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line upgrade asset management software purchase and implementation and the replacement of the head gate and upgrade for Whitehorse hydro unit 2.

We saw also the Yukon Party spending money on the Aishihik water licence renewal, transmission line refurbishments — and the list goes on and on. The current credit facilities used by Yukon Energy Corporation, as of today, is \$31 million. The authorized limit on that is \$36 million. The breakdown of all of that long-term debt, again, is involved in the financial statements, brought out in the Public Accounts. If you want to take a look at the breakdown of those, you could go back to the 2019 Public Accounts — note 14.

But, again, Mr. Deputy Chair, we are talking long-term debt from these corporations and the Hospital Corporation as well — and over the year, from Public Accounts to Public Accounts, numbers do go up and do go down, but our portion of the debt that the government currently has is extremely small compared to the debt that we are left with from the Yukon Party.

With that being said, the things that I just listed for the Development Corporation alone — they are important pieces of work when it comes to providing power — providing energy

— to Yukoners. We have seen the debt limit increased by the members opposite several times — a few different times — whereas we have seen the federal government increase the limit once under us, and you know, just because it was lifted to \$800 million, that doesn't mean that we have spent the \$800 million that it has been raised to. We have given the numbers as far as where we are right now — as far as debt — and we also have said that, if and when we have some non-fossil fuel projects to invest in, then that is where that money is going to come from.

Hopefully, we can also continue to work with the federal government to find other pockets of money — other federal initiatives — that would help us to alleviate that cost to our transfer agreement. We have seen that in the past. We have seen some monies set aside for Arctic energy, for example, through ICIP funding. So, again, there are other opportunities. It would be great if we could work in partnership with the federal government. We have some really interesting projects on the horizon when it comes to Atlin — increasing the power out of Atlin — really excited about being able to partner with the Taku River Tlingit but also with the British Columbia government and with the federal government as to what we could do to increase the involvement of First Nation governments when it comes to these utilities and what we can do to work interjurisdictionally on reconciliation and also provide clean energy for Yukoners.

Again, I won't go too far down that road because, again, I will be spoiling the thunder for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, who is very excited about the work that he and his department have done to get away from megadiesel as a permanent fixture here in Whitehorse and move forward to a non-fossil fuel alternative or suite of alternatives when it comes to energy security here in the Yukon.

The member opposite goes on about FTEs. We really missed an opportunity in shutting the Legislative Assembly down in the spring to speak of the increase of 30 to the FTE complement at that time. I don't recall, in the five years of the Yukon Party 2.0, that little amount of FTEs in a mains in their previous five years. The member opposite, again, can talk about increasing FTEs. We believe that there is a balance to be struck. We need to make sure that the programs and services have the human resources possible to make sure that we implement these programs and services for Yukoners, but we have also proven through the mains this year that we can do that and, at the same time — with a lens of working internally — trying our best to limit the amount of FTEs. So, 30 in the mains is extraordinary.

If we go into the numbers in the supplementary budget when it comes to FTEs — the number did increase, but again, a lot of those increases are not permanent. They are because of COVID and they are in response to things like border measures, and making sure that we had the human capacity to help out with the HEOC with the chief medical officer's team as we established a protocol and communications between communities. They are part-time FTEs.

We have talked about the numbers over and over again, but only 13 of those are full-time equivalents. Again, I think that, looking at this year's FTE count, we have done an

extraordinary job of making sure that we provide the programs and services necessary — but, at the same time, with a keen eye to making sure that, if we are increasing the FTEs, that we look internally first to make sure that we can work collaboratively, government-to-government, with our FTEs first and foremost.

If we need to add new professionals or if we need to add a new complement of human resources, well then, we will, because the most important thing during COVID times is the safety of Yukoners, and the most important thing is that government is making sure that the programs and services continue. We have answered this question a few times for the member opposite.

As of *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, there will be a total of 5,193 FTEs. As of the supplementary that we're speaking about here, the increase is 88.2 FTEs. Again, it's really important for Yukoners to understand that only 13 of those are permanent, to be added to the 30 that were added to the mains for this year. The rest are 75.2 term FTEs. The majority of these additional positions, as I mentioned, are for COVID supports to ensure that we continue to provide a high level of service for Yukoners.

To be very specific, the total number of FTEs also reflects an increase of 30.8 — 30.8 is the total number of FTEs between the 2019-20 budget year and the 2020-21 main estimates. If we take a look at our most current year and the addition of FTEs and if we compared that to the final year of the Yukon Party, it would be a huge difference. Remember, we've had the debate back and forth about the increase in teachers who were hired by the Yukon Party and were sitting in chairs already hired as FTEs before the election even happened and then the Yukon Party saying, "Well this is in your year, so that must be your FTE count." We could rehash that whole debate. I don't have the specific numbers in front of me, but again, that was something that the Yukon Party did and then told us that it was our year, so therefore it was our FTEs — not true, Mr. Deputy Chair.

I'll pick up where I left off here, Mr. Deputy Chair. We had a question also from the member opposite on the second question about the extended-family care —

**Deputy Chair:** Two minutes.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Two minutes? You know what, Mr. Deputy Chair — I will cede the floor because this particular answer is a little bit more than two minutes.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate that the Premier did provide some answers, but I want to note that, in areas such as the issue of farmers not having garbage service, the Premier got up and first of all applauded themselves for the courage to introduce tipping fees, which I must remind him is actually something that government is losing money on at some of the facilities. They're spending more money than they collect while also making life more expensive for Yukoners.

They have blocked a number of roads — old secondary roads, gravel pits, et cetera — the cost of which they still haven't disclosed — and have done stuff like putting in \$155,000 power line connections to dump facilities. Ultimately, it is not a very fiscally effective way of doing things.

But I want to return to the more important issue which is the commercial garbage service for farmers. The Premier can say all he wants that the Minister of Community Services will rise and correct the record, but the simple fact is that it comes down to this: Where's the commercial garbage service for farmers? I don't dispute that the minister did actually do something after I wrote him a letter. However, the fact remains that it didn't go far enough because the model is still not predictable enough for business and it has resulted in a situation where farmers still don't have this service.

Again, if you're serious about increasing the production of Yukon food and if you are serious about our agriculture sector, you need to work together with the city to come up with a framework that actually provides them with reasonable options for this waste disposal service. If you don't, you're going to see one of two things: Either those farms are not going to succeed or, since they don't have good options for waste disposal, they're going to either have to haul it themselves to a waste facility like Deep Creek — where government will then haul it back into Whitehorse and pay them a tipping fee to take it in the same landfill — or else you're going to see things such as increased burning and burying of waste or dumping inappropriately.

I will mention the fact that government has a bit of a disconnect between what the Department of Environment is doing and what the Department of Community Services is doing. When the Department of Environment is repeatedly urging citizens — including farmers and gardeners — to reduce the attractants on their properties that might attract wild animals as part of their desire to reduce human and wildlife conflict, yet on the other hand, Community Services makes it harder to get rid of organic waste and other garbage on those properties, you have two branches doing two completely different things that clash with each other and leave farmers and other citizens left in the middle with a problem. Unfortunately, lip service and solutions that are well-intentioned but don't fix the problem are just not enough.

I want to touch briefly again on the issue of the fuel tax rebate — and I just want to reference briefly the act, which is the Yukon government's legislation, for which the Minister of Finance is the minister responsible. Under section 6 of the act, it very clearly identifies activities that can use fuel oil that would be exempt, and those include fishing, logging, hunting or outfitting, trapping, mining — including mining exploration and development — farming, tourism, and operating and maintaining a sawmill. Again, that is in section 6 of the *Fuel Oil Tax Act* — which Hansard and others will find on the government website. It is very clear that the intent of that legislation was to exempt farmers from paying that tax.

There is literally no mention in that act of relying on federal definitions or federal case law that relates to farming on or off of people's property. It is a choice that has been made by the government to come up with a new interpretation that, in my view, is completely contrary to the intent of the act. It is indisputably a change in government's policy that is resulting in Yukon farmers not being eligible for a rebate that they used to be eligible for.

I want to move on to another issue that the Premier mentioned, which is that of renewable energy and diesel. The Premier was talking about using terms like “megadiesel” while conveniently ignoring that facilities that were considered previously were looking at either diesel or LNG. I would remind the Premier that in the government’s own documents — in the draft 10-year renewable electricity plan that Yukon Energy shared with stakeholders this summer — we see very clearly that part of the government’s plan for the next decade — actually, beyond the next decade — includes using diesel, including using incremental diesel replacements. So, the Premier is trying to create the impression that his government is only focused on renewable, but in fact, we see that the Liberal plan is for a decade of diesel.

In that, it’s also interesting that the legislative return that we received from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources identified the cost of this Liberal government continuing to rent diesels, which, I remind him, started under the Liberal government, and we see that the rental costs right now — I should specify that the rental costs to date and the rental costs that the minister told us that they expect to spend this year — we are seeing that the cost of renting diesel is \$13.4 million. That includes a rental cost this year of over \$6.5 million for 10.6 megawatts of diesel.

I would ask the Premier: Over that 10-year period going forward, how much more money does the government plan on spending on renting diesels? We see their decade of diesel in their plans. We see that they have not invested in owning the assets but instead have chosen to rent the assets. Is it simply a case of extrapolating the cost for this year of \$6.6 million going forward? Will the next decade cost \$66 million in diesel rental? Or because the growth of energy is more than that, how much higher is the actual number that the government is expecting to pay because of their choice to rent diesel instead of owning an asset that would produce power?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** When it comes to waste management, Community Services will be here to answer those very specific questions on waste disposal. The minister requests the ability to have a debate on this issue with the member opposite. If the member opposite wants to hear the department’s approach and make suggestions to the department, then he absolutely has the opportunity to do that when the department is here in the Legislative Assembly — when Community Services is here to debate the supplementary budget.

I think that there are definitely some things in what the member opposite speaks of as far as how we must support our farmers and that we must make sure that we invoke policy that makes sense. I know that the minister responsible is champing at the bit to have that debate and to listen to the suggestions from the member opposite when it comes to that.

I would say the same thing when it comes to the 10-year energy plan when it comes from the Yukon Development Corporation, the Yukon Energy Corporation, and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. They are absolutely champing at the bit to debate with the member opposite the strategy of megadiesel investment from the opposition or LNG investment from the opposition compared to what we want to do here,

which is work with First Nation governments and invest in non-fossil-fuel futures.

Now, are we happy that we are in a situation right now where we have to rent temporary diesels? No, we are not. We really wish that the millions and millions of dollars that the Yukon Party spent in their next generation hydro activity actually involved First Nations. When they got down to their sweet 16 and started getting down in their list on that project — I will take a look and come back to the Legislative Assembly to remind the members opposite how much money they spent on next generation hydro. I remember being at a GA where the former Premier was there talking with a particular First Nation. The particular First Nation — I believe it was Selkirk — was not happy that some of the areas that they had identified historically where they would absolutely not be in favour of a major hydro project had made it onto these short lists.

Again, there were countless millions of dollars wasted in an exercise that really was doomed to fail — because, of course, the Yukon Party did not work hand in glove with the First Nations, whose traditional territory would be affected in these next generation hydro projects. It has been a long time to get back to the table with First Nations and talk about exactly that — energy and utilities.

When it comes to working with First Nations, I spoke with leadership just the other day. We had a great conversation about some exciting projects that we can work on together. Has that taken some time? Yes, it has. Were we starting from square zero? Yes, we really were.

We are not happy to have temporary diesels and we look to phase those out as other exciting projects with First Nation development corporations and governments — including transboundary First Nations — this is all reconciliation in action. Again, I can feel the minister right now champing at the bit to have this conversation about our strategy and long-term planning compared to what the Yukon Party did with millions of dollars — and really, at the end of the day, they didn’t identify any projects that were worthy of going forward with at the time, with First Nations’ blessings — those whose traditional territories would be affected.

It does give you pause to talk about the overall plan of *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*. It is a Yukon-wide strategy. It has very ambitious targets and tangible actions to respond to the climate emergency. That strategy was developed in partnership with Yukon First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, and Yukon municipalities over the course of three years. The strategy outlines clear targets, timelines, evaluation criteria, and annual progress reported and will demonstrate to Yukoners that we are delivering on these commitments to make sure that we are able to meet the ambitious 2030 targets that we have set.

By 2030, Yukon’s greenhouse emissions — from all sources except mining — and we are working on that output-based system with the federal government — will be 30-percent lower than we were in 2010, and Yukon communities will be more resilient to the impacts of climate change. By 2022, we will set intensity-based targets for the mining industry, and we will see Yukon’s mines operating more efficiently.

We were criticized that the plan itself left some leeway in there to accomplish some targets — and I remember multiple ministers having the conversation with the amazing environmentalists who were helping us out with the plan about why we are leaving room. Basically, you see the exponential growth in these technologies as we speak — the price tag for things like solar panels and different types of non-fossil-fuel technologies. This is a booming industry. This is something that we really need to capitalize on as a government and as a region in Canada, because when you take a look at where the world is going when it comes to non-fossil-fuel futures, it's exciting. It would be excellent for our GDP to get involved with this industry.

When you take a look at those growths and that technology — over the next decades, things will change. To make targets right now based on modern technology but not the future technology, that's where there is a discrepancy in those targets.

But we are confident that this discrepancy will be made up by the increases in the technologies based on what we have seen to date in those initiatives.

So, over the next 10 years, the Government of Yukon will be partnering with the Government of Canada to invest half a billion dollars in climate change and energy. Over \$400 million of this will directly support economic development and recovery by investing in local renewable energy — infrastructure and building projects, encouraging purchases of green technologies, zero emission vehicles — that type of thing, Mr. Deputy Chair — supporting Yukon businesses and workers to develop new skills and new technologies, as well, in that green economy.

The Yukon government is leading by example in its commitments to reduce those greenhouse gas emissions from the government buildings by 30 percent by 2030, and we are going to achieve this by improving energy efficiency and also by offsetting fossil-fuel use with renewable energy. We have outlined a plan with tangible concrete actions that are modelled to have a very significant impact on Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions. This is not just a high-level strategy; it is a realistic pathway forward.

I will add to that — again, as I mentioned — we will work to close the remaining gap to the targets that I spoke of as we learn which actions are working well, which ones can be improved, and also, as I mentioned, the new technologies emerging in the next 10 years.

I would mention as well that, through fuel blending, by 2030, we expect to reduce non-mining greenhouse gas emissions by 70 kilotonnes per year and mining emissions by 25 kilotonnes per year as well.

I will go back — there were some questions from November 2 that I would like to get an opportunity to answer as well. The member opposite asked about the extended-family care agreements and if he could get a program description showing how much is being spent on them, what these agreements actually do, and the nature and the structure of those agreements. On a general basis, I can fill in some gaps there — but again, I would ask the member opposite to ask some more specific questions of the Minister of Health and

Social Services, when she has an opportunity in Committee of the Whole to get to her feet and to talk about the extended-family care agreements.

Under the *Child and Family Services Act*, when a child is in need of out-of-home care, the first choice is placement with an extended family member to enable closer connections to family, community, and culture. That is a sea change compared to the previous government.

As of June 2020, there were 131 children supported under the extended-family care agreement. That's compared to 115 children in November 2018. We've also seen an 18-percent reduction in the number of children in care over the last two years. As of July 2020, there were 78 children in care compared to 95 in November 2018. Those children are either on a continuing, temporary, or interim care order or a volunteer care agreement. As of July 2020, 15 children are living in group homes — 15. This is amazing work from the department and the Minister of Health and Social Services.

In addition to enhancing financial supports, we've also dedicated three placement resource workers to support extended-family caregivers in Whitehorse — one of whom is located in the McIntyre subdivision, working collaboratively with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

We will, of course, be evaluating this dedicated worker support model in the coming months to determine how effective it is. But as far as the cost and figures in the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, which we're here in the Legislative Assembly debating today, Health and Social Services would receive \$400,000 of additional budget for EFCAs. This \$400,000 is entirely recoverable from Canada.

The member opposite went on to ask a question about the pandemic's impact on tourism — what precautions and information is government relying on when they are making their projections in the tourism sector, understanding that there is significant uncertainty? Can you commit on when you expect GDP to get back on track?

I do believe the minister answered that question a few times on her feet in the Legislative Assembly and she also corrected the record as far as how quickly we got out there to support the tourism industry. When COVID first came to Canada, we had to cancel the Arctic Winter Games. Cancellation of an event like that — and other events that were planned pre-pandemic — these are cancellations of tourism and culture events. The Minister of Tourism and Culture acted very quickly to determine what the need was as far as cancellations — whether that be for our aviation industry, whether that be for our hotels, whether that be for major events that were planned.

This government was there to support those Yukoners who — like us — at that time were grappling to understand the consequences of the global pandemic. Right away — with cancellation supports — we worked with the business community with supports. Right away with the Business Advisory Committee — getting people from different businesses from every sector in Yukon to come together and talk about what needs would be going forward.

The Minister of Economic Development and his team worked collaboratively with others and came together with a

plan — a fixed business cost — which was definitely being used by tourism industry providers and businesses from that very early response. Again, they offered a program of fixed costs — not loans; the federal government was giving out loans; this government was putting out grants. This was money in pockets to all the businesses right away to make sure that they were covered in these extraordinary times.

Our hearts go out to the business people in Yukon — I don't know too many people in the business community who wanted any handouts from government; they want to work. They want the pandemic to be over and so do we; however, in the interim, the government is here for them. We proved that quickly, despite what the opposition would tell you. We did that with programs that no other jurisdiction in Canada offered. We did that as well with our sick leave provisions right off the bat — and it's a program that the federal government is keenly interested in for the rest of Canada.

We continue to support that into this legislative session and this supplementary budget — when we take a look at hoteliers and accommodation support and millions of dollars over the next three years — to again forecast to the business community and the tourism industry that we are here with you and we will get through this together.

Specifically to the member opposite's question — the restrictions on travel across the country and around the world are weighing heavily on the Yukon tourism sector — absolutely. 2020 is shaping up to be the most difficult year on record. There is no doubt about it. Based on the year-to-date decline in the border crossings — which are down nearly 95 percent, Mr. Deputy Chair, over the first eight months, as compared to the same period in 2019 — and the very poor outlook for the remainder of 2020, it may be 80- to 90-percent lower than the 2019 levels for the same time of year.

Given this unprecedented disruption to the travel and tourism sector, forecasters have been hesitant to make predictions about the magnitude and duration of the impacts. We have been on the floor of the Legislative Assembly talking as well about the Canada Council and their statistics about who is willing to travel right now, even if there weren't restrictions. That number is extremely low.

For Yukon, a great deal will depend, as far as what is going to happen in the future, on how long international border restrictions remain in place, for example. I have been on the calls with the federal government asking them about specific jurisdictions like Germany. We have direct flights to Germany and want to know from the federal government — on a country-to-country basis — what their approach to epidemiology is going to be to allow the safe travel of folks from those areas. But we also have to work hand in glove with the communities and make sure that the First Nation communities and the municipalities are ready for changes as we move forward and take a look at what we can do.

Even when most travel and border restrictions are lifted, concerns over contracting COVID-19 while travelling will definitely have an impact on demand. It will have an impact on demand until a vaccine is approved and widely available. We are very hopeful for that time to come soon, but we have to

make sure that, from now until then, we are there for the business community and for the tourism community.

Under the current forecast and the interim fiscal and economic outlook, 2022 is the first tourism season projected — and again, these are projections — and you have to be very careful about projections, but that is the first year projected to be unencumbered by restrictions on travel or business operations. Again, as we look at second surges and international situations, it is very hard to make predictions. This forecast is based on the best information and analysis available at this time. However, I again have to make sure that we understand that this might change.

These assumptions on timing are consistent with other forecasters such as the Bank of Canada, which also states the following in its June monetary policy report, in overview 2 — and I quote: "... the central scenario assumes the following ... the pandemic will have largely run its course by mid-2022, likely because of the widespread availability of a vaccine or effective treatment."

Due to the potential for reduced demand of risk-averse travellers, the forecast includes an assumption that tourism does not return to pre-COVID levels until 2023, as anxiety from travellers will continue to the present. Those are, again, the forecast assumptions based on the questions — but also the reality of supports that have been there from our government. I could go on about the federal supports as well, but I will leave it at that for now and cede the floor to the member opposite.

**Mr. Cathers:** I want to return to the issue of government's plans regarding energy and the fact that the public face of it — the presentation — is that it is *Our Clean Future* — that is what they call it, but the reality is that the Premier talks about renewables and his ministers talk about renewables, but the actual plans that Yukon Energy shared with stakeholders show the purchasing of new diesels. They show over a decade of reliance on diesel under this current government's plan.

Diesel is not renewable energy. Unfortunately, we also see a bit of a cognitive disconnect between the government's plans within their *Our Clean Future* document and the fact that, if you are doing stuff such as getting 4,800 zero-emission vehicles on the roads by 2030, ensuring that at least 50 percent of all new light-duty cars purchased each year by the government are zero-emission vehicles, and replacing 1,300 residential fossil-fuel heating systems with smart electric heating systems by 2030 — both of which can be found on, I believe, page 8 and page 9 respectively of the government's *Our Clean Future* document — those actions take electricity to power them. Right now, we have seen that the government's plan in the short term, the medium term, and the long term is to rent diesels.

Now, according to the legislative return that the Minister responsible for Yukon Development Corporation and for Yukon Energy Corporation tabled in this House on October 13, we see the cost that the government has spent to date on diesel. We then take a look at the Yukon Energy Corporation's plans — which they have called the draft 10-Year renewable electricity plan — although there is also diesel energy in that



plan — and what isn't clear is what the annual estimated future cost is of this government's plans to continue renting diesels.

I'm going to quote from the minister's legislative return: "During the winter of 2019, Yukon Energy rented nine portable diesel generators with a total capacity of 16.2 megawatts. The total cost of this rental was approximately \$4.37 million."

It then goes on to note: "This year, Yukon Energy will rent 17 units..." It later on tells us that is composed of "Nine units with a total capacity of 16.2 megawatts will be installed in Whitehorse and one extra unit will remain onsite as back-up. Six units with a total capacity of 10.8 megawatts will be installed in Faro and one extra unit will remain onsite as back-up."

So, we see that the costs have grown exponentially from 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, and then this current year. According to the minister's legislative return, it started out at \$700,000. It grew the next year to \$1.72 million, then it went to \$4.37 million and, this year, it's estimated to go to \$6.65 million. Now, I asked the Premier whether the government's costs — how much that's going to increase going forward. Is it just a case of the \$6.65 million that we're paying this year — that it will be required every year over the next decade? That seems certainly like less than the apparent growth of energy. That would be a cost of \$66.5 million in renting diesels over that time period. If the government is actually using more power than that — and I hear ministers laughing at this. It may be a laughing matter to them, but this is taxpayers' money we're talking about. Ratepayers are required to reach deeper into their pockets for another rate increase coming from this Liberal government's failed policies — these are topics of concern for them.

Again, I'm going to rely on the government and Yukon Energy's own documents. We see that the government's plans — as laid out in *Our Clean Future* — include electric vehicles. Those are referred to in Yukon Energy's draft plan on page 11 of the document that I have.

They are estimating that it will add 11 megawatts to the load. They are expecting another three megawatts to be added in demand based on electrification actions and another four megawatts due to smart heating, which would seem to relate to some of the heating commitments made in the government's plans. That is a load growth of 18 megawatts — again including — according to Yukon Energy's draft plans — what is shared with stakeholders.

Again, we are looking at the fact that — I will use the most comparable number from the minister's legislative return. Last year, they rented 16.2 megawatts at a cost of \$4.37 million. Obviously, 18 megawatts are more than 16.2, but I will compare government numbers to government numbers and give them the difference between just so that the minister can't suggest that we are using inaccurate comparisons of the costs. If you take that cost of leasing for the government's actions, it then leaves us the question: In addition to the other load growth, what is the actual cost going forward of diesel rentals to prop up the actual costs of implementing what government is pretending is a green agenda, but is actually being powered by burning diesel fuel?

**Deputy Chair:** Order. Would members like to take a quick recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Deputy Chair:** Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** The member opposite is wanting to have a debate about long-term plans for Yukon Energy Corporation here in general debate. If he really wants to put his influence, suggestions, or criticisms to the department or to the officials — I did speak during the break to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. They are well aware of the questions, concerns, and criticisms that were given today. We will have answers and responses. Comparing what the Yukon Party was investing — the permanent megadiesel plant compared to what we are doing with an interim approach of backup when it comes to diesel now — the question of costs spent on diesel — I shudder to think of the amount of money that the government would spend on diesel if we went toward a megadiesel plant that the members opposite would have wanted, but instead we do have some rentals as backup.

Again, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is champing at the bit to have a discussion with the member opposite when it comes to our energy future.

The member opposite did reference *Our Clean Future*. I am not going to repeat myself as to the direction, intent, and dollar values there. I will say, though, that, in assisting us with this extremely flexible and extremely adaptive management approach, we have committed to clear, annual progress reports to update the actions of the strategy every three to four years as well. Through our actions, we will create or support an estimated 115 jobs each year for retrofits to residential, commercial, and institutional buildings, including renewable heating systems. Anything further than just general debate, I would ask the member opposite — those questions that he asked and those concerns and criticisms will be identified by the corporations and also by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. They will be responding in due time in Committee of the Whole when the department and officials are here to debate.

I think that's it for that. I will cede the floor to the member opposite to see if there are any more questions.

**Mr. Cathers:** The Premier is very fond of his "ask someone else later" approach to responding to questions. Unfortunately, our experience — in this Sitting and in previous Sittings — has been that, if we do that, we find that we often don't get the answers then either. Sometimes the government doesn't even call a department for debate — such as we saw during the one Spring Sitting when the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education — the

largest department, in the case of Health and Social Services, with roughly 35 percent of government's operation and maintenance expenditures — and Education, one of the other largest departments — had only 4.4 percent of the time of the Legislative Assembly during debate — in fact, less time than the government spent in re-announcements through ministerial statements that we had to listen to ad nauseum throughout that Spring Sitting.

I will continue asking the Premier questions, and the Premier will find that the quickest path to actually clearing general debate is to provide a reasonable response to the questions that we are asking, rather than to say to ask someone else later. We have been burned on that too many times, Mr. Deputy Chair.

I do have to correct the Premier. This talking point is interesting that the Liberal government has come up with. The Premier and his minister have come up with this talking point about a megadiesel plant, which, apparently, they claim was the Yukon Party's plan for meeting our energy needs. It is funny that, depending on which day or which you're hearing from them — the Liberal government used to accuse the Yukon Party of supporting megahydro. Then they decided to make megadiesel the bogeyman. In fact, the 20-megawatt plant that was being talked about — first of all, both diesel and LNG were being considered as options.

Secondly and most importantly, it wasn't the Yukon Party that took that plan out for public consultation; it was the Liberal government. The need to meet some of our power needs with a thermal option was, indeed, part of the long-term energy plan that had been identified through the resource planning work in 2016, but that specific proposal and project was, in fact, taken out for public consultation by the Premier's Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation. The corporation under his watch, with his approval, took that project out. Then, after the Liberal government had apparently planned on going forward with that project — certainly expended taxpayers' money on developing the project proposal, holding public consultations, and so on — the Liberals decided that they were going to make a political decision to kill that project and pretend that they actually weren't actually going to rely on diesel or LNG for their energy needs, and instead they have chosen to rent rather than purchase. They are renting diesel, not LNG, and refusing to tell us about the total cost of their long-term rental of diesel. But we do see that, in their plan — again, I'm going to point to the Yukon Energy Corporation's plan, not our talking point and not something developed under a previous government, but the draft 10-year renewable electricity plan prepared by Yukon Energy Corporation with their new logo that they spent money on, under the current government, and dated July 2020. In that plan, we see a plan to add at least 18 megawatts to the load for the government's supposed green energy plans.

We flip the page to see energy existing and planned, and capacity existing and planned, and — surprise, surprise — we see that the government is planning on using diesels and buying diesels, in addition to their rentals, out to 2035-36, which is the last year shown in this plan.

Their green energy plan — their supposed *Our Clean Future* plan — is not really as clean as advertised. It includes renting diesels and includes the purchase of diesels, but that doesn't line up with the talking points, because the Premier's talking points and the minister's talking points would have you believe that it's all about renewable energy. Unfortunately, that is not what the plans actually say. Their talking points are undermined by their own plans and their own documents.

Again, we recognize that sometimes a utility needs to use thermal energy as part of their mix if they don't have sufficient renewable capacity. We were faced with that choice and had to choose the development of the LNG facility as the least objectionable option that we had available at the time. I would remind the government that we started out with two turbines. They made the choice to add another one to it.

I acknowledge that sometimes using thermal energy may be the best option. The key issue here is that government should be transparent about what it's doing and not pretend to the public that they are opposed to diesel energy, wouldn't want to touch diesel energy except just very, very temporarily, but have embedded within the heart of their plans the continued use of diesel energy going forward.

This comes back to the question that I asked earlier and received a long non-answer from the Premier about. They have diesel energy use, including rental diesels, in the plan. Over the next decade, how much money does the government expect to spend by renting diesel units? How much does it expect to spend on the fuel for them? Last but not least, of that increased cost, how much of that is directly due to meeting the commitments outlined in the government's supposed green energy plan, *Our Clean Future*?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, this concept of us not answering the questions when today, coming back to the member opposite and adding answers to the questions asked previously in the wrong places — asking questions about mains or Public Accounts when we have supplementary estimates, asking for us to speculate or for me to speculate on costs of diesel into the future when we are here to debate the supplementary budget for this year. Again, if the member opposite actually wanted answers to these questions, then he would — when the minister comes in with his department — have a debate with him about our intention to get off of fossil fuels and to turn to a clean energy future where we have invested over half a billion dollars over the next 10 years with the federal government in this initiative.

He keeps asking the same question over and over again. He has been warned in the past about that, but it is not going to change his tack. Again, the question was about going out in consultation for the Yukon Party's plan for next generation diesel — again, consultation ended with: "No, we're not going to do it." The minister answered that question already in the Legislative Assembly again. So, the members opposite's approach of saying that we are not answering the questions just doesn't cut the mustard, if you want to use that expression — "cut the mustard".

I remember being in debate when I would just go: "You know what? I am not getting these questions answered." So, I

would just list all the questions to the government of the day. Never once did they ever come back and answer those questions. Again, even if the questions are being asked in the wrong part of the Legislative Assembly, the wrong part of Committee of the Whole, we still do endeavour to get back to the member opposite with those questions. He has asked me a few times now to speculate on future diesel costs. I have said to him several times already that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is champing at the bit to have a conversation with him about their plan for next generation diesel compared to our plan for a green economy and clean growth.

No new question here — already answered the question. We are ready to go with more responses to the member opposite's questions, so what I will do is use this time to continue down the road of answering specific questions that the member opposite has asked in the past, which really busts open his whole narrative of us not answering these questions — but, oh well, we will continue to go through that.

The member opposite did ask, when it comes to the Public Accounts, what the percentage increase of expected revenues and expenses is as compared to previous fiscal years. If we look at a year-over-year comparison on a consolidated basis — comparing the 2019-20 actuals for Public Accounts to the 2020-21 main estimates — and if you take a look at revenue, revenue has increased from \$1.476 billion to \$1.573 billion, or about 6.6 percent. Expenditures as well have increased. As I say, comparing the 2019-20 actuals from the Public Accounts to the 2020-21 main estimates, the expenditures increased from \$1.48 billion to \$1.553 billion, or about five percent. Comparing the 2018-19 actuals to the 2019-20 actuals, Public Accounts to Public Accounts, revenue increased from \$1.4 billion to \$1.476 billion, or about 5.4 percent. For the same comparison of those actuals of 2018-19 to the actuals of 2019-20, the expenditures increased from \$1.399 billion to \$1.48 billion, or about 5.8 percent.

There are no consolidated comparators in supplementary estimates for 2020-21 as per normal practice — just making sure that we clarify that as well. However, we can show the percentage growth from the 2020-21 mains to the supplementary estimates on a non-consolidated basis, as we are here discussing the supplementary budget. Revenues in that consideration — and this, again, is percentage growth from the 2020-21 mains to the supplementary estimates here today on a non-consolidated basis — that would be revenue increased from \$1.526 billion to \$1.568 billion, or about 2.75 percent in this COVID year.

Expenditures did increase. They increased from \$1.522 billion to \$1.6 billion, or about 5.11 percent. We've already talked about the comparison between expenditures but also recoveries. We've already touched on that as far as the differences there, so I won't get into that. It is worth reminding the member opposite that, when we're speaking about these things, there are recoveries as well. He sometimes forgets that part when he's talking about what we spend.

When comparing the 2019-20 mains to this supplementary budget, revenues are increasing by 9.65 percent and expenditures are increasing by 11.39 percent. If we wanted to

compare the 2019-20 actuals from Public Accounts to this supplementary budget, revenues are increasing 8.4 percent and expenditures are increasing by 10.3 percent.

Of course, as we have the Public Accounts now here, we can continue to speak about the Public Accounts as they have now been tabled in the Legislative Assembly. I haven't seen too many of those questions from the member opposite now. He asked a lot of them when we were in the 2019-20 supplementary budget general debate over two departments. He asked a lot of questions about the Public Accounts at that time, but we do have it tabled now. Hopefully, we'll see some more questions there.

He did have a question about government pandemic spending. The question was: Does the government have any limit to its spending? We did answer it on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. We talked about fiscal anchors as well at that time, but it is again worth mentioning that, in the final report of the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel, they did indicate that adopting a fiscal anchor is intended to ensure that long-term shocks do not permanently push the government off the path leading to a long-term goal. I'll quote the report. It went on to say — and I quote: "There is a wide variety of forms that a fiscal anchor can take. A simple and transparent version of a fiscal anchor might be to simply require the government to restrict the rate of growth in spending. The general form of these restrictions are called 'tax and expenditure limits' and, as the name implies, constrains the choices governments make with respect to tax and spending choices. These restrictions can be imposed permanently or for short periods of time. For example, the government might consider restricting the rate of growth in spending to the combined rates of growth in population and inflation. In this way, real per capita spending is held constant perhaps until such time as its budget imbalance is corrected."

Mr. Deputy Chair, the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel also indicated that a fiscal anchor that is often considered is a balanced budget restriction with varying levels of strictness. Our primary focus — and our primary fiscal anchor during this mandate, which has been made public through our long-term forecasts — has been a return to surplus, as I mentioned yesterday and I am mentioning it again today. This was a fairly prudent first step that our government took toward righting the fiscal ship and one that we are on track to meeting. We had that with the tabling of the surplus budget in the spring, and we were on track there — again, a year ahead of schedule.

It is important to keep in mind that the trade-offs with adding or adjusting fiscal anchors is flexibility to respond to changing conditions. One example is that the government has heavily restricted itself to a balanced budget. If we didn't get to that fiscal anchor and if we didn't have that fiscal acuity, we wouldn't be able to support Yukoners and Yukon businesses through this global pandemic as we are currently doing and to the extent and rate in which we are doing it. Our government has continuously struck a balance between our fiscal goals and remaining flexible to ensure that the territory, the people, and its businesses are supported today and supported tomorrow as well.

Of course, as we all know, the global pandemic has disrupted our fiscal targets; however, I would again point to the surplus budget that was tabled in March as this government's commitment to and success on that goal. I did touch on that yesterday as far as anchors go. We talked about the Public Accounts, page 10, and the fiscal anchors therein, but I also just want to reiterate that one of those fiscal anchors that we did achieve in having a surplus going into the mains of this year.

The member opposite did go on — and we did respond to this the other day, but I want to add more to the answer — again, breaking apart his narrative that we don't answer questions. How far is the government prepared to go in subsidizing part of the economy that may not be working? Again, we did talk about that yesterday. We talked about the limits on COVID spending, but our anchor right now — and we mentioned this yesterday as well — is ensuring that Yukoners have what they need to come through the global pandemic in the best shape possible from an economic point of view and from a public health perspective.

We were clear in answering that question yesterday, and we are answering it more again here today. We are balancing fiscal prudence with those outcomes by listening to Yukoners. We have been listening to businesses. We talked about the Business Advisory Council yesterday. We talked about the Department of Tourism and Culture working with industry stakeholders therein and about the public health officials responding quickly and effectively — we spoke about that in answering the question yesterday — while making best use of the financial support packages as well — answering the question yesterday and again here today.

At the same time, we remain committed to responsible spending. That is a hallmark, and we take it very seriously. As we consider the impacts of all fiscal decisions on future generations, our fiscal liabilities or net debt are growing, but so is the territory. Our population is growing and aging. Our mining and other sectors are growing and are supporting infrastructure — well, it was aging. Again, we could go back to the Office of the Auditor General's scathing report from the previous government. They really didn't keep up on the aging facilities.

We, on this side of the House, are remaining flexible in our responses to these changing conditions by partnering with each level of government to strategically invest in the future while also moving toward spending less than we take in. Again, that flexibility is a really important thing to consider, as we are in a global pandemic.

We balanced our budget and then found ourselves in this bizarre situation that has made Yukoners, Canadians, and the world population reel under its weight. That flexibility and financial anchor is extremely important to understand as well. Now is the time to make sure that we have funding in place for Yukoners. This government has proven, in our four years of budgeting, that we are able to get back to a surplus situation, and we have seen bigger deficits in the past — that is for sure — from the previous government. We have proven our ability to get back to a sound, stable, surplus situation a year ahead of schedule, and now that we are in the grips of the pandemic and

we have shown numbers of our per capita spending compared to other jurisdictions and how we have been doing this by addressing the needs of health and social services, by addressing the needs of the business community and individuals and making sure that we had supports out there. We have also done it in a way where, if you take the averages of spending in all jurisdictions, we are in a very, very sound position right now. The unknown is how long the pandemic is going to last, but what is not unknown is that this government will be there for Yukoners. We will be there and we have more gas in the tank because of our fiscal anchoring and because of our ability to get back to surplus a year ahead of schedule.

**Mr. Cathers:** Just to correct the Premier — I do give credit to the Premier when he actually does answer the questions. I do appreciate that he did provide some answers to questions after he told me earlier that I shouldn't have asked them, but I would point out to the Premier that it's never the wrong time to be accountable to the public or the Legislative Assembly. The question might not be phrased the way you would like to hear it. You might rather receive it in Committee instead of Question Period or vice versa or perhaps during a different time in debate or a different day. Maybe the government had an announcement scheduled on a certain topic and a photo opportunity that they would really rather not preempt by being accountable and answering a question, but ultimately there is never a wrong time to be accountable, and it is never the wrong time to answer the questions and be accountable to this Legislative Assembly. In those areas where the Premier did not have information at his fingertips and provided it later, we do give credit where credit is due.

But it's really quite odd hearing this narrative of the government trying to invent this idea of a megadiesel plant. If they go back to the public record of consultation that occurred, the Premier need look no further than his minister to the right of him to see who went out to public consultation on a proposal to develop either a diesel or LNG 20-megawatt generation facility. I would remind the Premier that their proposal — the Liberal government decided not to admit that they were going to invest in diesel going forward and pretend that rentals were temporary, but instead, just this year alone, we see that — according to the legislative return provided by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on October 13, 2020 — they are renting more than 20 megawatts of diesel already. They are renting 16.2 megawatts installed in Whitehorse and 10.8 megawatts installed in Faro. It's in excess of 20. It's more in the neighbourhood of 26 or 27 megawatts that they are renting instead of owning, and they are choosing diesel instead of LNG.

I want to just jump to the topic of — the Premier said he is not going to speculate about diesel costs, but I would point out that government has information about that. This is not purely speculative. I'm looking at the Public Accounts right in front of me for the fiscal year that ended in March 2020. I would just note that — the Premier may be well aware but some people listening may not be — the Yukon Development Corporation has a fiscal year that actually ends in December, not in March, so the statements that are included in the Public Accounts reflect its fiscal year ending on December 31, 2019. These are

part of the Public Accounts, and they make reference to the fact that the corporation is required by Order-in-Council 1985/90 — I will quote from page 269 of the Public Accounts: “Fuel price adjustment. OIC 1995/90 directs the YUB to permit the Corporation to adjust electricity rates to reflect the fluctuations of the price of diesel fuel. The amount by which actual fuel prices vary from the long-term average prices is deferred and recovered from or refunded to customers in a future period. In 2017 the Corporation updated the long-term average cost to better reflect current market conditions. This change is consistent with the 2017-2018 GRA. Refer to Note 1(b).”

What I’m pointing to is the fact that not only is there a long-term estimate of fuel prices and an expectation of what the government-owned corporation, Yukon Energy Corporation — which is, of course, a subsidiary of Yukon Development Corporation but is a 100-percent government-owned corporation — there is a cost estimate for what they expect to pay for diesel included in that draft 10-year renewable energy plan that I made reference to. As part of their legally mandated filings with the Yukon Utilities Board, their regulator, they are required to update the expected operations cost for not just one scenario going forward, but for several scenarios based on high usage, medium usage or low usage and considering a number of factors, including higher diesel usage during low-water years. That, in fact, is not a new thing; it goes back decades.

The fundamental point is that there is a cost estimate that government has. While the Premier may or may not have it in front of him, the government does have cost estimates on how much renting their diesels is expected to cost in lease costs and how much it’s expected to cost in fuel costs going forward. They do have a cost estimate of how much the additional action items outlined in the government’s plan called *Our Clean Future* will add to that, both in terms of load and in terms of the diesel fuel and rental costs required to meet that additional load directly resulting from their supposed clean future energy plan.

My question is: What is that? Again, referring back to Public Accounts, as well as my own time as minister responsible for that corporation, we know that government has an estimate for it. The question is just whether they’re willing to provide it or whether they’re not willing to provide it. If the Premier actually doesn’t have that information in front of him, I would be happy to receive a commitment for him to get back to me with that information the next time we’re in general debate.

I’m going to again return to the issue of debt and the Premier’s previous indication that the Liberal government had not taken on more than \$20 million in new long-term debt when we know, in fact, that, according to Public Accounts, that number is closer to \$35 million.

We see as well, on page 275 of the Public Accounts, that Yukon Development Corporation has increased their long-term debt in their year, which ends December 31, 2019. I will quote from two parts of it here: “The change in long-term debt arising from financing activities during the year related to principal repayment of \$3,223,000 and the issuance of additional debt in the amount of \$10,724,000.” Again, we’re still looking for

answers on what that \$10 million in long-term debt that the government took on in 2019 was related to.

Secondly, again quoting from page 275 of the Public Accounts tabled by the Premier — it says: “The fair value of long-term debt at December 31, 2019 is \$231 million (December 31, 2018 - \$221 million).”

Again, just for the clarification of the reader and the listener, this section of the Public Accounts is specific to the Yukon Development Corporation, so the debt number mentioned there is in reference to their long-term debt — not the government’s total amount. So, again, if you are looking for information on what that \$10 million in additional debt was that the government took on — and looking as well for clarification on what the estimated diesel costs and rental costs are of the next decade, as shown in the Liberals’ plans, which include the usage of diesel. Pardon me — the second item is directly related to their implementation of their *Our Clean Future* energy strategy, which, as we see it from comparing the two items — the Yukon Energy plan to use diesel for over a decade, including new diesel, and the government’s plan, which adds a significant additional load in terms of megawatts for supposed green energy commitments that actually look like they are being powered with diesel. We are asking what the estimated costs of that are.

Again, if the Premier just doesn’t have the information in front of him, I will take a commitment from him to get back to me with that information during this Sitting.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, the department has some of these numbers on diesel. He did quote from Public Accounts, but, as you see in the quote from the Public Accounts, this is talking about 2019-20. It does talk about the changes in conditions and the forecasts therein, but it doesn’t speculate in the Public Accounts for 2019-20 what diesel is going to cost or what quantities we are going to need. However, the minister does have that number. The minister does have lots of the information that the member opposite wants.

I am not going to endeavour to get back to the member opposite about these diesel questions — the third time that he has asked. He is very dangerously close to being called on a point of order on Standing Order 19(b) — “speaks to matters other than (i) the question under discussion...” — three times now when we responded to him each time.

At the same time, the minister will absolutely have that information for the member opposite when it comes to forecasts or speculations on diesel costs and prices. Actually, the Development Corporation will be appearing this year as well and will absolutely be able to answer a lot of the questions at that time. If the member opposite really does want to have a less-than-general breakdown of these numbers, then he knows where to ask those questions.

I will talk in general about long-term debt, for sure. There has been an increase of \$8.4 million in additional long-term debt reflected in the Yukon government’s consolidated financial statements. That’s a combination of new long-term debt less the annual principal repayments. The member opposite knows this. He does know that new long-term debt was acquired for Yukon Energy to maintain its debt-to-equity

ratio. He knows all about that; he has a little bit of experience in that particular field — also, additional investments to Chu Níikwān for the first LNG engine that was added to the Whitehorse generating facility in 2019.

Now, Mr. Deputy Chair, that 2019 long-term debt in Yukon government consolidated statements does not include the debt between YDC and the Yukon government from previous governments' experience and debt, which is approximately \$38 million.

So again, let's talk about some of the credit facilities used — and we spoke a bit about this already as well — but again, I'm happy to answer the questions generally in debate here now, with more substantive responses in debate with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources when he has his opportunity to talk in Committee of the Whole — but also having Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation appearing as witnesses here in the Legislative Assembly — another great opportunity to expand and get into more specifics — two opportunities there.

When we talk about the credit facilities used — the \$23.8 million referenced in the credit facilities line of Yukon government's consolidated financial statements reflects the use of Yukon Energy's line of credit. The member opposite knows that as well. The line of credit was authorized by Yukon government and was used for projects until Yukon Energy could secure long-term debt.

I went through some of the examples earlier today in answering the member opposite's questions ad nauseum here about projects that were funded through the line of credit. We went through those lists — Mayo-McQuesten transmission line under the previous government, the asset management software purchase and implementation, the replacement of the head gate and the upgrade for Whitehorse hydro unit 2, and the Aishihik water licence renewal as well.

So, there are current credit facilities used by Yukon Energy — as of today, \$31 million — as already answered to the member opposite when it comes to long-term debt — the question that he is asking. The authorized limit is \$36 million.

Those are the numbers that I do have here in general debate. However, the member opposite's questions — again, if he really does want the responses — he said there's a long history — I forget how he said it — how the Premier will get up and say that the minister will answer the question, and then the minister doesn't answer the question. Well, the minister will answer those questions. He has told me during the break that he can't wait to answer those questions, actually.

So, again, we'll see in Hansard and we'll review. By the time we get to our final day of a 45-day session, we'll see. We'll see if the questions get answered or not — as far as how we speculate on diesel purchases moving forward, but also clarifying the record of what our future means as the Yukon Liberal government as far as diesels and purchases therein compared to the previous government.

**Mr. Cathers:** Again, I do want to note that when the Premier does provide an answer to something, I'll give him credit for that. I may question the answer. I may point out — as I did earlier in debate — that the answer — such as in the case

of government responding to the issue of farmers losing commercial garbage service — I acknowledged that they actually did take action, but the action simply wasn't effective enough to provide a solution. I also acknowledged in some cases where he did provide answers that previously he refused to provide — which he made up for today, and I appreciate that information.

However, I do have to point out that the Premier seems to have a new version of the Standing Orders in his mind that doesn't line up with our Standing Orders. There has never been a rule in this Assembly that, if a minister refuses to answer a question three times, a member can't ask the question again. That's not in the Standing Orders. I have asked several questions repeatedly because I haven't got an answer and the Premier has not provided the information.

Before moving on to another topic, I'm just going to point out that when it comes to the issue of the expected diesel fuel costs of implementing the government's new *Our Clean Future* plan and their expected diesel costs of meeting the rest of the load through rental of diesel and purchase of diesel fuel, the Premier did admit that the government has the information, but he said again that he's not going to provide that information himself. That's unfortunate. I hope that he will reconsider it, but I'm going to move on to another topic.

I'm just going to touch on — we were discussing this briefly, and then the Premier and I got talking about another matter, so I'm going to return to the topic of water licences — particularly for placer miners. The reason why I'm returning to this is it is a subject of great concern for Yukoners, including a number of his constituents — but also others.

The Premier acknowledged yesterday — and I'm referring to page 1692 of the Blues — he acknowledged that there were 16 licences before the board. He said that six were submitted in mid- to late summer and have not been processed yet. Then he referred to 11 that had been before the board for longer and noted that some of those were on pause — and I quote: "... due to wetlands issues and matters currently explored with this hearing in the public interest..."

Again, I'm going to ask the question: How many applications are delayed because of the wetlands issues? How many years have they been waiting — or how many months, if the Premier prefers that term?

I'm also going to quote from a press release issued by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce regarding the issue of the Yukon Water Board and comments that were made at the hearing recently. I would remind the Premier that, previously in debate when we've discussed the matter of the Water Board holding a public interest hearing regarding the wetlands and placer mining, the Premier has supported them doing that. I'm going to read from the press release issued by the Yukon Chamber of Mines on October 29, 2020. I assume that the Premier has a copy of it, but if not, I would be happy to send him over one. I will table this when I'm done reading from it as well so that it's on the record.

"For immediate release — October 29, 2020 —

"Yukon Chamber of Mines Disappointed by Yukon Water Board Chair Comments

“Whitehorse, YT — On Tuesday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, the Yukon Water Board began its public hearing into ‘Placer Mining in Wetlands’. The purpose of the hearing ‘is to gather information to further develop the Board’s Wetland Information Guidelines and to hear views about placer mining activities occurring in wetlands’.

“Unfortunately, during the afternoon’s proceedings on the first day, publicly broadcast live across all its streaming platforms (YouTube, Vimeo, Zoom), the Chair could be heard speaking with the board about how to strategize asking questions of particular presenters — specifically naming Yukon Chamber of Mines representative — and referring to him as ‘flying off the handle’ under questioning yet to be undertaken. The consultant had not yet presented on behalf of the Chamber, yet he was singled out by name and referred to in this derogatory fashion.

“Yukon’s mining industry has over numerous occasions, called into question the impartiality and efficiency of this administrative tribunal. Yesterday’s broadcast of the hearing has further illuminated the challenge of obtaining a fair hearing, that gives all participants *truly* equal footing.’ said Chamber of Mines President Ed Peart. ‘The perceived bias which was demonstrated by the board on Tuesday was disappointing to say the least. We appreciate the apology from the Board Chair and seek clarification of how the Yukon Water Board will repair this serious breach of trust.’

“The Yukon Chamber of Mines is participating in the hearing along with other affected stakeholders such as the Klondike Placer Miners Association, Yukon First Nation Governments, Conservation organizations, and others. The hearing ran from Tuesday, October 27<sup>th</sup> – Thursday, October 29<sup>th</sup> and was streamed live across multiple platforms.”

I would ask the Premier to comment on this matter considering that the board is one that he is the minister responsible for — along with the Yukon *Waters Act* — and the chair was appointed by this government, and this press release from the Yukon Chamber of Mines is directly questioning the fairness and impartiality of the board and this process — again, noting that the Premier has himself endorsed this process and the Water Board taking this action.

So, I will table a copy of this and would ask the Premier to comment on the press release — his views on it and on what the government will do to restore the confidence of the mining sector after these comments by the Yukon Water Board chair.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I don’t have a further breakdown as far as the 11 — we did say that currently there are 11 licences before the board. We made that statement the other day. Water Board applications come in on a daily basis, so we will check to see if that number is still accurate.

We did say that six were submitted in mid- to late summer and they have not been issued yet, but there are another 11 that have been remaining before the board for longer — and these longer timelines, as mentioned before, are usually due to proponents’ non-responses to information requests — of course, we know how that process goes — but there are others that are on pause due to wetland issues. Of course, we do know that there is a public hearing going on.

I would imagine — but I don’t want to speculate — that these would all be projects in the Indian River area. Again, I will see if we can provide any more information on that from the department, but I don’t have an update for the member opposite today.

When it comes to the chair of the Water Board, I was made aware of the comments. I understand that he did apologize for those comments when the Water Board hearing resumed the following day. I know that this was absolutely the right decision. I understand that he also welcomed comments and concerns from attendees and, at that time, none were raised, so that is an interesting point as well.

I am going to ask what the members opposite would have me do. Is the member opposite asking me for a resignation here? Are the members opposite asking me to do something as far as what is under the purview of being the Premier? I am not sure exactly where the members opposite are going here, but I will say that I have absolute confidence in the chair. I believe that he is doing a fantastic job holding a position that must always balance competing interests. I can’t think of anyone who would do a better job, to tell you the honest truth, Mr. Deputy Chair.

I am going to go back to a couple of days or weeks ago when we were at the Victoria Gold annual event with Banyan Gold as well — Every Student, Every Day. I will give credit to the member opposite for his involvement — the Member for Copperbelt South, who really was instrumental in starting with this program. I will give credit where credit is due there.

At the same time, I was given credit from John McConnell, the president and CAO of Victoria Gold. He basically said that he wanted to thank the Premier and that, if it wasn’t for my efforts, they would be bankrupt right now. I am going to share that credit. He went on to talk about getting us through the regulatory process and working with his team. I am going to share that credit with the chair of the Water Board. I will ask the industry if they have faith in the chair of the Water Board based on the fact that they got permitted for the largest gold mine in Yukon history in a time where, if it didn’t work out the way it worked out and with the timelines that were extremely tough to accomplish — the work that the chair, the secretariat, and the board did — talk about blowing by any concept of government employees working 9:00 to 5:00. These folks worked around the clock to make sure that they fulfilled their obligation and their responsibility to water and the concerns therein, but also understanding how to work with a proponent and how to work with an extremely important part of Yukon — the mining industry.

Watching the technical table and watching how this quasi-judicial board — with the responsibility through the secretariat to this government — moved through extremely tight timelines, I don’t know where we would be if we didn’t have the current chair of the Water Board in the chair during that process. Again, during this process, he apologized and asked if there were any comments or concerns from attendees. None were raised at that time. The Yukon Party is bringing it up now. I’m asking the member opposite: What do they want me to do? What are they implying when it comes to the chair of the Water Board?

Because it's my opinion — based upon the results when it comes to the memorandum of understanding established, with the protocols, the reporting protocols, the job titles, and the responsibilities — that it takes two to tango, and we have a chair who doesn't hide behind quasi-judicial status and he understands the responsibility of the secretariat when it comes to public servants working for the Water Board but also under the purview of our departments.

It is extremely important to be able to break down some of the barriers that existed under the previous government that don't exist anymore. I believe that the chair has done a fantastic job and he continues to have the confidence of this government.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the Premier providing a bit of insight into his views on the matter. I would note, though, that the Premier, in suggesting that, if the chair or another member of the board — I believe he was indicating the chair — asked people at a Water Board public hearing if they had any comments, issues, or concerns — I think that was what the Premier said — it was an opportunity to express them. I do have to point out to the Premier, in case he doesn't actually get this point, that for placer miners — when their future and the future of their family is potentially in the hands of the Water Board, including the chair — how many people feel comfortable, confident, and safe so that they can raise personal concerns directly in that venue?

I want to be clear. Even if the intent and the view of the chair and the board in its entirety is that they would never take punitive action in response to a concern being expressed directly by a placer miner in that venue — if the Premier were to put himself in the shoes of a placer miner standing or sitting there, facing someone who potentially holds their future and their family's future in their hands, how comfortable is that business owner going to be in saying, "Yeah, I do have a concern. Yeah, I do have an issue and I'm not satisfied with the response that was given."

So, the fact that the invitation was made for comments, issues, or concerns — even if it was made with 100-percent sincerity — does not mean that this is how citizens whose lives are potentially in the hands of that body would take it, because there can be the fear or worry that, if they speak up against someone in a position of power — what the potential repercussions could be. The same holds true when we hear that people don't speak concerns directly to the Premier or ministers about other areas.

I'll close off on this point here. We wanted the minister responsible to comment. He did provide some comments. If he has additional comments, we will certainly take those as well. I think it's just important for the public record — for all of those who have expressed concern and for every Yukoner to have the Premier on record stating his views on this matter and how it was handled, because ultimately he is the minister responsible. Yukoners whose livelihoods are potentially affected by the outcome of the hearing are concerned about what the outcome will be, both from the board and from government afterwards.

So, I'm going to move on to another area that we've yet to receive information on from the government.

As the Premier will be aware, I tabled on behalf of the Official Opposition a motion for the production of papers asking for a list for the following information from the Yukon government: a list showing a breakdown by department of the number of full-time government employees who are not residents of the Yukon; a list showing a breakdown by department of the number of full-time government employees who only live in the Yukon part time; a list of the management and senior management positions currently held who are not residents of the Yukon or who only live here part time; a list of all management and senior management positions currently held by people who are not technically classified as employees and an explanation of the nature of that alternate arrangement; a list of all management and senior management positions currently held by people who are not residents of the Yukon or who only live here part time who are not technically classified as employees; and a list showing the total number of days the deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, and directors have spent working for the government while residing outside of Yukon between 2017 and now.

Again, I note that, in asking for that information, the primary reason why we are asking for it is that we have heard those concerns repeatedly from government employees as well as others about an increasing trend toward particularly senior management staff either residing outside of the territory or spending a substantial portion of their time working remotely from somewhere down south. We are asking for that information. There is, of course, an effect operationally on government if people — particularly managers — are not present in the territory. There is an operational impact from that. As well, it is a case of more dollars flowing south rather than staying here in the territory supporting the local economy. So, we are asking the Premier and his colleagues to provide that information and to be accountable to Yukoners about what has occurred in those areas so that we understand the extent of those situations.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We do know that the substantive part of the question asked by the member opposite right now is the same question in the form of a motion that was presented to the Legislative Assembly — I believe it was yesterday. We do have department officials working on a response to that. I don't have anything new to add today, but we are aware of the motion and we are aware of the request from the member opposite.

Again, because the member opposite did go back to speaking about the chair and he spoke about what you would do as a placer miner — again, he chose his words pretty carefully — but I'm wondering where he is going with this. Does the member opposite feel that the placer community has an opinion? Has he been told by the placer community or KMPA of an opinion on the current chair? I have not heard an opinion therein. I am asking the member opposite what he is asking me to do.

Is he saying that the Yukon Party no longer has confidence in the chair? Is he saying that he is asking me — I don't know — is he asking me if the chair should be fired over these comments? I'm not really sure where the member opposite is going with this, but I do want him to clarify today in the



Legislative Assembly. I want to know. I answered his question. I said that I have full confidence in the chair. I want to know from the member opposite where he is on that.

Again, when it comes to the second part of the question — we are aware of the motion and we are working on the information for the member opposite. Again, it's very interesting for the member opposite to speak on behalf of the placer miners. I don't know if he's doing that or not. He used his words very, very particularly. But I do want to ask him: Where is he going with this? What is he asking me to do when it comes to the chair? I reiterate again the confidence that I have in the chair, the secretariat, and the board.

**Mr. Cathers:** I think I was quite clear about what I was asking with the questions and potential concerns that I was making reference to. It is something that — again, the most important thing in this matter was to hear the Premier, as the minister responsible, indicate his views on this matter pertaining to the Yukon Water Board. I would remind the Premier that, although he may wish to turn this into a partisan or combative discussion, ultimately, these are real questions relating to people's lives. It's very important, when someone is dealing with matters that affect their livelihood, that government and its boards — just as with a judicial process, there is a value in not just the intention of a person being appropriate, but for the public to be able to have confidence in that as well.

I have made clear our views of the importance of the Premier putting a statement on record regarding it, and we will certainly forward that concern on to all who have contacted us. If the Premier wants to know about individual placer miners or the KPMA as a whole and their views, I would encourage him to reach out to them and contact them to see if they wish to share their views — whatever those views may be — with him.

But I can tell you that among those views will be people who are concerned about the ongoing delays in the licensing process — not just related to the Water Board but also related to other areas directly under Energy, Mines and Resources, including the fact — as I have raised here in the past — the issues that have been brought to me by prospectors regarding the fact that government has not always followed the standards set out through orders-in-council regarding other requirements for placer miners to do reclamation work.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will recall a specific miner on whose behalf I raised concerns previously. I have also heard other concerns from Yukoners, but since not all of them have given permission to have their names placed on the record, I will not do so. However, I would note that those issues and those concerns are not confined to just one person, and they also relate to other areas within the government's permitting process — not just within the Water Board area.

I would note, as well — just as a reminder to the Premier — that when it comes to the area of the costs of their climate change and green energy plan, in fact, one of the reasons that we ask questions about it is that the *Interim Fiscal and Economic Update* that the Premier provided includes costs outlined for that — as well as land development, social development, education and health, community and First

Nation infrastructure, real property and asset management, transportation infrastructure, information technology, and forecasted operating expenses as well. All of those matters are contained at some level — although at a very high level of information — within the government's *Interim Fiscal and Economic Update*. So, it is surprising and disappointing that when we ask questions about it, we don't really get an answer — and, worse, I would note that the Premier had indicated that he didn't want to provide that information to me.

I am just going to move on to a couple of other areas. One relates to the recruitment and retention of health care professionals. That includes — recently, we are aware of the issue impacting Watson Lake — that saw a situation of physicians and nurses potentially leaving the community over the issue of the Housing Corporation's one-pet policy.

I would point out that, again, we recognize that these issues can cut across different departments or corporations, but ultimately, particularly in a pandemic, it's very important that government — especially government that has talked repeatedly about having a one-government approach to dealing with issues — come up with a solution. It's not enough to say that you are working on a response or to say that you are doing your best. When problems are affecting people's lives and when those problems are potentially resulting in a rural community losing physicians and nurses as a result of a government policy, it's not enough to say that you are working on a response. Government needs to figure out what the right solution is to the problem.

It's important for government — and I would suggest to the Premier and his colleagues that they would be well off if they change their views from being that simply responding to a question or responding to an issue is in any way the same as solving it. The reason why they haven't fixed the problem or how they are working on it is, in real-world terms, not very relevant. What people want to know in Watson Lake, as well as in our other rural communities that may be affected by this, is what government is actually going to do to address these issues, specifically as it relates to rural recruitment and retention.

I'm going to start off with Watson Lake, in particular, and the issue of the one-pet policy. Government has had this issue now for a while. It is one where, recognizing the time sensitivity where people can make decisions since they may be in a situation where they can't keep their pet and have a home at the same time, the government needs to either act quickly to fix the problem or, by the time they get around to eventually thinking of maybe addressing it, it's going to be too late for the solution to address the real-world problem that exists in that community.

Particularly with Watson Lake, what has the government done regarding the issue of the physicians and the nurses who are being affected by Yukon Housing Corporation's policy? Have they come up with a solution? What is it?

Next, I would ask the Premier as well — since we're waiting for one piece of information that we don't have yet but directly relates to the staff and health care professionals in rural communities. We know that government rolled out with great fanfare 11 mental health positions related to the wellness hubs

in communities, which was, as we know, a replacement to some extent of what was previously provided by Many Rivers — not in fact a new service in some areas. We know that they had 11 positions associated with it. At one point, they admitted that they had only filled seven of those positions. At the current time, how many of those positions are staffed, and how many of those positions are vacant?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I think the member opposite is just trying to buy time here or something, because the question about staffing in Watson Lake has been asked of the minister a couple of times in the Legislative Assembly. She has responded to that question.

Again, the question that he just asked again has already been asked and already answered. It is interesting that he says that answering the questions isn't necessarily solving the problems.

So, let's talk about how this government is dealing with issues. I'll just reiterate a bit on the question that he had about mental health supports and Many Rivers: one NGO replaced by two NGOs; two mental health nurses under the Yukon Party replaced by 22 mental health professionals in four different mental health hubs — so that has been answered ad nauseum in the Legislative Assembly as well. The member opposite knows that, but he is just buying time, I guess, to continue in general debate.

It's a very strange thing to say that answering questions is not solving problems. Well, answering questions — okay, I guess we're answering questions now, but we're not solving problems. Before, we weren't answering the questions, and now we're answering the question but we're not solving problems.

Let's talk about when it comes to mining — because the member opposite started these questions with a question on mining. We could talk about new mining production, supporting middle-term gains; we could talk about how, for the first time since 2013, Yukon could have three producing mines in 2020 moving forward — looking at Alexco and looking at what's happening with Minto, which is great, but Victoria Gold's expectations for the Eagle Gold project and also looking at what's happening with Alexco. These are extremely important things — extremely important production potentials here.

It is really important that we continue to take a look at how we do solve problems. We solve problems by balancing the economy and the environment together, Mr. Deputy Chair. That was our platform in the last election and we made good on those commitments. There are, for sure, strong mineral prices to add into that. Looking through the pandemic, they just got stronger. That definitely adds potential fuel to the mining outlook.

Much of the global economy is suffering due to COVID-19. Gold prices have never been higher. The price of gold reached an all-time high in June of just under \$1,900 per troy ounce. That was then surpassed to \$2,000 per troy ounce in August. Since that time, gold settled somewhat and is trading at a different level — but, again, the work that we've done to make sure that Victoria Gold is up and running — it is the

largest gold mine in Yukon history — making sure that they safely return people to work on a new schedule when it comes to alternate self-isolation plans — this is how we solve problems. It is by working with the First Nations, by working with the mining community, by communicating through the pandemic — that is how we find solutions — and by making sure that placer miners can get safely back to camp in a time when there was a lot of pressure to shut things down. We kept on speaking to all those concerns.

We asked people to make sure that their concerns were based on medical advice and science, and we got to a place where we could get placer miners as they were returning from everywhere from — you know, I have great friends in the placer community who are born-and-raised Yukoners — third generation — who winter in places like Texas. They come back into the community and they are welcomed, obviously, with open arms in that community. Again, it's watching the placer community working with the government and working on their own to make sure that individuals got back into the placer field. We had people like the Favron family reaching out to placer miners who they didn't even necessarily know to help and support them — getting groceries and supplies. They were just going above and beyond.

The work that we do to make sure that, as an essential service, we had placer and we had Victoria Gold up and running, continuing to move through these very trying times — that is how we solve problems. It is by working with other governments. It is by working all summer — since March and all the way through the pandemic, every day — to make sure that we were in a strong position economically not only just as a government, but doing all the supports that we possibly could.

It is the same with the outfitting community. That's how we solve problems — by working with the outfitting community. They were decimated this year because there are border controls. A lot of their customers come from the States. We worked with them to do what we could in the current situation to get folks out to their camps as much as possible. So, that's how we solve problems, Mr. Deputy Chair.

We could continue to take a look at the sector and the gold prices. We could take a look at Pembridge. We could take a look at Alexco and what we are doing to have conversations with the chairs of the Water Board and YESAB — in a room together a few times now — which was unheard of under the Yukon Party, I would assume. I don't know if they have anything to add as far as any of those meetings that they had; I'm not sure if they ever happened. But that's how we solve problems — by communicating, especially when it comes to our regulatory responsibilities.

The member opposite also spoke about fiscal and economic impacts when it comes to COVID. The impact of the pandemic across Canada can be measured by comparing pre-COVID and post-COVID fiscal and economic forecasts. So, let's take a look at how we compare to other jurisdictions. Since actions were first taken by government back in February or March to slow the spread of the virus, all provinces and territories have seen steep declines in growth forecasts and expanded government deficits.

If we take a look at the interim fiscal and economic updates for October 2020, on page 7, we see a chart about real GDP forecasts. Again, this is a good way of ending the day here — the member opposite started with fiscal anchors and GDP considerations and how the sky is falling. If we take a look at the chart on page 7 of this forecast — the impact of COVID-19 on provinces' and territories' real GDP — it definitely ranges. It ranges from minus 5.4 percentage points in Yukon to almost minus 14 percentage points in Alberta. Taking a look at the comparisons of the changes in the 2020-21 budget balance per capita and taking a look at the changes in 2020 real GDP growth forecast percentages — the Yukon is absolutely in an enviable position when it comes to not only our forecast moving forward but how we have managed to get as much industry as we possibly could during COVID times back to work and into work in the fields. Also, as we take a look at tangible capital assets getting out the door on a year-to-year basis from the mains to the Public Accounts, this government is solving problems by doing what they say they're going to do up front.

Now, there was a time with the Yukon Party where they would have much fanfare in the mains about all the capital projects that they were going to do. I will take the comparison of our mains to our actuals — to our Public Accounts — any day when it comes to our ability to solve problems and to do what we said we were going to do when it comes to capital assets.

With that, Mr. Deputy Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by Ms. McPhee that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### **Chair's report**

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 58

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, November 4, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, November 4, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.  
Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Wills Month

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the Third Party to recognize Wills Month, which takes place each November in an effort to encourage Yukoners to consider creating a legally valid will.

When a person passes away without a will, their loved ones are left to experience the grief of the loss and to act on their behalf to determine final arrangements and the management of their estate. Dying without a will, or dying intestate, adds layers of uncertainty for family and friends in an already difficult time. This becomes especially challenging when no instructions have been left for managing a person's estate and financial affairs or who will assume parental or legal responsibilities for a deceased person's children.

As difficult as it can be to think about, we need to consider what will happen when we die. We need to ask ourselves: What will I leave behind? Who will carry which responsibilities in my absence? What decisions can I make now to ease that burden and convey my wishes to my family for later?

It is a common misconception that making a will is not a concern until you are middle-aged or a senior. However, all adult Yukoners with families, those who might own businesses or properties, or those who lead busy and complex lives should also have wills.

We know that, at first glance, creating a will can seem daunting. Throughout November, we are offering workshops and information sessions for Wills Month to assist Yukoners. You will find that creating a legally valid will is not a difficult process. Workshops will be held via Zoom on November 19 and November 23. In addition, Justice Veale will be giving an in-person presentation on November 25 — with COVID measures in place — at Mount McIntyre Recreation Centre in Whitehorse.

Yukoners can expect to leave the workshops having gained an understanding of why they need a will, the will drafting process and potential costs, common myths about wills, how to prepare a will, and what an enduring power of attorney and an advance directive are. I encourage all Yukoners to consider attending a workshop. For details and to register, please visit the Government of Yukon website and search "learn about wills and estates".

I am especially pleased that this Wills Month, we have brought forward amendments to the *Wills Act* — contained within Bill No. 12 — in this Legislative Assembly to modernize the legislative framework here in the territory. The *Wills Act* has not been amended for 66 years. It needs updating to reflect the modern lives of Yukoners.

Our message today, in recognizing Make a Will Month, is to encourage all Yukoners to plan ahead for their loved ones by creating a will this November.

Visit [yukon.ca](http://yukon.ca) or [yukonpubliclegaleducation@yplea.com](mailto:yukonpubliclegaleducation@yplea.com) for help and information.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November as Make a Will Month in the Yukon. We began the Make a Will Month initiative in 2015 to raise awareness of the value and importance of a will to provide certainty and assurance after someone passes away.

Particularly important for people to know are the difficulties that family members may face in dealing with the estate and wishes of a person who passed away without a will in place. A will, as most people know, is a written document that sets out how you would like your assets dealt with or distributed and deals with such matters as guardianship of children, preferences for burial or cremation, and service arrangements. Many people do not have a will or have not thought about how they would like their assets dealt with or to whom they would entrust executorship in the event of their death. Often parents have not thought about legally defining their wishes in terms of guardianship for their children. It is important, and there is no time like the present to start planning out how you would like such matters dealt with.

Begin to think about what you would like done with your assets and how someone would deal with your debts and liabilities. There are resources available to help you get started on a will, and you can contact the public guardian and trustee with questions about wills and estates.

Thank you to all for taking the time to assist Yukoners to get organized to create wills and to the former and current staff of the Department of Justice for their work in both suggesting the recognition of Make a Will Month as well as the recent work on amendments to the *Wills Act*.

*Applause*

### In recognition of Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** It is also Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week, and I rise today on behalf of the Yukon government and the Official Opposition to talk about the dangers of carbon monoxide and what Yukoners can do to protect themselves and their families from it.

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas produced from the burning of fuels such as gas, kerosene, oil, propane, and wood. It can become a problem in any space heated by a fuel-burning source, not just your house. Your garage, cabin, wall tent, RV, boat, and camper can fill up very quickly with enough carbon monoxide to cause severe, long-term injury or death.

Snowmobiles and vehicles running inside an attached garage or near a home's fresh air intake can significantly increase carbon monoxide levels indoors.

Carbon monoxide is known as "the silent killer" because it's a gas that you can't see, smell, or taste, so people may not realize they're exposed to it until it's too late. Its symptoms can mimic those of a flu — yet another thing to watch for in 2020. At very high levels, a person can collapse and use lose consciousness within minutes, leading to death. We've tragically and needlessly lost Yukoners due to carbon monoxide poisoning. I ask that we all do our part so that, together, we prevent any future loss of life.

In 2013, Yukon was the first jurisdiction in Canada to mandate that all residences with fuel-burning appliances or attached garages are required to have carbon monoxide alarms installed. Carbon monoxide alarms or combination carbon monoxide and smoke alarms must be installed outside all sleeping areas and on every level of the home, including the basement. If you're a tenant, it is your landlord's responsibility to install them.

Never use a fuel-burning appliance that is intended for outdoor use — such as a barbecue, grill, or portable generator — indoors.

On a yearly basis, if you are homeowner or landlord, you should schedule maintenance of appliances such as furnaces, water heaters, fireplaces, wood stoves, barbecues, and gas ranges. This includes cleaning of chimneys, vents, and exhaust pipes or systems to ensure that they aren't blocked by anything that can prevent carbon monoxide from being vented outside.

Installation and maintenance of fuel-burning appliances should be done by a qualified technician who is trained to spot potential issues that could be causing carbon monoxide build up.

Exposure to carbon monoxide can be fatal for people and pets. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include: headache, nausea, dizziness, breathlessness, confusion, hallucinations, and unconsciousness. If you think your home, cabin, trailer, or vehicle has a buildup of carbon monoxide, please go outside immediately and call 911.

Thank you to Yukoners who are protecting their families and communities by making carbon monoxide safety and prevention a priority. I urge you to be aware of the signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning and to test your alarms at least once a month. It just takes a few seconds and it could save lives.

*Applause*

**Ms. Hanson:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party to speak to the importance of Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week. My colleague from Takhini-Kopper King and I talked about adding our voice to this tribute.

We do so in part to pay tribute to Brad and Valerie Rusk and their children, Rebekah and Gabriel, who, along with their boarder, Donald McNamee, died of carbon monoxide poisoning in their rented Porter Creek home on January 29, 2012. Their deaths were quickly dismissed as accidental. The

question the grieving relatives asked: Was this accident preventable?

Yukoners owe a debt of gratitude to the Rusk family for their persistence in requesting that a coroner's inquest take place, during which some ugly truths were laid bare, including multiple reports from Yukon government departments and agencies detailing the dangerous state of oil-fired appliances in Yukon over the preceding years. A nationally recognized expert had advised Yukon government and industry on the need to modernize legislation and regulations — regulations that may have prevented the hooking up of a new heating appliance to an old chimney due to the risks of clogging and carbon monoxide leaks and may have prevented the deaths of five people.

We also give gratitude to the coroner's jury — six men and women who, after a grueling week of testimony, made nine recommendations. Sadly, many of those recommendations mirrored the recommendations previously made to the Yukon government that were not acted upon.

I join in reiterating the minister's words about the importance of carbon monoxide poisoning awareness. It is not just about being aware, but actually checking and making sure that you and your family are safe, because it's too easy to forget that carbon monoxide is called "the silent killer" for a reason: you can't smell or taste it. Carbon monoxide reduces your ability to think clearly.

In the days before the Rusk family died, Valerie Rusk went to her doctor's office, asking for an appointment to find out why she and her family were so sick. They all had headaches and were feeling weak and nauseous. An appointment was made to see the entire family the next day, but the family was too sick to make that appointment. They died a few days later.

Carbon monoxide deaths are preventable, Mr. Speaker. Ask yourself: Are you one of the 40 percent of Canadians who does not have a carbon monoxide alarm? Do you believe that carbon monoxide alarms last forever? Do you know that you have to replace your carbon monoxide alarm every five to seven years? Do you believe that carbon monoxide alarms are only needed if you have a gas furnace? Do you believe that your heating system does not need to be checked annually?

These questions highlight the importance of education. Appliances that use gas, oil, wood, or any kind of fossil fuel produce carbon monoxide during combustion. Sources of carbon monoxide in your home can include your furnace, your water heater, your wood stove, your fireplace, your oven, and of course, automotive exhaust.

Normally, those appliances are vented outside, but if there's a leak or poor installation, tragedy looms. Your only protection is a CSA-approved carbon monoxide alarm. It's the least you can do to protect yourself and your family.

*Applause*

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



## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling a legislative return responding to questions from the Leader of the Official Opposition during Committee of the Whole on October 20, 2020.

**Mr. Cathers:** I have for tabling a letter dated October 30, 2020, to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources urging the government to provide continued funding for the Fireweed Community Market.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges Members' Services Board to waive any confidentiality provisions as they pertain to recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer regarding safely conducting an election during a pandemic, including any recommendations regarding changes to the *Elections Act*.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to direct the Yukon Housing Corporation to:

(1) ensure that emergency vehicles can access its buildings at all times;

(2) prioritize the safety of seniors by ensuring priority snowplowing of seniors' residences' access ways and parking lots; and

(3) consider tenants' physical abilities when communicating requirements around removal of vehicles and snow clearing.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure equitable, fair, and transparent support to all Yukon daycares applying for and receiving the direct operating grant.

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

THAT this House supports the rental assistance program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Canada-Yukon housing benefit

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Every Yukoner deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. Despite the good work of many, our government recognizes that some Yukoners still struggle to find housing that meets their needs and is affordable. As we look forward to National Housing Day on November 22, I want to draw attention to some of the ways in which Yukon Housing Corporation is working to help Yukoners gain and maintain affordable and adequate housing.

New units are being built that will help ease the lack of available affordable housing, like the 47 units of community housing being built at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street in Whitehorse, the hundreds of affordable housing units that we have supported through the housing initiative fund, as well as other housing being planned and built in communities across the territory. We are working with our partners on solutions to meet the needs of Yukoners, including looking for new and innovative ways to support affordable housing.

Today, I am proud to announce the new Canada housing benefit, a rent subsidy program that is available for low- to moderate-income Yukon households. Developed in partnership with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, this new program will provide additional support to hundreds of low-income households across the territory. This year, there will be \$584,000 available for the program. Funding for the program will increase over the seven years.

The Canada housing benefit prioritizes households in need and the tenants can continue to receive the benefit if they move from one home to another within the territory. Depending on their household income and the size of the family, applicants can receive \$200, \$400, \$600, or \$800 per month, which will be paid directly to the tenant.

Yukoners can find the application form online or at Yukon Housing Corporation's offices starting today. Yukoners approved for the program will start receiving the Canada housing benefit before December 31, 2020, to help pay their rent for November and December. This program is available to Yukon households that make less than the affordable household income limit, which is \$103,070 in gross household income per year.

The amount that an eligible household will receive through this program will be based on the size of the unit required for the family makeup. This new program focuses on Yukoners who are not supported through our existing rent supplement program or Yukon Housing Corporation's housing program. It will be available until 2027. It is an important part of the 10-year national housing strategy announced in 2017.

Our Liberal government recognizes that stable, affordable housing is foundational to the health and well-being of all Yukoners. The Canada-Yukon housing benefit will help us achieve a key goal in the housing action plan for Yukoners by increasing access to adequate and affordable market and non-market rental housing. Working on this together with our partners, we continue to implement the National Housing Strategy, as well as the housing action plan for Yukon, the

*Putting People First* plan, and the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness.

We are pleased to collaborate with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation on this new initiative. The Canada-Yukon housing benefit will help Yukoners afford housing that meets their needs.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this important topic today. I appreciate the minister providing us with an update on this file and I hope that it helps Yukoners who are struggling through this pandemic. The minister mentioned that the program will last for seven years, that there is \$584,000 available this year, and that it will increase next year. I am hoping that the minister can tell us how much it will increase to next year.

While making rent and housing more affordable is important for many, it is also important to note that it does very little when there is no housing available. We know that there is a severe housing shortage in the Yukon and it has become increasingly worse over the last four years under this Liberal government.

In July 2016, the social and seniors housing wait-list was at 105. As of October 13, 2020, this wait-list has skyrocketed to 361. That is more than triple — and all under this minister and this Liberal government.

So, while we support assisting folks in affording their rent, the government needs to do a better job in getting more houses and more lots out there so that there is actually more housing available. We have raised this issue with the minister many times and the problem only seems to be getting worse. So, I do hope that this is a signal that she will start to show some urgency with these issues and that the Liberals will start trying to solve the problem.

While I have the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation up, I want to bring to the minister's attention an urgent issue that was raised with us and needed some quick attention by this government. Greenwood Manor is a seniors housing complex run by Yukon Housing Corporation and a family has reached out to us to flag that the snow clearing had not been done at this facility, and it was putting seniors at risk. As a result, elderly residents were finding it difficult to get in and out of the building for such things as medical appointments.

We were also told that an ambulance arrived at the building last night to pick up a resident, and the snow was so bad that the ambulance got stuck. As a result, a second ambulance had to be called out, and the resident had to be wheeled out in the street on a stretcher.

Further, we are told that the elderly residents have been informed that they have to dig out their cars on their own to make way for the government plows. There are obviously several concerns here, including having emergency vehicles becoming stuck when they arrive or having elderly individuals go shovel two feet of snow by themselves in cold weather.

I also note that this concern that came to us was also sent to the Premier, the Deputy Premier, and the minister. I am hoping that the minister can assure us that this won't happen

again so that families don't have to go public to get this addressed.

**Ms. White:** Housing is critical, and it's a human right. Suitable and decent housing contributes to our mental well-being by providing a safe environment to live, work, play, and rest. The truth for many in Yukon is that accessing housing is tough, and access to affordable housing is a dream but not a reality. For more than a decade, Yukon has been in an ever-increasing housing crunch. New construction can't keep up with demand, there is a shortage of building lots in rural communities, and the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list gets longer every year. With more than 350 people on the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list, it is clear that housing affordability is an issue across the territory for seniors, individuals, and families. Yukon Housing Corporation's rent supplement program is always fully utilized, with folks who need help being told that there is no room in the program for them.

We are pleased to hear about the additional support coming from the Government of Canada to address housing affordability, funding that we were told about during the spring briefing. Programs like this one are good in that they can provide immediate assistance to people whose housing cost is more than they can afford, but let's be clear: They don't address the cause of the problem, they don't address the out-of-control rent increases on the private market, they don't address the lack of availability or the high demand of affordable housing, and they don't help the young families trying to purchase their first home in an overheated market.

Someone working for minimum wage can barely afford rent in this town — everybody knows this — and this announcement will only ease the sad reality. While subsidizing that person's rent will help in the short term, it is not a long-term solution. In a fair and just society, someone working full-time should not need a rent subsidy to make ends meet. When this government had the ability to increase minimum wage, they chose the path of least resistance, never putting themselves in the shoes of the lowest wage earners. It speaks to their moral compass that they chose to shortchange minimum wage workers 25 cents per hour by not following the recommendations made by the Employment Standards Board. That's over \$500 a year for the lowest paid workers in our economy. These are the same workers whom we all consider to be essential during this pandemic.

We are told that the average cost of a two-bedroom apartment in Whitehorse is just over \$1,200, and this is laughable to anyone in Yukon who has looked for a place to rent recently. People know it to be much higher. But even if we believe these statistics, for a person earning minimum wage, that's nearly two-thirds of the money that they make a year. This is not sustainable.

So, while we welcome this new program because it will help some people with their rent, we're still waiting to see action from this government that will fundamentally address Yukon's housing crisis. Until this happens, the Yukon housing wait-list will keep growing and more Yukoners will need

subsidies to keep a roof over their head. Yukoners need more than temporary solutions. Housing, after all, is a human right and we need our government to treat it as such.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I'm glad to have the opportunity to highlight some of the work that is being done on housing in the Yukon. With respect to the announcement today or the addressing — the objective of addressing and developing housing solutions across the Yukon and the wide-ranging needs of Yukoners, this is one way to address housing — making housing more affordable in our territory. This is quite a contrast from the previous Yukon government.

There were some questions today with respect to Greenwood Manor and snow removal. The announcement today is about affordable housing. It's about supporting our vulnerable population. Certainly, housing is a human right. Our objective is to ensure that every Yukoner has adequate housing, affordable housing, and that we look at the whole housing transformation and look at supporting the Yukon Housing Corporation tenants, but we also have to look across the Yukon for housing affordability, availability, and vulnerabilities across the Yukon.

The Yukon Party government, previously led by the Housing minister at that time, backed out of a major affordable housing program to the sum of \$13 million. So, explain to Yukoners why they sat on the money and didn't address that and put those housing units on the market — the whole business around catching up and keeping up around the housing needs.

We know that indigenous communities in the Yukon — Yukon First Nation communities — are extremely pressured as well in terms of catching up and keeping up to the housing market. It's not so much about what we're doing in Whitehorse; it's about how we can provide Yukoners with adequate opportunities.

At the time when the concerns were voiced previously around the housing subsidies, we did certainly look at our efforts going forward and looked at providing opportunities. Using this arrangement with the federal government, we provided supports to our households during COVID-19, and the rental assistance program allowed us to give security to our Yukoners. The good news is that our Liberal government is working with our partners to ease housing pressures across the territory. Residential construction is booming; the City of Whitehorse has set a record in 2020 for development permits. The total value of construction so far this year is \$41 million; last year, it was \$24 million at this point in time. New units being built will help to ease the lack of available affordable housing — so will the 47 units of community housing being built at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street.

Today, I am proud to announce the new Canada-Yukon housing benefit, a rent subsidy program that is available for low- to moderate-income Yukon households. The new program will provide additional supports to hundreds of low-income households across the territory. The benefit prioritizes households in need, and the tenant can continue to receive the benefit if they move from one home to another, regardless of whether it's in Whitehorse or rural Yukon communities.

Yukoners can find the application, as I indicated, on our website, and I certainly look forward to working with Yukoners as we move this project forward. Our Liberal government recognizes that stable, affordable housing is the foundation of the health and well-being of all Yukoners.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Secure medical unit

**Mr. Hassard:** Yesterday, it was revealed that an incident that took place at the hospital has resulted in the end of psychiatric services at the hospital. This comes after over a year of delays from the Liberals on the creation of a secure medical unit at the hospital, which staff who work at the hospital have been pleading for. According to e-mails to staff, the assault was preceded by e-mails from the psychiatrist to the department pleading for heightened security measures.

So, the minister's department was aware of the safety concerns before the assault took place. Can the minister tell us when her department became aware of these security concerns and what they did with that information when they received it?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Our government is committed to ensuring that Yukoners have access to the services and supports that they require, including at Yukon hospitals. We are aware of an incident that occurred at the Whitehorse General Hospital on October 28, and we are working with the Hospital Corporation and a resident psychiatrist to ensure that staff and patients are supported and that staff and physicians have access to a safe workplace.

At the Whitehorse General Hospital — as I understand it — the deputy minister and the CEO are working very closely with the Yukon Medical Association to ensure that we have a safe workplace and that the services the psychiatrist provided at the hospital will continue, and the arrangement is being discussed as we speak.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, staff at the hospital have been flagging safety concerns to this Liberal government for well over a year. That's why the secure medical unit is so badly needed. On March 7, 2019, the Premier stated this in his budget speech — quote: "This year's Budget also provides \$1 million for a larger secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital..."

The 2019-20 budget documents go on to state that this is for planning; however, yesterday, it was revealed by the minister in her media scrum that the Liberals have delayed this spending and, as a result, have put staff and patients at risk. The minister's exact quote to media was — quote: "There's a million dollars in the budget in 2020-21 and that's the planning budget."

So, can the Minister of Health tell us why she is putting the safety of patients and staff at risk by delaying this important funding?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** As I indicated, our first priority certainly in Health and Social Services — and I know it's a priority of the Hospital Corporation as well — is to ensure that all patients and all staff are safe and that we provide the best

possible service to all who work and enter the Whitehorse General Hospital for services.

The Hospital Corporation has brought in a security officer. We have security officers at the centre there now. They have been there for quite some time. They have looked at providing some immediate interventions. As I know it — I can't speak specifically about the incident but I can talk generally about what has transpired with respect to the Hospital Corporation and its supports to ensure that the staff are safe and the patients who enter the facility are given the services that they need.

With respect to next steps on the secure medical unit, the planning is underway and it has been for quite some time. We have been working very closely with the Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Hospital Corporation, and of course the department on a plan and a plan to fill the secure medical unit — the shell of the facility that was left there by the previous government — to put in the services that were necessary and we continue to put best efforts forward to get that done as quickly as we can.

**Mr. Hassard:** I am happy to hear that the minister has a good excuse — that it was our fault — one more time.

Even the minister has admitted that the lack of a secure medical unit is putting people at risk. Let me remind the minister of her own words. On April 11, she herself said that the current secure medical unit — quote: "... does not meet current client and patient safety standards."

The minister knows that this space does not meet safety standards, yet she has delayed the funding that the Premier originally announced a year and a half ago. Now there has been an assault on a physician and the hospital has lost psychiatric services.

Will the minister stop her delays that are putting people at risk and finally provide adequate support to the hospital to improve safety?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I certainly want to acknowledge that the incident that happened at the hospital is a priority. It is a priority for this government and it's a priority for the Hospital Corporation, and the staff are doing a really great job in trying to resolve this going forward in collaboration with the psychiatrist, working with the Yukon Medical Association.

I want to put that aside to say that we are working with the corporation to discuss next steps and options as we look at the secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital. The resources are provided and the funding is there for the planning and design of this unit, and the department was provided with a solid business case going forward. Efforts will continue on in terms of the engagement and looking at our partners to move forward quickly on the secure medical unit. We certainly want to acknowledge the efforts there by the Hospital Corporation to have a facility ready for use by 2023 with the support of our partners.

That is the vision. The resources are there and the funding of \$1 million is made available to do the planning, which is in the budget. The Hospital Corporation is working toward finalizing that drafting.

### Question re: Hospital staffing

**Ms. McLeod:** As we have discussed, the minister's delays on the secure medical unit means that we will not have this much-needed unit for years, but I would like the minister to clarify some of her remarks to the media yesterday.

Yesterday, the minister stated — and I quote: "The exciting thing is that we have psychiatrists in the Yukon while we haven't had psychiatrists before." However, a June press release from the minister states: "Prior to this year, adult psychiatric services in Yukon were provided by one visiting psychiatrist and one resident psychiatrist..."

So, here we are again with the minister sharing inaccurate information with Yukoners. This has become a bit of a common thing with this minister. Will the minister now correct the record and retract her incorrect statements from yesterday?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to acknowledge that we have increased our resident psychiatrist supports in Yukon. In fact, we have mental wellness supports in all of our communities now. We have four mental wellness hubs. We link in with the supports to all of our communities. We have increased the supports to improve access to care for patients as part of our work to enhance the continuum of mental wellness supports in the Yukon. We have increased the model of care that provides services to Whitehorse at the private clinic and treatment services for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services through our Referred Care Clinic. We are taking a holistic approach and a multidisciplinary approach as we look at mental health in the Yukon.

In 2019, three psychiatrists opened a private practice, accepting referrals from physicians for all patients requiring care. So, yes, Mr. Speaker — that is very positive news for Yukoners to know that we are now enhancing the specialized supports and services for Yukoners, taking it from a multidisciplinary, holistic approach and ensuring that all Yukoners, including rural Yukon communities, are provided supports as they need them.

**Ms. McLeod:** It has become habit for this Health and Social Services minister to share inaccurate or false information with Yukoners. Two weeks ago, the minister told this House that there were no staffing vacancies at community hospitals, only to be corrected a day later by officials who confirmed that, actually, there were staffing vacancies at these hospitals.

Yesterday in her media scrum, the minister was asked about how many Yukoners are impacted by the loss of psychiatry services at the hospital, and the minister's exact response was: "I can't answer your question with respect to how many patients are supported outside the Yukon because I don't ask those questions."

If the Minister of Health and Social Services isn't asking those questions, who is?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Just for the member opposite's records, when we speak about very specific data and information, I don't generally get that information.

If it's an urgent requirement from the member opposite, I would endeavour to get that information. It's a large department, but also, the responsibilities at the hospital rest with the hospital.

I will endeavour to address that. The same holds true for staffing at the hospital. If I get information from the hospital to say that they have used locums and that they have filled all of the positions and there are no shortages across the continuum of care in our community centres, that is what I report.

With respect to knowing how many positions are vacant at the hospital, I will endeavour to respond, but that is the responsibility of the Hospital Corporation as well. What I did clarify was that we are working in collaboration with the Hospital Corporation on a recruitment and retention strategy so that we consistently provide for filling all of the vacancies rather than having two streams going forward to try to fill vacancies across the Yukon.

**Ms. McLeod:** It's clear that the Minister of Health and Social Services is not paying attention to her files. The minister shares inaccurate information with Yukoners, the minister was nowhere to be seen all summer in response to the pandemic, and yesterday, when asked about the health care of Yukoners, she said that she doesn't know because she doesn't ask those questions.

The minister's lack of attention to these important issues means that the hospital does not have the resources it needs and that our community hospitals are not appropriately staffed. In fact, another department of the minister's is actually contributing to health care staffing issues in our communities, and the minister refuses to fix it.

When will this minister start showing some urgency and start getting properly briefed so she can stop sharing inaccurate information with Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I can understand why the member opposite didn't see the minister all summer, because the member opposite wasn't around. My ministers were here, Mr. Speaker. We were here every day, since the pandemic started, working really hard for Yukoners to put the supports in place.

This particular minister has worked tirelessly, not only working in Health and Social Services and making sure that, during a pandemic, the hospital had the supports that it needed but also, adding to that, a collaborative care model that the opposition didn't even understand when they were in government.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite must clear the record when she says that the minister was not around or not doing her job, because that is absolutely incorrect information. Again, if the member opposite doesn't show up in Whitehorse the whole summer, I can understand why the member opposite wouldn't understand who is working and who isn't working around here.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic impact on Yukon tourism**

**Ms. Hanson:** From Watson Lake to Beaver Creek, from Keno to Old Crow, every Yukon community has a museum or cultural centre. Some are fortunate to have both. These centres that are open to the public share First Nation history and culture, the history of the gold rush, and the building of the Alaska Highway. They all have stories to share. COVID-19 and the loss of tourism this past summer has greatly impacted these

centres. Many struggle to even stay open on a part-time basis. No real revenues from admissions and no large public events such as Indigenous Day, Moosehide Gathering, or Adäka to pull people in has resulted in few tourists.

What actions or support has the minister implemented to assist these important community assets that rely on tourism?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. I believe this may be the first question about culture and heritage that we have had on the floor of the Assembly in this Sitting, so I am really grateful to stand and speak about it. This government has taken many steps to support this cultural sector. We know, of course, that there were significant impacts as a result of COVID-19 on this particular area of our Yukon Territory. We absolutely cherish the 19 museums and cultural centres that we have. We were quick to extend all of our funding agreements to all of our facilities and all of our associations that we work with to ensure that they had the funding that they needed — even though we knew that they would not be able to open their doors as they normally would and that they would not be able to provide the types of services that they normally would.

As well, for all of the events that we normally enjoy as Yukoners — we were not able to have those, so we extended all the funding and worked with all of those organizations and associations throughout the pandemic.

**Ms. Hanson:** These community museums and cultural centres depend on volunteers and community support to be able to offer programs. Students often fill the summer job roster. Yukon's COVID-19 tourism recovery plan makes no mention of community museums or cultural centres. It is unclear whether board members of the Yukon Historical and Museums Association were asked about the impacts on their programs or whether they were invited to participate in any recovery planning for this vital part of Yukon's tourism sector.

Can the minister outline what involvement museums and cultural centres had during consultations and planning for the development of Yukon's COVID-19 tourism recovery plan?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. I believe we will be debating a motion later on this afternoon specifically around this exact area of discussion today during Question Period.

During the last several years, we embarked on a new journey with Yukoners in terms of planning for tourism and developed a new *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. The museums, cultural centres, and the arts community were all involved in that.

One of the outcomes was the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board. We have representation on that board from the cultural, heritage, and First Nation-specific stakeholders and they have absolutely advised us. They worked with us hand in hand through the relief and recovery planning. We also had representation from these very areas on the Business Advisory Council.

We're going to debate this later. I have a lot more information to provide. I will try to provide a little bit more of it after the third question.

**Ms. Hanson:** A 2003 study entitled *Economic Impacts of Yukon Museums and Heritage Institutions* was commissioned by the government of the day. Even then, this report indicated that the local impact of community museums and cultural centres was substantial. Teslin's George Johnston Museum and the Teslin Tlingit Heritage Centre combined accounted for more than 10 percent of that community's employment. Think of how many changes and new centres have been created since then and the even greater impacts these community resources have today.

Despite the statement that honouring our heritage is a core value of Yukon's tourism strategy, it has been ignored when it comes to the draft tourism recovery plan.

What assurances has this minister provided to the museums and cultural centres that, despite ignoring them in the recovery plan, that they will be actively supported in both the relief and recovery phases of Yukon's tourism economy?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board was one of the direct results of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. Many of the action items — and there were 24 that were identified in the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* — have been brought and elevated into the tourism relief and recovery plan.

Again, it's current, it's relevant, and it's the envy — again — of the whole country. We actually did the planning during times when we were having extreme success in tourism, and now we have a pandemic to deal with and we have a current, relevant plan. The heritage and culture — and all of our stakeholders — and this is in fact the first time that we've done a tourism plan that took into consideration partners in tourism, culture, and heritage. We absolutely value this sector of our community and know that they're going to be a very big part of the healing as we get through this pandemic. They're going to help us tell the stories. The historical associations are going to be the ones that tell this story, as we will, as Yukoners.

I look forward to debating this further this afternoon.

#### Question re: Personnel costs

**Mr. Cathers:** Long before the start of the pandemic, the Liberals were spending outside their means. They ballooned the size of the public service by 568 full-time equivalent positions according to their own numbers. That's the equivalent of a small town larger than Mayo or Carmacks. According to the audited Public Accounts, in just three years between 2017 and 2020, the Liberals added almost \$86 million in personnel costs.

Can the Premier tell us how much more the Liberals are adding in government personnel costs this year?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, we answered this question in Committee of the Whole yesterday and we spoke about how, from our mains, we added 30 FTEs in this fiscal year — 30.

Then of course the pandemic came along and we did have to increase some of our supports — but again, only 13 more full-time equivalents at that time.

Now there have been some more FTEs that are of a temporary nature or a part-time nature as we battle the

pandemic. But again, Mr. Speaker, I'll take our record on FTE growth over the Yukon Party's any day.

**Mr. Cathers:** I think we have the bizarre situation where the Premier while in opposition — and now — criticizes the previous government for adding too many government employees and his solution to that is to go on a hiring spree to hire 568 more.

Quite simply, the Liberals are burning through cash. Long before pandemic spending, they went on a hiring spree and grew the size of the public service. Their total increase is 568 FTE positions. That's more than five times the size of Burwash Landing. The hiring spree has added almost \$86 million to government personnel costs between 2017 and 2020.

Why won't the Premier actually tell us how much he's adding in personnel costs this year?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, this year, the amount of increases of permanent full-time equivalents — we had 30 for the mains. I would challenge the members opposite to give me a year that was even close to that under the Yukon Party in their previous five years. Then, in *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, there was an increase of 13 permanent. Now — as I have said — there were 75.5 term positions — or a 1.7-percent increase — from the 2020-21 main estimates.

Again, the majority of this increase is attributed to our response to the pandemic. Is the member opposite saying that we shouldn't have hired those part-time individuals to battle the pandemic? Is that what he's saying? What programs and services would he want us to cut? Because we have done an enviable job of not only balancing our budget a year ahead of schedule — before the pandemic — but also curbed a trend in the increasing of FTEs to the tune of 30 FTEs in the mains.

The member opposite can have fun with his statistics, but in this year, 30 plus 13 is the number of full-time equivalents this year, and there was another addition of term positions as we dealt with border controls, as we dealt with making sure that we have personal protection equipment, and making sure that our communities were safe.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have done an enviable job to make sure we did that within our means.

**Mr. Cathers:** In opposition, the Premier criticized the previous government for adding too many staff. His solution to this was to hire more than a small-town's-worth of staff and add them to government. The Liberals spent the entire summer hiding from transparency and accountability by shutting down the Legislative Assembly. Now that the House is finally sitting, they continue to refuse to answer questions.

Here is what we know: The Liberals have grown the size of government by 568 FTE positions by their own numbers. The Public Accounts show that when you compare 2020 to 2017 — in just three years — their hiring spree increased personnel costs to taxpayers by almost \$86 million, before the pandemic.

We're trying to find out how much these personnel costs are increasing by this year. Does the Premier even know? If he does know, why does he believe that the public doesn't have a right to know?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is true that the members opposite planned a 150-bed facility without taking into consideration putting anybody in that building. Yes, it is true that we had to increase the mental health supports in Yukon, because there were only two for rural Yukon, and we did add some FTEs for that extremely important work.

Yes, it is extremely important for people to remember the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — and the lack of planning for that, as well — and also the hiring spree that the members opposite went on in the election year for teachers who were in the classrooms before we even got into power, but yet they said that those were our hires.

The real fact is, Mr. Speaker, that, yes, it is a very, very small town — 30 up front and another 13 after that. According to my calculations, that is 43. That is a very, very small town.

**Question re: Alaska Highway corridor upgrades**

**Mr. Hassard:** So, there is no debate that improvements along the Alaska Highway corridor in Whitehorse are needed. With the upgrades to the highway, Hillcrest residents have asked for a number of safety improvements to assist those crossing the highway. The government said no to those requests, citing costs. The plan to expand the intersection to seven or more lanes has received significant criticism from residents due to safety reasons. The residents said that they were not confident that the government would listen to their concerns in drawing up the final design; however, that design went ahead.

What is the Yukon government doing to ensure the safety of motorists on the Alaska Highway in the Hillcrest area now that the first phase of construction is completed and we are now into winter?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am very happy to address the improvements that we are making along our highway system, including in front of the subdivision of Hillcrest. As I am sure all of us are aware, workplace and community safety are very important to me, and, in fact, improved safety to pedestrians, bikers, and drivers is why I see these long-sought improvements — lights, controlled crosswalks, turn lanes, and bike paths in front of Hillcrest — as such a great addition to our community. It is very exciting, and the traffic disruption and confusion that the community has endured so stoically this summer, through this \$10-million job, is now over and the traffic flows, from everything I have heard from the community and from people who have reached out to me — they are saying that they are very happy with the final result.

I have spoken to the construction company, Cobalt, and they said that it was one of the best projects they have ever worked on, despite all the challenges of working through COVID in a very restricted area, on one of the busiest highways in the territory. They said that working in tandem with the community and with the Department of Highways and Public Works was an excellent job for them. I know that the community residents are now seeing the benefits of the highway improvements that we put in place there. I am happy to talk about this again in question 2.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, Hillcrest residents spent the summer dodging construction equipment as work commenced, but the residents thought: “Hey, some short-term pain for long-term gain.” However, the pain continues. Residents are telling us, especially with the recent snowfall, that it is very hard to tell where they are on the road due to issues with the road and line painting.

With both northbound and southbound vehicles hugging the centre line in efforts to stay on the road, it’s creating a safety hazard. Can the minister tell us if they are working with the contractor to identify and alleviate these residents’ safety concerns?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can tell the member opposite that we are working very closely with the contractor and with the community. We invited the community to our weekly safety meetings up in Hillcrest when the job was going on, and we will continue that practice in the future. It is a refinement to the whole process to make sure that the community has involvement in the construction jobs that are happening in front of their community. That was something that was suggested, and I took it on. I thought that it was a great addition. Mr. Speaker, as well, the department is meeting with the contractor and the community every week at these safety meetings. They are part of this whole thing.

Yes, last week, as a matter of fact, the Department of Highways and Public Works met with the contractor and had a debrief on the projects throughout the territory — how they were going. They had a frank exchange that lasted for hours. By happenstance, I happened to phone the contractor that afternoon and had a very good discussion with them myself about the work that is happening throughout the territory. I was told that they had never had meetings like this with the department before. They valued them intensely, and the frank exchange will help both parties come to much better agreements on what is needed in the future and to refine contracting and project execution. The individual whom I was talking to said that it was an absolutely great exchange of ideas and he looked forward to that type of collaboration into the future.

**Mr. Hassard:** Hillcrest residents have also raised other safety concerns along this stretch of road. There are still not many street lights in the area and it’s tough to see where the road is when it’s dark. Residents say that key traffic signs are missing, speeding has increased, and there are no safe crossings for bikes and pedestrians.

With summer behind us, can the minister tell us how much work still needs to be completed and when these safety concerns will be addressed?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As everyone in this House knows, this was a \$10-million project. It was a multi-year project. We are going to continue with the work next year. I have biked, walked, and driven through that construction site all summer to keep an eye on it myself. I have worked with the community of Hillcrest with my colleague, the MLA for Mountainview. I have spoken with the contractor. I have had the department working very closely with contractors throughout the territory going forward.

I know that the job in this particular stretch of Alaska Highway was one of the most chaotic and busiest stretches of highway in the territory. Certainly, through the construction, there was — when you pull out all the controls that were there and actually worked with it with a couple of construction sites — it was very hard for the community. I know that they put up with that and endured that.

What we have now, Mr. Speaker, is a road that is working far, far better than it has in many, many years and it will serve the community very, very well going forward. We have bike trails — we have bike paths along the highway. We have lights that were never there before, Mr. Speaker. The speed limit is actually decreasing. We have proper turn lanes. It's going to be a great improvement to the City of Whitehorse and the safety of the highway going forward.

**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. 268

**Clerk:** Motion No. 268, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Watson Lake: THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide a detailed breakdown of spending associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you just stated, this motion states:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide a detailed breakdown of spending associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

I believe that this is a relatively straightforward motion. Having this information, of course, will help to provide some much-needed transparency and accountability of a Liberal government that seems to have gone to great lengths to avoid democratic accountability.

We would like to see where the money was spent, how it was spent, what it was spent on, who received the contracts, and how many full-time equivalents were created. We would like to see these details in writing so that Yukoners can review how taxpayers' money was spent.

This information will assist us as legislators in doing our job of providing scrutiny of government decisions.

With that, I'm going to end my remarks and hope that the Liberals will support democratic accountability.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I'm happy to speak to Motion No. 268 today. The motion requests a breakdown of COVID spending and I'm happy to provide it. I will note for the record that members of the opposition were provided a briefing on the

Department of Health and Social Services spending and they were free to ask the questions they wished at that briefing.

I will further note that we have not yet begun debate on the supplementary budget for the Department of Health and Social Services. Members, of course, are free to ask about spending at that time.

I hope that today Yukoners will hear whether or not the Official Opposition supports being in a state of emergency or not. They have refused to answer the questions on two Wednesdays in a row. The ongoing COVID response from this government is very important to all Yukoners, and I'm glad to have this opportunity to further speak to the work done by so many to keep our territory safe.

Our government worked quickly and efficiently to respond to the COVID-19 health pandemic last spring. On March 23, the Health Emergency Operations Centre opened. The centre collaborated with other departments to ensure a coordinated public health response to COVID-19 and was established to address the immediate COVID-19 risks.

Staff at the centre did an incredible job bringing together resources from across the government. At its height, more than 80 employees were working together on operations, planning, logistics, and finance. The Health Emergency Operations Centre also played a key role in supporting the chief medical officer of health as he developed his public health guidance and supported businesses and organizations as part of the restart plan. The centre has now transitioned into the COVID response unit to continue its work addressing ongoing and emerging COVID risks.

This unit remains a temporary branch of Health and Social Services to provide ongoing operation support to the chief medical officer of health. This unit is focused on ensuring that the government continues to have a coordinated public health response until a vaccine is in place.

Also, on March 23, our government opened the Respiratory Assessment Centre to provide rapid access to COVID-19 testing to Yukoners. The centre also provided acute care to patients with influenza-like illnesses as physicians in Yukon moved primarily to virtual care. This centre continues to reduce the testing burden on Yukon Communicable Disease Control, allowing this incredible team of individuals to focus on its vital work of contact tracing and testing high-risk clients and contacts of confirmed cases.

The Respiratory Assessment Centre also eased the burden to the Emergency department of our hospitals and physician clinics, allowing them to focus on other aspects of maintaining public health and acute care needs during the pandemic. The centre has now transitioned into COVID testing and assessment centre. Total spending on the Health Emergency Operations Centre and our anticipated costs for the now COVID response unit, supplementary services for the office of the chief medical officer of health and the Respiratory Assessment Centre — now the COVID testing and assessment centre — is \$8,467,202. Support for these operations is ongoing, as we continue to ensure that we do all that we can to keep Yukoners safe and healthy.



Thank you to the many health professionals in our territory who have responded so quickly and professionally to support our work in setting up these vital operations for Yukoners.

As we responded quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic, one of our priorities was to ensure that Yukoners did not experience financial hardship. We entered the crisis with strong economic momentum and a solid financial footing. Starting from this good place, we drastically improved the support that we were able to offer businesses and families in the Yukon. In fact, our government was one of the first in the country to roll out business supports through the Yukon business relief program.

Additionally, on April 27, we announced that the Canadian emergency response benefit payment would not be considered income when determining eligibility for social assistance for the months of April, May, June, July, August, and September.

We further exempted two federal benefits — the Canadian emergency student benefit and the one-time \$600 disability payment. The cost of these social supports and the anticipated increased demand for social assistance related to the pandemic is \$2,826,000.

Another early consideration last spring was childcare. The Yukon was one of very few provinces and territories to keep licensed childcare programs open through the COVID-19 pandemic and one of the first Canadian jurisdictions to implement a robust funding model during the COVID-19 response. To ensure continued access to childcare for critical and essential workers and to provide critical funding to maintain operations, we provided 100 percent of the direct operating grant for building costs from March to the end of June, as well as 100 percent of wages for all working staff at daycare centres that stayed open.

We increased the direct operating grant to day homes by 50 percent for those that remained open from March to the end of June. For the centres that closed, we provided 100 percent of the direct operating grant, including costs for March to the end of June.

We also provided supports to parents and caregivers by providing all childcare fees to keep children's spaces and by limiting childcare spaces to only children of critical and essential workers. We continue to provide funds to ensure additional infection prevention and control measures for childcare operators, such as enhanced cleaning and disinfecting, to ensure a safe environment for both children and staff, as well as training related to COVID protocols.

The total amount of COVID-related supports for childcare providers is \$3,347,263. We have supported the Yukon Hospital Corporation throughout the pandemic to ensure that it remains equipped and well-positioned to respond to the health and safety needs of Yukoners, including staff.

We have provided additional COVID funding in recognition of additional costs to prepare for COVID and ongoing operational costs, such as salaries, supplies, and medical equipment. The funding also addressed lost revenue and out-of-territory patients. The total amount of COVID-related additional funds provided to the Hospital Corporation is \$6,012,424. Additionally, we provided \$250,000 in funding to Yukon physicians whose practices were affected by the

pandemic to ensure that Yukoners did not lose access to critical in-territory physician services.

Health supports to mitigate COVID transmission is another key area of spending in our response to the pandemic. This includes support to the Yukon centre for communicable diseases and increased funding for Yukon 811 services.

Please allow me to pause to reflect on the incredible service that the team at the Yukon centre for communicable diseases provided — it was absolutely amazing over the course of the last few months. I had the pleasure of meeting with members of the communicable disease centre team last Friday and I am impressed with the competent and thorough approach to contact tracing and slowing the spread of COVID-19 in our territory. I would like to say thank you to all the staff at the Yukon communicable disease centre. Your work has been instrumental to our efforts.

We also provided funding for additional medical personnel, such as infection control nurses and care providers in long-term care homes. I am pleased to say that, to date, we have had zero cases of COVID-19 in our long-term care homes. It is a reality, and we are working diligently to maintain that statistic.

We started work early in the pandemic to plan and implement additional measures to keep staff and residents in long-term care homes safe, such as limiting staff movement between different homes and changing visitation. We are very fortunate for the high quality of care in our long-term care homes. I am grateful to all the staff for their ongoing dedication and hard work. Health supports to mitigate COVID transmission in long-term care homes and support for the Yukon Communicable Disease Control totals \$1,107,757. This is another key mitigation area in our response to the continued work to ensure the safety of front-line health and long-term care workers.

Yukon remains equipped and prepared to effectively respond to COVID-19 with a reliable supply of personal protective equipment. Keeping our health care professionals safe is of high priority for our government. We have worked closely with our federal, provincial, and territorial partners on the coordinated bulk purchasing of PPE. We maintain a 12-week supply of reserve PPE in addition to our regular stockpile of PPE, which is used on a day-to-day basis and continues to be replenished.

Yukon has not experienced the shortage of PPE felt in other jurisdictions. We will continue our work to ensure that front-line health workers have the resources they need. Some of our PPE supply has been transferred from the government at no charge — some included in the number that I already shared — which has been provided to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Additional costs for masks, sanitizers, and plexiglass screens for all Yukon government facilities across the territory and First Nation governments amount to \$802,300.

Our government is committed to supporting all Yukoners through the pandemic, especially our most vulnerable. This has included additional professional staff to ensure that we can respond to increased demand, including community nurses and mental health support workers.

We have increased funding to non-governmental service providers, such as the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, All Genders Yukon, and mental health Yukon. We have provided some alternate accommodations so that clients at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter are able to socially distance themselves and others and remain safe. Expenditures to protect the health and safety of Yukon's most vulnerable people totals \$2,491,087.

Additional expenditures of \$983,511 are allocated for new screening staff in places such as at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and long-term care homes. This amount also includes enhanced cleaning at these locations; ensuring that Yukoners have a safe place to self-isolate is a continued response of our government.

For individuals unable to self-isolate at home, it is vital that they have another option. The total amount budgeted for the self-isolation centre in response to the COVID-19 health pandemic in Whitehorse and communities, as needed, is \$1,533,407.

Open, available, and transparent communication between our government, the chief medical officer of health, and all Yukoners has been — and remains — of the utmost importance to our territory's collective work to slow the spread of COVID-19. Our government has worked hard to keep open and transparent lines of communication through the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included a weekly meeting with the minister or the Premier and the Yukon chief medical officer of health.

Just last week, the Minister of Community Services and I met with the Mayor and Council of Watson Lake. We met with the chief and council. I know the chief medical officer has also met with them; he was on the call with us. We continue to take priority and precedence on ensuring that all Yukoners are safe and that the resources are on the ground to meet the needs of Yukoners as we go through this pandemic.

Additionally, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Government of Yukon have embarked on a whole-of-territory communications plan to educate Yukoners on what they can do to slow the spread of COVID-19 by following the "safe six". The response to this campaign has been incredible. I offer my personal thanks to all Yukoners for their continued effort to physically distance, wash their hands, stay home if unwell, follow gathering guidelines, avoid unnecessary travel to our rural communities, and self-isolate if they have been outside of our territory bubble or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19.

Our communities know how to take care of each other and never has this been shown more than in the past eight months as we have all worked together to stay safe and reduce the spread of the virus.

We will continue to work closely with the chief medical officer of health and Yukon Communicable Disease Control to ensure that we base our efforts on the newest information and the best practices.

We will continue to communicate as much as possible with Yukoners. The total amount to support communications, administration, and technology supports, which includes

technology for virtual medical and government meetings, is \$1,183,149.

COVID has placed additional pressures on other health services like the flu vaccine. This year, we have taken a different approach to ensure safe distancing practices and respond to the increased demand. Costs to support the 2020 influenza vaccine recognized this increased demand — and a total of \$291,000. As we continue to respond to the pandemic, we have built in capacity to meet future needs. This provides additional funding to support our ongoing response, such as potential clusters of new cases, potential vaccine program, and the ability to manage the surge in cases. The total future capacity funding is \$4 million.

This brings us to the total line item in the 2020-21 Supplementary No. 1 budget of \$33,695,000. This includes money spent to date as well as projected to the end of the fiscal year. This unique situation requires a dramatic increase in spending on public health measures, emergency management, coordination, enforcement, and financial and economic relief.

I can say that I am proud of the work done by the team to keep Yukoners safe during this time. We are grateful during this time for the federal supports that we have received to date. These funds are critical to the territory's COVID-19 response to ensure that all Yukoners are supported to stay safe.

Yukon received the first northern supports package early on in the pandemic. This includes funding that was for aviation and health and social services. The allocation was \$22 million, with \$18.4 million directed to Health and Social Services.

In July, Canada announced \$19 billion in funding for the Safe Restart Agreement, which will be directed toward testing, contact tracing, data management, health care system capacity, support for vulnerable peoples, personal protection equipment, childcare, and support for municipalities and paid sick leave over the next six to eight months. Funding was primarily allocated to provinces and territories on a per capita basis, excluding the childcare which has a base allocation, which saw us receive \$13.2 million. Health and Social Services will receive \$11.2 million of that total.

A second northern supports package has been negotiated to acknowledge northern realities with the higher cost of delivering programs and services. Yukon received a total of \$12.4 million — \$7.7 million to support health system capacity and \$4.7 million to support vulnerable populations.

While I am pleased to speak of these specific response measures, we must also acknowledge the additional services and work provided by government departments during this time.

As we navigate the COVID-19 health pandemic, I am grateful for the work of this government and the Department of Health and Social Services and the work that they have done over the past four years, creating strong, respectful, partnerships. We are on a journey to improve the health and well-being of Yukoners in all aspects of society.

Through the implementation of the recommendations and the *Putting People First* report, our government has a road map to preventive and people-centred care for all. We know that all communities matter and that mental health is important. This

has led our government to improve mental health supports prior to the pandemic, and this work served Yukoners well when the pandemic hit.

Mental health supports have been expanded across the territory, with rural positions increased from two when I took office to currently having 22. At the onset of the pandemic, service providers quickly adapted to continue to provide critical services while working within the pandemic guidelines.

Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has continued to provide supports across the Yukon. The Canadian Mental Health Association, Yukon division, and All Genders Yukon Society also continue to provide counselling supports. By properly supporting mental health in our territory, we were prepared to manage the unexpected, and that is exactly what happened when our territory was hit with COVID-19.

Additionally, through work with the home first program, bed pressures have been reduced at the Yukon hospitals. Due to the reablement unit program at the Thomson Centre, 80 percent of participants have returned home.

We have introduced a social pediatric model with three resident pediatricians, introducing medical travel for children seeing a pediatrician out of the territory that was reduced by 74 percent. We have child and youth counsellors with master's level training who work with children in every Yukon community. Wait times for ophthalmology have been reduced from 37 months to nine months. Ultrasounds have been expanded to Yukon community hospitals.

This work, combined with the work of my colleagues to build a strong economy and to diversify, to grow a sustainable and thriving tourism sector, to work with community and First Nation partners on their infrastructure priorities, to modernize our school curriculums, to strength school communities — all of this work has come together to allow us to work as a team to provide the strong response that was needed and continues to be needed to support Yukoners through the global health pandemic.

The additional funds needed to respond to COVID-19 tell a bigger story. While opposition members may want to focus on just the funding, it is important to understand the incredible amount of hard work and collaboration by public servants, health care providers, and municipal and First Nation governments in our territory to keep Yukon in a good position. Behind these numbers is a story about everything done to keep Yukoners safe, to keep people in their jobs and in their homes, and to adapt services to ensure that Yukoners have the access they need to mental health supports, doctors, surgeries, and medical travel.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the federal Conservative candidate in the last election made a comment in the *Whitehorse Star* on May 1, 2020, stating — and I quote: "... humanity has not faced a challenge like this pandemic in generations, so politicians are taking direction from medical experts — ordinary professionals in extraordinary circumstances doing the best they can — but public confidence wavers when their advice changes daily.

"And while doctors may be experts in health, they are not experts in financial or cultural health..."

I like to point out that this individual was a paid employee of the Yukon Party caucus this spring. The first reaction from local Conservatives to this COVID-19 pandemic was to discredit the chief medical officers of health across our nation.

Today, I was informed that we are not doing enough. Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, what I have just explained and highlighted in my submission clearly highlights all of the work that the public servants of this government have been doing over the course of the last eight months in responding to a global pandemic to address the needs of Yukoners — certainly a priority for all of us. We believe the science and we believe the doctors, and we will work very closely with the chief medical officer of health and take his direction under advisement as we look at moving forward. We will continue to innovate and adapt to ensure that we are meeting the needs of Yukoners — now and into the future.

I will say, again, just as our government has indicated — and as my colleagues have indicated over the course of this Sitting — that Yukoners are strong, resilient people, and they will adapt. They will adapt and they will come together to collaborate. The public servants have put in extra effort and have gone above and beyond to ensure that we provide the right services for Yukoners during this pandemic.

I want to just complete my submission by saying hai' choo, the greatest thank you, to the staff at Health and Social Services for your work delivering these essential services. You are vital to the health and well-being of our territory, and this government will continue to do everything necessary to support all Yukoners.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that list. It is interesting because, during the opposition briefing, we did ask, actually, for a breakdown of the \$33,695,000 line item that says "pandemic management", so I appreciate that the minister has just done that.

I will just highlight in stark contrast that the breakdown in the budget briefing goes as low as \$20,000 where it is explained that it is for community health programs. It was a bit surprising to know that there was a \$33,695,000 line item that just said "pandemic management", so I thank the minister for listing that, and that will be really helpful when we are able to talk about it in the budget debate.

**Mr. Gallina:** I want to thank the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this important motion for us to debate today.

This government takes the roles and responsibilities that Yukoners have placed with us very seriously. This includes being open and transparent on how taxpayers' dollars are spent and explaining why we take the positions that we do.

For Yukoners listening today, I will make note that a number of opportunities were offered to opposition members during the summer to question ministers and department staff on the main estimates and how the government was responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those offers to meet were either declined or ignored.

As a government, we are committed to having open, transparent, and accountable discussions with questions on all departments' spending, not just Health and Social Services. A clear example of openness and transparency displayed by this government is the fact that, for the first time that I can recall ever in the territory, the Public Accounts of this government have been scrutinized through public hearings.

Traditionally, the House spends a lot of time debating budgets and what is forecast to be spent. By having these public hearings with officials from the Department of Finance and various departments, the conversation shifts to where and how territorial funds were spent.

I acknowledge that the Leader of the Official Opposition is the chair of the Public Accounts Committee and that this is an all-party committee. I'll also note for Yukoners that there were no Public Accounts hearings in the previous 14 years of Conservative Yukon Party governance. In the four years of this Liberal government, hearings on Public Accounts have begun to happen, and I expect this level of public scrutiny to continue. It's important that Yukoners know where their money is being spent, how it is being spent, and how they are benefiting from it.

I'll take this time to share with my constituents and Yukoners how Health and Social Services has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic to keep Yukoners safe. For example, almost \$2.5 million was spent on direct client services to vulnerable populations. Contained within this were measures to protect the health and safety of our vulnerable population. This Liberal government provided alternative accommodation for clients at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter to allow for proper physical and social distancing to promote a safe environment for those already struggling.

This government supported NGOs and service providers with a focus on our vulnerable peoples, including the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, All Genders Yukon, and mental health Yukon. This \$2.5 million was also used for additional professional staff in order to respond to the anticipated increased demand for community nurses and mental health support workers.

Recognizing that childcare services for essential workers is paramount through this pandemic, the department spent over \$3.7 million to support licensed childcare providers.

Essential workers provide critical services necessary to the function of our society. These include: health sector workers; emergency services; critical infrastructure workers, including energy and utility workers; information technology workers; government workers; and legal service providers. Having these supports in place was necessary to ensure that parents had the appropriate support for the gradual return to work and phased reopening of our economy.

Included in this \$3.7 million are the additional infection prevention control measures for childcare operators, which include enhanced cleaning and disinfecting as well as enhanced training for staff related to COVID-19 protocols. Mr. Speaker, this government has spent \$1.5 million on self-isolation facilities in Whitehorse and in the communities — a small price to pay to ensure that Yukoners who were not able to self-isolate

in their homes had a safe place where they received the necessary services to weather the storm. Mr. Speaker, the purpose of each of these expenses is to ensure Yukoners' health and safety as we press forward through this pandemic.

As well, an additional \$6 million was provided to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to support necessary COVID responses. It's important to me and to Yukoners who rely on our hospital facilities and staff that they have the necessary support and preparedness and that they are able to respond adequately to an outbreak, should it happen. Despite our low infection rate in Yukon, we have seen first-hand that we are not immune, as one Yukoner has unfortunately passed away. My condolences do go out to their family, their friends, and their loved ones.

This government has been working tirelessly to help protect everyone who calls Yukon home and those who work here providing essential services. We are forever grateful for those who have participated in maintaining the "safe six", those who have respected our COVID-19 guidelines, and those who have recognized the importance of following the recommendations passed down by our chief medical officer of health. It's all too easy to get caught up in the rhetoric and misinformation being passed around through social media. The decisions made by this government to keep people safe are substantiated by science, the medical professionals, people who have dedicated their lives to work in the medical field and understand how viruses operate, evolve, spread, and impact our everyday life. The advice from these medical professionals has consistently remained the same: practise social distancing, wash your hands, self-isolate when you have symptoms, and wear a mask when you can't keep your distance from others.

Mr. Speaker, we don't have to look far to Outside jurisdictions to know that the precautions and measures that we are taking are working. Fairbanks, Alaska shares a similar population size to Whitehorse. It is a mere 10-hour drive from here and, to date, has experienced almost 2,400 cases of COVID-19. Couple that with daily COVID-19 rates reaching the thousands in a number of provinces across the country, our infection rate remains low. Our transmission rate remains low, and I'm hopeful that we can maintain this trajectory as we enter the winter season.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this government remains committed to transparency and accountability to Yukoners. I have provided clear examples of how the territory's Public Accounts are now being publicly scrutinized for the first time in the territory's history that I can recall, and I expect these hearings to continue in the future.

If I made note previously that the Public Accounts Committee had not met in the previous administration, I will correct the record. The Public Accounts Committee did meet in the previous administration; however, there were no public hearings that were held during the 14 years of the Yukon Party government.

As well, my Liberal colleagues made several offers to opposition members to question government spending in the government's response to COVID-19. These offers were not taken up. This is an important motion in providing the Member

for Watson Lake the information that she's looking for, on her terms.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I just wanted to try to add a couple of thoughts. First of all, I'm going to try to talk about two things that I heard today that I'm not sure were correct. The first one is whether or not there were public hearings for the Public Accounts. I think there were in previous years, so what I will do is try to look that up and talk with my colleague. The other one that I wanted to talk about was a comment from the Member for Watson Lake during Question Period — that the Minister of Health and Social Services wasn't working, suggesting that she wasn't active.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am speaking to the motion, Mr. Speaker. This motion is about being accountable to the public, and part of that is being active in the role. Let me just talk about that for a moment, Mr. Speaker.

Health and Social Services normally has a big portfolio. We all know that; we all know that there is a big budget and lots to do. I mean, we have seen here, through this Legislature, *Putting People First*, aging in place, work on the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and on vulnerable persons, and work on mental wellness. That's all ongoing all the time.

When the pandemic — not even before the pandemic was here, but when we first started to be concerned about the pandemic, around the time when we were cancelling the Arctic Winter Games, we started having meetings. I had meetings personally with the Minister of Health and Social Services, the chief medical officer of health, and our director of emergency response here in the territory. We sat down to have discussions and planning meetings to prepare in case there would be a pandemic coming.

Before we ever declared a public health emergency, the minister and her team put in place the Health Emergency Operations Centre — in case — to be prepared. That's why there were costs against last year's budget early on.

Other things that I know she was working on — once we were aware that the pandemic was coming to Canada and posed a risk to us, she worked with her team to put in place personal protective equipment across not only all our health care centres but across our communities. She worked to get the Respiratory Assessment Centre up and running. She worked on how to develop the isolation centre by discussing it with the business community, because we had been meeting with them almost right away to talk about concerns around the Arctic Winter Games. She worked with the hospitals to support them so that they were dealing with the most acute care patients, because there was a concern that, if patients needed to start to come to our hospitals, there would be space for them and also that we not put those patients at risk who had less acuity.

All of us, as ministers, were on federal, provincial, and territorial calls. In the first few weeks, I was on three calls a week. I know that the Minister of Health and Social Services was on those calls with her colleagues discussing the issues across the country and how to coordinate. She was working on how to do testing, how to do contract tracing, and how to do an

online self-assessment tool. She was part of the group that was dealing with the COVID information centre to make sure it was up and running so that we were getting information out to the public. She was part of conversations with all of our communities in those meetings. At first, they were three times a week. Later on, they went down to twice a week and then once a week, but I recall her being on many of those calls.

There was all sorts of work around guidelines to help our businesses and the public. There was all sorts of work around public education, about working to support the chief medical officer of health, the Premier or other ministers and herself to get up in front of the public to talk about what was happening and to answer questions so that the public would know what was going on. She worked to make sure that our long-term care facilities were protected because we knew — as we watched the pandemic unfold across the country — that seniors were more at risk.

What I am trying to say is that the reason I am concerned with the comments that came from the Member for Watson Lake is because they suggested that the minister wasn't active. In fact, it was the opposite. The minister was incredibly active during this time.

As far as the motion goes that we have here today, I am happy to support the notion that we will get detailed numbers around the spending on COVID-19. I think that is great.

I just want to make sure, for the Yukon public, that they are aware of how much work this minister put in to help protect Yukoners during the pandemic.

**Speaker:** If the member now speaks, she will close debate on Motion No. 268.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Ms. McLeod:** I want to thank the members for their contributions this afternoon to this discussion on getting a detailed breakdown of spending that has been associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, we are referring to the \$33 million-plus that was identified in the supplementary budget. We had quite a struggle to get the information for the \$5 million that was in Bill No. 204, so obviously there was some concern about how much — I guess, discussion — it would take to get that information.

I appreciate that the minister gave us a breakdown today of some broad strokes in spending, which we would be only too happy to drill into in debate on Health and Social Services. It has been suggested here that — I mean, I know the Member for Takhini-Kopper King also made a request for this information and it was not provided, to my knowledge. It certainly wasn't provided to this opposition party. So, I felt that it was necessary to have this discussion today.

Anyway, I guess I'm just going to leave it at that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to again thank the minister for the information she provided for us today. While I would have asked for a written compilation of those costs, they will be in the Blues, so I don't believe we'll need that.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

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

*Motion No. 268 agreed to*

### Motion No. 297

**Clerk:** Motion No. 297, standing in the name of Ms. Hanson.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to include the Yukon Historical and Museums Association in the discussions and planning for the COVID-19 tourism recovery plan.

**Ms. Hanson:** I am happy to have an opportunity to rise today to talk about this motion. I want to say at the outset that when we're talking about including — so, it's an inclusion approach that I'm trying to suggest here. I raise this motion today, not in a negative way, but in the hopes that the minister will acknowledge that it is reasonable to seek clarification — and in this case, perhaps remedy for situations that arise — perhaps by oversight, who knows — but, in this case, what appears to be the omission of any reference to the museum and heritage sector in the Yukon COVID-19 tourism recovery plan.

I'm referring, of course, to a plan that is dated October 13, 2020, that all members of this House, I'm sure, have had a chance to review.

There are a number of reasons that I'll get into about why I think this is important. I know that the minister shares my concern and my respect for our historical sites and our

museums — our heritage resources; she said so this afternoon, in fact. But the reality that we're dealing with in this territory is that — as the recovery plan indicates on page 11 in echoing the scenarios that Destination Canada developed in terms of the potential impact of the pandemic, depending on the duration of the pandemic — there is every indication at the federal level and certainly here in the Yukon that it may take as long as five years to recover to the 2019 visitation rates that all Yukoners enjoyed — all Yukoners enjoyed the visitation levels that were at an all-time high.

The federal body, Destination Canada, further estimated that the tourism sector would be hit three times harder than any other sector of our economy. We have heard from TIA over the course of the — I think 33 — calls to date that they have had, on a weekly basis, among their memberships — the Tourism Industry Association — that 50 percent to 60 percent of tourism businesses will not survive without Yukon government leadership. The demise, the lack of vitality, or the inability of this sector to endure — as we have talked about in this Legislative Assembly — through relief measures as we plan toward recovery — really what I'm talking about here is the fact that we have a recovery plan, but one of the emphases of that is, in part, addressed through the relief measures that we put in until we are on the path to recovery.

The key element of this — particularly when we talk about sectors like the cultural sector and heritage and museums — is the real potential for the loss to the territory and the communities — in many cases, these centres that we are talking about and the resources that we're talking about are based in small communities throughout the territory — so the critical loss of skilled human capital is a challenge that we need to be very cognizant of and to take into our thinking as we deal with the long-term vitality of our tourism sector — the whole of our tourism sector.

So, the tourism recovery plan — and I'm quoting here: "... specifically targets the rebuilding and strengthening of the Yukon tourism economy and sector through target investments that support the safe recovery and rebuilding of our tourism industry."

I had looked then, Mr. Speaker, to this recovery plan, looking at it in the context of what we talk about or what I see on the government websites and what's publicly available. As a Member of the Legislative Assembly, that's what I have access to. When the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* was tabled in the Legislative Assembly — and we've discussed it a number of times — and as I said earlier today, one of the key, core values that Yukoners contributed to — and then through the bodies that worked with the minister and through the advisory bodies that were established — thankfully, was the core value of honouring our heritage. That's why I was hopeful that I would see in the recovery plan an explicit mention of this — of heritage, museums — and see where the role of the association that represents them is reflected in that or reflected in any other documents. I couldn't find it. That's why I'm raising it today, because I want to ensure — as I know the minister has said and this government has said that they want to hear from the voices of all who are affected. I know that if

those stories are going to be told — as the minister said, into the future — then we need to have the resources to be able to do that, and we need to find a way to sustain them through the next very difficult period.

I guess my concern emanates largely from my observation over the last number of years that, despite the fact that the tourism sector and many of the private and community entities work so hard in this sector, our investment as government doesn't match what our words are about how important this sector is to the economy — putting our money where our mouth is, quite frankly — because when I look at the areas in our budget, for example, we say that heritage is important and that it's a core value of our strategy, but we flatlined the amount of money that we provide to those resources.

So, the Yukon Historical and Museums Association — the same amount year after year. I can go through just about every one of them, but I am not going to waste the time. I would reference people to look at 17-13 in the budget and 18. Even essential items that could be worked on right now — and maybe the minister will announce today that there have been some additional investments in this area, but it seems to me that, during a pandemic at a time when many of the museums and heritage sites are not able to be open to the public, here is an opportunity for general operation and maintenance and training support. But again, not only has that flatlined, it has decreased — and we referenced that on page 17-14, if the minister is looking to see where I am pulling the figures or where my reference is from. Whether that is First Nation cultural centres — flatlined — or museums assistance — flatlined. Partly that may be because it's a broad swath when we look at what is encompassed in the tourism strategy, but if we take as a core value the importance of — as we say in the report that heritage is a core value and respect for it and then how that is communicated to people is generally through our museums and our cultural centres and heritage sites.

So, then I thought that one of the things that we hear over the course of many of the tourism association's meetings and the discussions as the strategy was unfolding was definitions of the kinds of tourists that tourism operators might be wanting to and gearing themselves to attract and how Yukon cultural or heritage sites or others might want to be positioning themselves to — in terms of attracting more tourists whether it is to Teslin, Mayo, Old Crow, Dawson, or Beaver Creek.

You go on the website — so, with Destination Canada, the Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture has put together these dashboard demographics identifying them in terms of the kinds of tourists that we may or may not want to work toward pulling into the territory and how most effectively to work with those tourists to get a deeper appreciation of the territory.

We have 18 percent of the Canadian visitors to Yukon, according to the territorial government's dashboard demographics, as cultural explorers. That is great. These are people who are seeking local foods, attractions like museums and historical sites, and a preference for small towns. They are not materialistic, they are not intimidated by change, and they enjoy spontaneity. They look at local arts and crafts exhibitions.

The heritage and culture connection is in visiting museums and historical attractions and experiencing local foods.

There are lots of little factoids in these dashboard demographics, Mr. Speaker. They talk about everything that is covered off. I am sure the minister was there as well, but I can remember attending several of the tourism conferences where they describe these various characteristics of travellers and tourists. Sometimes they sounded more like a horoscope or some kind of Myers-Briggs assessment of tourists — for example, a cultural explorer tip saying that a CE, a cultural explorer, is more indulgent and carefree when travelling. They like to share their experience with others and use social media to do so during the trip, and 63 percent find activities in the category of heritage and culture appealing. The CE tip says that they are taking full advantage of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, when marketing and engaging with the cultural explorer. I was thinking that this is something that we would be seeing in terms of working with the Yukon Historical and Museums Association, dealing with historic sites and heritage and cultural sites.

That might be something that could be worked on, and we would be seeing some sort of additional resources provided while people are unable to do the work that they want to be doing, engaging directly, as all tourism-engaged people want to be doing.

Another group is the historians. These are a combination of personal history buffs and cultural history buffs. Goodness knows that Yukon has a wealth of history opportunities for visitors.

There are all sorts of little dashboard demographics with respect to the historian-type Canadian visitor to the Yukon in the dashboard demographics that Destination Canada developed for application in the Yukon. They seek an experience appeal — and each one of these areas has considerations for product development — so that includes experience appeal. They seek well-known historic sites and buildings. They seek taking time at historic sites and museums.

In this sector, historians, experience drivers, the average percentage of this type who find activities in this category appealing was heritage and culture — 53 percent.

I raise this partly because I think this is an interesting exercise that Destination Canada has assisted the Yukon government in working on, but also to point out that the data that was surprising to me — when they looked at the snapshot in terms of the numbers — so, when they profiled these profiles that I have just shared with you, Mr. Speaker, they were a snapshot of Canadian visitors to Yukon, based on the Yukon visitor tracking program.

Now, I would have thought that we would have had visitor data — visitor tracking information — based on the years 2018-19 when we were gearing up so that we would have data that reflects the current trend and the current travellers to the Yukon. Unfortunately, the data that the Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture input into this system was from 2012-14. That is unfortunate — this is directly from the website. Here is an opportunity, perhaps — here is an opportunity to work on building a more robust picture of these two — and there are

others; there are other descriptors or dashboard demographics for the other EQ identifiers — descriptors of us as tourists or people as tourists — but having accurate information would help the minister to build her case to her colleagues about why there needs to be additional investment in this particular sector.

That is also, again, as I said earlier, my concern about the fact that, as I look at the apparent exclusion — or apparent non-inclusion — of the Yukon's museums and heritage institutions in any express plan — or any express action — with respect to a three-year plan to drive the recovery of Yukon's tourism sector, which is the Yukon's tourism recovery plan — there are a couple of things that struck me. Nowhere on the websites of yukon.ca or Yukon Tourism and Culture or Yukon Economic Development can I find anything more recent with respect to the economic impact of Yukon's historical and museums, circle sites and museums — our heritage institutions — any more recent data or analysis with respect to the economic impacts of the sector than 2003.

The world has changed a lot in 17 years. Thankfully, we saw, up until the impact of COVID-19 — we were all hopeful about an increase in each year, with very robust targets 10 years out in terms of the broad tourism sector. I would hope that this would be a real opportunity for the minister to perhaps invite, as part of the recovery plan, the Yukon Historical and Museums Association and other heritage and culture representatives to be part of assessing the real economic impact. We all know that in every little community, including in Whitehorse, there is a significant economic impact. Having that information allows us then to build on it to grow this sector.

The last puzzling piece to this was that — when I had said that I hadn't seen any reference in the Yukon COVID-19 tourism recovery plan to museums or historical sites, I will correct myself. I stand corrected because the word is there, but there is no information and there is no way to find it. I will read you the paragraph that struck me as important and reinforces the need to have an inclusive approach to developing and making sure that the COVID-19 tourism recovery plan envelops all possible players. It says — for Hansard, it is on page 17 of the tourism recovery plan: "All this is to say that while many sectors of Yukon's economy have been able to adapt and begin to recover from the impacts of COVID-19, the sectors that rely on visitation and gatherings continue to need ongoing relief and support. 'Recovery: Yukon's economic strategy in 2020' outlines how Government of Yukon will continue to provide relief with supplemental programs for accommodations and tourism business as well as for tourism and culture non-profit organizations such as museums and cultural centres."

Before I put this motion forward, Mr. Speaker, I thought that this was it and that I would find something there.

Despite the best efforts of several people in my office, including myself, in yukon.ca, and Yukon tourism, there is no document that's publicly available called "Recovery: Yukon's economic strategy in 2020". I can't rely upon that document, nor can anybody in this House, unless and until the minister — and perhaps she will table today, as part of helping inform the discussion here today, that document so that we can see what

relief with supplemental programs are contained in that strategy for recovery for cultural non-profit organizations such as museums and cultural centres.

I look forward to that, and then I would say that it would be going a long way to addressing the concerns that I raised here. I am raising them in a positive sense. I'm not trying to criticize this minister; this is not a personal thing. This is about how we make sure that all parts of our tourism sector are in a healthy place to recover and that we're doing it in an informed way with the best data possible.

I have identified a couple of areas where there are gaps in data. I know that people have been busy. I have watched over the course of the last months, but this is not just because of the pandemic that this sector has lagged behind in terms of investments by this government or the previous government. We need to make sure that we continue to match what we state is our commitment in this Legislative Assembly with the ongoing support and inclusion in the development of appropriate supports — of supports that correspond to the identified needs.

I don't have anything else to add. I look forward to a positive response. This motion is offered in a positive vein and would allow us to move forward and get on with other business of the day.

I hope that we can enjoy the support of the minister and other members of this Legislative Assembly with respect to the inclusion of all sectors — in particular, the Yukon Historical and Museums Association — in the essential planning for recovery toward a healthy tourism sector that is representative of all of our very deserving individuals and organizations that comprise tourism and make our tourism sector — have made it in the past and hopefully will make it in the future — really such a vital part of our economy and the fabric of our community.

As the minister said — and we look at the museums and the cultural centres. As the core value said — and we talk about our heritage value — that's where the stories are. We can't lose those stories, nor can we lose the storytellers and the keepers of the stories. So, simply by inclusion, we can address some of this and we can move forward.

I look forward to positive discussion this afternoon.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I was really trying to give the members opposite an opportunity to speak as I will be the only speaker as planned today on this motion. I thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for bringing forward this motion. As I said today in Question Period, I'm happy to rise to speak about culture, heritage, and our museum community.

For many years, we have welcomed visitors from around the world to experience this really special place that we call home — our Yukon home. We had three consecutive years of record visitation from 2017, 2018, and 2019. Together, we created the new *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy: Sustainable Tourism. Our Path. Our Future. 2018-2028* to take tourism to the next level in a responsible, respectful, and sustainable way for the benefit of Yukoners.



We were on track to exceed our joint goals — business revenue attributable to tourism, resident support for tourism, and the development of a sustainable framework to move the industry forward in a constructive and responsible way — but then COVID-19 happened.

As we all know, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic has been especially challenging for the tourism industry. Travel and gathering restrictions have been essential to keep Yukoners safe, but at the same time, they have had ongoing profoundly negative impacts for the Yukon visitor economy.

The situation facing the tourism industry has been continually shifting throughout the spring, summer, and fall. It is a very fluid situation, and it has been challenging to develop a recovery plan based on that fact alone. One very encouraging realization has been the continued currency and the relevance of our *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. As I said today in Question Period, we are the envy of the country, having gone through a planning process when we did to have a plan in place for such difficult times.

The strategy is based upon the heartfelt values of Yukoners, as expressed to us through public engagement sessions. As a result, the goals of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* include ensuring tourism has broad public support and legitimacy and that tourism is operating in a sustainable way that meets the needs of present and future generations of Yukoners and takes into consideration the needs of present and future generations of Yukoners.

These values and goals provide an excellent framework for a tourism recovery plan. We are confident that we can return tourism to the strength that we once enjoyed. The industry can regain its title as Yukon's largest private sector employer and return to contributing five percent of our GDP and \$368 million in revenue to Yukon businesses, but not until it is safe to do so.

With this confidence and patience instilled in us by the long-term view of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*, we know that we can deal with COVID-19 and return to tourism when the time is right. That is why I am so grateful to the 15 Yukon organizations and the partners that made up the Yukon Tourism Development Strategy Steering Committee. The *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* was written by the committee, and the Yukon Historical and Museums Association was one of the members and signatories involved in developing the strategy. They did a great job.

The document — which included, again, participation from the Yukon Historical and Museums Association and other stakeholders from that sector of our community submitted and recommended to government — this was adopted by our government immediately and we began implementing the priority actions as identified by the committee.

One of the recommendations of the strategy was to conduct a review of tourism governance. This led to the establishment of the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board. The role of the advisory board is to provide me, as the Minister of Tourism and Culture, with strategic advice on implementing the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* and to work to align the efforts of government and industry in a manner that maximizes the

efficiency of destination management and supports tourism industry growth.

Those who were involved in designing the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board looked at the success of the Yukon Tourism Development Strategy Steering Committee and wanted to capture its essence in seeking key sectoral representation. This resulted in the requirement that the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board be made up of three members representing tourism perspectives, but also two representing First Nations' perspectives, one representing the perspective of the Yukon communities, and the last one representing cultural perspectives. The existence of a cultural representative is a direct legacy of the Yukon Historical and Museums Association's importance in providing a cultural voice in the work of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* steering committee, and thus, the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board played a key role and central role in developing and advising the contents of the tourism relief and recovery plan, with a cultural perspective baked into it.

Other key factors have influenced the tourism relief and recovery plan. We conducted a survey of tourism businesses in partnership with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon and the Yukon Bureau of Statistics. To round out our information gathering, we also conducted a survey of Yukon non-profit societies and gained a better understanding of the economic and operational pressures related to the pandemic. This survey was conducted by Volunteer Yukon, the Yukon Nonprofit Advisory Council, and the Yukon Bureau of Statistics.

We expect to be able to release the official "what we heard" report from this survey soon; however, the initial results are reassuring, with no respondents indicating that the pandemic has placed them in immediate financial peril — however, the sector has concerns about the future, as we're talking about today.

These initial results have influenced a tourism relief and recovery plan and will continue to do so as we move into more detailed implementation. Yukon non-profit organizations such as the Yukon Historical and Museums Association are critical to the health and vitality of our communities and economic fabric of Yukon. Therefore, we have made best efforts to be supportive of the non-profit organizations in the face of the pandemic.

For those non-profits reliant on Yukon government funding, my department elected to honour the 2019-20 transfer payment agreements, even in cases where COVID-19 got in the way of meeting agreement deliverables. Also, we ensured agreements for 2020-21 were put in place early to get money flowing. As I mentioned, we recently formed the Yukon non-profit advisory council. This has been a very positive development. It is encouraging to see non-profit organizations taking the initiative to work together on common issues and challenges facing this very diverse sector.

This is an excellent forum for any non-profit organization to become active in engaging government. COVID-19 is, of course, a key issue that impacts all non-profits in one way or another. As I said, the tourism relief and recovery plan is a work

in progress. We will release the overarching framework of the plan soon. We will continue to engage partners and stakeholders on how details of this plan will be implemented. In this regard, we will be directly involved with the Yukon Historical and Museums Association in discussions about the plan and the annual Yukon museums roundtable, which is taking place this year on December 1.

As one of the Yukon's most respected and long-standing non-profit organizations, we strongly support the Yukon Historical and Museums Association through the Department of Tourism and Culture's museum assistance program. We are providing them with the annual operational funding — again, knowing that they are unable to do some of the normal activities they would do. The \$74,000 has gone to them — and I'm not sure how much time I have, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** You have unlimited time.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Unlimited, okay.

I wanted to also just identify some of the other funds that we have within the Department of Tourism and Culture and funds that we've expanded as we have dealt with the pandemic and different provisions that we've put in place for this specific area of our community.

I'll just go over the regular funding that was given to all of our organizations, in terms of museums and cultural centres: the Yukon Historical and Museums Association received \$74,000; the Dawson City Museum, \$130,000; the Binet House in Mayo, \$40,000; Campbell Region Interpretive Centre in Faro, \$40,000; Carcross/Tagish First Nation Learning Centre, \$130,000; Da Kų Cultural Centre, \$130,000; MacBride Copperbelt Mining Museum, \$50,000; George Johnston Museum, \$50,000; Keno Mining Museum, \$50,000; Kluane Museum of Natural History, \$50,000; the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, \$130,000; the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation cultural centre, \$50,000; the MacBride Museum, \$182,000; Northern Lights Centre in the Town of Watson Lake, \$40,000; the Old Log Church Museum, \$80,000; Big Jonathan House, \$50,000; Teslin Tlingit Heritage Centre, \$130,000; the Yukon Transportation Museum, \$130,000; Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation cultural centre, \$130,000; and the John Tizya Centre in Old Crow, \$50,000.

We extended our agreements as well to all of those other really important stakeholders: the Junction Arts and Music Society received \$32,600; the Longest Night Society, \$18,000; the Nakai Theatre ensemble, \$62,000; the Northern Fibres Guild, \$5,600; Northern Lights School of Dance, \$28,000; Rotary Club of Whitehorse, \$10,000; the Village of Mayo, \$8,000; the Whitehorse Concerts, \$39,300; Yukon Film Society, \$89,000; and the Yukon Bluegrass Music Society, \$28,000.

Getting into some of our key stakeholders, we funded the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon with \$219,000, and we've extended further funds in relation to the pandemic, so there is an increase to that amount that is in our supplementary budget as well. There is: the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon, \$264,000; Yukon Convention Bureau, \$200,000; Sport Yukon, \$43,000; Yukon Quest, \$150,000; Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous, \$75,000; Selkirk First Nation for First

Nation historic sites, \$106,000; Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation for the Forty Mile site, \$95,000; Carcross/Tagish First Nation for Conrad, \$7,500; Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation for Rampart House, \$60,000; and Yukon Council of Archives, \$70,000.

There is the arts sector: Friends of the Yukon Permanent Art Collection, \$30,000; Dawson City Arts Society, \$425,000; Northern Cultural Expressions Society, \$345,000; the Yukon Art Society, \$82,000; Yukon Art Society for the artist in the school program, \$100,000; Yukon Arts Centre, \$891,657; Yukon Arts Centre Old Fire Hall, \$175,000; Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association, \$160,000; All-City Band Society, \$25,000; the Association franco-yukonnaise, \$20,000; Blue Feather Music Festival, \$27,500; Whitehorse Community Choir, \$30,900; Dawson City Music Festival Association, \$59,400; Guild Society, \$108,000; Gwaandak Theatre Society, \$64,800; Heart of Riverdale, \$50,000; and Jazz Yukon, \$33,700.

We increased some of our arts funding so that we could ensure that, because we weren't able to have the types of events that we normally would, artists and folks working in the heritage sector were able to access additional dollars as we were in this incredibly difficult time during COVID-19. I would like to just talk about a couple of them.

Going back, though, I would like to also say that all of the funding that I just described, in terms of what went to all of the various organizations — we also provide funding to the Yukon Heritage Resources Board, which is a mandated board through the UFA to look at the oversight of heritage in Yukon. We also provide funding for operation and maintenance and other work that's done on all of our heritage sites throughout the Yukon.

There is always more that we can do, and we want to do more. I think this is a really important aspect of our territory, and I'm proud of the funding that is distributed to all of these organizations and all who contribute to this important aspect of our territory. We provided an additional \$490,000 in various funds for artists, and that was a direct result of COVID-19. I won't directly go into those details, but I do want to speak to a couple of the questions before I wrap up — in terms of the member feeling that, somehow, there is something that needs to be remedied.

I believe that we have taken extra steps to ensure that the culture, heritage, and arts communities were absolutely included in the development of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*, and that strategy is what has informed our recovery plan.

The surveys and the work that we are doing with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics and other entities are informing the relief programs going forward. I have worked really closely with our federal partners as well. We are still anticipating further programs that will relate specifically to arts, culture, and the performing arts that will come from the federal government as well. So, we are continuing to have those types of meetings on a regular basis. I had several meetings with the federal Minister of Heritage and Culture throughout the pandemic — many in-depth discussions and one-on-one — relaying exactly the issues that we have in Yukon. This is a vitally important part of our

territory and in order to ensure that we have the quality of arts community that we have come to enjoy and appreciate — it really makes up the fabric of who we are as Yukoners but it also supports our tourism industry. I know that my colleagues — I worked alongside my colleagues from the Northwest Territories and Nunavut wanted to ensure that the Minister of Heritage and Culture heard specifically what some of the uniqueness is in the north and that our response would need to be modified in terms of — as you look at the rest of the country and take into consideration the uniqueness of our north.

I know that it was well-received and it has helped to inform steps going forward in terms of long-term support.

The Member for Whitehorse Centre talked about the data that is available — and I will have to get back to her in terms of this data that she is referring to, because we have new data that is available. We did a visitor exit survey from 2017-18, and we did it for a whole year. That exit survey hadn't been done since 2012, but it was only done for half a year; this is how the visitor exit surveys were done previously. This exit survey that we did was done for an entire year, so it included all of our seasons — which was not typical, in terms of the type of data that was previously gathered.

So, I will ensure that she can find the data that she is looking for, because this is exactly — we in Tourism and Culture make all of our decisions based on evidence and data, and we work very closely with our partners at Destination Canada to inform them. They have access, actually, to the new data that we have available to us through the visitor exit survey, and we will continue to do that work. It's built into the tourism development strategy to continue to do good research and ensure that we have the correct data going forward so that we can make well-informed decisions.

In terms of this motion specifically, I thank the member for bringing it forward. We haven't had a lot of opportunity to speak about culture and heritage during this Sitting. I believe that this is such a vitally important part of our territory and that this sector is going to need as much support as all other related tourism- and travel-related entities will need. They're built into the relief and recovery plan.

On that note, I hope I have answered a lot of the questions. I think there is a lot of room for more discussion around this, and as the minister responsible, I take my job very seriously and I have been very committed to ensuring that we are hearing from Yukoners, that we're taking into consideration the issues that they have, and that we're doing everything possible to make sure that we are responding in an appropriate way.

I want to thank the member for bringing it forward today. As I've said, we do have the roundtable planned for December 1 and we'll have these direct discussions there.

On that note, we will be supporting the motion today. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity on speaking to Motion No. 297 to thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for bringing this forward. We, on this side, agree with this motion 100 percent. Including the Yukon Historical Museums Association in the discussion and

planning for the COVID-19 tourism recovery plan is a good idea.

I wish it didn't have to be brought forward in a motion to make the government actually think about working with this organization. It's something that the minister should have been doing from the beginning.

I don't have a lot to say today, but the minister has not announced the entire tourism recovery plan. We think that this is unfortunate and it is unfair to industry. Every day, we on this side are contacted by key players in the tourism industry wondering what's in the package for them. We believe that the Liberals should really prioritize getting support out to the tourism industry immediately.

We've offered to help. We've said this on many occasions — we've offered to help to work with the government since the beginning of the pandemic, and I know that the Third Party has also. Unfortunately, the Liberals have refused all offers to work together collaboratively. You know what — this doesn't serve the industry well. I do hope that the Liberals figure out that we should be working together. Until that time, the offer, of course, still stands. We are willing to work with the government, but the government needs to start being open and transparent. They need to share information with us and they need to start trying to answer questions.

I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity, because we're talking about — with this motion — recovery of the tourism sector. I want to talk about some of the industry just in my riding. I could go on about the rest of the Yukon and be here for days and days because I'm a historian and I really enjoy the history of the Yukon — the thousands of years of history, the hundreds of years of history, the 50 years of history.

In my riding alone, we have the Da Kų Cultural Centre and it's a beautiful building and it's a good example of First Nation government and all types of government working together. In there, there are thousands of years of First Nation cultural history.

Parks Canada has been here since 1969-70, and their history is there, and then the Yukon government has tourism, and they talk about the "trail of 42" and everything else Yukon. That's promoting, supporting, and educating our tourists. They love that stuff when they come to the Yukon.

One just needs to go to the Kluane Lake museum in Burwash and have a look at what I think is some of the best taxidermy in the world. I was so happy — I think I brought this up before — that there is also cultural stuff in there, too, and some beautiful beadwork.

Kwāday Dān Kenji — I don't know if anybody has been there, but that's Long Ago Peoples' Place, and that is an incredible place that needs seeing and needs to be part of this conversation. Shakat Tun Adventures — "Shakat Tun" means "summer hunting trails" in Christmas Bay, and that's something, and it's definitely worth seeing, too. We have other museums, unofficial museums. There's one in Beaver Creek — I'm sure we've all been to the one in Beaver Creek — and there are a couple in my community. If you ever get an invitation there or an opportunity to stop by, you should, because there is a lot of history in there.

I think the Member for Whitehorse Centre brought up — and I just want to talk a little bit about — just on the Internet alone — and if you go to Facebook, there's the Destruction Bay Days. That's a fresh site where people are posting old photos and history. There are the People of Beaver Creek Yukon or People of Haines Junction pages — two sites where there is so much history. Probably the most popular one throughout the Yukon is Yukon History & Abandoned Places.

On many occasions, I have seen someone comment or share a picture and ask if anybody knows anything about it, and it just runs rampant. There's great history, but those people need to be part of the tourism recovery plan. They need to be engaged, and they need to be talked to.

I just wanted to add that. As I said, with my closing remarks, I want to thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for bringing this motion forward. It's very timely, and we will be supporting this motion.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that it's just important to correct the record. It's always important to do that. Maybe I'll just start with the comments that we just heard from the Member for Kluane. Even though we are speaking to the motion brought forward by the Member for Whitehorse Centre, there was kind of a —

#### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order. I'm not picking on the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, but just for the benefit of the House because everyone says this — but I have been advised by the Clerks-at-the-Table that the members cannot "correct the record" of anybody else. You cannot do that.

You can correct yourself. You can stand on a matter of personal privilege and you can correct the record by saying, "I misspoke myself" or that a certain statistic was incorrect.

I suppose you would say, "These are the facts as I see them, and the member opposite is incorrect." I've been told by the keepers of the procedural narrative for our Assembly that you cannot "correct the record" of another member.

I know that this is very interesting for all members at this juncture in the afternoon, but like I said, I'm not picking on the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources specifically because I likely have heard this from every member over the course of the last four years — except perhaps the Leader of the Third Party.

On that minor note, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources can continue.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** On that point, Mr. Speaker, I think that my experience has been, over the last couple of years, that there have been new interpretations and changes — I think maybe instead of on the fly, with the great wisdom of the Clerks-at-the-Table who continue to educate us from their previous experience, if there's something that — collectively, as members, we could talk about some of these particular points and ways to do our job better and more appropriately.

But maybe we can collectively put a session aside to understand what those things are.

#### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Sorry, just briefly. I think I have conveyed the message with respect to the element of correcting the record. I could provide specific reasons, but like I said, I learn as well, and I learn from the Clerks.

When I heard you say that, it tweaked to me that it was something that I should probably clarify with all members.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Maybe I should share some facts that may differ from the facts that were previously spoken to. I also want to be respectful to the fact that we're really talking about support for the heritage sector and the infrastructure in the museums that exists across the Yukon and the great community work as it interfaces with our tourism strategy, even though we are talking about recovery.

I think the minister has done a good job of connecting the fact that — because there was a fairly new strategy put together — this strategy also becomes an impetus for some of the work that is going to be done for recovery — really, with that same notion that this gives an opportunity, as members across had said, at this particular time not just to improve your infrastructure, your programming, your delivery of the content, but also there is an opportunity here to put your strategy in place and to look at how this overall strategy is a great, refreshing approach to what will happen with tourism.

I will just again go back to some of the comments made by the Member for Kluane. There has been a reoccurring theme and it has been integrated into the response here on this motion. It really talks about: "Why aren't you doing work for the tourism sector during these particular pressures that we have seen from COVID-19?" Also, it segued into understanding that there are supports to be put in place for these particular museums and heritage hot spots.

Again, as the minister spoke to, we were in a position where the minister very quickly, at the beginning of this pandemic with her department, provided the funding for the upcoming fiscal year to each of those organizations — understanding that they probably would not be providing the same programming that they normally would. They would, of course, have different costs if they were open. They would be delivering programming — some of those organizations for half a year, some for a longer period of time — but the department knew that it was essential to provide them with that funding. That is the first key piece. That counters some of the information that has been provided here today. Those are the facts, and the money flowed very quickly.

The business relief program, which also has been highly used by the tourism sector, was something that was put into place very quickly. The first meeting that occurred with the Business Advisory Council was, I believe, on April 9. Previous to that, there was work done around ensuring that we were listening to the business community and the policy work was being done. That was rolled out as well.

What is interesting is that the Member for Kluane continues, each time he gets up on this questioning, to state that we didn't do the work and that the work didn't get done — and what is interesting about that is that, during the briefing for

Economic Development, the last comments that were made by the Member for Klwane were to thank the officials on their quick and swift work that they did to put this program out. So, that is completely counter to the questioning that we hear every single day when he touches on this. I will have a discussion — maybe during Question Period — with him on that the next time he brings it up, if we have that opportunity. I wonder why he would thank the officials and the government for their quick and swift work, yet come in each day and share a bit of a different narrative.

Of course, our program for business is extended. The number of organizations that are looking to leverage that has gone down dramatically. We were over almost 500 organizations and now that's at about, I think, 150 organizations or businesses that are using it. Of course, we have lifted the ceiling of how much these organizations can access. Again, being respectful to the content of the motion, I will go back to some of the comments that were made by the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

When we think of support for the heritage sector, it's not just about how we provide money to museums and these organizations. I think that we have shown and shared through the conversations with the minister that there has been input that has been provided through the process of the strategy — and also in the case where there are ongoing conversations that are happening with the Tourism Advisory Board. Again, that organization has representation.

I also think that there were a lot of comments made by the member that were also broader than just the motion. It really touched on what we are doing for heritage. Again, the focus of this motion was to speak to input into a recovery plan, but we heard conversations about the budget and we heard the conversations about trends and annual funding.

So, I think it's fair to say that it was a broader conversation. Being consistent with that, or speaking to that, I think it's also important to understand what the government has done for heritage. You would leave listening to that and you would think there had been a lack of commitment to heritage.

You don't have to go any further than to look at some of our communities — as in Mayo, where you've seen the community come together in some of their most important heritage assets — the Anglican Church that's there or the resource centre — and to look at the funding — that funding that had not been received for many, many years — really important pieces of infrastructure in those communities that were badly in need of repair. I know that the community development fund was accessed by the proponents and the individuals who support that important work, and that's just one example.

Also, I think it's important to think about how government looks at heritage and how they work in that area. It's not just about those museums — although very important — it's about how government looks at heritage. What I think I would commend the minister on is the heritage assessment work that gets done. There was a commitment, I know, that the minister made in her work with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. It is something that is used in many aspects when we are going into our

communities. It's really important for those who have a real passion for heritage and who understand the importance of heritage to understand that work is so key. We've seen over the last number of years that work really being highlighted by this minister — and such a strong voice.

We have lots of challenging conversations around this from time to time because it is a new step that those in the resource sector have to take, but I have to commend the minister for always ensuring that her colleagues know just how important this is. What I've learned from the minister about this is that it's not just the importance of this heritage and our history as Yukoners, but how important elements of that story are to the Yukon brand and what draws so many visitors to the Yukon. It's such an integral part of when people are making decisions about the Yukon.

Just this morning, I had an opportunity to speak to a panel around the resource sector, but the first question that was asked was "Please, share with us the history of the Yukon — especially when it comes to some of these sectors — and tell us the stories of Skookum Jim or Kate Carmack". Those are always things that are brought up, even when we're talking about economic issues or investment.

I think that's one thing that's important to touch on — the fact that heritage assessment work has been something that has been driven by the minister and is such an important piece of what we're doing.

Another thing that's important to touch on — when we talk about recovery and we talk about how heritage will be key to recovery — and if the voice was there — just this week, the minister attended a meeting with me with the Chiefs Committee on Economic Development. The minister spoke to the chiefs about the fact that, in January, she attended a meeting with me during Roundup, but it was a meeting that was put together by the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce. The minister attended, and at that point, the minister made an offer to Yukon First Nation development corporations that there was a new heritage resource centre that the minister wanted to invest in, and within that, we felt that in using the clauses of chapter 22 and the language of chapter 22 of existing self-government agreements, there was a real opportunity to work directly with First Nation governments or development corporations to help build the new heritage resource centre.

One thing that the minister has done is to make sure that all people in Cabinet — she has invited us — we have spent time going out to the Archives that the government inherited — and there are so many special things there, but we believe that it's time for a new centre.

I think that bringing First Nation governments to the table to look at developing and building a new heritage resource centre, where the very important items that the Yukon has can be looked after in an appropriate manner in a facility that can be world-class — that really provides the respect that's needed.

When I think about the building of that new infrastructure and that support to all of these different museums that exist — and heritage infrastructure — it just seems to me that this, again, is such a strong commitment, and it's so timely that

we're debating this motion, because we just had this discussion this week — actually, within the last 48 hours.

Again, we went back to First Nation leaders and said, "Look, please contemplate this because it's such an important thing."

I also want to say that I appreciate the opportunity that the minister has provided us to go out into the field and have a chance to go out into the Member for Kluane's home area — going up and understanding what needs to be put in place around the work around the ice patch and for us with other portfolios and responsibilities to be educated on that and to understand what we need to — just the respect that we have to have for all of these community pieces of infrastructure. I think the member opposite talked about Da Ku — a great place, a state-of-the-art, classy facility where there are items that come out of places such as the ice patch. It's really important that the minister ensured that the funding, very quickly in March, was provided to those organizations so they could provide some stability in their overhead.

So, once again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the chance to touch on a few things today. Again, I appreciate the education on that. I will make sure that I choose my words appropriately as we go forward.

But again, thanks for the opportunity to share a bit more about the passion of the department and the minister and also the fact that you have a minister who is coming into this role who has always brought people together — a track record of bringing people together when it's time to make decisions. Again, that's the work that has been done here. Voices, of course, that have been chosen to speak on behalf of those organizations have been heard. That's why we're committed to making sure that all of those stakeholders are part of a recovery as they have been part of the strategic plan.

**Speaker:** Is there any further debate on Motion No. 297? If the member now speaks, she will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Ms. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank all members for their support for this motion today. As I said at the outset, this was intended as a motion to reinforce inclusion in the territory and also, as I said in my comments, to underscore the imperative and importance of making sure that all sectors of our tourism economy are reflected.

I thank the Minister of Economic Development for his comments about information that has been shared but that the members of this Legislative Assembly are not privy to. So, what I have been looking for, Mr. Speaker, and will continue to endeavour to have access to, is information that is and should be made available to all members of this Legislative Assembly, not just those who attend private meetings.

I look forward to having the minister either for Tourism and Culture or for Economic Development tabling in this Legislative Assembly the document that I referred to earlier, as I said when I stood, to self-correct myself.

I had to acknowledge that perhaps there is someplace within the Yukon system a document that makes reference to a

strategy that is going to outline how the Government of Yukon will provide relief with supplemental programs for tourism and culture non-profit organizations, such as museums and cultural centres — that document being entitled or referenced in the October 13 Yukon COVID-19 tourism recovery plan. It was referenced as "Recovery: Yukon's economic strategy in 2020". If the government would make that document available, perhaps this whole discussion this afternoon would have been rendered moot, Mr. Speaker, but it wasn't. Therefore, it has been interesting — in some ways a bit repetitive, but edifying nonetheless. I thank the members for their support.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

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

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

*Motion No. 297 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.

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair (Mr. Hutton):** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Chair, I do have some more updates for the member opposite. We endeavoured to get back to him with some more information about some Water Board licences. Currently, we have 10 applications that remain before the board for Indian River licences, which overlap with wetlands. Those all require a wetlands reclamation plan per the decision document. Four also require an additional plan to meet the full interim approach criteria for placer mining in wetlands, which includes details like no mining in bogs or preserving 40 percent of fen as well. With some applications, the delay falls to the operator, as I have expressed in the past, to respond to information requests from the Water Board.

I have just a confirmation and reiteration of information based on a question on November 3 discussing the government's fiscal position. The member opposite was asking about the Yukon Development Corporation. I am happy to respond to the question. I do need to point out that we talked about changes in long-term debt and that the change in long-term debt is reported on a consolidated basis for the Yukon Development Corporation. It does not relate to the government's fiscal position on a non-consolidated basis.

The question from the member opposite related specifically to the change in long-term debt of \$10 million. \$3.959 million is long-term debt between Yukon Development Corporation and KDFN related to investments in their third LNG unit. The remainder, \$6.765 million, is Yukon Energy Corporation's long-term debt from TD bank for its 2018 capital structure true-up. The Yukon Energy Corporation's capital structure true-up is the process where construction funds accessed through the line of credit are swapped to lower interest long-term debt at the completion of a project.

The member opposite also asked a follow-up question related to their motion — Motion No. 235 for the production of papers — outlining the residency and classification of Government of Yukon employees by department.

Mr. Chair, Yukon government employees are expected to live and work within Yukon as a condition of their employment. In rare cases, the Yukon government may hire an out-of-territory resident to work remotely long term. These remote work arrangements have generally been used to staff specialized positions that are difficult to fill from within the Yukon, allowing us to meet operational requirements in situations where local recruitment efforts have been

unsuccessful. These arrangements have been appropriate for the position or the employee and the remote work site and are approved on a case-by-case basis. This is at the discretion of individual departments. It must be approved by the deputy minister and the Public Service Commissioner. There are currently a handful of long-term, out-of-territory working arrangements across the government.

Aside from these few exceptions, the Government of Yukon employees are expected to reside in the Yukon, as I said, and must report to their official workplace according to their regularly scheduled hours of work. While I am happy to provide this high-level summary, I will allow the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission to speak more specifically about this item in greater detail at a later time.

I will cede the floor to the member opposite.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate that the Premier has acknowledged that there are some staff out of the territory who are working; however, it does not appear to be a full description. We have heard this as a repeated concern from within departments — and a growing concern — and that includes staff who had positions in the Yukon who have been allowed to move elsewhere, we have been informed, as well as senior staff in departments who play a very major role in the pandemic response. The reports that we have heard regarding the amount of time that they are not residing in the territory are concerning.

We are trying to be respectful of privacy, on the one hand, but also recognize that, as it relates operationally to how the government is dealing with things — especially including the pandemic response — it does become a matter of public interest, notwithstanding the fact that there are some privacy considerations associated with it. Again, we would like a more fulsome breakdown. We would rather not have to get into ATIPP or call a motion for the production of papers. It is information that we would like to see a breakdown on — what the total number is and how many departments are affected, as well as understanding the positions that are affected.

In the case of, for example, another department related to COVID response, we appreciate that officials have already advised us that one person hired for work related to the COVID response is not a resident of the Yukon. I do want to note that there is always the possibility that, for certain skillsets, contract work or a temporary position might need to be addressed in an unusual way. What we are hearing is that this is becoming a trend, and it is not just disturbing to the public, which it is, but it is disturbing to employees and recently retired employees who are concerned about the impact that it is having.

I will move on to another area related to the pandemic. Again, this is an area that crosses multiple portfolios, so it is one that we felt was appropriate to raise in general debate with the Premier. In this part of the pandemic response, it relates to the responsibilities of Health and Social Services and of Community Services for pandemic response and involves Department of Education facilities that are maintained by Highways and Public Works.

One question that I have heard from a constituent — and I know that some of my colleagues have heard it from others —

relates to the issue of sports groups and other user groups — and by that, I mean both kids and adults — being able to use school gyms during the pandemic. On the one hand, it has been strongly encouraged and recommended by Dr. Hanley as well as other physicians that people, including youth, need exercise as part of keeping healthy during the pandemic, and I, of course, agree with that. But on the flip side — and again, we recognize where this concern arises from — there has been an issue with gyms not being open and a number of user groups having to pay out-of-pocket fees to lease the Canada Games Centre to run sports programs, but that has created a challenge because of the increasing number of user groups and sports groups that are competing, and they run into issues such as getting rescheduled, losing gym times, et cetera — not through the fault of the Canada Games Centre, of course, but simply due to the fact that there are a lot of people competing to use it.

Most recently, from what we've heard, there was an announcement that the gym closure had been extended until November 23. I also understand that there have been some discussions underway involving sports groups, as well as departments, aimed at potentially trying to open those up sooner. Could the Premier please advise me what the status of those discussions is and if the government is going to be able to open up access to its own school gymnasiums to sports groups and other user groups prior to November 23? If so, when do they envision being able to do so?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** As I understand it, user groups in schools have been addressed. We are in a pandemic, and we have to take a look to make sure that the user groups are safe, that the custodial staff are safe as well as the students returning the next day. With that, there has been quick work done with the chief medical officer of health's department. At first, obviously, the priority was getting the students back to school, and then we could focus our attention on user groups.

As I understand it, it is one user group per night. School facilities will be available for after-use on week nights only at this point. Each user group will be provided with an extended block of time per booking to maximize the number of cohorts — cohorts being different age groups or women's teams versus men's teams, co-ed teams — different type of cohorts like that — who can use the facility. Priority will be made there, and the priority is being given to user groups delivering activities to children and youth, first and foremost.

I do know that there are ongoing conversations with the municipality as well, but there's a general sense of what's happening, and we'll leave the rest to the ministers who are responsible, when they have their time here in Committee of the Whole, to fill in the gaps of the general information I gave.

While I am on my feet — I did miss a question here — a back-and-forth — something that I did kind of ponder about a bit here the other day when the member opposite was speaking about the debt levels and talking about how, somehow, we were misleading — that it wasn't just \$20-some million. The member opposite said it was up to \$30 million of debt that we gave. To be clear, I'll give the timeline here of exactly what happened from the borrowing of the Yukon Party and then the numbers, and how they moved per year after that.

When we took office here, we inherited a debt from the Yukon Party. As of March 31, 2016, that outstanding balance was reported as \$201.558 million — not the number that the member opposite gave the other day. This is directly attributed to the time that the Yukon Party was in power. That was the number. That was the hangover of debt that we inherited from the Yukon Party — just over \$200 million.

Our government has paid \$30.591 million to reduce that debt over the past four years. This was not included in my previous discussion. I just wanted to provide a little bit more information. After paying that \$30.591 million on the inherited debt, that still left us with the number that the member opposite talked about — which he claimed title to — which was the \$170.967 million outstanding from the original \$201.559 million in debt that the Yukon Party left us.

Now, if we're looking at the total government debt as of March 31 of this year, we see the total of \$228.435 million — so \$228,435,000 — in outstanding debt. Of this, we know that this is where we are right now, but it's good to give the context of where we were.

For the past four years, we have not only paid down some of the debt that we inherited, but we're also paying the interest charges on that debt that the Yukon Party left us, which has to be absorbed within our annual budgets as well. We take a pertinent approach to borrowing, which enables us to deliver on our promises to Yukoners with the strategic investments that we've met by prioritizing this government with the community as far as priorities go. We are leveraging funds to lay a foundation for a much stronger and a much more sustainable future with that sound fiscal prudence.

I just wanted to put things into context for the member opposite as far as the current status of the debt.

**Mr. Cathers:** That was a very clever way that the Premier put it — albeit one that does not present an accurate picture of the facts. As the Premier very well knows, on page 51 of the Public Accounts from March 31, 2017 — which is the end of the overlap year, most of which was the Yukon Party's time in office and part of which was the Liberal Party's — the total debt at the end of March 31, 2017, was \$193.5 million.

The Liberal government has increased that by \$34.9 million up to the end of the last fiscal year that we have Public Accounts for. These are not my numbers; these are the numbers from the Public Accounts, audited by the Auditor General and tabled by the Premier himself.

So, that is \$34.9 million — and I would remind the Premier that the debt balance at the start of the 2016-17 fiscal year was higher than it was at the end of the year, and loans that existed — relating to both the Yukon Development Corporation and the Hospital Corporation, as well as housing — were paid down in accordance with the terms of those loans, which include annual payments. These were specified in the previous Public Accounts, as the Premier knows very well. I would hope that he scrutinized those during his time as the Leader of the Third Party — though perhaps he didn't read those, which may be why he professes a lack of knowledge about the financial situation upon taking office, when in fact it was fully disclosed.



Moving on to other matters, I am pleased to hear the Premier indicating that he believes that the issue around gyms is resolved. I know that I have heard from some people who have not heard that word yet — if that is indeed the case, I am sure that they will be glad to hear it. It is a matter of importance to people who are being affected by it. Sports and active living, of course, are an important part, for many people, of enjoying their lives and also for keeping healthy. As the Premier and his colleagues should be aware, active living, including exercise, is an important part of being healthier and, consequently, does have a proven beneficial impact on reducing people developing problems such as chronic obesity, which add to costs to the health care system, as well as affecting their quality of life. So, I am pleased to hear that this is occurring.

I would ask the Premier about one matter that we don't see mentioned in the supplementary budget, but we've never heard it mentioned by the government in any budget until we bring up the question — that is one that relates to the importance of communications for people in rural Yukon. As the Premier will be aware, this is something that — during the Yukon Party's time in office, we invested in initiatives, including the creation of the 811 HealthLine and the expansion of the 911 service.

We also partnered with the private sector to expand cellphone service beyond the Whitehorse area. That investment, incurred largely in two installments during Yukon Party's time in office, resulted in expanding that service to most communities in the territory, as well as the Whitehorse periphery. However, there has been a growth in population through that time in a number of areas that are unserved, as well as issues relating to some of how the moves to newer technology of cell service has, in some cases, resulted in gaps in service that weren't there when the towers were initially put in. That's a problem that's happening, for example, in the Ibex Valley area — and I know it's not the only area in the territory where people are reporting that they used to have better cell service than they do, and there has been a decline in that service since that time.

As the Premier will be well aware, we have repeatedly urged the government to support the expansion of communications infrastructure into rural Yukon, including working with the private sector to expand cellphone coverage to people without service in areas including Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fox Lake, Ibex Valley, Junction 37, Champagne, Mendenhall, and the north Alaska Highway, as well as improving service in areas with coverage gaps.

Unfortunately, while we are pleased that, when we have raised the issue, the Premier and his colleagues have not rejected the concept, the answer every time has been various versions of a response that basically boils down to "We'll think about it". Unfortunately, as we get to this part in the Liberal government's mandate, four years in, of a situation where people are concerned about it — and this issue has reared its head for some, including in my riding, during the recent windstorm that we experienced, where a number of people lost landline service. That has again raised the issue to one that is very top-of-mind for Yukoners. As well, the snow that we saw on Monday of this week created situations where we were

fortunate that there were not a large number of accidents. The RCMP had reported that, I believe, there were a total of eight accidents that they identified at that time.

I could stand to be corrected on that number, but they did issue a press release noting that the number was relatively low, but in an accident situation — whether during a snowstorm or some other event or simply if a vehicle is stuck on the side of the highway — being able to call home or call for help is something that is a matter of interest to people but, under certain situations, could also be a matter of great importance and potentially even a matter of life and death in extreme situations. So, the value in having that communication there for emergency purposes — and I would just ask the Premier — we have really heard very little from the government around this. We haven't heard a rejection of the concept, but we haven't heard support for it either — what the government's position is and what their plan is, if they have one, on addressing the request from Yukoners on expanded cellphone coverage.

Again, just to refresh the Premier's memory in case I wasn't talking clearly — or he didn't hear me clearly — the areas that we have identified, based on what we hear from Yukoners, include Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fox Lake and the south Fox Lake area, Ibex Valley, Junction 37, Champagne, Mendenhall, and the north Alaska Highway.

Could the Premier let us know what the government's position is on that? Do they intend to take action on that list of priorities or any portion of that list?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, as the member opposite referenced, this has been a question in the debate already, and I believe that the ministers have responded.

As far as updates, I do know that, in the last few years, as far as my travel back and forth — and I am sure, Mr. Chair, that you can concur with this — the amount of cell service coverage along the road from Whitehorse to Dawson has expanded. I am finding connectivity in places — even in between Stewart Crossing and Dawson — that definitely wasn't there in the past. I know that there is work ongoing with our providers here — Northwestel — and the departments, but I will leave the credit and the expansion news to the departments that are responsible for those to comment on.

Again, we are here in general debate with a supplementary budget. I can report — I don't believe, and I will check in with my DM here — that I don't believe that there is money in this supplementary budget for work in expanding of the Internet services per se, and if there is, I will correct the record later or get the minister that is responsible for that to report, but I don't believe that there is. Again, we'll get the proper place to respond to that with the proper minister at the proper time.

It is interesting, though, that the member opposite is continuing to refuse that \$201.558 million of debt was — now, I guess, in his mind — not accumulated by the previous government. I guess now he's trying to say, as well, that, in their last year, they might have done some kind of reduction to that debt. I don't remember debating that in the Legislature in their last year, so I will let the member opposite correct the record if that's true, but the Yukon Party did accumulate \$201.558 million of debt, and the current debt, right now, is not

that much higher — our current debt level right now being \$228 million — yet the member opposite would make it seem that we are the ones who borrowed the money.

I'm going to move on from that point because it's just — and with all the assaults that he hurled at me personally, I will just cast those to the side as well. That's not something that, on this side of the House, we are going to play with.

I've been accused of a lot of things from the members opposite. They used to call me a “Timbit hockey player” at times when they got frustrated with me. The personal attacks continue again here today on the floor of the Legislative Assembly from the Yukon Party — nothing new to see here, Mr. Chair.

I will say that, when it comes to debt and how we have circumnavigated through these extraordinary times, I think we have done a fair job — a fair job comparatively to others in Canada. Our economy has been in a situation where, when you take a look at the global pandemic, there are positive stats from economic reports — not just from us, but from economic reports. Unemployment rates fell more than 1.8 percentage points in September, and this is the lowest in the country. We are very thankful for that. We're very thankful that Yukoners, where we can, are going back to work. We know that we have a long way to go, but it's always important to get to our feet and counter what we're hearing from the Yukon Party.

As of August, the number of people on employer payrolls had received half of those pandemic job losses. Sales receipts from restaurants and bars have recovered more than half of their pandemic losses, while the retail sales have fully recovered, reaching an all-time high in August.

That's a really important point there, because the credit for the fact that retail sales have fully recovered to an all-time high in August belongs to no political party in the Legislative Assembly. That credit belongs to Yukoners who buy local, and I want to thank people for doing so. There was criticism of our government employees, whether they were at work or not at work. We have proven they were at work during the pandemic for the whole time. People working from home in August still went downtown, still bought local, whether they were from the private sector or the public sector. To see that in August we had an all-time high in retail sales, that credit goes directly to every Yukoner who made a conscious decision to buy local, and I thank them for that.

Heading into the pandemic, our economic fundamentals were generally strong, regardless of what the member opposite would have you believe. Yukon's positive labour market led the way — again, a credit to Yukon's ingenuity and the private sector — boasting the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. Yukoners are earning more pay on average, with average weekly earnings up in August by almost 10 percent from 12 months prior — good for third place in Canada jurisdictions, but only behind the two other territories. These are hallmarks of a strong economy — a strong fiscal situation that we're in due to the money that we earn through a good labour market.

Our housing market continues to perform well in light of current disruptions. Existing home sales were up this year by 7.8 percent in the first half of 2019. We have a long way to go

still with housing and making sure that we have housing available, but when you're in a booming economy, housing is something that goes along with that. The work that we have done in the last two years — compared to the previous four as we have talked about many times in the Legislative Assembly — talks about the importance of us spending, getting lots out the door, and getting housing available, whether it be affordable housing or social housing, to complement the housing market.

Yukon's construction sector has continued to be active in 2020. I know that in Dawson, when I was trying to do some renovations at my house, it was hard to get Mike and his crew to get to my house to work because everyone in town wanted a carpenter this summer. There were a lot of people working. It was really hard to find construction folks because they were working this summer, which was good to see.

The value of building permits is on par with the 2019 performance, which is also a testament to a healthy economy, given very unprecedented economic disruptions. Again, we are not out of the woods and there are still people and businesses that are suffering, but it is important to share the statistics about where we are when we put into context our government and our communities as compared to other jurisdictions.

We have said before as well that Yukon and Nunavut are the only two jurisdictions in Canada that are expected to see real GDP growth in 2020. We saw an announcement about spending from the Nunavut government. They are in a unique situation. My heart goes out to Premier Savikataaq and his team. They are going to be in a really unique situation there. They are, of course, in a different situation from us with no roads to a lot of their communities — mobility is a real concern when it comes to how they get equipment and health care into their communities. It is a huge expense compared to us.

But in the Yukon, we have seen strong mining production — the ramping up of the Eagle Gold project, which is expected to lead to very modest economic growth in 2020 of .8 percent, ramping up to 6.9 percent in 2021. Mr. Speaker, that is incredible.

The ability for us as a government to work with the chief medical officer of health and the proponent to get people safely to the mine and moving back and forth safely was a herculean effort. Again, it shows the importance of making sure that, in these trying times, we have a strong economy as much as we possibly can and to work hand in glove with the private sector in order to ensure that, whether it's through the business relief fund or through assisting the mining sector — either the placer miners or the quartz mining folks — to get to camps safely so that our communities are safe and our economy can survive.

The department's forecast is significantly more conservative than — the Conference Board of Canada is forecasting nine percent growth this year and 7.7 percent growth next year. Our own statisticians — the bean counters and the good folks in Finance — are definitely a little bit more conservative than that, but these are numbers from the Conference Board of Canada.

Speaking of the Conference Board of Canada, I am going to read some quotes from their reports — and I quote: “Despite

the global pandemic, Yukon will post strong economic growth in 2020 thanks to increased production in its mining sector.”

Another quote from the Conference Board of Canada: “Yukon has a lower unemployment rate than any other province or territory. In 2018, the unemployment rate fell to a historic low of 2.7 per cent. And, although it rose to 3.6 per cent last year, that was still well below the level of any other province or territory.”

Another quote from the Conference Board of Canada: “Yukon’s unemployment rate will fall to 2.4 per cent in 2021, its lowest level on record. Continued gains in the territory’s mining industry and a recovering tourism sector are the main reasons for the historically low unemployment rate.”

We have Standard and Poor’s as well, which also shows a positive fiscal situation here in Yukon — and I quote: “Changes in Yukon’s GDP are often fueled by activity within the mining sector, and we believe that the start of production at Victoria Gold’s Eagle mine and ongoing development of the Coffee Gold mine will help to maintain modestly positive GDP growth in 2020...” They did go on to say — and I quote: “Yukon will continue to benefit from a very manageable debt burden and ample liquidity over the next few years... We believe that the territory’s debt policy is prudent: debt limits are legislated and outstanding balances are well below the limits.”

Just to remind people again of the \$201.558 million of borrowing from the Yukon Party that we did inherit.

One more quote — and I will leave it at that for the Standard and Poor’s — is: “... the direct fiscal impacts stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic will be less severe for Yukon than for Canadian provinces, given the relatively small proportion of its revenues that have direct exposure to economic activity. We expect that continued activity in the mining sector and Yukon’s reliance on federal transfer payments, while limiting its fiscal flexibility, will help the territory recover positive budgetary momentum in the next two years.”

I do recall, in the past, the Yukon Party government ministers getting up and, when it came to a booming economy, taking all the credit as opposed to giving the credit to the mining industry. We have worked hand in glove with the mining industry, and we’re giving credit to the mining industry. We’re very thankful to be in the situation that we’re in right now and that we got Victoria Gold through the regulatory process to be able to be in production. We’ll give credit to the placer miners for getting out to the field and for helping other families. We’ll also give credit to the fact that we do have a federal transfer payment. We’re very lucky for that, compared with other jurisdictions.

We talk all the time with the other provinces about their situations. Sometimes at those tables, the three territories — we don’t have much to say when folks are talking about proportionate money going to each of the provinces. We know that we’re very lucky here to have a federal transfer payment, and we’ll give credit to that.

But we are also seeing huge improvements and increases in a lot of different fields that we’re very proud of when it comes to how we are going to diversify our own economy.

What’s really important to this government is being able to work on the economy and the environment together as issues.

I want to spend a little bit of time, if I may, talking about initiatives to make sure that controlling our debt limits and controlling the amount of debt that we have but, at the same time, looking to invest in a clean future — extremely important to this government. Also, what’s really interesting work — and I’m really proud of it — we haven’t talked too much about it this year in the Legislative Assembly — is the concept of economic and environmental sustainability put together. We’re extremely committed to working in partnership with all of the stakeholders in the Yukon, collaborating to find solutions to complex challenges that face the territory.

This is interesting stuff — codesign labs. Codesign labs are one way in which we can achieve this. During the pandemic response, we have applied a refined version and vision of this model. For example, we conveyed economic and tourism industry stakeholders to identify priorities and core issues for moving toward recovery and also the reopening of the economy. We’ve also leveraged co-lab principles in some of our previous engagement work, including modernizing the *Liquor Act* in 2019 when we conveyed interest groups, licensees, First Nation governments, and local governments in a series of workshops that further developed new legislation.

In the coming year — and this is where the exciting piece is when it comes to economic and environmental sustainability — we will be piloting a Yukon co-lab, which is a very innovative approach — an open and creative process where groups from across sectors are working together to generate solutions on very complicated problems — very complex and very Yukon-centric problems. A Yukon co-lab will be promoting a multi-stakeholder, multi-agency collaboration so that end users most impacted by solutions can participate in the design of those solutions at the outset. The co-lab is going to focus in on solving practical problems that support sustainable development in the Yukon.

I want to give credit to the Minister of Economic Development for the work that he has done to get YuKconstruct moving forward. There are lots of brilliant people doing lots of brilliant work down there at that building. Kudos to the Department of Economic Development for all the work that they did to see that vision — modernizing our approach to the tech community and to folks working together.

All of this work is about developing solutions with users, not for them, as together, the teams will discover, design, define, and deliver new ways to work forward in partnerships so that we can stand up here and take a look at the lasting results to complicated problems. It would be my pleasure in future legislative sessions to be able to sit up here and give credit again to the stakeholders who will be involved in the co-labs for economic and environmental sustainability. Active participation from all across all sectors is extremely fundamental when coming to the guiding principles around our public engagement approach, and these co-labs are going to take that step further together, and we will stand up here in the Legislative Assembly and give credit to those communities at

that time as we look to work with partnerships to expand our own-source revenues here in the Yukon.

**Mr. Cathers:** First of all, I have to remind the Premier that I have never compared him to a hockey player of any size. The Premier needs to recognize that, when we are criticizing the government for their performance or their lack of transparency, it is not a personal insult. We are reflecting on their performance or their refusal to answer questions, and we are doing our job as the Official Opposition in holding the government to account for that refusal to provide information or that failure to take action.

For example, the Premier, in spending 20 minutes or close to it, dodging my question — a very simple question — about cellphone service — something that is very important to Yukoners, especially for those who are in areas that don't have it. This is something that we have raised repeatedly. I have raised it. The Member for Kluane has raised it. In fact, I believe that all of my colleagues — the Member for Porter Creek North, the Member for Watson Lake, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, and the Member for Copperbelt South — have all spoken in favour of this repeatedly on behalf of our constituents and other Yukoners who raised it with us. Four years into this government, we cannot get a straight answer on whether they will support it or not.

The Premier gave one of his “ask someone else later” answers, but unfortunately, four years into this Liberal government, we just don't have an answer on it and people are looking for action. If the Liberal government doesn't support the expansion of cellphone service, then tell us. If they do support it, what Yukoners want to see is action, not words.

Mr. Chair, I do want to point out as well that I appreciate that the Premier provided a little more information on the topic of wetlands. It is one that is of great concern to Yukoners who are affected by it. There was an indication from the Premier that he was pleased to see the progress of the mining sector moving forward, but unfortunately, we have heard repeatedly from multiple affected people about long delays — not just involving the water licence process, but increasing problems on the government side through increasing delays in the process run by Energy, Mines and Resources, as well as other departments, including Environment.

We're hearing that the problems are getting worse. Unfortunately, this government is good at talking points, but they seem to think that the work ends when the photo op is done. We have seen that the regulatory and permitting process has gotten worse under their watch.

Another area I want to touch on — and I'll ask the Premier to respond to it when he rises next — the Premier made reference to the housing market, talking about taking action in that area. One of the things that we've heard repeatedly from landlords is that changes that the federal government made to taxing rental properties have created a real disincentive to people actually making investments in rental property. As the Premier likely knows — or as he should know — a substantial portion of the rental housing market here in the Yukon — as well as throughout the country — includes people who are making personal investments on a small scale by buying

another house that they rent out or buying a duplex that they rent out, as well as people purchasing shares in apartment buildings and choosing that as an investment, because real estate has traditionally been a solid investment — it is often fairly safe to predict that it will go up in most housing markets.

However, changes that were brought in by the Trudeau Liberals have increased the tax on rental properties by classifying them as so-called “passive income”, and the taxation rate that they increased is now rather punitive. In some cases, I believe it's up to 50 percent. The effect of that has been a real disincentive to investors, including Yukon residents, to make an investment in rental properties.

We have heard this repeatedly from Yukon businesses, Yukon realtors, Yukon landlords, and others who would have potentially considered becoming an investor in a rental property but are choosing not to, because of the tax changes. The question is — it has been brought to our attention — I'm sure it has been brought to the attention of the Premier and his colleagues — has the Premier raised this issue with either Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister Freeland, or the previous Minister of Finance — Minister Morneau — and expressed concern about this taxation change?

As Minister of Finance, he is the Yukon government's lead on taxation-related matters. If this government is at all listening to what they're hearing from Yukon business owners, they should be aware that this is a topic of significant concern. So, can the Premier tell this House what position his government has taken on the tax changes made by the federal Liberals that have increased the taxes on rental properties and made them punitive in some cases? Has he expressed concern to the federal government and asked them to change it to, in fact, create more of an incentive for businesses to invest in rental properties and invest in creating a housing supply? If not, will he commit to do so?

With that, Mr. Chair, seeing the time — and also seeing that the Premier is getting advice on that and he obviously needs information — I move that you report progress.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### **Chair's report**

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services 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 November 4, 2020:**

34-3-43

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 204, *Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20* — Jersey barriers (Mostyn)

**The following document was filed November 4, 2020:**

34-3-37

Continued funding for the Fireweed Community Market, letter re (dated October 30, 2020) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Mr. Pillai, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Cathers)





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 59

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, November 5, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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



**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Thursday, November 5, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Withdrawal of motions**

**Speaker:** The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change which has been made to the Order Paper. The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper as the motion is out of order: Motion No. 87, 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.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, mysterious, you may think — but I would ask the Assembly to help me in welcoming Mr. Gallant, from Vanier Catholic Secondary School, and the grade 10 science class. Due to COVID restrictions in the gallery, I think there was going to be half the class and then half the class, but I think that they probably made the decision to stand right outside that door and to listen to the proceedings today over our radio system.

So, I would ask the Assembly to welcome the grade 10 science class from Vanier Catholic Secondary School today.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of Movember**

**Mr. Adel:** I rise today on behalf of the Liberal government, the Official Opposition, and the Third Party to pay tribute to Movember.

I rise today, as I have many times before, to pay tribute to the month of November and Movember. Movember is an awareness month dedicated to the mental and physical health of men across the world. It is one of the things that is near and dear to my heart. My father was a survivor of prostate cancer. As the father of three young men, I do everything I can to keep them informed of this silent killer. It is one where people just don't talk about it, and we have to get the cause out there, so that they are aware — one of the largest killers men face each and every day.

Globally, an average of one man every minute of every day passes away from suicide. Suicide is also disproportionately represented by men with 75 percent of suicide victims being male. Traditionally, discussions of men's mental health and physical health have been silent.

Movember aims to change the stigma associated with men and challenges each of us to be more open and accepting of these dangerous diseases and mental disorders. Since 2003, Movember has funded over 1,260 projects around the globe in support of men's health, with the goal of reducing male suicide by 25 percent by 2030. In order for us to reach the goal, it is imperative that each of us openly discuss these issues with the men in our lives. We need to shift from a silent norm to one that is accepting, understanding, and supportive of our initiative to live a long and healthy life.

Movember looks at male health through a lens that focuses on prevention and intervention. The first step always is to talk about it — so, let's talk about it. Let's share the concerns with the men we care for. Let's encourage each of them — young and old — to break the stigma, get regular checkups, and let's all check with them when we notice the signs of depression.

I would encourage anyone who can to participate and donate to this incredibly important cause.

This year, it is virtual, so we won't be losing some luxurious facial hair or any of the other things that we normally do, but we have to do something. We all have men in our lives whom we value, love, respect, and admire. Together we can help shape a future that promotes men's health, removes the stigma of discussion, and supports our men when they need it most.

*Applause*

**In recognition of National Senior Safety Week**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I rise today to pay tribute to National Senior Safety Week on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government. The Yukon is rich with resources: our forests, rivers, wildlife, minerals like gold and silver, and — one of our most precious resources, of course — our people, Yukoners themselves. Among Yukoners, if our kids are gold, our seniors are certainly silver.

When you become a senior, and I speak from growing experience, many things change. There are the obvious physical changes that can happen. Our joints may ache more, for one, and some of us may get the odd grey hair or two. We can also face some very real challenges — how to stay connected with family and friends and how to ensure that our voices remain heard. But becoming a senior can also mean, despite the physical changes and challenges, that we become richer — richer in wisdom, experience, knowledge of our traditions, and connections with our family and friends — all things vitally important to a healthy and vibrant Yukon, which is why I am thrilled that the Canada Safety Council holds a National Senior Safety Week every year, starting tomorrow, November 6, through to November 12. This year, the council's theme is "Old Age is Not a Crime", which is focusing on the all too prevalent issue of elder abuse.

I would like to acknowledge the work of our very own dynamic seniors organizations here in the Yukon: the Yukon Council on Aging, which provides valuable information for seniors — including how to recognize scams directed specifically at the aging population; the Golden Age Society, which provides opportunities for social interaction to reduce

isolation for seniors; Seniors Action Yukon, which gives up-to-date information to all Yukoners on issues and opportunities and advocates for seniors; and — one of my favourites — the ElderActive Recreation Association, which makes sure that Yukoners 55-plus have opportunities to stay active and competitive and to get out there and have fun.

Thank you to all of these groups and the Canada Safety Council for their ongoing work to support seniors, our vital north-of-60, north-of-60 resource.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Senior Safety Week, held from November 6 to 12. Each year, the Canada Safety Council pays special attention to keeping mature Canadians, or seniors, healthy, independent, and safe. To have a week of awareness is wonderful, but the council does continuous work all year to make seniors able to become aware of and address issues as they arise.

We all want to stay in our homes or apartments as long as we can, and there are many avenues to make this happen. In the Yukon this year, we had a wet summer and now an early start to winter. Yard maintenance and snow removal can become daunting. We commend the Yukon Council on Aging as they assist seniors to contact someone to help them with these major tasks in Whitehorse. Once a person decides that they feel they no longer can do these tasks themselves, they can contact someone for a small fee. But many seniors in our Yukon communities also need assistance. We encourage anyone who wants to help to make sure that the town officials or organizations know that you are available to specifically help seniors so they can age in place.

As we get older, many things change and our bodies and minds might not be as nimble as in younger years — social networks diminish; technology and social media are confusing; alcohol and medication safety factors need to be addressed; elder abuse happens; there are scams on the elderly; we require safety features in our home so we can stay longer — and the list goes on. These are all issues that many face, but can be accentuated when you become older.

Yukon organizations such as the Yukon Council on Aging and the Golden Age Society are just two in Whitehorse that ensure that information reaches seniors and these groups are very active.

We tend to put an age to a birthday number — how many years we have lived. So, just on a lighter note, just yesterday, I was young. Today, I'm still young, but I remember when I was about 13 and someone who was 30-ish — gosh, they were almost near death. But now, as time moves on, I feel blessed to have my health, my mobility, and strength. I love my senior discounts and I realize that the attention that we put on age is just not that important.

So, kudos to all seniors who contribute and please don't ignore those beautiful souls who have given so much to society throughout their lives. As Mark Twain said, "Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

So, be safe. Thank you.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Despite my age, I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus in recognition of National Senior Safety Week.

Imagine a poster of a wanted person that you would see on the corkboard of the RCMP detachment. Now, imagine that the picture on that poster is of your grandmother or your grandfather. The writing on the side of the image reads: "Solitary confinement is a horrible place to put someone who already feels isolated and helpless. Old age is not a crime."

This year's theme and images are jolting and they get you right in the gut. Loneliness, abuse, and isolation are only some of the complex issues that seniors live with daily. Coupled with being made to feel like they're a burden, an inconvenience, or worse, many seniors won't reach out for the help that they need.

Canada has a lot to learn from countries and cultures where older folks are inherently treated with dignity and respect. The Canada Safety Council is an independent knowledge-based charitable organization dedicated to the cause of safety. They provide national leadership and safety through information, education, and collaboration. The council highlights numerous safety-focused weeks throughout the year, including this week, Senior Safety Week, during the month of November where they've chosen to shine light on the complexity and severity of elder abuse in Canada.

Elder abuse happens far more often than any of us could imagine and it takes many forms. Elder abuse typically falls into one of the following categories: physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, or financial. So, pay attention to the seniors around you. If you notice changes in behaviour, physical appearance, or unexplained injuries, ask gentle questions. If you notice sudden changes in spending habits, again, ask gentle questions. Respect boundaries, but always trust your instincts. There are services and agencies in Yukon that specialize in the protection of older adults who you can call with your concerns and observations.

We all have a responsibility to take care of our seniors and elders because old age is not a crime; it's a gift.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Blue Feather Music Festival**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Blue Feather Music Festival.

For 20 years, the Blue Feather Music Festival has delighted audiences with epic and eclectic performances and stayed true to its vision of helping to support and mentor our youth. The blue feather is a symbol of hope and that is what this festival is all about. In fact, the theme for this year's festival is "Hope Rising". Music is such a powerful and unifying force. Whatever your beliefs and whatever your position is in life, music has a way of bringing people together to inspire one another and to restore hope.

Since its inception, the Blue Feather Music Festival has provided a space for healing, sharing culture, and supporting and inspiring our community through music and arts. Over the

years, Blue Feather has featured an impressive array of big-name musical performers — both national and international — sharing the stage with Yukon’s homegrown talent.

Beyond what you see on the stage, however, the festival also offers opportunities for youth to develop the behind-the-scenes skills that go into staging such an event. In keeping with one of the festival’s founding principles, Yukon’s budding young stage technicians gain empowering hands-on experience in every aspect of the festival. It is a welcoming and inclusive place where those who are passionate about live music come together to learn and share.

This year’s festival — like so many other events — has had to adapt to the new realities brought about by COVID-19. This year will be a blend of in-person and online platforms. In partnership with Shakat Media, the Blue Feather Music Festival has ably switched to an online platform, offering thrilling and diverse lineups of performers. If you manage to obtain a ticket, you are very lucky. It is important that we continue to be innovative and make meaningful connections during the pandemic, so thank you to the organizing team for finding a way to produce the festival this year. Seeing the partnership develop between Blue Feather Society and Shakat Media and indigenous organizations focused on youth adds to this achievement.

In paying tribute today to this amazing event, I want to acknowledge the founders, partners, mentors, organizers, and volunteers, past and present. We have Blue Feather Music society founder Gary Bailie to thank for the festival’s success and longevity. His dedication and tireless effort are evident in the growth and success of this festival and many youth whose lives have been positively influenced over the years.

Blue Feather and everything it has come to represent is inseparable from the passion, energy, and positivity that Gary brings each and every year — so thank you, Gary, and thank you to the amazing production team, many volunteers, and community partners who make this festival happen, especially in this challenging year.

Congratulations on 20 years of enriching the lives of Yukoners. Here is to many more.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Blue Feather Music Festival as they celebrate their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of entertaining Yukoners.

This year, like many annual Yukon events, Blue Feather has a little different look to it. In addition to the main stage performances, Blue Feather has gone viral. While the festival may look a little different this year, it is really encouraging that the musical will be accessible to so many more people and hopefully draw more interest in future years.

Music festivals across the Yukon — of course, that includes Atlin — have endured the test of time. People visit in droves and spend money, and the territory is a genuine travel destination for music lovers of all ages. We are so fortunate to be able to showcase homegrown talent in our festivals, and our

events often attract national and international acts to entertain alongside our own.

This festival has brought talented blues and rock artists north of 60 in early November since the year 2000. I want to give a shout-out and sincere thanks to the organizer and producer, Gary Bailie, for his positive spirit and dedication to this incredible event. Gary has been a tireless organizer of this event over the years, and he needs to be commended for not only putting musical arts on stage, but also — as the minister said earlier — for teaching what goes on behind the scenes at the music festival for our interested youth.

Youth are — and continue to be — a major part of the festival. That is highlighted in Blue Feather’s mission statement. It talks about the effect of music and art on the community and working together so youth can carry the skills they learn into the future. The hands-on experience and the skills by local volunteers working behind the curtain can translate to other endeavours and quite possibly future professions.

If any local youth are interested in how the music festival is put on, I would encourage anyone watching to maybe think about giving some of their time next year. Again, thank you to Gary and to all the Blue Feather organizers, volunteers, and performers.

*Applause*

**Ms. Hanson:** This morning, my Facebook page had one of those ubiquitous Facebook memories — this was one I posted four years ago — and it read: “A truly amazing night at Blue Feather festival. Buffy Sainte-Marie sang until after midnight. Gary Bailie, you and your wonderful crew have outdone yourselves. Thank you.”

Today, I repeat those thanks. On behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party, I join in celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Blue Feather Music Festival. This year’s festival — like so many other events in 2020 — will take place within the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, there is no doubt that the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Blue Feather festival will again be a success, and there are many reasons why this is so.

Key among them is the strong community that is at the core of the Blue Feather Music Festival — or as Gary Bailie, founder of the festival put it, common unity.

*Up Here* magazine described the Blue Feather festival as a story about picking up the pieces after something breaks and keeping memories alive without being imprisoned by the past. It is about acts of kindness becoming successions of kind acts. It is about one good heart, how a community will build around it, and what that community can achieve. It is about selecting deliberately positive themes each year, such as “Hope Rising” or the previous one, “Soul Shine”, to convey the notion of loving the skin that you are in and realizing that everyone has a gift.

Blue Feather finds those gifts by mentoring youth — respecting them and their ideas — and by doing so, Blue Feather Music Festival has developed a talented local crew, able to run all production aspects of a major festival, and has

fostered young musicians — many of whom are festival headliners on this and many other stages across Canada.

Blue Feather doesn't stop at wanting a better world for children. As Gary Bailie has said, "We don't only want a better world for our children we want to kind of create better children for our world. This is a way to give them the tools to do that." Over the course of the first weekend in November, Blue Feather is a great example of how that is done, with a substance-free two-day musical celebration, largely run and organized by young people who are given the opportunity to both learn and demonstrate new skills and abilities.

Gary Bailie was quoted as saying that it is about hope and that, by doing something creative, the hope is that, as the festival moves forward, suicides will end — hopefully. We have to hope.

For 20 years, the Blue Feather Music Festival has given a reason to celebrate hope and we thank them for that.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Ms. White:** For tabling, I have a letter directed to the Minister of Education from the Yukon TID support network.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports border and CEMA enforcement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Ms. Hanson:** 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 "Recovery: Yukon's economic strategy in 2020" referred to in the Yukon's COVID-19 tourism recovery plan.

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

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Xplornet continued service

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** This week, we received great news that Xplornet will continue to provide service to hundreds of Yukoners who rely on its satellite service. In phone calls with Xplornet and Telesat executives over the last few weeks, we were told that the companies were in the final stages of a tough negotiation. On Monday, Telesat president and CEO Dan Goldberg and his team told me that he had not yet received the

signed legal agreement from Xplornet. By yesterday, the deal had been ratified, and Xplornet customers had been informed that the service would continue beyond December 31.

Xplornet has not said how long the service will be extended, but in my calls with the company, we have discussed a two-year extension, and I expect the company to hold to that. Yukoners need time to find, develop, and deploy new services.

The aged Telesat satellite that the Xplornet system bounces its signals off of is scheduled to be decommissioned in 2025. The last few months have been difficult for remote Yukon Xplornet customers who face losing their long-established link to the global communication network in the middle of a Yukon winter and a global pandemic.

Since August, the Premier, the Minister of Economic Development, and I have been discussing the importance of this service with the Klondike Placer Miners' Association, Total North, tourism outfits, and residents who depend on this service. As noted, I have been in regular contact with Xplornet President Allison Lenehan and his management team and also Telesat's team led by Goldberg. As well, Yukon MP Larry Bagnell, the federal Rural Economic Development Minister Monsef, and I have worked together on this file with federal Innovation, Science and Industry Minister Bains.

So, it has been a full-court press on this file because we understand how important this connectivity is for Yukoners. Affordable, robust, and dependable Internet is critically important to Yukoners and, because of that, it has been a focus for this government. It is why we are building the redundant fibre line up the Dempster. It is why we financially backstopped Northwestel's application to the CRTC to get Connect Yukon 2.0 broadband to virtually every Yukon home. It is why we have spent so much time rolling out the new online services for Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, you don't know what you've got until it's gone. In August, hundreds of Yukoners learned how fragile their satellite service was. Through a lot of hard work and collaboration, we have achieved a reprieve, but relying on decades-old technology is not a winning strategy. In our conversations, Xplornet has stressed that this extension is not a long-term solution. Customers will need to find a new satellite provider or technology.

We have conveyed how hard it would be for customers to find and deploy an affordable alternative in the grips of a Yukon winter — if one was available — which, in some cases, was doubtful. Now we have a little time to find, develop, and deploy solutions in the summer and there are promising things on the horizon.

I thank Xplornet and Telesat for working with us and on striking a new arrangement to continue serving remote Yukoners and companies for the immediate future.

**Mr. Hassard:** Thank you for the opportunity to rise to speak to the issue of Xplornet today. This is great news — the extension of Xplornet's service to Yukoners really is great for Yukoners. Many Yukoners rely on this service and the discontinuation of it was a scary prospect for those who rely on it for safety, for education, or for their businesses. I think that

today should not be about politicians taking credit, so before the minister throws out his shoulder patting himself on the back, I want to make sure that today we highlight the people who actually did the work to get this done.

First and foremost, we need to recognize the customers and the Yukoners who are going to be impacted. These individuals saw a problem and they worked very hard to get the attention of the companies, the government, the agencies, and the CRTC — anyone who would listen — to make sure that this issue was a priority.

Hundreds of Yukoners organized letter-writing campaigns and e-mail-writing campaigns, they made phone calls, they grabbed politicians and public servants in parking lots, and they lobbied hard. They were the ones with the most to lose and they worked extremely hard to make sure that their service stayed. The local dealers and retailers for XplorNet here in the Yukon who had advocated on behalf of their customers also deserve a major shout-out — Total North, Dynamic Systems, and Bob Laking in Dawson City — just to name a few, Mr. Speaker. These organizations and individuals worked extremely hard to make sure that their customers, clients, and friends had accurate information about what was happening and what they could do to try to effect change. They got their customers information on who to send the letters and e-mails to, and they were helpful in making sure that their customers had accurate information, even when sometimes certain ministers were publicly sharing incorrect information.

The chamber of commerce, which worked hard to advocate on behalf of local and small businesses in their communities, also deserves a shout-out. Industry associations such as Tech Yukon — which wrote letters on behalf of customers and the territory's innovation tech sector with concerns about this decision — also deserve a huge thanks for their work and advocacy. Of course, Mr. Speaker, the Klondike Placer Miners' Association and its many members in industry first started raising this issue with the territorial government in July, but found their initial concerns met by deaf ears, so they had to turn to others for advocacy.

When we attended the annual general meeting for KPMA on September 4, this was one of the biggest issues that we heard about from members, and many expressed frustration that the Minister of Economic Development had not responded to concerns related to the issue. Some of them were also surprised to hear the Premier indicate at those meetings that it was the first time he had ever heard of the issue, because they had been raising it with him for weeks.

But at that time, I think we all heard loud and clear that this was not an issue that could be ignored any longer. It was an issue that needed leadership and representatives who could be decisive and take action. It would not have been possible without all the hard work of all of the highly engaged and highly motivated customers, the companies and individuals who serve them, the chambers and industry associations such as Tech Yukon and the KPMA.

So, once again, Mr. Speaker, credit where credit is due — thank you to all of these hard-working Yukoners.

**Ms. Hanson:** The Yukon New Democratic Party is happy to hear the good news announced today — news that many Yukoners have been waiting months for. For Yukoners who rely on XplorNet, the earlier announcement that they would be without a means of communication at the end of December was devastating news.

Back in the day, many relied on the radiophone; today, many Yukoners living in remote areas of the territory have come to rely on XplorNet to stay connected. Losing this connection would have turned the clock back decades in terms of connectivity. Whether living remotely or trying to run a home business in a remote location or a wilderness tourism experience, having a way to communicate daily and to seek assistance in an emergency — whether a medical emergency or a situation like a wildland fire — is an absolute necessity.

I believe that most Yukoners would agree that it is the job of our government to advocate and negotiate with any corporation providing critical communications that suddenly announces that they are leaving Yukoners high and dry. We heard from an individual on the radio this morning saying that there is a sense of relief but more needs to be done. Yukoners using XplorNet will want the assurance of how long this service will remain available and that alternatives will be in place when the service ceases.

While an immediate crisis is now averted, much remains up in the air for the future. In two or five years, communications will no doubt be even more advanced. It is critical that Yukoners currently reliant on XplorNet satellite services will have access to reliable and affordable communication options.

I am concerned that the minister's statement implies that it's up to these Yukoners to find a solution for the long term. I'm not sure how he expects Yukoners who live in the bush to launch a new satellite, but maybe he can expand on this in his answer.

If this government truly believes in the value of connectivity, they will take a leading role in collaborating with the private sector to guarantee that services remain available. I hope that the minister can expand on what role this government expects to play in finding a long-term solution for XplorNet clients.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I would like to thank the members opposite for their comments. We, of course, agree that, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, there is a full-court press on this issue. Yukoners banded together, as they always do. We did have absolutely extraordinary representation from local companies like Total North Communications and the Klondike Placer Miners' Association and from customers across the territory, making the case that this was a very critical service for them. We certainly appreciate the e-mails and all of the advocacy. I have been doing that in reaching back to all of those people and thanking them for their time and effort on this issue.

I think that we can all agree, Mr. Speaker, that connectivity is important for all Yukoners. We are glad to see that remote Yukoners will continue to have satellite service through XplorNet past the end of this calendar year.

The member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, on the one hand, as he often wants to do, said, “Let’s take politics out of it”, and then he got political and criticized the Premier and my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, for not being up to speed on the file. That is expressly not true. They are highly capable, decent, and thoughtful individuals who knew about this file that we are advocating with the KPMA long before the members opposite are giving them credit for.

On that, I would like to thank the Leader of the conservative Yukon Party for supporting the Liberal government’s work to ensure that Yukoners are not disconnected after December 31. We appreciated the news release and the public support of our leadership in resolving this issue. We also appreciate their leader’s letter to the federal Liberal government backing up our efforts. Our government’s strategic approach to brokering a solution involves several Yukon departments, the presidents of both companies, Yukoners, local companies, placer miners, the federal ministers Bains and Monsef, and Yukon MP Larry Bagnell. Through this advocacy, we were able to achieve a solution on behalf of all Yukoners. That is great news, Mr. Speaker, and we all agree on that.

Truth told, I am a little surprised by the Yukon Party’s new interest in Internet connectivity. Just on Monday, in a ministerial statement, the Leader of the Official Opposition pushed against the Bids and Tenders digital system in favour of retaining paper bids. If only their new leader had put effort — or any effort, in fact — into delivering a redundant fibre line for the territory when he was a minister, we might have avoided many Internet outages that cost Yukoners millions in lost sales and productivity.

No matter, Mr. Speaker — we got this. With all the necessary NWT permits in place, we have now let contracts to construct this line, and the work is underway. We have expanded our online services to Yukoners. We have an open data repository that never existed before, and we have supported Connect Yukon 2.0, which will benefit all Yukoners in virtually all communities, with faster and more robust broadband connections delivered through Northwestel.

As for XplorNet and Telesat, we recognized the importance of this service right at the beginning, and these companies have heard us and all Yukoners loud and clear. With the time that we bought, we are now exploring new satellite communication options that will serve Yukoners beyond the two-year service expected from XplorNet. There is a lot of interest in the Starlink project from SpaceX, and that is one avenue we are keen to find out the details on in the near future.

Amazon is also launching a satellite service, and we have started talking with our local communications companies to see what, if any, service they might provide, given their formidable expertise serving Yukoners in this field. Yukoners can rest assured that this government will continue to monitor the situation over the next two years, and scout and promote new, and, hopefully, affordable options for Yukoners when this current deal expires.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Teacher recruitment and retention

**Mr. Kent:** This morning, I received a copy of a letter to the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation from the school council for J.V. Clark School in Mayo. The letter voices concerns to the minister about a number of issues related to teacher recruitment and retention in Mayo, and how it is being negatively impacted by a lack of housing in the policies of Yukon Housing Corporation.

This is the second letter to the minister on this topic from this school council. The first was sent on September 10 to the ministers responsible for housing and Education, and the council has still not received a response. We are well into the school year, so these housing issues for teachers need to be dealt with urgently.

Can the minister tell us why she has still not responded to the September 10 letter from the J.V. Clark School Council?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would be happy to look into the letter. I haven’t received the letter. If there was one sent, I will certainly endeavour to seek information from the department. At the moment, I am not able to respond with respect to the details.

What I can say is that we have looked at housing availability within our communities. In fact, we are having in-depth discussions with the community of Mayo, Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and the municipality, and we are speaking with all of our municipalities, looking at the wait-list in our communities.

We are also really working hard with the Public Service Commission to look at modernizing our social housing and our staff housing — I guess it would be the number of units that we have and then looking at some alternative arrangements to enhance the supports we have in those communities.

We’re happy to say that we are looking at emerging opportunities within our communities by partnerships and expanding the housing — the Yukon Housing Corporation’s loans program. We’re happy to say that we have put in over 600 units in all Yukon communities and we’ll continue to do that into the future.

If there’s a specific concern, I would be happy to look into that.

**Mr. Kent:** There are a number of specific concerns that the school council raises and if the minister has lost or misplaced that initial letter, I’m sure that the council will be happy to resend it to her. We’re hoping for an answer. We’re two months after it was initially sent.

The letter that I received today highlights the Yukon’s housing policy requires teachers to have full-time contracts in order to get a Yukon Housing unit. This means that teachers in Mayo with part-time status are often left with the only option of leaving the community. The letter also highlights that there have been instances of part-time teachers living in campers until it is too cold and their only option is to leave town or they have been forced to rent couch space from friends in the community.

So, can the minister tell us what she is doing to address concerns that government policies are negatively impacting the ability for Mayo to recruit and retain teachers so that they can remain in the community for the long term?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can say that we are very proud to have taken significant steps in modernizing our approach to housing for the Yukon government staff in rural Yukon communities.

Our 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. In late-May 2019, the government policy governing employee housing was revised as part of our modernization effort. The updated policy prioritizes housing to essential positions such as health professionals and teachers, limits tenancies to three years to encourage staff to consider other housing options in the communities, and realigns rental rates to be more reflective of private market rates in each specific community.

With the new policy in only its second year, Mr. Speaker, it is too soon to evaluate its impact. We will continue to implement the policy and collaborate with our partners in communities in the years ahead as we strive to achieve our long-term goal of affordable housing options and private market opportunities in Yukon communities.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that recently I was in touch with the president of the Yukon Teachers' Association. He brought up an issue in Faro. There was a teacher in Faro, and we were able to find housing for that individual very, very quickly. So, we are working with our partners to make sure that our teachers are housed in our communities.

**Mr. Kent:** As I mentioned, these government policies are negatively impacting the ability for Mayo to recruit and retain teachers. The J.V. Clark School required five new teacher or EA positions this September; however, they were only able to fill one position by September, and four are still posted. According to the school council, lack of housing is a major barrier to teachers coming to Mayo. Potential applicants for teaching positions are hesitant to apply on jobs in the area because housing is difficult to find.

So, what actions is the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation taking to respond to concerns in Mayo that a lack of housing is negatively impacting their ability to recruit and retain teachers?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, let's put things into context. I am going to start by saying that creating safe and affordable housing for all Yukoners is an absolute priority for this Liberal government, and we are making significant progress toward this goal. We do know that housing is a basic necessity and that all Yukoners have a right to it.

The member opposite has to remember when he was the minister. I remember that, when I got my job here in the Legislative Assembly, the teacher who replaced me at Robert Service School came from Toronto and had to sleep in a tent outside at the Klondike River for a couple of months because the Yukon Party had changed the policy and held up different

housing for different departments, and teachers were left out in the cold.

What we are doing now is that we are changing around the housing model completely. We now have community housing. What a substantial change to the department right now — to go from a model that didn't look at individual communities in individual ways. We changed that to a whole-of-government approach.

Now, the members opposite are screaming off-mic because they don't like it when we compare and when we say that we have changed the policies from the Yukon Party, and we are making huge strides in that. This is an extremely important issue. The member opposite talked about some of the issues in Faro that we have cleared up. The minister has committed to responding to that letter — but it needs to be said here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly that we have moved mountains as far as changing the Yukon housing situation and how we deal with teachers as well.

#### **Question re: Capital project funding lapses**

**Mr. Cathers:** According to the Public Accounts, the Department of Highways and Public Works lapsed \$8 million in capital projects last year. That's \$8 million that could have gone toward local contractors last year and could have put Yukoners to work.

Can the minister tell us why his department lapsed \$8 million in capital projects last year?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Of course the members opposite know that there are many, many reasons why a capital project might be lapsed, when we go to put contracts out. What the member opposite is not talking about, though, is the hundreds of millions of dollars in contract that we actually did let last year successfully that we have delivered throughout the territory. We are talking about the north Klondike Highway construction and the Hillcrest construction. I know that my colleague in Community Services has the lot development that his department is getting out — it actually puts to shame some of the work of the previous government. We are working on orders of magnitude — more work on that file than previous governments.

I have absolutely no problem talking about the record of this government, with its five-year capital plan, its changes to procurement, its local contracting — where we have a local company building the French school, as opposed to an Outside company building a 30-percent smaller F.H. Collins Secondary School — I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, about the strides that this government has made in improving procurement for Yukoners. I know that Yukoners care about this matter greatly — about having work, about having local procurement, about having fair, open, and transparent — the one million exceptions to get that work into contractors' hands locally — I could go on all afternoon.

**Mr. Cathers:** Wow. I asked a simple question; I didn't get an answer. So, I will try another one. According to the Public Accounts, the Department of Community Services lapsed \$19.7 million in capital projects last year. That is

\$19.7 million that could have gone toward local contractors last year, and could have put Yukoners to work.

Can the minister tell us why his department lapsed \$19.7 million in capital projects last year?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will get a detailed response for the member opposite, but at the same time in that response, I will outline all of the investments that we have made across the territory — across all communities — by taking their priorities — last year, my understanding is that there was \$75 million in infrastructure across our communities. This is far above and beyond what the previous government was investing — and it is important, especially during COVID-19, because what we are doing is creating economic activity — keeping our local companies working and keeping our projects moving across all of our communities. I am happy to talk about all of those great projects that are happening across the Yukon.

**Mr. Cathers:** The score is now two simple questions — no answer. The spending I am talking about is last fiscal year, which is before COVID-19.

I'll try again. According to the Public Accounts, the Department of Education lapsed \$2 million in capital projects last year. That's \$2 million that could have gone toward local contractors and toward much-needed education infrastructure improvements last year and putting Yukoners to work.

Can the minister tell us why her department lapsed \$2 million in capital projects last year and which projects those lapses are associated with?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I really do appreciate the opportunity again to talk about this issue on the floor of the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, we are forecasting and tendering projects earlier each and every year and continually improving our approaches so that businesses can take full advantage of Yukon's short, intense building season. Contractors have told us that we need to focus on putting out contracts at the right time rather than just in time. When planning and tendering projects, we are giving contractors the best opportunities to perform the work at the right time.

For the 2020 season, Mr. Speaker, we put out 57 seasonally dependent tenders worth approximately \$111 million by the end of March. An additional 28 projects worth approximately \$54 million were tendered by the end of May. I'm talking about this this afternoon because, rather than focus on \$2 million in contracts that didn't go out for whatever reason — and we can get the member opposite the answer to that question — I think it behooves us, in a time of this global pandemic and a time of economic uncertainty across the globe and certainly within this country — we should actually be celebrating the work that this government is doing to make sure that Yukoners are employed and that the facilities and the infrastructure that they rely on going forward are put in place, and we're doing that work.

#### **Question re: Canada-Yukon housing benefit program**

**Ms. White:** Recent reports in the media highlight the out-of-control increases in rental rates across Yukon. Yukoners are told that the average rent for a two-bedroom unit in

Whitehorse is \$1,227 a month, but anyone who has looked for a place to rent recently knows that this is way off and that prices are much higher. Increased electrical rates, high Internet rates, and heating costs make it even harder for people to make ends meet. Now, imagine trying to cover these basic costs while working for a \$13.71 minimum wage or anything under a living wage for Yukon.

Yesterday, the government announced the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. While this program is badly needed by many, it doesn't address the cause of the problem.

Can the minister tell Yukoners how many households this program is expected to assist over the next calendar year?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** In the last couple of days, we've made some significant announcements with Canada, and that is to look at the continuation of supporting Yukon families that are compromised in a way that they are perhaps not able to make their rent payments. We look at marginalized families. We had a rent subsidy program as a result of COVID, we attempted to put into place the resources needed, and the Canada housing benefit program is a replacement of that. We have signed off on an agreement. We have a funding initiative for \$9.1 million over eight years.

The objective there, Mr. Speaker, is really to provide resources to assist Yukoners recovering from the effects of COVID-19; however, we also look at the federal funding to support affordability and availability of housing for Yukoners and align that with the housing action plan and the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness, taking into account recommendations from the *Putting People First* report. We are taking into consideration the housing needs. We have our housing support staff at the Yukon Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services who are working hand in hand to address the needs of Yukoners.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the minister's talking points. My question was about the number of households that the program is expected to assist.

Last month, there were 361 households on the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list: 144 seniors, 295 households in Whitehorse, and 66 households in the communities. The minister can list all the projects or all the programs she wants, but the numbers show that the government has not made a dent in this wait-list. We have been in a housing crunch for years. This government and their predecessors announced a handful of projects, but they have failed to actually make a difference for people who are waiting for affordable housing.

With its 800 units already occupied, when does the minister expect the Yukon Housing Corporation to clear the wait-list of the almost 400 individuals?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The objective of the Yukon Housing Corporation is really to work with our partners in our communities. The effort in terms of the funding envelope that is available, the loans programs, the housing initiative fund, and the municipal matching grant is really to look at supporting the communities. That is what it's about. It is about working together.

I can acknowledge that we have made a significant dent in our communities. We have a growing population, we have a



booming economy, and we appreciate and recognize that. At the same time, it's not solely the Government of Yukon's responsibility. We are working with our partners in our communities, and we have made significant gains in terms of addressing the wait-lists.

Sure, I am acknowledging that we have a growing wait-list, but we have a number of units coming on. We just signed an agreement with the private sector that will address another 86 units in the market. We have our 47-unit facility coming onstream. We have two facilities in Dawson City. We're now in the process of having in-depth discussions with the municipality of Watson Lake and with the chief and council to address the pressures there.

We are working toward addressing these challenges that we're seeing across the Yukon.

**Ms. White:** I'm sure the 361 households on the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list are relieved by the minister's answers and her timelines. The CMHC suggests that no more than 30 percent of a person's income should go toward their housing, and many Yukoners are paying well over 50 percent of their income for shelter.

The new rent subsidy program funded by Ottawa will help some, but with no limit on how much a landlord can increase rent, it's only a temporary solution. With essential workers seeing a one-time pandemic pay raise disappear and many Yukoners still unable to return to work, having safe and affordable housing is critical.

Does the minister agree that more needs to be done to reduce the wait-list for housing and assist those workers whose wages are still not even close to a living wage in Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can acknowledge that more is being done. We are doing a lot. We are working with our partners in our communities. We have looked at always keeping our sights on the wait-lists, looking at it community by community, trying to address the challenges that we're seeing are most prevalent in some of our communities, and acknowledging that the Housing Corporation has worked with our communities.

I want to assure Yukoners that the new units that are coming onstream will address that, but we also know that the continuation of our partnerships with the municipalities and our private sector partners will address some of the shortages that we're seeing in our communities now.

We have also recently, in the Legislative Assembly, spoke about lots within our communities that are perhaps some of the challenges that we're seeing. We're working very closely with Community Services to address those challenges in some of the communities — like Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, for example, or Mayo — where we need to find an alternative. We are working very quickly to address those issues in our communities. Community by community, we will resolve the long-overdue challenges and problems in these communities which have been neglected.

#### **Question re: Diabetes treatment**

**Ms. White:** Over two years ago, the Yukon T1D support network asked the Department of Education to address the support needs of students who have type 1 diabetes. The support network provided the department with a brochure

outlining basic health recommendations for educators. A letter accompanying the brochure pointed out that the Canadian Paediatric Society gave the Yukon a poor grade in its management of type 1 diabetes in schools.

The T1D support network offered assistance to the department to improve the policies and support that would benefit students and the department.

Can the minister tell us why the Department of Education would turn down the assistance of the T1D support network, an organization promoting best practices when supporting students with type 1 diabetes?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the opportunity to address the question.

I think the assumption in the question is that anything has been turned down and that wouldn't be correct. We will continue to work for the health and safety of our students and our staff. But in particular, students in relation to this question — the students are a key priority in the Department of Education — as a matter of fact, there has been a significant shift in the way in which the department does its work throughout both the central administration office as well as in schools in that, on every issue that we address, we turn our minds to what is in the best interest of those students.

It is a significant shift in the culture of the Department of Education. It is something that this government in our one-government approach is extremely committed to. The assumption should not be that anything has been turned down; work continues on this situation. We will resolve it going forward when we are able to come to the conclusion of what is in the best interests of the students. It is a critically important issue about health and safety and how students are managing health issues while they're in school. It is a significant responsibility of course for teachers and administrators as well and something that must be addressed.

**Ms. White:** The current Department of Education policy lumps all severe or life-threatening medical conditions together with no information on any specific conditions, treatment, or warning signs. The document outlines responsibilities of administration, educators, and parents — and little else.

When reviewing policies from other provinces, it's clear that providing educators with information on type 1 and type 2 diabetes symptoms and treatment is the gold standard.

Can the minister explain why a policy given a failing grade by the Canadian Paediatric Society and meant to protect students with severe conditions has not been updated?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With respect to supports for children and families experiencing challenges with diabetes — we know that we have seen significant challenges across the Yukon, and we are pleased to announce most recently that we are now covering constant glucose monitoring. In that process, we have made significant policy changes to reflect the needs of the students and the parents. We have listened to the parents, and they have direct input into the drafting of this process. We have a two-year pilot project that funded those who participated, and we have made a commitment to Yukoners that we will continue to support the families with the constant glucose monitoring and to support the choices that Yukoners elect to make, and that

is using the services that are there and determining the most important supports that are available.

I certainly want to ensure that all students are healthy, that they are safe, and that they are directly linked to the supports that they need in time, and that means that we need to work with the families. Of course, the Department of Education is working very closely with Health and Social Services. We have met with the families, and we will continue to do so in terms of addressing their core needs.

**Ms. White:** The Minister of Health and Social Services has stated that government is — and I quote: “... proud to lead the country in supporting individuals with type 1 diabetes.” But this is only true when it comes to continuous glucose monitoring and thanks to the tireless advocacy support by the type 1 diabetes support network.

When it comes to supporting students in schools with type 1 diabetes, Yukon still gets a failing grade. When parents send their kids with medical conditions to school, they want to be assured that teachers and administrators have the best information to support students with type 1 diabetes or any other condition. The T1D support network has offered to help to create a policy that will give students a safe and supportive educational experience. Will the minister commit to working with the T1D support network in creating new policies that meet the needs of students and their families living with type 1 diabetes?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The health and safety of students in our schools is our top priority with respect to the Department of Education — and, frankly, a top priority in our one-government approach going forward. I am extremely proud of the changes that have been made and the shift at the Department of Education to focus on students and to focus on their well-being, their health, and their safety.

We will of course commit to working with the T1D network for the purposes of revising policy and updating policy. I can assure you that I understand that work to be ongoing and that the relationship is important. We must learn to the benefit of our students and we must ensure their health and safety — and frankly, that teachers are supported in their responsibilities in the classrooms — administrators as well.

These are important issues. They are important issues for parents who are sending their students to school — their children to school — who need assistance with health issues, and it is incredibly important that we support our teachers and their responsibilities in this area as well.

I look forward to the work that will come in the future, but certainly recognize the work that has been ongoing with the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education to date.

#### **Question re: Aviation investment strategy**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Between November 2019 and February 2020, the government consulted on Yukon’s aviation investment strategy. The “what we heard” document was released in August 2020. In that document, the minister said that over 200 members of the aviation community provided feedback to help inform the report. One of the key

recommendations was — and I quote: “A focus on land development and leasing opportunities and changes to the existing application and approval process.”

Can the minister update this House on what changes his government is making to land development and leasing opportunities and existing application processes for our aviation community?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can tell the member opposite — first of all, I thank her for her question. Second of all, I want to just highlight to the member opposite that aviation in the territory is an absolutely critical industry. It has certainly been a focus of this government to make sure that it has the supports it needs and the infrastructure that it needs to service the territory, because it does bring people and goods throughout our great territory and to its individual communities.

I could talk about — what we are talking about is leased land. We are currently developing a land management plan for future leased land development at the Yukon airports and aerodromes. It has been an issue that has plagued the airport for — I would say decades. Sorting it out has not been easy, but this work is being undertaken in phases and the longer term strategy will be informed by Yukon’s Flight Path, as the member opposite just mentioned today.

The initial offering of new lots will be made available at Whitehorse and Mayo later this year and work continues to allow for additional subdivisions and leases on a priority basis. In the meantime, urgent business requirements are being accommodated with short-term licences where possible.

When I came into this role — and I will be happy to talk about this in the next question.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The report also states that industry would like to see improved governance and policies within the Yukon government to better support aviation users and businesses.

Can the minister update this House on what work will be undertaken regarding this specific ask by members of the aviation industry?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will say that we continue to work with stakeholders on a case-by-case basis to support business at our airports and aerodromes, and tenants whose leases expire are continuing on a month-to-month basis with the same terms and conditions as their expired leases.

Making sure that there’s land available at our airport is certainly a very important issue for me and for the people at the Aviation branch and within Highways and Public Works. They have worked for years trying to sort this issue out. The problem is that there has not been a lot of planning up at the airport for decades — perhaps even as far back as when the federal government ran the airport. The whole thing has been a really difficult file to untangle. We are working very, very hard on this file, Mr. Speaker, because we realize how important it is to have land at the airports. We will continue that work with stakeholders over the coming months and years.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** As part of the consultation, the government asked whether or not the government should start collecting airport improvement fees and taxes, passenger facility fees, landing fees, terminal fees, and aircraft parking

fees. It seems odd to consult on bringing in new fees and taxes at the airport unless it's something that the Liberal government is considering.

Is the government considering and bringing in any of these new taxes to the airport? If not, why do they continue to ask the same questions?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We're in the midst of a global pandemic. We are currently — yes, we are absolutely continuing with *Yukon's Flight Path*. Our government has made significant investments in aviation over the past few years, including upgrades to equipment and facilities. *Yukon's Flight Path*, our investment strategy being developed, will be a living and breathing framework to help guide investments in Yukon's aviation system over the next 10 years.

This multi-year investment strategy will make sure that we are meeting Yukon's current and future aviation system needs, including safety, efficiency, stakeholder needs, and operational requirements.

We are going to continue with this. Of course, we are going to look at and gather as much information about how we finance, work, and pay for the airport as we possibly can. I have been on the floor of this House stating that I will not impose an airport improvement fee at the airport. I haven't changed from that position. We are in the midst of a global pandemic. In fact, this government has actually forgiven all lease payments on our airports — all fees in total — so there are no fees being gathered or levied on people who have land or who operate at the airport right now. We have done that to support our aviation industry. We have committed to giving that same support through next year, so I think that's really where this lies — no fees at the airport right now.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### **Bill No. 10: Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020) — Third Reading**

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 10, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thank you to all the members of the Legislature. Bill No. 10 provides access to paid and unpaid leave for victims of domestic or sexualized violence working in territorially regulated industries and professions. This leave provides employees the time to get the support they choose if they, their children, or people for whom they are close friends or caregivers experience domestic or sexualized violence.

The paid and unpaid leave will provide an important and necessary support when dealing with domestic or sexualized violence. It will significantly lower barriers for employees by minimizing financial hardships and providing victims the time to access medical, legal, and other supports as they need. This leave aligns with work being done to support missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirited Yukoners, as well as the work of the Yukon's sexualized assault response team that aim to improve services and, like this leave, reduce barriers for victims.

Mr. Speaker, I thank fellow members for considering Bill No. 10, entitled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)*. I look forward to final submissions today on this bill.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The *Employment Standards Act* changes to include paid or unpaid leave for victims of domestic or sexualized violence is something that we agree with. We, too, thank the drafters and legislators for making these appropriate changes to this act. The time frame is now to ensure that this act is introduced to the employers and employees alike in a reasonable time, and put into action the next steps.

We also appreciate the sensitivity and privacy issues on these changes. We look forward to the positive outcomes that will ensure that persons who are suffering due to violence will be able to get better care and support for the trauma that they are enduring and not have to worry about employment.

Again, thanks to all who made this possible. We look forward to supporting the changes.

**Ms. White:** In speaking to Bill No. 10, I just want to highlight that, when the conversation was happening in Committee of the Whole, the minister said that it was a priority that you were able to take your values and put them toward legislation so that they could do what was right. We, of course, support the changes to the *Employment Standards Act* and recognize that it is about doing the right thing for people and making sure that we are supporting them when they need it the most.

With that, those are my comments for the day.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am happy to stand in support of Bill No. 10 today, *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020)*. I would like to thank all of the folks in our departments who worked really hard to bring this forward and, of course, to my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, for his work and in-depth preparedness for this bill. It means a lot to have all of our legislators come together to do this work collaboratively.

It is part of our mandate as a government to improve programs and supports for victims of domestic and sexualized violence at every level so that they can feel supported, honoured, and believed.

We know that services must support the healing of victims and we are committed to improving these responses wherever possible. This is just one way.

As we all know, Yukon has one of the highest rates of gender-based violence in Canada — three times higher than the

national average and three times higher yet again if you're an indigenous woman. Just like the Minister of Community Services stated in his remarks today, the bill provides victims of sexualized violence with options. We aim to break down barriers for victims and create space in which they can pursue supports they may need without financial burden or threat of job loss limiting them.

During Committee of the Whole, I was really intrigued by the questions that came forward. I really want to thank the members opposite for posing the questions that they did because our role is going to be significant from the Women's Directorate as we move into implementation of this bill and the consultation with our stakeholders. I think that the debate that happened here during Committee of the Whole was really helpful and it will help to inform that process.

I think that's a great day when we can achieve that throughout the process that we have before us as legislators. I'm not always convinced that some of the debate that happens during Committee of the Whole is helpful to Yukoners but, in this case, I really believe that it was.

So, I want to also just talk a little bit about my other work that is going to tie into this. I'm so proud to be working with my colleagues on the Yukon Advisory Council on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to build a strategy to prevent violence against women, girls, and two-spirited Yukoners as well as to provide even more supports for victims. I'm really looking forward to sharing the strategy with members of this House soon. This work that we have done on Bill No. 10 will help in advancing that work.

In closing, I would like to give my thanks to my fellow members again for their thoughtful conversation around this bill. I'm looking forward to the bill passing today and to continuing the critical work to support victims of gender-based violence.

**Speaker:** If the member now speaks, he will close debate on third reading of Bill No. 10.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank all the members of this Legislature who spoke on the bill. I would just like to say that it is very important that we work with victims and those agencies that support victims and find the way in which to implement this change — this new support — for leave provisions for those who are suffering domestic violence, sexualized assault, or those who are supporting those who are suffering domestic violence or sexualized assault. It's important, as well, that we support our employers because I think this is going to help them too. It's working with those two groups — collaborating with them. I want to acknowledge that the Member for Whitehorse Centre, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and the Member for Porter Creek North all talked about the importance of bringing this new leave provision to life and getting it moving.

I thank everybody for their comments and their support. I again say here on the floor that the next step — there are no regulations that are required in order to enable this. What is

required is working with support groups and employers to make sure that the way that this rolls out will be supportive and not revictimizing those people who have suffered this type of trauma.

We will work diligently. I thank everybody today and during the previous debate for their comments and thoughts on this bill.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question on the motion for third reading of Bill No. 10?

**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. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

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

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

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 10 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 10 has passed this House.

### Bill No. 11: *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015* — Second Reading

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

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, be now read a second time.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** This government is pleased to bring forward the *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015* for second reading.

I would like to take a moment to provide some background information to support these amendments. Concerns were identified by individual First Nation governments with the registration of settlement land at the Land Titles Office under the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. A land titles registry working group

consisting of Department of Justice staff and interested First Nation governments was struck and developed a set of recommendations to resolve the concerns expressed by some First Nation governments.

The recommendations set out by this working group require these changes to the Yukon *Land Titles Act, 2015* and subsequently will require changes to the Settlement Lands Regulation under that act. I don't understand the regulation to be terribly complicated, and it will be a minor regulation to give force and effect if Bill No. 11 passes this House.

The proposed amendments can be divided into the following main components and will serve to expand the definitions of "subsidiary certificate of title" and "development agreement" as two particular terms and recognize the authority of Yukon First Nation governments with respect to development agreements, plans of subdivision, and approvals of air space plans.

The amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* are a testament to the Government of Yukon's commitment to working with Yukon First Nation governments, to reconciliation, and to working together to resolve issues and to provide clarity for First Nation governments so they will have the tools that they need to support their communities and see them thrive.

The Government of Yukon is pleased to move forward with these amendments. We are working together with Yukon First Nation governments to increase opportunities for land and economic development in the Yukon Territory.

**Mr. Cathers:** I'm pleased to rise today in support of this amendment to the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. I would like to note and again acknowledge the work of everyone helping with the land titles amendment act project. It was a significant amount of work involving Department of Justice staff, private sector stakeholders, and, of course, the First Nations. Particularly, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation was involved due to their interest in working to allow the registry of their settlement land in the land titles system.

As a result of that work, the *Land Titles Act* was amended in 2015. I was also happy to have the opportunity to work with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Chief Doris Bill to bring forward those amendments; however, I acknowledge that, as the minister mentioned, there were additional issues that were identified after that legislation was tabled. I am pleased to see them be adjusted through this fairly short amendment to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* that is providing the clarity that is necessary to help facilitate First Nations, if they choose to do so, in registering land in the land titles registry system.

I would also just like to take the opportunity to congratulate Kwanlin Dün First Nation on the completion and passage of their lands act. That directly represents a significant milestone for them and has the potential to create great opportunity for the citizens of that First Nation, as well as economic opportunity for the First Nation itself.

I would note that, while each First Nation of course will make its own choices about the manner in which it proceeds, if it chooses to, I do believe that the basic structure and the basic

model provides a real, potential opportunity for other First Nations to borrow from and to utilize in their areas to provide opportunities for their citizens and businesses and for the economic benefit for the First Nation as a whole.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up my remarks and, again, just thank all of the people who were involved with the development of the *Land Titles Act* modernization in 2015, as well as those who have continued to work on identifying adjustments to implement it, such as was brought forward by the minister here, and ensure that it fulfills its intent, which includes facilitating the ability for First Nations to register some settlement land in the land titles registry if they choose to do so.

With that, I will conclude my remarks.

**Ms. Hanson:** In rising to speak to Bill No. 11, I am pleased to see these proposed amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* coming before us. I think that, in addition to it being a sign of work being done by the Yukon government and the officials of the government, it is a real testament to the patience of Yukon First Nation governments that we are finally here, 15 years after the Kwanlin Dün agreement was signed and came into effect — many, many years after the first four and the subsequent First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, we know that, over the years, there have been many efforts by First Nations to find ways to get the kind of certainty that's required for them as governments to be able to realize the economic opportunities of some of the lands that they have retained as First Nation settlement land in their final agreements without jeopardizing any of the rights that might be attached to those various categories of land — whether it's category A or B settlement land.

The discussions that have led to these amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* were not straightforward or simple; they are complex matters. I'm aware — and I'm sure that others in this Assembly are aware — of the efforts of so many on all sides. I do commend the work that has been done. We will have a number of questions as we go through the details of the proposed amendments, but I just want to give a shout-out to Kwanlin Dün for being the trailblazer on this one. Having done that with their lands act and as they begin to implement that, it will give confidence to other Yukon First Nations that in fact there are opportunities and possibilities to be accrued to their First Nation should they choose to look at adhering to this kind of an approach, which Kwanlin Dün has led the way on.

We look forward to getting into discussion of the details of the amendments. Of course, we'll be asking the question as we always do with respect to the timing of the necessary regulatory changes that will be required to support these legislative changes.

**Speaker:** Is there any further debate on second reading of Bill No. 11?

If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the comments and indicated support from the members opposite. I think they are exactly correct. These are trailblazing opportunities. Kwanlin Dün First Nation has led the way and will be appreciative of these clarifications in Bill No. 11. As well, of course, they have already made changes to their self-government agreement for the purpose of the issues and land titles that they choose to do in the land titles registry — but certainly they will be appreciative of this clarification as well so that there won't be any misunderstandings. This will further debate, and ultimately, I hope, support for Bill No. 11 will provide tools to other First Nations who choose to proceed with economic development in this manner — and, as the member opposite has said, without any loss of their rights with respect to category A or category B settlement lands.

I look forward to us further discussing this matter and any questions that might be coming.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question on second reading of Bill No. 11?

**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. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 14 yea, nil nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.  
*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 11 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

**Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel):** Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

#### *Recess*

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

#### **Bill No. 11: *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015***

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before Committee is general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*.

Is there any general debate?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am just going to invite the officials from the Department of Justice to take a seat just to my right. I would like to ask my colleagues to help me welcome Sheri Hogeboom and Abdul Hafeez, who have worked on Bill No. 11, the matter before the Legislative Assembly this afternoon. I appreciate their attendance and look forward to their assistance as the afternoon proceeds.

Mr. Deputy Chair, the Government of Yukon is pleased to bring forward Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*. As I have noted earlier today, the proposed amendments in Bill No. 11 will expand the definitions of “subsidiary certificate of title” and “development agreement”, and it will recognize the authority of Yukon First Nation governments with respect to development agreements, plans of subdivision, and approvals of air space plans.

On the whole, the proposed amendments will provide Yukon First Nation governments greater certainty when registering their settlement land. The specific amendments begin with changes to definitions within the act. The definition of “development agreement” has been amended to include an agreement made under a Yukon First Nation government’s law between a Yukon First Nation government and a person and an agreement made for the planning, zoning, and development of settlement land.

Further, within the existing definition of “plan of subdivision”, we have updated the wording to recognize the authority of Yukon First Nations to approve a plan of subdivision under Yukon First Nation law.

Next, the definition of “subsidiary certificate of title” has been replaced to recognize that a certificate of title may be issued for land that is less than fee simple and for category A or category B settlement land where the interest is less than the eligible First Nation’s entire interest.

Finally, an amendment has been added to include a plan of survey for an air space parcel, approved by a Yukon First Nation government under its law.

Through engagement with interested Yukon First Nation governments, we have discussed some concerns with the system of registration under the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, and they have sought greater certainty. In response, we have prioritized the amendments identified by Yukon First Nation governments when considering registration of settlement land. Our goal is to mitigate these concerns in a manner that respects Yukon First Nation jurisdictions and maintains the integrity of the land titles system.

The Government of Yukon is pleased to continue to work with First Nation governments to increase opportunities for land development in the Yukon Territory.

I look forward to further discussions on these brief but important legislative amendments in Bill No. 11.

**Mr. Cathers:** I have no questions regarding the amendments; they are fairly straightforward. My only questions have been answered previously by officials. With that, I will turn the floor over to the member from the Third Party for any questions that she may have.

**Ms. Hanson:** I just have one or two questions of the minister. As we discussed at second reading, these legislative amendments have been the subject of conversation and negotiation between government and First Nation governments for a number of years. I think it would be helpful in the press release — as she just made the statement now, there was a land titles registry working group, which, over the years, has consisted of various Department of Justice officials and representatives from a number of First Nations. The minister indicated that this working group, together, developed a set of recommendations to address concerns raised by First Nation governments regarding registration of settlement land at the Land Titles Office. In the interest of having a better understanding of why this exercise is not something that happened overnight — it took many years — I think that it would be helpful to have a sense of the concerns raised by First Nation governments with respect to the hesitancy or fears about what registration in the Yukon land titles system might mean and how those have been overcome or if there are additional measures to be brought forward in the future with respect to addressing any of those concerns or if they're all captured in the amendments that we see here today.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I thank the member opposite for the question. It was certainly a question when our office began working on this. Let's do this in a more general way and then more specifically.

The key concern that was raised by Yukon First Nation governments is their ability to prevent loss of settlement land in a manner contrary to the Yukon First Nation's constitution or the law. They needed to be able to protect their rights to those lands while participating in the land titles process.

In particular, the way that this was resolved, for the most part, is in Bill No. 11 — clarification of certain definitions and those definitions now clearly making reference to First Nation settlement lands and being clear that the development of land was possible and appropriate and would be recognized without — I think it was the member opposite earlier who said this — jeopardizing title. I think that's absolutely true.

The definitions brought forward here, and the discussions that have taken place with that working group, are a satisfactory step in that process and are supportive — I don't want to speak for the First Nations that were involved in this process, but information that we have is that they are supportive — and that the vast majority of their concerns are dealt with through Bill No. 11; a few are not.

There was one proposal during the consultations, or the meetings — and the work and recommendations going forward, to come to Bill No. 11 — that there would be the removal of a new addition, which is section 59.01. One of the First Nations, in particular, was not prepared to have that discussion, but asked if we could shelve it and have it later. That's section 59.01 in the *Land Titles Act, 2015*.

The other was a conversation about section 102 of the act and a conversation about the land titles tariff of fees regulation. The First Nation governments and the working group together determined that the first step in this process would be to bring Bill No. 11 to the Legislative Assembly and get those changes, which reserve the right and clear up the definitions, and that these details in both sections — 102 and the land tariff regulation — would be something that they were prepared to speak about at a future time.

Clearly, Bill No. 11 is not the definitive answer. It's a step in a long process, but it is a significant and important one, because the changes of the definitions will allow the protection of First Nation government land rights, for sure.

I can note that, while we're not interested in having this drag out any longer, the working group continues to have their conversations and that we are proceeding at the pace that the First Nation governments are prepared for and are interested in. I can indicate that these changes will solidify the changes that were made early in our mandate to allow for the registration of settlement lands.

As noted earlier, Kwanlin Dün First Nation has done so already. They have changed their self-government agreement to do so. The next stage in this process will be for other First Nations that choose to take the same steps — have tripartite conversations between Yukon government, the Canadian government, and the First Nation government — to proceed with the amendments to the self-government agreements so that they can register land.

I hope that answers the question.

**Ms. Hanson:** Is there a requirement for consequential amendments to federal and/or territorial self-government legislation as a result of the changes made by a First Nation to their self-government agreement in this case?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** No, there aren't. The last step in the process for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation was for the Government of Canada, Government of Yukon, and Kwanlin Dün First Nation government to agree to the changes to their self-government agreement. The rest has been done in the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, and the additional clarification of the definitions will be done in Bill No. 11. There's no further step beyond that.

**Ms. Hanson:** I'm just rolling it through my head.

Could the minister just clarify what section of the self-government agreement has been changed?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I will provide the member opposite and all of the House with this information — if it's incorrect — or I will confirm that it's correct. We think that it's section 13. My question was whether it was section 13 in the *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Self-Government Agreement* because it's the only one that has been done or if it is section 13 in every one. We think it's section 13 in every one, but we will confirm just to be sure. I don't have one with me, and I don't have the Kwanlin Dün agreement that was changed. It seems correct to me but we'll confirm.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister. It's my recollection — having spent too many years on this particular file — that it is section 13 that enumerates the heads of power for the First Nation. My question I guess was really: Are we adding or are we just modifying a head of power that the First Nation has? There are three broad categories under section 13.

It's in terms of jurisdiction that they have on their settlement land and their citizens on settlement land. Is that what we're talking about here — that component — or is it an addition or modification of it?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the question. We are going by memory, so if there needs to be something corrected, I will. It is a modification. It has to do, Mr. Deputy Chair, with the idea that — so there would be no conflict. Once land was registered, in the *Land Titles Act 2015*, it restricts some of the First Nation's ability to change or do something with that land that would be inconsistent with it having been registered. Those, I believe, are the modifications that were done to section 13. It was quite specific and targeted. Again, that's from memory. I'm happy to clarify if it needs to be corrected or to add more information.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for that. It is hard to roll back the memory bank on some of these things.

Just with respect to the minister's comments with respect to tariffs and fees and that not being necessary to be dealt with now, does she have any sense of when it is anticipated that this matter would be dealt with?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It is a change that would be made to the fees regulation under the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. The committee hasn't set a next meeting yet, but they had decided that they wanted Bill No. 11 to proceed and then they would turn their minds to that work, and that will proceed. It is around the concept of having First Nation governments recognized in that part of the regulation. Perhaps they might impose fees on activities under that regulation, and they just haven't proceeded with that concept yet. It will be a regulation change that will be discussed by the next part of the working group.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for that. In the meantime, while that is being sort of worked out, can this act be enacted prior to the tariffs and fees — like, just go ahead with it and then sort out the tariffs and fees later?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Bill No. 11 will come into force and effect upon assent — so it will be immediately upon assent — and have its effect on the changes — make changes to the *Land*

*Titles Act, 2015*. The fee regulation can be quite separate and will not be responsible for holding any of that process up.

I should also, while I am on my feet, indicate that the Settlement Lands Regulation will not be required in order for this bill to come into force and effect upon assent, but the timetable to have that completed is January 2021 — so, quite quickly so that this situation can be remedied and First Nations can proceed with their economic choices and land work on behalf of their citizens.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for that and I thank her for that clarification, because the March 9 press release said that the amendments to the Settlement Lands Regulation will be required to support the legislative changes. It is good to see that there is some nimbleness here and that it will occur in the next couple of months.

I just have one more general question. It is more of a curiosity one because I don't know how this works. The minister talked about the amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* expanding the definition of "subsidiary certificate of title" and recognizing the authority of First Nation governments with respect to development agreements, plans of subdivision, and approvals of air space plans. Can the minister explain what an air space plan is, in plain language?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am smiling because I had this exact question. Even though I was hearkening back to some very long-ago concepts of land and property rights from the legal education that I had many moons ago, I remembered some of it, but not all of it, so thank you for the question.

"Air space plan" means a plan of survey that creates an air space parcel. It has to do with properties that are higher than — a concept might be a high-rise apartment building where there are concepts of air space being used. Air space plans make it possible to subdivide land vertically and to create a title to a volume of air above or below a property. Air space plans are particularly important in the development of high-rise buildings, as I noted, because they create separate lots within a development. A First Nation or any developer might well have separate lots or separate ownership pieces being able to exist one on top of another.

An air space parcel is defined as "a volume of space, rather than a flat plane". Air space parcels are basically separate properties that are stacked on top of each other or perhaps beside each other, depending on the circumstances. I think that this is the best way to explain it.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for that. If I look at it in the context of downtown Whitehorse or any other city, what I would think about would be condominiums, which are, vertically, mostly apartments.

I just want to confirm that, when we are talking about approval of air space plans, that doesn't have anything to do with zoning or anything like that. I guess that is my question. It is not a zoning issue; it's an ownership issue — that statement is a question.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It's about the registration of properties, so not zoning. Section 81 might be a good reference in the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. It makes reference to registering parcels of air space land. It comes under that title, actually, and



it's about being able to register a particular piece of property that might be one on top of another in an air space plan survey and the ability to do that in the land titles system, which is about ownership and registration of that ownership and any provisions as a result of doing that.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*?

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

*On Clause 1*

*Clause 1 agreed to*

*On Clause 2*

*Clause 2 agreed to*

*On Clause 3*

**Ms. Hanson:** I seek the approval of the Legislative Assembly to ask a question backward. I thought it was clause 3, but it's in clause 2(c).

Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to revisit clause 2.

### Unanimous consent re revisiting clause 2

**Deputy Chair:** Ms. Hanson has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to revisit clause 2.

Do we have unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Deputy Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

*On Clause 2 — revisited*

**Ms. Hanson:** I appreciate that. I do want to ask a question to clarify. So, subsection (c) talks about how the "definition of 'subsidiary certificate of title' is replaced with the following" — and this is to clarify that definition means a certificate of title issued for an interest in land that is less than fee simple. Then it talks about category A and category B.

So, category A — section 5.4.1.1(a) is pretty clear when we talk about — and that has to do with the rights and obligations and the equivalent to fee simple except for mines and minerals. I was curious about the next one — which is category B — which has the same sort of introductory language.

This section reserves — basically, my bottom-line question — does this reserve the right to deal with — because this is the section, I think, that talks about "specified substance" — and that's gravel and gravel pits. Maybe I'm wrong about that, but that's where — I went back and checked the final agreement. So, a "specified substance" can be carving stone, flint, limestone, marble, gypsum, shale, clay, slate, gravel, sand, construction stone, ochre, marl, and peat. I guess what I'm asking is: What is the impact of the clarification of — basically, is it allowing for an interest to be created in a gravel pit that would be registered as a titled gravel pit? That's kind of a crass way of stating it, but that's what I'm asking.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm going to talk just a little bit about what this section does, which is really changing the definition or modifying the definition of "subsidiary certificate of title". Under the current *Land Titles Act, 2015*, a registrar is authorized to create or transfer a subsidiary interest in settlement land without a Yukon First Nation's consent, despite

the Yukon First Nation law imposing restrictions. So, this will enable the Settlement Lands Regulation to repair that problem.

This definition will be from the legislation and ultimately the Settlement Lands Regulation will repair the concept of not requiring the First Nation's consent, first of all, to register or create a transfer of the subsidiary interest in a title.

The current definition of "subsidiary certificate of title" is not clear in the current legislation. Let me say it this way: It is not clear in the current legislation that it covers leasehold interests in category A or category B settlement land. It raises an issue as to the ability of the Land Titles Office to issue subsidiary certificates of title to category A or B settlement land that has been brought under the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. So, the *Land Titles Act, 2015* amendment — this amendment will clarify that. So, it's really about being distinct from fee simple and allowing leaseholds of category A and category B settlement land.

So, I don't think it's necessarily related to the specified substance that has been noted by the member opposite. What I think she's referring to is the self-government agreement — so I don't think it's necessarily related to that. It's about creating the ability for a full set of tools for the First Nation to deal with lands that they want to register in the Land Titles Office, including those with leasehold situations.

**Ms. Hanson:** The reason I raised it was because section 5.4.1.2 talks about category B settlement land — I'm reading my scribbles here — the rights, et cetera — "... reserving therefrom the Mines and Minerals and the Right to Work the Mines and Minerals but including the Specified Substances Right..." — and the "Specified Substances Right" means the right of a First Nation to take and use, without payment of any royalty, a specified substance — and specified substances are the ones I was saying earlier, including gravel, marl, and peat. So, it is not in their self-government agreement — it's in their final agreement provision — and that is why I'm just curious as to — you know, it's settlement land and that stuff.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I apologize. I did earlier say "self-government agreement". I think that the reference by the member opposite was *Umbrella Final Agreement*, and she is quite correct. The new definition of "subsidiary certificate of title" has been amended in Bill No. 11 to specifically make reference to section 5.4.1.1, which describes category A settlement land in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, and to incorporate section 5.4.1.2, which describes the rights to category B settlement land within the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

So, for complete clarity, the conversations, agreements, and recommendations that came forward from the working group — including First Nation governments that were interested in this particular working group — and for their future planning was to expressly incorporate those two things into the definition so that there would be no question that this is the case.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further debate on clause 2?

*Clause 2 agreed to*

*On Clause 3*

*Clause 3 agreed to*

*On the Title*  
*Title agreed to*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that you report Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, without amendment.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by Ms. McPhee that the Chair report Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, without amendment.

*Motion agreed to*

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*. Is there any further general debate? Mr. Cathers, you have 12 minutes and 52 seconds remaining.

**Mr. Cathers:** I am pleased to rise today again in debating this supplementary budget. I want to just follow through — of course, I asked a number of questions at the end of the day yesterday that I am hopeful the Premier will have answers to. I would also like to add to them by touching on an issue that is top of mind for a lot of Yukoners right now, which relates to the forces of nature, Mr. Deputy Chair.

We saw the situation here in the Yukon this week where we had a significant snowstorm, and the previous week — both occurring on a Monday, I would note — we had a strong windstorm that knocked out power and damaged people's property in my riding as well as in other areas within Yukon. Recognizing that, of course, government can't control nature or prevent a heavy snowfall or a strong windstorm from occurring, there are, in the wake of those events, people left trying to carry on with their lives, deal with both the inconvenience that it causes at the time, as well as take the steps necessary to pull things back together afterwards, so to speak. After those situations, it is fair to say that you can look back and see things that worked very well and things that didn't.

What I want to touch on is what the government is doing — or perhaps what it should be doing — in terms of learning from situations like that, working together within government with the key departments, as well as with other partners including municipalities, First Nations, and the private sector to respond and ensure that they are prepared to address those situations.

Government often talks about things like emergency plans. This, I would characterize as not just “emergency plans”, but also the ability of the system to respond well to events that — for lack of a better term — I would characterize as “sub-emergency events”. They are not a situation that could really be classified as an “emergency situation”, but they are serious and they can have serious effects. For example, in the situation of the snowstorm — as the Premier will be aware — we heard many concerns from Yukoners about the lack of communication from the Department of Education regarding school busing, including the fact that parents were notified — in some cases by e-mail — after the close of the school day where the buses would be running and that they would not be running down some side roads.

As well, my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, noted the fact that, at the beginning of the day, announcements regarding buses were going out — I believe that he indicated around 9:30 in the morning by e-mail.

What I am asking the Premier about in this context is not intended to focus just on what went wrong in terms of communication during the snowstorm, but to ask what government plans to do about it within the Yukon government structure, as well as with its partners, to ensure that there are steps taken to address where there were some serious problems.

For example, one concern that I have heard regarding schools relates to the snow at the time and the delays with which it was cleared out of the parking lot, as well as the increased congestion with vehicles during the storm. A number of people were concerned about what would have happened if there had been a fire at a school during a situation like that — which is, perhaps, not highly likely, but those types of things can happen, especially if there is an accident of some nature during a storm. The concern that was expressed to me was related to two things: both the ability of emergency vehicles to get to a school during the snow, before it was cleared away, and the ability of them to get other vehicles through at the time, as well as the ability of students to actually get out of the school through the exit doors. I have seen photos — even today — of exit doors at the school that are still congested with snow. Particularly for young children, that could pose a serious situation if there were to be a fire afterward.

We also heard that issue that was raised by citizens on social media — as well as in the Legislative Assembly by my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, and by the Leader of the Third Party — relating to the situation at Greenwood Manor, in particular. I heard directly from someone who had a family member affected by that. I understand — hearing from folks who work for Emergency Medical Services — that it's not the first time that there have been problems at Greenwood Manor, in particular, with EMS trying to respond to an emergency after a snowfall and having the impact of the snowfall causing problems with that.

We do recognize that some parts of that may relate to other agencies outside of government, to private contractors, et cetera, but I would ask the Premier if he could speak to what the government is doing in response to that, including whether he is confident that steps are being taken to prevent there being

the types of problems with access of emergency vehicles to government-operated senior homes after a snowfall, as well as steps taken to prevent the somewhat risky situation at schools — which I referred to — from occurring in the future.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I'll respond to the member opposite, but before I do, I'll start by disagreeing with him as far as a slow response or not doing enough. It was interesting to hear this morning on the radio Mr. Graham from the city when he was asked if he has ever seen a snowstorm like this. Of course, he is in charge of keeping the roads safe for the municipality, and I thought it was a great interview. His response was "not in his career".

This is one of those anomaly-type of situations — which is funny, because when we said that in the Legislative Assembly the other day, the opposition laughed at us — that we couldn't prepare for something like this — whereas the folks who are manning the plows and the graders and providing this amazing essential service would concur that this was an anomaly — early in the year, the amount of snow and the amount of time.

I will disagree with the opposition. I think that, in these circumstances, the government, and also other governments, have done a great job, to tell you the truth, of responding to that very quick snow situation. Now, did everything get done immediately? No. We even just saw with the roads downtown — priority 1 roads — that it took a long time. We were driving in one lane as opposed to two.

Great advice again from Mr. Graham — folks, have a little a patience, slow down, and remember that there are people crossing sidewalks, so be very vigilant. I saw most Yukoners adhering to that. In our normal rush-hour traffic in the middle of the summer, we get a little aggressive in our driving, wondering why it's so important to get from A to B so quickly. If we just take our time, we may be 30 seconds later. I saw Yukoners, over the last few days, really being good to one another. You know, it's going to take a little bit longer to get to work. There's going to be one lane where there is normally two, and there are going to be delays, and there are going to be cancellations and these types of things.

I believe that the response to an unprecedented snow occurrence in Yukon, with the amount of snow that got dumped — there are always lessons learned. That's what I love about the public service in general. They always do learn from experience, whether it's the municipal crew, like I mentioned, or the Highways and Public Works folks or the emergency measures folks as well.

Project Nanook — preparing us for emergencies and doing individual types of simulations, whether it be for flood or how we mitigate a wildfire near communities and those types of things — the amount of work that the Minister of Community Services and his team have done in preparing us for fires and making sure that we get enough of the fuel away from the major centres, starting with a great project here in Whitehorse — this is the type of work where previously we didn't see that happening, and now what we're seeing is a response to these types of situations.

I'll add to that, if we take a look at our response to COVID in general — that emergency situation. So, whether it's floods,

fires, a snow apocalypse — as we saw this week — or even COVID, our response is applaudable for the public servants and the departments, the directors in the departments, and the managers. I don't know what the opposition sees, but what I see is a government that responds.

There is always something to work on, for sure. It is not great when you hear about delays in some snow removal for some folks who may have some mobility challenges. Our hearts definitely go out to them, but it's not from a lack of attempt. You see people working extremely hard to remove snow, but I guess that — I won't make that comment. What I will say is that, in emergency situations like that, on this side of the House, we see a public servant who springs into action and does the best that they can to get people moving again.

When it came to our response to COVID, that's another example. I would like to speak about that for a bit. What I have noticed is that, whether it's on the federal basis — in our conversations with the federal government — or on the territorial and provincial basis with the Premiers and the other ministers — and the weekly, sometimes daily, conversations therein — or the conversations government to government with the Yukon government, First Nation governments, and municipalities locally in this region, we have learned a lot in the past eight months.

We are going to be better as a society and as a community from what we've learned in working so tightly together with each other. It was a busy summer for the chiefs and for the councillors. It was a busy summer for the Association of Yukon Communities. It was a busy summer for municipal governments, mayors, and councillors. It is always a pleasure and an honour to be able to go into communities and speak with these leaders in the best of times, but I really saw the Yukon spirit of people saying, "You know, it's a different time of year, things are not going to be perfect, but we are going to work together and try our best to be better." What we are seeing are a lot of recommendations from governments, municipal and First Nation governments, stakeholders, and the Business Advisory Council. People are adding to the narrative in a positive way. That is always good to see.

When it came to the COVID response, our key partners in health promotion with First Nation governments and municipalities really helped us in preventing the transmission of COVID-19 in our communities. Our government was completely committed to that work. We set up community outreach teams to assist and to work directly with the First Nation governments to provide information, answer questions, and ensure a coordinated response to the pandemic.

It is very similar with the work of the Community Services department with the municipalities, but engagement and collaboration were extremely important, and we have learned so much over the last eight months as to how to be better as a society and as a community because of these ongoing communications.

If you relied in the past on, let's say, an annual meeting of the Finance ministers, for example — you get a lot done annually with those meetings, but now, when you have those meetings every week with your counterparts and your

colleagues right across the nation, we will be better as a nation because of those conversations. If you take a look at the conversations that we have had since March with the community outreach teams — the coordination there with Yukon and transboundary First Nations and other government staff — we will be better as a government and as a community because we all came together and shared in solutions and suggestions together.

We also set up a working group with the chief medical officer of health for coordination and to track information requests and ensure that the accurate and current information was flowing and getting to the communities as we partnered together.

We did a lot. Our government did a lot to meet the challenges of COVID. I will go over again to emergency measures or snow removal as well, but when it came to COVID, the member opposite asked: “What are you doing to be better?” Well, during COVID, we introduced a cancellation event support program to reimburse businesses that were losing money for cancelled events, in real time. Again, cancellation of the Arctic Winter Games — and within weeks, we had this fund up and running even though the opposition would say that there was a countdown of a couple hundred days and we still hadn’t done anything for these businesses — simply not the case.

We brought in paid sick leave so that employees could take time off when they were required to take time without losing their income — so employers could support their employees. It is something that we did immediately, regardless of what the opposition would have you believe.

We developed a business relief package that is better than most other jurisdictions in Canada — I would say all jurisdictions in Canada, including specific supports to the tourism sector through the tourism accommodation support — again, contrary to what the opposition would have you believe.

We changed regulations so that seniors could continue to drive, even if their driver’s licence needed renewal. Again, this is an example of what we are doing in real time to address emergency situations.

We adjusted regulations to make it possible for societies to continue to do their good work — to continue to meet virtually and those types of things.

We subsidized childcare costs so that early learning childcare providers could stay open and support essential workers. I could riff off of that to universal daycare, using some of our pilot projects and looking in other jurisdictions in Canada about best practices. How we, through the pandemic, recognizing that the pandemic adversely affected women more than men, especially single parents, as far as trying to get into the workforce or getting supports for their children while being in the workforce, or while continuing their education — this is an extremely important thing for us and is another example of, in an emergency situation, what we are doing to pivot, to change, and to be better as a government.

We offered wage top-ups so that employers could pay their employees more during this time. We introduced the eviction protection and rent subsidy so that tenants and landlords were protected. These are examples of COVID-19 responses. The

member opposite knows very well, as far as emergency supports, that the department does an amazing job with simulated emergencies. They are always developing and training, increasing the training of our skilled professionals who are there to help individuals.

When it comes to the Department of Highways and Public Works and their ability to deal with extreme weather conditions, they use the tools that they have available. It’s not as if people weren’t working at the time; it is an example of an amazing amount of snow dumped down in a concentrated area in a very short period of time. We look outside now, and the sun is shining, and it’s a beautiful, sunny day — my favourite temperature, minus 18. I think we have gotten to a place now where most people have been shovelled out, and people are safe again. If the member opposite has some constituents who he knows still need assistance right now, we’re more than willing to work with him to figure out what we can do to provide the supports that folks need in these extreme times.

I will go back. The member opposite did ask a few other questions yesterday before we were about to leave the Legislative Assembly in Committee of the Whole. I’m going to use some time here to answer some of those questions. They were kind of rapid-fire at the end of the day, but we’ll continue the debate.

There was a question about a commitment to check if there is money in *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for expanded cell services. The member opposite asked what the government’s plan was for expanded cellphone coverage. In the context of the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* that we have here, which is what we’re debating today — I’ll answer in that capacity, knowing very well that the ministers responsible will have an opportunity, if we get past general debate, to answer more in-depth about their departments, not only just the budgetary numbers. This is the important piece, and I hope the opposition is amenable to it — it is about providing more detail past the dollar values. We, in Finance here, can talk about numbers, but those members relish the opportunity to debate our direction in things like fibre technology and our record in that capacity.

As far as the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* — or maybe even a little bit more information on that — I can say in general that, from the five-year capital plan’s perspective, that plan shows \$43 million for IT infrastructure in 2020-21 — that year alone. Now, with decreases from the Dempster project in *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* and also increases to school IT, to Meditech, IHealth increases, there is a total of \$29.98 million remaining in this funding envelope this fiscal year.

We explained this a few times on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, both in Question Period but also in general debate. We do have a breakdown further to that. Again, you have the reduction of Dempster fibre, which was the \$19.5 million that we have mentioned a few times. The addition in that fund for this year — as the government, in a pandemic and an emergency situation, proving its ability to be adaptive and flexible — they took the money for school-based IT — SBIT — and added \$800,000 there. Of course, you can speak with the ministers responsible for the breakdown of what this

money is for. There is another \$750,000 for Meditech in the hospital, and also \$4.932 million in 1Health. The Minister of Health and Social Services would relish the opportunity to talk about this amazing expanse in our health care for Yukoners.

What we are looking at right there is \$30 million in the capital envelope for IT and for infrastructure. As you know, Mr. Deputy Chair, the government is always looking for ways to connect communities together and those that are outside of the territory as well. We are not involved in the provision necessarily of cell coverage throughout the Yukon; however, we do work closely with the CRTC and with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. Bell Mobility, for example, as a part of the ruling by the CRTC, does have plans to increase its coverage along the Alaska Highway between Whitehorse and Haines Junction this year, which is great news.

It's just a good opportunity for us to talk about, in our window and in our purview, what we are responsible for and the good work that this government is doing. Again, the ministers responsible will be happy to break down and talk more about what they are doing as far as technologies, communication, and infrastructure.

The member opposite was also asking questions about the impact of the federal tax changes on property owners in Yukon. I want to thank the member opposite for raising this important issue. As you know, Mr. Deputy Chair, the federal *Income Tax Act* is a very complicated piece of legislation. The issue of changes to taxation of passive income is not a new issue, as the members opposite know. Rent income is one form of passive income that was part of these changes. This is entirely a federal matter, for the record. It is not a territorial provision; these are federal acts.

That said, when the federal government proposed these changes in 2017, I did reach out to then-Minister Morneau, the federal Minister of Finance, advocating for the interest of Yukoners. I will always do that. When there are some changes, I will make sure that I voice the concerns of Yukoners. As part of these changes, the first \$50,000 of passive income in a year for a small business — an amount that is exceeded by only three percent of corporations — is still taxed at a rate that is similar to before those changes, so that is good. For annual passive income between \$50,000 and \$150,000, a corporation pays taxes at a rate between the small business tax rate and the general corporation rate. Once the corporation exceeds the \$150,000 in investment income that year, that income is taxed at a general corporate tax rate.

I think that I am going to run out of time here before I get to the rest of this, but suffice it to say that the Yukon small business tax rate is zero. We put it to zero this year. That is for Yukon small businesses. The general corporation rate is 12 percent, and the corresponding federal rates are nine percent and 15 percent.

So, again, this is the Yukon Liberal Party government reducing taxes and working with the federal government as well to advocate on behalf of Yukoners when it comes to taxes.

I can continue down the road of that specific question that the member opposite asked when it came to the impact of the

federal tax changes to some property owners when I get a chance to get to my feet in the next answer to the member opposite's questions.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would just like to note that it is unfortunate that the Premier chose to characterize my questions about the response to the windstorm and the snow as somehow being critical of staff, which was not the case. What the Premier unfortunately seems to miss with that is that it is really a question about the surge capacity of the system. Government tends to — in an area such as snowplowing, for example, the Department of Highways and Public Works typically would get their snowplowing crew in place based on what normally occurs. That is typically what they would be expected to receive through the budgeting process.

The problem becomes, in a situation such as what we saw — if the government doesn't have in place a structure that provides the potential for surge capacity, either within the system or through the use of private contractors, we can end up with situations such as at Greenwood Manor or at the schools, which I referenced, where there is a situation that is potentially unsafe for the residents and the students respectively. It is not a criticism of staff who are working as fast as they can to deal with an event that is beyond their ability to be everywhere at once. The question really is about the system surge capacity and what can be learned, especially as it relates to the two specific situations that I brought up, which fortunately don't seem to have resulted in a problem that caused injury or loss of life, but potentially — such as in the situation at Greenwood Manor where we understand that an ambulance arrived, got stuck in the snow, and a second ambulance had to come, and then a resident had to be transported between the two on a stretcher — again, according to what we have been told by Yukoners affected by it.

In that type of situation — anytime an ambulance is stuck somewhere, that creates a potentially very serious problem, and anytime a second ambulance has to be dispatched, it does create a situation where, if there's another call, that ambulance can't respond.

What I'm saying is not intended to be, in any way, shape, or form, critical of any of the staff of government or municipalities or private companies who responded to the snowstorm the best they could and worked as quickly as they could; it's a question about the system and whether something additional needs to be in place to address those types of events.

While I do agree with the Premier and the statements he referenced from an official of the city about the abnormality of a snowstorm of that particular amount, it's not the first time we have had snowstorms that have caused problems — including, as I mentioned, that we were told by staff of EMS that the problem at Greenwood Manor has occurred a number of times previously.

I'm sure I'm not going to get much more additional information from the Premier today, but I do hope that he and his Cabinet will take this point to heart, along with staff of departments, and give consideration to the question about what I would characterize as a large situation but a sub-emergency situation. What needs to be done in the future to prevent there

being situations of schools that would not be able to have a fire truck get to the building if there were a fire, students who wouldn't be able to get out some of the exit doors because of the snow being in place, still blocking those entrances, and the government's own seniors facilities — where we understand there have been, on more than one occasion, problems with ambulances not being able to access the building?

Moving on to the next topic, I do want to just thank all of the staff of government and corporations that responded to that, as well as private sector contractors — both to the snowstorm and the windstorm. I would like to particularly note, with regard to the windstorm, that crews of ATCO and Yukon Energy Corporation really did an outstanding job of responding quickly to a very large number of situations involving trees on power lines or snapped power poles and also thank the staff of Highways and Public Works — as well as helpful neighbours — who did work to clear multiple roads throughout the territory.

Again, as I close my comments on that issue, I would just note that the real question is about the surge capacity of the system and how it deals with those events, if they occur, in a manner that is effective and responsible.

Moving on to another area — it's unfortunate that, in the area of cell service, the Premier's response basically seemed to be washing his hands of the issue. It was only through the efforts of the Yukon Party, when in government — as well as department staff in working with the private sector — that cell service got expanded beyond the Whitehorse area. Without government being part of the solution, it's simply not, in the short term, going to be economically attractive for companies to make that investment.

It really comes down to the question of whether the Liberals believe — as we believed and do believe — that there is a time for making those investments in services such as improved cell service, making investments in expanding 911 territory-wide, as we did back in our last term in government — completed in 2016 — and making those investments such as the 811 Yukon HealthLine when there was a time when some in government questioned its effectiveness. But it has proven to be a vital tool here and across the country in responding to the pandemic. So, it is a question of whether the Liberal government believes that investing and improving communications has long-term benefits that may or may not immediately be seen but are ultimately good for the Yukon and its citizens. Unfortunately, it seems that this is not even on the priority list for them.

The Premier made some mention — if he could expand a bit more on what they're doing on universal daycare, I would be interested in hearing what he has to say about that. It is an area where we have yet to receive clarity on what the government is planning on doing. It ties back to another area — that being the comprehensive health review. We have seen the photo op, but there is a lack of clarity about what government is planning on doing. We have heard, of course — particularly in the area of the comprehensive health review — about serious concerns expressed by major stakeholders within the health system — about the government not working with them in

making its decision to implement recommendations and announcing that without even telling them that they were going to do that first.

The Premier knows that I'm particularly referring to the Yukon Medical Association. It is concerning when we see — just as we have throughout the pandemic — the approach of this government really taking an attitude that is dismissive of the need to work with health care providers, to consult with people who are affected by — in the case of the pandemic — ministerial orders, and to recognize that the Liberals don't have all the answers. There are Yukoners who are being affected by these decisions, including — in the case of the comprehensive health review — that government has accepted proposed major changes to our health care system and the fact that they skipped some steps in the process by not working with people whom they should have — it is concerning, to say the least.

I would also like to touch on — as the Premier knows, we have discussed, on a number of occasions, the government's pattern of inadequate funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. I am pleased that the Premier did finally provide us with numbers earlier showing that the increase to the core budget of the Hospital Corporation has been a mere 10 percent over a period of five years.

I would also note that the rate of growth in health care costs across the country has, according to reports done analyzing the systems across Canada, claimed around an average of an eight-percent increase since 1972, if memory serves correctly. So, not suggesting government should be aiming for that eight-percent level, but two percent in growth within the hospital system doesn't even keep up with the increases in payroll cost and the increases in other costs there.

We appreciate that the government has finally now recognized the need to increase funding. The Premier acknowledged — made mention of the significant increase in the current fiscal year that was an attempt to make up for their years of neglect of the system.

I want to turn to another area where the government has been neglecting the needs of our hospital — and it's an issue that was touched on earlier in Question Period, but we still are waiting for answers on — and that's the secure medical unit.

We know, when the emergency room expansion was completed, that it was deliberately done with the shelled-in space allowing for the future detailed design of that space, which was contemplated to be a new secure medical unit. The existing secure medical unit — as the Premier may or may not know — was a renovation to an existing ward of the hospital that resulted from requests that were raised with me, as then-Minister of Health and Social Services, from the Hospital Corporation as well as from physicians. We took action to renovate that section of the hospital, but it was never designed for that end use. It was making the best of the facilities that we had through renovations.

That led to the emergency room development project, and excellent work was done by the Hospital Corporation contractors in doing that on time and on budget, as well as replacing the ambulance station no. 1 with the current facility that exists and provides as well an improved dispatch station.

We know that this Liberal government, upon being aware of the secure medical unit plan, made a commitment through a ministerial statement over a year and a half ago that they were going to proceed with the project. There was a notional allocation in the budget. Then we could practically hear the sound of crickets from the government in terms of progress on this file.

There were indications recently by the minister that made it sound like this project had been pushed off at least a year. The question for the Premier at this point is: Is the government still committed to the secure medical unit project? If so, why has it been delayed? When does the government foresee actually getting on with the job and getting that project done?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** When it comes to the secure medical unit, the Minister of Health and Social Services ad nauseum has committed — tripled down, doubled down — to this and has answered that question from the member opposite quite a few times now. If the member opposite doesn't like the answer, it doesn't mean that the minister didn't answer the question; she did.

I will go back. There was a lot in that. We went from surge capacity all the way through to health and everywhere in between.

I am going to continue on my answer with the tax question that the member opposite did start with yesterday. I got as far as talking about the breakdown of passive income between different earnings — \$50,000 and under, \$50,000 to \$150,000 as a corporation — and then once a corporation exceeds the \$150,000 in passive investment in income in that year, I reiterated and reminded the member opposite that we, in this current budget, reduced the small business tax rate to zero for Yukon small businesses — reducing Yukoners' taxes here in the Yukon. The general tax rate — we reduced that, as well, down to 12 percent. If you take a look at corresponding federal rates, you are looking at nine percent for small and 15 percent for corporate.

This is a great incentive for small businesses and corporations to grow roots here in the Yukon. Passive income earned outside of corporations, as the member opposite knows, is taxed at an individual's personal tax rate — to answer his question. In Yukon, an individual with an income that exceeds half a million dollars a year pays a combined federal-territorial margin tax rate of 48 percent on the portion of income in excess of half a million dollars. This is close to the rate that the member opposite quoted in Committee on November 4. However, Yukon continues to support Canada's efforts to ensure that Canadians pay their fair share of taxes, whether it is personal or corporate, in a transparent and equitable manner.

As I have said, we have raised Yukoners' concerns about the impacts to Yukoners regarding the changes to the federal tax regime with the federal minister, and we will continue to have that regular discussion. We have also, on our behalf here in Yukon, reduced those small business taxes to zero and corporate taxes to 12 percent in Yukon.

From there, I will go back to today. The member opposite keeps on talking about surge capacity; he said this is about surge capacity. I am going to disagree with him.

I won't go to other jurisdictions, but snow events that have only been experienced once in a snow-removal expert's career hopefully will not happen again for years — maybe even decades — as that kind of unique situation. If it does, this government has proven to be able to be adaptive and responsive to those situations. We proved it with the increases in forest fires by making sure that we have fuel smart programs and fuel safe programs through the Department of Health and Social Services. We have been extremely adaptive in project Nanook and other projects where we simulate experiences. The reason why we pick floods, forest fires, or these types of things — is because these are the emergency situations that we know are in our front headlights.

A snow event like we had the other day — you heard it this morning — a very dedicated public servant saying, "I've never seen something like this before in my career."

So, surge capacity? I don't know if this is an example of what we should be talking about on surge capacity. I think that what we have proven is, when it comes to COVID — nobody expected that COVID would be coming this year — that our ability to respond to emergency situations that are ongoing, like a pandemic, or ones that are increasing, like forest fires, or ones that we know are obvious, as far as our supply chain management, like floods — this government has proven, despite what the member opposite says, to be responsive, flexible, and intelligent, and the training is increasing for our emergency responders all the time. I want to thank them. I want to thank the public servants who make me extremely proud to be the Premier of this government when it comes to emergency responses.

If we're talking about a snow event like this one-time event — and the member opposite is talking about surge capacity inside of a one-time event — is he advocating for us to hire more FTEs than normal, than necessary, to respond to this?

We have proven to be extremely adaptive, and we'll continue to be adaptive as we deal with emergency situations that are continuing or obvious. Again, I hope that we do not see dumps of snow like this in the future on a regular basis, but if we do, the government has proven to be able to be resilient enough and responsive enough to adapt their processes and procedures to make sure that we keep Yukoners safe.

The member opposite talked about the secure medical unit. We did say that the minister has responded to that a few times, saying that the planning is done. He is asking when the planning is going to be done — the planning is done. They are now working on a model of care with partners. The member asked that question a few times of the minister, and she responded with that. The funds are included in the capital plan for 2021-22, and that question has been responded to for the member opposite as he asks it again.

He did also ask about — speaking about our investment in telecommunications — he said that I didn't answer the question. I did answer the question, actually. I talked exactly about all the different telecommunications technologies that we are investing millions of dollars in. As we wait for our ability to spend money on the Dempster redundancy fibre optic project, which is more millions of dollars of investment that

will move forward next year — we wish it moved forward this year, but in the pandemic year, it was a little more problematic than we thought it would be — but the money is there. We will make sure that this continues on next year.

We heard the opposition talk about different routes of redundancy in the past — we just didn't see them getting it done. But it is interesting that, as he was speaking about these things, he said that we were very dismissive about how we consulted with Yukoners when it comes to projects. I just completely disagree with the member opposite on this, especially when it takes into consideration that he was talking about health and a lack of consultation. The independent review consulted for over a year. That one independent process alone worked with governments — First Nation governments, municipal governments, and stakeholders — for over a year to develop one of the most amazing reviews in Yukon history, in my opinion. It is going to revolutionize the health care system here in Yukon. We are going to be a model and an example for the rest of Canada. The member opposite says that we are dismissive on health care and consulting with Yukoners. My goodness gracious — that was a lot of consulting.

*Our Clean Future* is another excellent example of consultation with Yukoners where we took the time to get it right. The whole time, as we were developing *Our Clean Future*, we were being asked when it was going to be announced. Then when we announced it, it was, “Well, you didn't do enough consulting; we think that you are dismissive on consulting.” This is an interesting tack from the member opposite. Again, it's interesting — let's just say that it's interesting.

When it comes to engagement and our approach to engagement in general, I believe that the Yukon government is very committed to better and more meaningful public engagement because we believe that the perspectives of individual citizens can absolutely inform the best possible direction for Yukoners. I will take our consultation efforts against the opposition's — when they were in government — any day. When I talk to the folks in the communities and in the regions that are responsible — whether it is through Executive Council Office or other parts of our government — I keep on saying that this is engagement on steroids. The issue we are having as a government is actually engagement fatigue at some points.

We've had record amounts of engagement in our surveys — public engagement when working on initiatives that are extremely important to Yukoners like the tourism development strategy, and the climate change, energy, and green economy strategy — talking to Yukon parks, and LGBTQ2S+ inclusion. That's just to name a few. Aging in place — another great example where the member opposite says we're dismissive in consultations, yet there is extraordinary amounts of consultation with stakeholders.

When making decisions that impact Yukoners and the future of the territory, we want to make sure that we take the public's view into consideration and we want to hear from a wide range of voices.

I would say that the appetite to participate in broad public engagement increases when restrictions lessen. But in all likelihood, we have been seeing personal engagement return to levels that are more normal now that we're starting to live with COVID and now that we're starting to fall into the winter and into regular processes here.

We are working to expand the range of our digital engagement tools that are available to Yukoners who prefer to engage online — and we've been told that most people prefer to do it that way — that isn't to say that it's the only way, but that is definitely a preference of Yukoners. This provides online alternatives to surveys and it absolutely fosters more constructive dialogue between communities and government.

The member opposite has been on record saying that it's a bad way of engaging because people can vote on surveys a multitude of times and somehow that Yukoners are gaming the system. I disagree with the member opposite; I believe that the public engagement that we have set up through our new processes — through yukon.ca and through engageyukon.ca — I think it's an amazing and sophisticated system. The change to the website — which again, the members opposite would say is no good — if we didn't change our website before COVID, we would have been in serious trouble in providing up-to-date communication to our partner governments and to stakeholders.

Where did we go from here? I believe that there was a question about the hospital, as far as total funding. The member opposite talked about total funding again for the hospital. We've been over this a few times, Mr. Deputy Chair. Here we are in the supplementary budget talking about the relief for Yukoners through COVID — but the member opposite wants to talk about the main budget, and that's fine.

The total budget for the Yukon Hospital Corporation for 2020-21 is \$81.3 million for its core operations and other requirements — and this is nearly a nine percent — 8.6 percent — increase over the last year's mains, 2019-20 mains. That increase is to core funding. It's an increase to orthopaedics, to 1Health, to Meditech, and also to one-time funding initiatives and pension solvency. Between the 2015-16 fiscal year to 2020-21, the Yukon Hospital Corporation's O&M has increased almost 29 percent. This increase was — and we have gone over this; the member opposite keeps on bringing it up, so I will keep on answering — a 10-percent increase in core funding, averaging two percent over each year of the last five years; a 14-percent increase for new programs added to base — for things like MRI, or for emergency department expansion, First Nation health, lab testing; a three-percent increase for one-time funding for more obstetricians, for ultrasound in communities, pension solvency — as I mentioned — but that's another place — overall; and also two-percent funding to the base funding for ongoing costs to chemotherapy — extremely important.

This is absolutely good news for Yukoners. We are advancing services here in the territory — where, in the past, you would have had to fly out for these procedures and for these visits, we can do them here at home. We're working very



closely with the Hospital Corporation to ensure that the proposed budget meets their core funding needs.

It was increased by 30 percent from the previous government to now, and yet the member opposite is crying that we're not giving them enough money — 30 percent more than they did.

For the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, we are providing the Hospital Corporation — again, if we are going to get back to what we're here today to debate — in *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for 2020-21, we are providing the Hospital Corporation with \$6,012,424 in additional COVID-19 funding to support COVID-19 preparedness, making changes to the emergency department, lost revenues, increased staffing, and also the purchase of additional supplies — extremely important investments.

We believe that the increase to spending is a balance between making sure that Yukoners not only maintain the programs and services that they have come to know, appreciate, and deserve, but also increasing those. The minister and her team are extremely thrilled about how we can expand type 1 diabetes provisions, how we can expand orthopaedics, how we can expand chemotherapy, and how we can expand all of these individual, important services to Yukoners but also, at the same time, make sure that we live within our means and be able to, pre-pandemic, come at a surplus budget — a modest surplus of \$4 million or so. That, to me, is fiscal balance. The member opposite sometimes will say that we are not spending enough and then other times he will say that we are spending way too much money. Again, it is hard to tell which angle he is coming from at which particular time.

When it comes to the supplementary estimates, what we are not hearing are a lot of conversations about the money in this budget for the supplementary estimates here in general debate. I feel like I need to get us back onto that track a bit.

You want to talk about fiscal prudence. The pandemic has resulted in significant increases in spending, and that is concerning not only to me but to Yukoners and Canadians as well. It also has a decrease in user fees and tax revenues for the government, which concerns me if we are in a long-term position with COVID because we need to have the revenues. We need to be able to afford the programs and services that we have in place, and we do know that this impact is expected to continue for the foreseeable future, and that is concerning. That does keep the deputy minister, me, and others up at night. But at the same time, we put ourselves in a financial situation to be able to cope. I have read from Standard and Poor's, and I have read from other agencies about comparisons of our jurisdiction to others. We are in a good place; we are not out of the woods yet. This is going to go on for the foreseeable future.

This spending today that we are supposed to be talking about on the supplementary budget is to ensure that Yukoners remain safe, that they remain healthy, that the local businesses stay afloat and recover — thrive, hopefully, once things get back to normal again — and that our economy remains stronger over the long term. I do look forward to the day when there is a vaccine, when Canada has herd immunity, the nation and the world start travelling again, commerce increases again, and

supply chain managements become stronger, because the conversations that we are having at a federal base, with our counterparts there, and the conversations that we are having locally — we will be better as a community and we will be better as a nation because of the people and the leaders in this country who have come together to work together — from coast to coast to coast — to make sure that we have the programs and services in place now, as we are in triage, and then into relief and then recovery. Then, when we get to a vaccine, we will be thriving again.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, I can understand why the Premier doesn't want to talk about the Hospital Corporation and the government's record of neglect on that, but the fact that he dismissed my concerns about it as crying about the hospital — I'm not crying, but Yukoners who have been affected by this are. The problems that we have seen recently blowing up into the media at the Hospital Corporation are directly due to the Finance minister's and the Minister of Health and Social Services' record of neglect for the core funding for the hospital.

The Premier can throw in expansions to programs associated with the ER all he wants. He can talk about increasing chemotherapy. We agree with those things, but those things do not do a darn thing for the needs of the core budget of the hospital. That he is so dismissive of it is certainly something that the doctors, nurses, and other health care workers there will be happy to hear — the Premier expressing his true opinion of the work that goes on there. For the record, we support the work that they do and believe that it is important for government to treat it more seriously than they have.

I would also point out that the Premier did not provide an answer on the secure medical unit. We would like to hear timelines — because we have heard platitudes, we have heard announcements, and we have heard conflicting information from the minister, but we want timelines. The fact that also, in an earlier response, the Premier, when listing some of the amounts in the budget, cited an amount for Meditech replacement and IHealth and didn't seem to realize that they actually are the same project, it just shows the neglect that he has shown toward the needs of our hospital system.

I have to point out, as I did earlier in Question Period, that if you look at the audited Public Accounts for the 2019 fiscal year, the growth of general government as a whole — the growth of their expenses — of \$81.5 million is more than the entire budget for the Hospital Corporation. So, they have been growing in every other area but neglecting one of the most important areas.

Again, when we talk about the comprehensive health review, the Premier unfortunately is touting its virtues. Unfortunately, while we do appreciate the work that was done by the panel and the work that was done on the system, it was evident, even from the testimony of the witnesses from the panel when they appeared in this Assembly, that they were expecting the government to do additional work on this.

I will quote one of the witnesses when he said to the Legislative Assembly on October 19, on page 1467: "If you don't get one part of it right or a couple parts of it right — even if you get, for example, hospital care right, if you don't have

primary care right, it's going to fall apart and it will be an extremely expensive system, aside from it not being patient-centred."

Then what did government do? We know what happened this summer. The Minister of Health and Social Services, without having consulted with the Yukon Medical Association, made an announcement that they were accepting all the recommendations from the health review. We heard the acting president at the time of the Yukon Medical Association expressing their real concern with what government had done in that situation. It's very disturbing to me that the Premier doesn't really seem to recognize the importance of working with our physicians, as well as with other members of the Yukon's health care community, in figuring out what the right steps are to take and getting it right — as a member of the panel noted, the importance of getting it right — and that is something that government, in this case, has not done.

We are left with the question of why the government made the decision to implement the recommendations from the comprehensive health care review without taking the necessary step of working closely with the Yukon Medical Association, which provides a huge amount of the health care and primary care here in the Yukon. Why did they make the announcement and have to get called out by the Yukon Medical Association for their lack of consultation instead of working with them first?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Just to let the member opposite know, Meditech dollars are for the existing system. 1Health — those dollars are for the new and improved expanded system — just to clarify for the member opposite.

He also said that we need timelines when it comes to the secure medical unit. We gave him timelines. Funding is included in the capital plan for 2020-21. Now, the minister responsible will be able to have a continued dialogue when it comes to the secure medical unit and when it comes to what we are doing to make sure that this moves forward. I do appreciate that the members opposite want to see this happen, and I agree. We do as well. That's why we're funding it.

The member opposite keeps on going back to his speaking notes about, "You're not doing enough for the Hospital Corporation." But we keep on saying that we've increased by 30 percent since his government left office — 30 percent. We also talked about the increase this year alone to the tune of 8.6 percent, year over year — an 8.6 percent increase — but the member opposite will continue with his speaking note of saying, "You're not giving enough money over to the corporation."

What we do is, based upon evidence-based decision-making, work with all of the development corporations and all of our departments. Our budgetary process is sound. We provide the money that we need to not only maintain the programs and services that we have but also expand them. We've been moving mountains and expanding the services that Yukoners have come to know and love, but also we've expanded.

One of the biggest expansions that I'm the most proud of — from the Health and Social Services department working

with the Hospital Corporation — is a move from the Yukon Party's acute care model to our collaborative care.

We need to go no further than the Peachey report, a very scathing review from the Office of the Auditor General, that recommended, if you're going to build hospitals in the rural communities, you really should have programming for those hospitals. From that, the previous government commissioned the Peachey report, which said that you need to move to collaborative care. It's something that I, when in opposition, and the NDP in opposition were saying for a long time to the Yukon Party, to deaf ears.

What you're seeing here under the Yukon Liberal Party government is a movement to collaborative care. What you're seeing is not only in the work with the Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services but also — with the minister's unique ability to add into that, housing — revolutionizing how we do the Yukon Housing Corporation — the Yukon housing association — moving it to community care, to community housing, which allows it to be more flexible to allow it to take into consideration the unique needs of communities as opposed to a one-size-fits-all independent from Health and Social Services approach of the previous government.

The minister is the one to speak to, when she is here in Committee of the Whole, about what that 30-percent increase over our mandate has been about when it comes to core funding. Is everything perfect? No. We have come a long way, but we have a long way to go.

There is so much more to do. In this supplementary budget is, for example, an additional \$3.75 million to support daycares as part of COVID-19 response, but also the additional \$2.4 million as a part of early learning and childcare funding, with our agreement with Canada, and commitments to having universal daycare moving forward. This is the type of spending that we are doing on a collaborative care model of health, education — the professionals in the daycares. This is exciting work.

The member opposite won't get off his speaking notes of "You need to give more money." Okay, we'll continue to provide the programs and services, expand the programs and services, and expand the models of care, as the minister and the team have been doing since we formed office.

I'm not even going to get into foster care, aging in place, and all of these other amazing initiatives that we're seeing now, which we never saw before with the previous government. The previous government had a plan of a 300-bed facility for our aging population where everybody from all of the communities would come to Whitehorse. That was their plan — one plan, one size fits all.

We have taken the design of a 150-bed facility here in Whitehorse, which is an amazing facility for the need here in Whitehorse and the surrounding community.

We want to make sure that our elders in the rural communities age in place because the elders in our communities are the lifeblood of our communities. They are so important. I think about elders in my community of Dawson City. I think about people like Percy Henry. I can't imagine us

being without him and others in our community. We want to keep folks like that — elders like Ed Roberts — in the communities because they are so important. They are so important for our children — the relationship that they have with our children when we have aging-in-place programming through a collaborative health care model. That connection is so amazing. I wish it had been there in the past as much. You look at a guy like Bertie Rear before he passed away. What an amazing individual he was. His grandkids learned so much from that man. When he passed away, it was devastating to our community of Dawson City and devastating to the kids who were his grandkids.

We need to make sure that our models of care reflect the communities and keep people in the communities as long as possible. It is an extremely important part of what we are doing here in our government, and I am extremely proud of that.

Now, the member opposite did talk about the Meditech system being used at the hospital. We are updating an out-of-date technology used by the previous government and expanding it to other locations where Yukoners can access health care. That is extremely important to our communities and is extremely important to the technical model of the health care field. For example, community nurses, community nursing centres, physicians' offices, and long-term care facilities — IHealth is that system's approach, and it needs to start with the Meditech upgrade. I can't be any clearer than that for the member opposite. He can make it sound like we don't know what we are talking about over here, but that is exactly the difference between the two. We are updating an old system with a new system; it is quite straightforward.

One of the things, again, when we talk about our health care model — and this has been a question from the opposition as well — as we take a look at what we are doing with housing as it relates to health — the Housing Corporation — we were very excited to announce again the new Canadian Yukon housing benefit in partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. This, to me, is part of our health care system; it really is. Keeping people healthy — safe and healthy — in their communities is an extremely important part of a collaborative health care model. This program contributes to the COVID-19 recovery process, moves Yukoners out of housing needs, providing housing subsidies directly to individuals in that rental market housing — that is extremely important work. We are very proud of it. That Yukon and Canadian housing benefit is a fund initiative of \$9.1 million over the next eight years, which is going to help with the national housing strategy.

The Yukon representative on these national boards and organizations — through the great work of the previous Deputy Minister Pamela Hine and the current work that Mary Cameron and the team are doing over at housing — it is extraordinary how large Yukon's voice is at this table. It is extremely important for these types of funding — rental subsidy programs — \$584,000 available this fiscal year, with some financial relief of COVID-19, but there's more there as well. The federal funds that are received will support the affordability and availability for housing for Yukoners. It is something that we

definitely need to do more work on, but this is an example of us moving that needle. It takes into consideration as well the *Putting People First* report — again, the independent review, going out and speaking and consulting with all stakeholders in developing its review.

With the review, as the member opposite knows, the independent panel said, "You can't pick and choose. You are either accepting this plan or you are not accepting this plan." After years of us going out and engaging with the medical community on this review, it was extremely important for us as a government to say, "Yes, we are accepting the recommendations and we are going to start moving forward." Is the consultation done? No, it is not done; it will continue. This isn't going to happen overnight. It is continuing. It is moving now. The department never stopped. It never stayed still during that independent review. It did so much to change, to move, and to augment during that time, and now we are going to continue with the complete complement of the medical community to make sure that we keep on moving forward and implementing the recommendations of the plan. I am extremely excited about it.

I think that when we look at some of the housing issues, the initiatives, and the partnerships that we are doing right now — whether it's Canada-Yukon housing benefit or the Yukon Housing Corporation COVID-19 rent-assist — another really important part of the whole continuum when it comes to being healthy in all of our communities — it's extremely important work and it's extremely important to bring these things up today.

Now, the member opposite talks about consultation. We talked about consultation. I'm not dismissive at all. The consultation will continue. We've accepted the recommendations of the plan. We did hear from the NDP that they as well would have accepted the recommendations of the plan. I believe that the Leader of the NDP said, when the plan came out, "If they don't accept all the recommendations, we certainly will." I haven't heard from the Yukon Party yet though. I'm not sure if they would accept the recommendations of the independent panel or not. They've been very quiet about that.

They will criticize us about engagement, where the independent panel spent a lot of time — definitely over a year. I'm not sure on the floor right now — I don't have the number in front of me about how long the plan was out for consultation and review, but it was extraordinary. The member opposite makes it sound like, moving forward, we're not going to consult. Well, if we've proven anything, we do, as a government, consult. I went over that review today. I talked about our engagement. I talked about our plan. I talked about how we've revolutionized and changed the system of engagement here in Yukon and we're going to continue to do that. Yet the member opposite would say, "You didn't consult. You don't give enough money to the Hospital Corporation." We talked about the increases of money to the Hospital Corporation and we talked about the change in direction from acute care to collaborative care — but I guess there's nothing I can say on the floor of the Legislative Assembly to convince

the member opposite that we're moving the needle quite considerably here when it comes to health care.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would point out that the Premier said at one point that I criticized growth of government. I remind the Premier that I've never criticized the growth of the budget for the Hospital Corporation.

The Premier, by his own admission, admitted that when you're actually talking about the core budget — not new services and not new programs — that the budget for the Hospital Corporation has only gone up 10 percent — by his own admission — over a period of five years.

He talked about the average rate while conveniently ignoring the fact that his own minister told this House in 2017-18 that they were only giving the hospital a one-percent increase. There were several years under the Liberals where we've seen the hospital getting less than the rate of inflation for the increase to the core budget and lower than the increase to what the staff received through their agreements with the union. If the minister wants to talk total numbers, let's talk about total numbers. I'm looking at the Public Accounts here from the 2016-17 fiscal year which show the actual transfer to the Hospital Corporation in the overlap year between the two governments of \$94,113,000.

If you look at the previous year, under the Yukon Party government, we see that the actual transfer to the Hospital Corporation was \$92,041,500. Both of these are — for the reference of Hansard — in schedule 9 of the Public Accounts, and our staff can provide the exact page number — that was cut off on what I have here.

Then, if we look at what we see in the last fiscal year, ending 2020, that has dropped to \$81 million and change. So, it hasn't grown — like the Premier pretends — if we're talking the total amount given to the Hospital Corporation. It's showing a drop in excess of \$10 million. That is why I will continue to raise this issue with the Premier until this government gets the importance of ensuring that our hospitals are properly resourced.

In areas such as the secure medical unit, we have heard that timelines have changed. We saw money in last year's budget that seems to be sliding forward. We see no concrete timelines, and we hear only platitudes and lip service. When we're talking about consultation — I'm going to move now to the comments of the president of the Yukon Medical Association. This relates both to the comprehensive health review and to the spending that this government has, in this budget, related to moving forward with its plans to implement it.

In August of 2020 — I'm going to quote from a *Whitehorse Star* story that Hansard will find online, dated August 18: "The Yukon's doctors are 'surprised and disappointed' by a government promise to overhaul the territory's health system without proper consultation, according to the Yukon Medical Association (YMA).

"Last Thursday..." — then it says the name of the health minister, which I can't in this Assembly — "... committed to implementing all of the recommendations laid out in an independent review of the Yukon's health and social services.

"The doctors of Yukon are very concerned about the announcement to accept all 76 recommendations contained in the report without properly consulting first with the YMA,' Dr. Ryan Warshawski, the acting YMA president, said in a statement his morning.

"The 207-page Putting People First report, released last May, provides a road map for improving health and social services in the Yukon.

"The recommendations include a plan for establishing a network of polyclinics and changing doctors' payment structures.

"The report envisions that the Yukon's current system of private doctor's clinics will be replaced with the polyclinic network, managed by the territorial government."

I am just going to take an aside from that. The government has proposed replacing private doctors' clinics in Whitehorse, and in some cases in other communities, with polyclinics, which is going to have significant cost implications both in this year, if the government is moving forward with it, and in future years. The Yukon Medical Association says that the government didn't even talk to them about it before accepting the recommendation.

So, back to the August 18 article — and I quote: "'Many of these recommendations will have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of all Yukoners, not just doctors, and we have not yet had a chance to discuss the implications of the report with the government,' Warshawski said.

"The YMA says a joint committee between its organization and the government to review the recommendations was recently established. That committee met a few days before last Thursday's announcement.

"The government's plan to publicly accept all the recommendations wasn't communicated at that meeting, the press release said.

"The YMA is currently compiling perspectives on the report from the Yukon's doctors.

"We have been consulting with our members and preparing a detailed critique of the expert panel report and its recommendations as it relates to health care which we had planned to share with the government as a basis for future discussions..."

I just want to step aside again from the article here and say that, as it relates to the government here accepting the comprehensive health review, moving forward with the budget and with this supplementary budget with a plan, apparently, to implement the review or an intention to do that — and we find that it is absolutely appalling that government would not consult with the Yukon Medical Association. As the Premier will recall, we heard from the panel members the acknowledgement that the panel itself had met with the YMA and — just quoting from Hansard on October 19 — that some of the panel members also met with a group: "... around 10 to 12 YMA members, including the Yukon chief medical officer of health, in an evening session — again, very early in the first round of our panel consultations — where we had a broad general discussion."

The implications of the comprehensive health review have major implications on the government as a whole, not just the Department of Health and Social Services. It has impacts throughout society and throughout the government, which is one of the reasons that I am raising it now with the Premier, because this government has set this out as one of its apparently signature things that it is announcing to Yukoners through their recent puff piece going out in the mail that they are doing.

Meanwhile, they have missed an absolutely vital step in the process in not fully understanding the implications that this has on our existing structure of medical clinics. Again, if you're making those changes, it is absolutely vital that everyone involved in our health care system be engaged properly before government locks in its decisions, because otherwise, it could be characterized as a "ready-fire-aim" approach where government really doesn't know the implications of what it's doing, but it's committed to doing it anyway. It doesn't really know how it's going to affect Yukon health care professionals, but they've committed to doing it anyway. They don't seem to know about the costs.

I want to ask the Premier if, when he rises next, he can elaborate on the costs of implementing the 76 recommendations as well as explain why it had to come to the stage where the Yukon Medical Association issued a press release expressing disappointment with the government's decision, noting — and I will quote from a CHON-FM article: "The YMA notes that it has a longstanding positive relationship with the Yukon government but that this can only be maintained if there is trust and open communications between both sides." That is from an online story on Tuesday, August 18, 2020.

The acting president also noted that the doctors in Yukon "... are very concerned about the announcement to accept all 76 recommendations contained in the report without properly consulting first with the Yukon Medical Association." That is a quote from the acting Yukon Medical Association president, Dr. Ryan Warshawski, who is now the president but was acting at the time.

This is a commitment from the government that relates directly to the budget but goes far beyond the budget in making a profound commitment to transform our health care system — but not talking to our health care professionals properly before making that decision. Perhaps the Premier would like to update me on the total number of physicians in the territory. I don't have that exact number at my fingertips, but I know that, in the past, it has been in excess of 60 physicians practising — sometimes above the 70 level. To consult with 10 or 12 of them early in the process is very insulting to Yukon physicians, and it speaks volumes about this Liberal government's attitude toward Yukon physicians and toward other health care providers as well.

They pay lip service on one hand — where the Premier talks about just how much they value them — but when it comes down to deciding to make a transformational change, they are not even consulted before government commits to implementing the 76 recommendations.

It's ironic that, in the report itself on page 2, it speaks to the fact that — and I quote: "There is too little coordination and

understanding of the needs of communities and the roles of various players in the system..."

To deal with that, what's the Premier's solution? To not talk to the doctors before committing to implement the report, leaving the doctors having to resort to the media to express their profound concern with government taking that action.

Perhaps the Premier can explain why they made that decision and acted in the way they did without even talking to Yukon physicians properly first.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Let's start with the member opposite's "fun with numbers". We've been around this show before. We've explained how we're keeping our conversation to O&M versus capital to show the increases. There's a reason for that. We've talked about capital budgets being cyclical. I used the word in the Legislative Assembly before — "lumpy" — because, in capital budgets from time to time — not necessarily on a linear progression per year — you will see significant increases in capital budgets in one year versus another, as the member opposite is doing, but as an overall trend, there is a whole different statistical picture there that the member opposite doesn't want you to see.

One of those boom periods — and we've explained this again, but the member opposite is going back and saying, "Look what I just discovered", but we just had this conversation one of the last times we were up here — in the Yukon Hospital Corporation's budget was 2015 to 2017. What was that about? That was when the MRI and the ER capital project was allocated between \$17 million and \$23 million per year for very specific initiatives — great initiatives, but very specific.

Again, to compare year by year, as the member opposite is doing, doesn't really show the full picture, and he knows that. Including this in a year-over-year comparison — it's going to be misleading in one direction or another because it's not showing a full picture.

The O&M budget — and I keep on going back to this. This is important — the operation and maintenance. This is the funding that we're talking about for the corporation. That is what increases.

That is one thing where it's not going to be lumpy. This is a trend — and our trend — we increased it by 30 percent between 2015-16 and the most recent budget. You cannot deny that number.

Again, when the member opposite is trying to say, "Well, look over here, though — if you compare one year versus one other year — aha! I have seen something that proves my narrative."

Well, okay, yes — I explained that a few times now to the member opposite as to why that is. However, it still is not enough for the member opposite. If you look at actual spending over the same period and if you use the supplementary estimates for this year, the increase over the same period is 29.7 percent. That's important for Yukoners to understand — that on a year-to-year basis, overall, we are increasing the funding — and that number is not lumpy. That number is a good projection, and we believe that the numbers matter over here in the Yukon Liberal Party.

Interesting enough as well — I know we don't have very much time here. I'll continue on here to say that Bruce McLennan, the independent expert on the panel, did say — the member opposite doesn't want you to know this — that we did have meetings. We had meetings with the former head of the Yukon Medical Association, Katharine Smart — yet the member opposite will say that we didn't. Well, I don't know what he's saying about Bruce McLennan, but Bruce McLennan states that, yes, they did — and there were meetings with groups of physicians, and the Yukon Medical Association did have an opportunity to come to that presentation. It was on the Alaskan Southcentral Foundation — which is similar to the model proposed — so a conversation about that. No physicians were able to attend, but the offer was out there for a model that was a preliminary to this bigger piece — but again, an opportunity.

The member opposite would make you believe that, moving forward, there would be no conversations with the Yukon Medical Association. Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, that is simply not the case. The Hospital Corporation — the independent panel — has done an extraordinary job, through this amazing review, to work with partners — and they will continue to do so. The work doesn't stop; the consultation doesn't stop; the important work doesn't stop.

I will continue on another day, because I believe we are out of time.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by Ms. McPhee that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Mr. Adel:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 60

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Monday, November 9, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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



**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Monday, November 9, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I would ask the Assembly today to welcome some individuals who are here for our tribute to Farmer of the Year: Mr. Mario Ley; Dionne Laybourne; and their children, Emerson, Aislyn, and Dietrich.

I would also ask you to welcome two of our leaders in the Agriculture branch, Mr. Brad Barton and Mr. Kirk Price.

*Applause*

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I know that not all the guests are in the Legislative Assembly yet. We are juggling things around a little bit to ensure that everyone has a chance to be here for the part that they're attending for today.

I would like to welcome the Porter Creek Secondary School students. We have Gabriel Hopkins, Rylee Reed, Alia Krueger, Brendan Gregory, Daniel Hansen, Annabelle MacLeod, Xander O'Donnell, and special guests with them, Mr. Jason Cook and Felicity Brammer, and the principal for Porter Creek Secondary School, Peter Giangrande. We will also have today Joe Wickenhauser, the executive director for Queer Yukon, and Edwine Veniat, my ministerial advisor. We also have folks from the Women's Directorate and Justice listening in today, as there is not enough room for everyone with the restrictions in seating.

Thank you very much for being here today. I am looking forward to the business of the day.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of National Aboriginal Veterans Day

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to National Aboriginal Veterans Day, which took place this past Sunday. National Aboriginal Veterans Day honours the many courageous First Nation, Inuit, Métis, and other indigenous veterans who have served in uniform throughout Canada's history. Up to 12,000 indigenous Canadians have answered the call since World War I, and sadly, approximately 500 have died in conflicts around the world. Unfortunately, their valour and courage went unrecognized for many years. After witnessing the horrors of war, many who survived came home to a country

that did not see them as equal citizens or provide them with the same rights and benefits as their fellow soldiers.

This year is the 75<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the end of World War II, and I want to highlight two Yukon First Nation citizens who took part in the conflict: First, I want to recognize Alex Van Bibber from the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, who died at 98 years old in 2014. Van Bibber was one of the last Yukon First Nation veterans to serve in World War II. He survived the war and returned to Yukon, where he spent the rest of his life giving back to his community. However, like so many other indigenous veterans, Van Bibber may have fought for his country, but he lost his official Indian status in the process.

Many returning indigenous veterans gained the right to vote, which was still not afforded to all indigenous people. Many lost their official status and benefits as were then outlined in the *Indian Act*.

In spite of these challenges, Van Bibber would go on to become active with the Assembly of First Nations, receive the Order of Canada, and become a founding member of the Yukon Outfitters Association and the Yukon Fish and Game Association. He was also given a lifetime achievement award by Indspire, formerly known as the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards.

Chief Elijah Smith was also a World War II veteran and Order of Canada recipient. After the war, Chief Smith went on to, of course, lead the creation and signing of the *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* historical document. This year, he is being considered to be featured on the country's next \$5 bill. In spite of his leadership roles, Smith was also one of the thousands of World War II indigenous veterans who lost their status due to their service in the war. He was also denied the benefits and same compensation given to fellow non-indigenous soldiers.

After serving on Canada's behalf in support of human rights, both Van Bibber and Smith came home to a country where their indigenous people did not receive equal treatment. National Aboriginal Veterans Day is meant to bring this history to light and to properly recognize the veterans like Van Bibber, Smith, and thousands of others who fought on behalf of Canada. In 1991, Canada began to address the past wrongs with an agreement to compensate indigenous veterans who did not receive the benefits that they deserved. In 2001, a beautiful monument was erected in Ottawa to honour those who served and died.

On behalf of the Government of Yukon and all Yukoners, I want to express our deep appreciation and respect to all indigenous veterans who have served and continue to serve with courage and dedication. Your sacrifices will never be forgotten, nor will your important role in keeping our country and Canadians safe. We will honour your contributions by continuing our path toward reconciliation.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Aboriginal Veterans Day, a day observed annually on November 8 in

Canada. This special day recognizes the significant contributions of indigenous veterans past and present, military members who serve and have served our country in conflicts around the world and also on the home front throughout Canada's war efforts and during peacetime.

Thousands of indigenous people have served over the years, voluntarily enlisting in the Canadian military from all regions of the country. They have been on the front lines. They have worked in support of military campaigns. They have made contributions to war charities and they have volunteered labour in war-time industries. They came together for our country and we come together in recognition of their contributions. The contributions of the indigenous people of Yukon were monumental.

The war brought entire communities together to raise funds. Resources and materials were collected. Fundraisers were held and many efforts were recognized nationally. But it was not until recently that stories began to surface about the extensive efforts of indigenous Canadians stepping out to join the Canadian forces and other supports. Stories of Yukon individuals and community contributions have been recounted over the years here in the House and always deserve special mention — stories like that of Chief Moses of Old Crow and the Vuntut Gwitchin people who raised money for overseas efforts. King George VI presented the community with the British Empire Medal for their leadership and loyalty, strengthening ties between Canada and England. And stories of those Van Bibber boys — Dan, Alex, and Archie — and their experiences both overseas and serving on Canadian soil over the years — stories of those who helped by serving as guides as the Alaska Highway road link to Alaska was built through the Yukon wilderness — a massive war effort in the early 1940s by two countries: Canada and the United States.

So, we thank all indigenous veterans for their service, for their contributions, for their efforts and sacrifices for us throughout our history and especially today. Lest we forget.

*Applause*

**Ms. Hanson:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party to pay tribute to National Aboriginal Veterans Day, commemorated November 8 and to all the indigenous Canadians who have served Canada, both in times of war and in peacekeeping. Despite the fact that more than 12,000 indigenous people served in the major conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the world wars to Korea to many peacekeeping missions the world over, with the loss of an estimated 500 lives, it was not until 1994 that National Aboriginal Veterans Day began in Winnipeg. It began because aboriginal veterans were not and had not been recognized in Remembrance Day activities.

Mr. Speaker, over the years, I have shared that my awareness of the difference in how Canada's military veterans were treated was ingrained early. The stories we hear today about the lived experiences of indigenous Canadians past and present who served this country echo those I heard as a child growing up. These were stories about two young men — one, my father — from the prairies who answered the call to serve

overseas during World War II — friends who were treated as equals when it came time to war, but in times of peace, their government and the institutions that they had gone to war to protect and serve treated them very differently. Denial of services, to veterans' benefits, and denial of the right to the most basic democratic right in a democracy — the right to vote — persisted for many years.

Mr. Speaker, it has been remarked upon many times that the indigenous people of this country have shown remarkable patience in the face of persistent and system racism. In 2020, some may find it hard to believe that it took until 1995 — 50 years after the end of the Second World War — for indigenous people to be allowed to lay Remembrance Day wreaths at the National War Memorial in Ottawa to remember and honour their dead comrades, or that it was not until 2001 that the first monument commemorating the role of indigenous people during the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War was dedicated in Ottawa, or that it took until 2003 for the Government of Canada to provide veterans' benefits to First Nation soldiers who had been denied them in past and to Métis veterans who had never received them.

Mr. Speaker, despite the recalcitrance of Canadian governments to honour and respect the many contributions of Indian, Inuit, and Métis men and women who volunteered to serve on behalf of all Canadians, First Nation, Inuit, and Métis people continue to serve Canada in operations at home and overseas, as they have done for more than 200 years. Today we remember all of the indigenous people who have served or given their lives, and we express gratitude to the more than 2,700 indigenous members of the Canadian Armed Forces who continue to serve on behalf of all Canadians.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Intersex Day of Remembrance**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government in tribute to Intersex Day of Remembrance. Intersex Day of Remembrance falls on November 8. It was initiated by intersex advocates as a day to remember loved ones we have lost and to bring awareness to intersex issues. Intersex people are born with sex characteristics that do not fit typical binary definitions of male or female bodies, including sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, and hormone and chromosome patterns.

Experts tell us that between 0.05 percent and 1.7 percent of the population are born with intersex traits. These estimates are similar to the number of people born with red hair.

Intersex people often live with stigma and discrimination just for being born in their own bodies. In recent years, awareness of intersex people and recognition of the specific human rights abuses that they face has grown. This is due to the work of intersex human rights advocates.

Intersex people may face forced or a coercive medical interventions, harmful practices, and other forms of stigmatization due to their physical traits. According to Organisation Intersex International, only a handful of jurisdictions have actually implemented measures to prevent and address such abuses, and effectiveness of these provisions

has not yet been fully documented. For decades, medical professionals have pushed the notion that the necessary treatment of intersex people is with a concealment-centred approach. This approach means that intersex people are encouraged or even forced to hide who they really are.

The purpose of these interventions is often not based on the health or well-being of the individual, but rather they are done to mask the patient's intersex. It is meant to surgically or hormonally alter the patient's body in order to conform to society's limited scope of what a typical male or female body looks like. This approach can go as far as lying to parents of intersex children and to intersex folks themselves.

Concealment-centred approaches to medicine have proven to be scientifically ambiguous and do more harm than good. It is time to face the facts: gender and sex are a spectrum, and it is time to look beyond our binary biases. I urge all of you to educate yourselves on intersex issues and be the strong ally that the intersex community deserves. Today I stand in solidarity with them.

According to the Intersex Society of North America — and I quote: “People who are intersex will tell you that the primary thing they've been harmed by is induced shame about their intersex.” It is time to reduce the shame that people feel and work toward a more accepting society. The best way to reduce shame and reduce harm to intersex folks is to talk openly and honestly about intersex issues. LGBTQ2S+ folks deserve to feel safe, heard, and honoured in all spaces across Canada and especially in Yukon.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** On behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party, I stand to recognize the important movement and advances of intersex awareness. What started as a conversation in 2003 and led to an e-mail exchange between two people in 2004 was the beginnings of what is now two international days in a week-long series of events to recognize and celebrate the intersex folks among us. Seventeen years ago, the emergent intersex movement was still trying to find its way in a world where few people knew what intersex was and fewer people were openly talking about their own intersex status.

An intersex person does not fit the typical definition of “male” or “female”. This means that they have variations in their chromosomes, genitals, or internal organs. Being intersex relates to biological sex characteristics and is distinct from a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. An intersex person may be straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or asexual and may identify as female, male, both, or neither. Because their bodies are seen as different, intersex children and adults are often stigmatized and subjected to multiple human rights violations, including violations of their rights to health and physical integrity, to be free from torture and ill treatment, and to equality and non-discrimination.

Intersex folks who have had to go through unnecessary surgeries and medical procedures to normalize their appearance are forced to live with the consequences and decisions that were made by others. The procedures that they were put through have detrimental effects on a person's physical and mental

health. Despite that, the surgeries are frequently justified on the basis of cultural and gender norms and discriminatory beliefs about intersex people and their integration into society. Discriminatory attitudes can never justify human rights violations, including forced treatment and violations of the right to physical integrity. It is with the belief that this is not acceptable, right, or just that the intersex visibility movement was born.

The first Intersex Awareness Day was framed as a grassroots effort to raise awareness around intersex. They encouraged other organizations to join in with it. In short, they put it out there in the hope that different groups and different people would somehow take up the banner and make it into something. That first year — 2003 — nothing much came of it. What was started to give what was then a very small community a sense of belonging and something to talk about or to use as an excuse to share their story with people who were interested in hearing about it has grown into a vibrant international movement. Once 2004 came along, word had spread about Intersex Awareness Day and events were planned throughout the world by different advocates and were taking place in community forums, on campuses, and in community centres. This momentum continues to build to this day.

It is fitting that the original idea behind the day is still with it, recognizing the very earliest pioneers who were out on the front lines in the intersex movement, unafraid to be out and seen, not ashamed of the body they were born in, because, Mr. Speaker, it's time to change society and not bodies.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Yukon Farm Family of the Year**

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the Yukon New Democratic Party to pay tribute to Yukon's farm family of the year, Mario Ley and Dionne Laybourne, as well as their children who are here: Emerson, Aislyn, and Deitrich.

Each year, our Agriculture branch, with the help of the agricultural community, recognizes a farmer based on their accomplishments, volunteerism, farm management skills, and the use of innovative ideas. Mr. Speaker, Mario Ley and Dionne Laybourne are exemplary in their hard work, commitment to animal welfare, and contributions to agriculture in the Yukon. I cannot think of a better farm family to honour with this award in 2020. Mario and Dionne have been operating their Can Do Farm for over a decade on their agricultural properties in the Ibex Valley just west of Whitehorse.

From their start in hay production, Mario and Dionne have broadened their operation over the years. They are now raising and selling cattle, pigs, chickens, and turkeys, and they seem to be expanding year after year. Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of hard work, success, and commitment all Yukoners respect.

Mr. Speaker, I had a bit of a moment to get to speak with the family at our agricultural conference on Saturday. What stood out for me is something that Mario said. He said that when he arrived in Yukon about 20 years ago — the day he arrived, he knew he was home, like so many. What better time to say that I would like to congratulate Mario Ley and Dionne

Laybourne as Yukon's farm family of the year. I wish you both the best in your ambitions and efforts to provide locally raised products for Yukoners — and Mario, in your continued leadership in Yukon's agricultural community.

I would also like to take a brief moment to acknowledge the many amazing Yukoners who were also nominated this year for Farmer of the Year. The list of agricultural operations is impressive and it demonstrates the growing self-sufficiency and dynamic local food production in this territory: Agnes Seitz and Gertie Share of Needle Mountain Food Forest and Gardens in the Hamlet of Mount Lorne — Agnes and Gertie are the runners-up this year — Agnes is a respected local food producer and educator; Megan Waterman of Lastraw Ranch in Dawson City; Kate Mechan and Bart Bounds of Elemental Farm in Takhini Valley; Lucy Vogt of Vogt Enterprises and Market Garden in Dawson; Scott and Jackie Dickson, owners of Takhini River Ranch; Derrick Hastings with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in teaching and working farm in Dawson; Gerry and Ann-Marie Stockley on the Mayo Road; Pauline Paton, Paton's Patch Farm at Fox Lake; and Shelby Jordan of Bon Ton and Company, who is an agricultural food processor in Dawson.

I congratulate all of the nominees and I want to thank you all for your contribution to Yukon agriculture and to our continued efforts to create food self-sufficiency in the Yukon. To all members and to those listening today: Please continue your support of Yukon agriculture, and I hope that delicious meats raised and processed by Mario and Dionne at the Can Do Farm have found a regular place on your tables at home.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Yukon's 2020 farm family of the year: Mario Ley and Dionne Laybourne and their children, who are owners and operators of the Can Do Farm as well as my constituents.

Their farm, located in the Ibex Valley, is a producer of hay, beef, pork, chicken, and turkey. It is known for its natural and sustainable approach with animals being raised mostly on a local diet. Can Do Farm is aiming for significant growth next year, with plans well underway for the operation of an abattoir and meat-processing facility. In addition to slaughtering, cutting, and processing their own animals, Can Do Farm plans to have the capacity to provide services to other livestock producers. As well, they are planning, I understand, on a retail outlet, offering fresh meat cuts, as well as speciality creations such as smokies, jerky, sausage, and bacon. I understand that their plans also include sales to restaurants, as well as to the hotel industry. This type of expansion is a great example of the potential of Yukon agriculture as well as the future promise here in the Yukon.

So, congratulations to Mario and Dionne, and I wish you the very best of luck in your endeavours in the next year and beyond. Congratulations, as well, to all who were nominated for this year's recognition.

*Applause*

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports reorienting Yukon's health care system from a traditional and fragmented medical model to a focus on population health, accompanied by integrated person-centred care across the health and social system.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House:

(1) congratulates the American people for successfully conducting their presidential election and selecting Joe Biden as their president and Kamala Harris as the first female, Black, South Asian vice-president ever; and

(2) looks forward to working with the new administration on matters such as cross-border safety, trade, and protecting vital salmon and Porcupine caribou habitat.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, as established by Motion No. 6 of the First Session of the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly and amended by Motion No. 380 of the Second Session of the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly and Motion No. 71 of the Third Session of the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, be amended by:

(1) rescinding the appointment of Wade Istchenko; and

(2) appointing Brad Cathers to the committee.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT, notwithstanding Standing Order 2(1), during the 2020 Fall Sitting, the Legislative Assembly shall:

(1) stand adjourned from its rising on Tuesday, November 10, 2020, until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, November 16, 2020; and

(2) meet on Friday, December 4, 2020, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., or to an earlier adjournment time if so ordered.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce in Yukon communities to ensure that rural Yukoners have reliable and consistent access to all standard, in-person banking services, as offered prior to the transition from the TD bank to CIBC.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Minister of Education to respond to any outstanding correspondence from the J.V. Clark

School Council regarding staff housing shortages for teachers in Mayo.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that all government buildings are accessible to staff and the public by removing snow from public sidewalks, bike racks, and parking lots in a timely manner.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure the safety of seniors living in Yukon Housing Corporation residences by clearing snow and ice from entrances, sidewalks, and parking lots in a timely manner.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Yukon aviation industry

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Our Liberal government has made it a priority to support Yukon's aviation industry. Aviation is critical to our modern northern lifestyle, keeping our communities connected and helping to grow our economy. Our government is making historic investments in Yukon's aviation infrastructure to support a strong future for northern airways, but in March, the COVID-19 pandemic clobbered the global aviation sector. Yukon's aviation industry, like most other jurisdictions, saw traffic decline more than 90 percent in some cases. Despite this once-in-a-century event, they continue to provide essential services, such as medical travel, medevac, and the delivery of critical medical tests outside the territory.

In the face of lockdowns, border restrictions, self-isolation orders, and hot zones across Canada and around the world, people are not flying as much. Despite this, local operators have embraced innovation and demonstrated determination and resilience. Our government has supported the Yukon aviation businesses by waiving commercial fees and working collaboratively with the federal government to provide operators with the financial support to maintain essential services. To date, we have provided more than \$3 million to our carriers.

Today, I am pleased to announce that the federal government will provide an additional \$7.1 million to support Yukon's aviation industry. With the goal of providing broad support to the Yukon aviation sector, we will be distributing the funds based on demonstrated need from carriers. We are here to make sure that these carriers can continue to operate. We don't want them to suffer financial hardship in the delivery of essential services that Yukoners rely on. Air North will be eligible to receive up to \$5.7 million to maintain the current scheduled flights south to Vancouver and north to Dawson City and Old Crow. Alkan Air will receive up to \$300,000 to continue to provide medevac services across the territory and down to the lower mainland. Additionally, \$1.1 million is available to support other Yukon charter and rotary carriers

based on provision of essential services and a demonstrated financial need.

This funding will go directly to our air carriers to ensure that they can continue to service the territory in these unprecedented times. It will ensure that they can maintain critical linkages to our communities and keep the territory connected. It will ensure that food, equipment, supplies, and medicine reach people living in remote communities in a reliable and timely manner.

I am pleased to announce that the Government of Yukon is also extending the waiving of aviation fees until March 31, 2021. This will save the aviation industry approximately \$234,000. In total, the fee waiver is saving Yukon air operators more than \$1 million. The aviation community continues to be deeply impacted by COVID-19, but it has demonstrated tremendous tenacity and unparalleled tenacity to continue their operations.

Our government is committed to supporting Yukon airlines to keep our communities connected. This funding and support will ensure that they can continue to provide services that Yukoners rely on. I want to thank Yukon's aviation companies for all their efforts.

**Mr. Hassard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise to speak to this. Certainly, support for the aviation sector through this economic downturn is important. I won't go through the host of reasons why, as the minister just did a pretty good job of that. But, in short, the aviation industry has been completely devastated due to the pandemic. That is why our support as legislators is so important.

On October 21, the Yukon Party brought forward a motion to enhance supports for the aviation industry. That motion called on the government to do the following things: ensuring that all air travel funded by the government to southern destinations be required to be with a local air carrier; ensuring that all government initiatives that involved air travel include strong provisions to mandate the use of local aviation companies; and, of course, supporting the development of meaningful interline travel agreements between Air North and mainland carriers.

While the Liberal government initially opposed the motion and made a number of amendments to remove any action from it, I am happy to report that, by the end of the debate, they had reversed their position and the motion ended up receiving unanimous support in this House. It is tangible actions, such as getting the government to book and use contracting to encourage only using local aviation companies, that I think will be beneficial to supporting this industry through the recovery. While today's announcement is certainly welcome as well, I do have some questions for the minister that I'm hoping he can answer when he is on his feet again.

This funding envelope was first announced at the beginning of August, with the provision that the territorial government would then have to negotiate a bilateral agreement with the feds before we got today's more detailed announcement. Can the minister tell us why there has been a

95-day delay between when the funding was first announced and today, when we finally got the details?

The press release states that \$7.1 million only covers up until December 31. As December 31 is only seven weeks from now, what is the government's plan to support the aviation sector beyond the end of this year? Certainly, no realistic expectation suggests that the aviation industry will rebound by December 31, so it seems short-sighted for the government to only announce funding that expires in just a few weeks rather than an extended long-term recovery package.

Another question that I have is with respect to the support for the entire aviation sector in Yukon. The money announced — while two companies appear to have approximately 85 percent of the entire funding pot earmarked for them, that leaves just shy of \$1 million left for the dozens of other local aviation companies. To be clear, we do not oppose the support going to our larger companies, but we are left wondering why so little is being offered to all the rest of the industry. I will quote from an October 16 letter that went to the Premier and our Member of Parliament signed by 12 of these companies that states — and I quote: “We believe it should go without saying that it is not only the larger carriers affected by the COVID pandemic. Smaller carriers, both fixed wing and rotary, based in the Yukon have seen a steep drop in revenues due to the pandemic, and are struggling to survive.” The letter goes on to request that the Government of Yukon develop a relief program for the assistance of smaller fixed-wing as well as rotary-wing carriers.

As the government received this request nearly a month ago, I am wondering: Why hasn't the government responded to this letter from industry yet?

**Ms. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to respond to the ministerial statement of the day.

Aviation does have a long history in Yukon. We just celebrated 100 years of aviation this past year. As mentioned, aviation plays an important role in tourism, wildfire protection, medevacs within Yukon and to Vancouver or Edmonton, mineral exploration, and providing air service to Yukoners to communities, and, of course, a critical link to Yukon's only fly-in community of Old Crow.

We know that the Yukon aviation industry is hurting due to the pandemic, with reduced flights and people just not travelling to or within Yukon or travelling Outside. In May, this government announced the waiving of all commercial aviation fees from April 1 to December 31, 2020. The waiving of these fees has now been extended until March 31, 2021, and we support that. We are, however, curious about the private businesses impacted by the waiving of these fees.

NAV Canada is one such private business. NAV Canada is a fully privatized civil air aviation service provider. NAV Canada staff are the people who keep our aircraft in the skies and ensure safe landings and takeoffs. They too have been hurt by the pandemic and the massive reduction in flights across Canada. From their website, it says: “Our revenues come from our aviation customers, not government subsidies. By investing

in operations and controlling costs, we strive to keep customer charges stable, while improving safety and flight efficiency.”

So, I am curious: What consideration has this government given to NAV Canada and the loss of their revenues, and are there any other businesses impacted by the waiving of all of these fees?

We are pleased with the federal announcement of funding for Yukon's aviation industry and the announcement of this government's redistribution of these dollars — \$5.7 million to Air North and another \$300,000 to Alkan Air, as well as an additional \$1.1 million to support other charter and rotary carriers. These are important companies to Yukoners and are deserving of support in these unprecedented times.

We have talked about this before, and I will ask again: Is this government prepared to put their money where their mouth is and support Air North by providing policy direction to all departments that Air North be the airline of preference for government employees travelling outside of the Yukon? Is this government prepared to put this into policy so that, when the pandemic has passed, our local airline will continue to grow and serve the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, as always, I welcome the opposition's thoughts this afternoon on this very important matter. I am a little bit disappointed, Mr. Speaker, by the revisionist history and crass politics expressed by the Leader of the Official Opposition over there as it pertains to the motion that we came together and actually passed unanimously — and here it has been sullied by the member opposite. I regret that — it does a disservice to this House, Mr. Speaker.

I am going to turn to what is really important to Yukoners this afternoon, and that is that these are trying times for the aviation industry in the Yukon, across Canada, and around the world. This industry is absolutely critical to our territory. It must survive beyond the pandemic, and so any company that has lost money and is in danger of closing its doors must reach out to us and we will help, Mr. Speaker. Reach out to us and we will help.

The Department of Highways and Public Works has been working very closely with industry and over the last month I have personally spoken with virtually every aviation operator in the territory. I have heard their views on contracts, on insurance, on pilot certification, and this year's exploration, mining, outfitting, and tourism seasons. We are listening and we are working with industry and our federal partners to implement measures that support this critical industry to make sure that they survive this pandemic. That is really important.

Last year, we also invested heavily in the aviation sector so that they could flourish. As the members opposite know, we have dramatically increased spending on aviation over our term in government. We have paved Dawson's runway. We have built an all-weather maintenance facility up there to support that critical piece of infrastructure that we promised and we delivered on. We certified and invested in Mayo. We are going to have new airline lights up there. We have made very large and critical investments in Whitehorse, including the

connections for aircraft to the terminal. We have invested in new equipment there.

We have invested in snow-clearing and maintenance equipment that is cutting edge and replaced a lot of dilapidated snow-clearing equipment that we inherited when we took office. We have a baggage-handling system and security enhancements up at the airport, Mr. Speaker, that are currently underway. We're improving the food-services sector up at our airport in Whitehorse. We have a long-term strategy that we've been working very closely on with industry and the community. We're making lease lots available here in Whitehorse and in Mayo.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment to the aviation industry was made prior to the pandemic. It's continuing through the pandemic to make sure that our operators make it through to the other side of this global health crisis.

Mr. Speaker, we talked about buying airline seats on flights out of the territory. I will say that under our current government — this year in particular — the percentage of government seats purchased on Air North flights has never been higher. We were a bit shy of 100 percent this year. Recently when I checked, it was about 93 percent of government flights on Air North. This is higher than it has ever been, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to continue this. It's absolutely critical that we support our local airlines and make sure they survive this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have talked about the interline agreements. I know that this is an important issue. I know that in 2012, they were struggling to make this happen. We are going to continue to work with our partners to make sure that they survive this pandemic in a healthy fashion.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Panache Ventures return on investment

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, it has been more than a year since the Yukon Liberal government gave \$2 million to a private venture capital fund, Panache Ventures, based in Montréal.

At the time, we learned that this was a grant of \$2 million and Yukon taxpayers would not realize any return or financial benefit from the investment. It was stated by participants that the intent of the investment was to provide access to equity for all Yukon entrepreneurs.

So, can the Minister of Economic Development tell us how much of the Panache Ventures fund has been committed to Yukon companies? How much has been invested in Yukon companies so far as a result of this \$2 million that this government gave to a Montréal firm?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'm happy to rise and to speak to this.

So, in 2019 — just for a background for Yukoners — in partnership with seven Yukon First Nations and Panache Ventures, we made a significant investment into the future of Yukon's innovation knowledge economy by increasing access

to equity, financing, and capacity development to support Yukon's technology companies.

This investment helps close an identified gap that we have seen. This came from industry. They were told that they need more access to venture capital. Of course, that is part of the reason why we did this work.

The investment strengthens entrepreneurial opportunities for Yukon First Nation development corporations by opening up a new avenue in their investment strategies as well and really focusing on partnerships through chapter 22 and returning benefits to Yukon communities. This investment will support capacity development in Yukon's technology sector, including access to an international network of funds investors. We were supposed to have 100 CEOs here this summer. Of course, with COVID, we are moving that to next year, but it's a great mentorship opportunity, as well as seminars in investments.

I am happy to see this year in Silicon Valley in the C100 group, the Yukon being noted for innovation. Now, companies and organizations across the country are wondering how you can bring First Nation development corporations in with government to have these types of investment vehicles. So far, Panache has invested in one Yukon-based company — Proof Data Technology — and has committed to make efforts in investing in up to three more. I will get the exact financial number for that —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Hassard:** In the 2019 Fall Sitting of this Assembly, the minister claimed that, by giving \$2 million of taxpayers' money to this Outside firm, Yukon companies would have opportunities for mentorship. The minister further stated that, due to this investment in — and I quote: "... the very near future...", over 60 CEOs from a number of companies would be hosted by Yukon. At the time, Panache Ventures representatives publicly stated that they planned to visit Yukon regularly and spend time speaking face to face with local entrepreneurs.

Will the minister tell us when and how often representatives of Panache Ventures have visited Yukon since the \$2 million was shipped south in September of 2019? How many Yukon companies have been provided with mentorship?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Again, I will get the number that was invested in Proof Data Technology.

What is important is that this is a 10-year fund, so it's over a period of time. They will look for particular strategic investments that meet the goals. The others that have come to the table — we have the Alberta development corporation, Québec pension fund, Adidas family, National Bank — the pedigree of investment here is extremely significant. All of those jurisdictions have done their background and due diligence.

I will check — the representation is that there is a young gentleman from the Yukon who represents the interests of the First Nations on that board. He is a director with Chu Niikwän Development Corporation — Kwanlin Dün's development corporation — and also, I believe, a chartered accountant.

We will have the department reach out to him to get a report on mentorship, if there are any new investments on the

horizon, and what is the plan to reschedule the CEO conference that was supposed to happen this year — hoping, of course, that COVID has gone aside — and anything else that we should bring back to the Legislative Assembly on this good investment and forward-looking vision that we have seen from these First Nation development corporations.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, over a year and one company, and we don't know the dollar amount. The minister has indicated that, due to giving this Montréal firm \$2 million, the Yukon economy would expand and that Yukoners could expect to be getting jobs in the technology sector.

Will the minister explain how the Yukon economy has expanded due to this \$2 million that was shipped south, and what new jobs have been created as a direct result of Yukon taxpayers giving this \$2 million to this Montréal firm?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** As we hear from across the way some comments about: “Good question” — you know what — the entrepreneurial city of the year in 2018 was Whitehorse. We spent the weekend even at the agricultural conference in the NorthLight Innovation centre. We are seeing company after company come in. I look forward to budgetary debate when we can get into the numbers on jobs that we are seeing increase in that sector — something at a speed we did not see previously.

This private equity is just one element of that opportunity to access capital to increase — we saw last week — the work we did will be coming to the House to talk a bit about that — an analysis done on angel investment with NACO Canada. Again, really putting our shoulders into the entire ecosystem to ensure that there are opportunities there. So, we do see new jobs.

Even this month, we heard that the government wasn't leaning in — 400 jobs recovered or in place right now — again, leading the country as the lowest — when you go apples to apples — the lowest unemployment rate in the country and the best ratio of jobs available to people unemployed.

Once again, I think that our economic track record stands for itself. I think that the opposition should reach out to the First Nations that invested and see what they think and if this was a good investment. Is this really what the spirit of that chapter 22 was all about?

### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago, the Minister of Tourism and Culture announced that there would be a tourism relief package coming. That was three weeks ago, and we are still waiting for details.

Can the minister tell us when the details for the relief package for restaurants and bars will be announced?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question. Our government — I think that I have stated this a number of times — had a very swift, quick response to the global pandemic that we are currently facing. We put in place the types of programs that were needed. We worked with our business community to identify those — the cancelled events program. We then put in place sick-leave benefits. We put in place a Yukon business relief program.

Yes, a couple of weeks ago, I announced that we are investing a further \$15 million toward our tourism sector. We have announced the accommodation piece and will continue to work with our partners to identify further relief that is needed. We have worked with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics to do a thorough analysis.

We make our decisions based on evidence on this side of the House, and that is what we will continue to do. We will use Yukoners' money in the best possible way going forward. I look forward to further questions.

**Mr. Istchenko:** For the record, I was asking about a relief package for restaurants and bars.

Three weeks ago, the Minister of Tourism and Culture announced that there would be a tourism relief package coming. That was three weeks ago, and we are still waiting for details.

Can the minister tell us when details for the relief package for RV parks will be announced?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I think I was pretty clear in my previous answer that our government has put in place business relief programs that were led as a one-government — but specifically by Economic Development — to support our businesses. All of those businesses that the member opposite is talking about are eligible for the Yukon business relief program.

We have worked with our partners in Canada. We were the first to respond in Canada to put in place a program like this, and we will continue to work with our partners to ensure that their needs are met. We are finalizing the data that we have worked on with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, and we will continue to make good decisions about that.

I look forward to another question.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, three weeks ago, the Minister of Tourism announced that there would be a tourism relief package coming. That's three weeks ago. Like I said earlier, we are waiting for details.

Can the minister tell us when the details for the relief package for outfitters and wilderness tourism will be announced?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, I'll keep repeating myself. I'm not sure that the member opposite is hearing the answers that I'm giving. I mean, we do have programs in place right now for all Yukon businesses, and that absolutely includes tourism businesses. All of the businesses that the member opposite has talked about today are covered under the Yukon business relief program. They will continue to be covered.

We are making evidence-based decisions and using the money that we've identified for further relief for the tourism sector. We are going to make decisions that are good for Yukoners, because we have limited funds. We have a supplementary budget that is before us and we want to make the best use of those funds going forward. We're looking toward recovery, as well, so those are all considerations that we're working on right now.

I look forward to releasing the tourism relief and recovery plan when it is ready. I look forward to having those discussions with members opposite if we ever potentially get into



department debate on Tourism. I absolutely look forward to having that discussion with you.

**Question re: COVID-19 impact on education system**

**Ms. White:** This current school semester has been extremely difficult on folks. Whitehorse school administrators, educators, bus drivers, teachers' aides, parents, and students have all been impacted by half-day, in-person classes. A quick look at public forums and social media will tell you that it has been brutal.

What's not clear is how the impact of half-day classes is being measured and how that information is going to be put into action for the January semester.

Can the minister say at what point Yukoners affected by half-day, in-person classes will be surveyed and if this will inform recommendations for the January school semester?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The decisions made previously with respect to the school reopening plan, the ability to return 5,700 students to full-time, five-days-per-week education in our school system, is something of which we are extremely proud. It can only have been done because of the hard work of students, parents, educators, and administrators.

We have had to adapt the programming for grades 10 to 12 students at the three larger high schools in Whitehorse. That programming is being assessed daily, and it has been assessed daily since August 19 when school went back to full-time classes. We are working with administrators.

I don't disagree with some of the preamble in the question today, because it is on the shoulders of educators, administrators, students, families, and parents as to how successful the return to school has been, and that assessment is ongoing. We are working with all of those individuals — all of our parents, students, families, and all of our partners in education — for the purposes of determining how to best move forward so that students are safe.

**Ms. White:** Many students are struggling academically due to the half-day, in-person classes. Students are feeling depressed and unmotivated. Busing has been a nightmare for many families, and this has also affected city buses and their passengers. Educators, staff, and families are feeling burnt out. The same can be said of parents trying to struggle with their kids' learning and well-being with their own struggles. In order to help them, it is important to understand what the difficulties are that they are facing. What is working and what isn't? More importantly, how is that being measured by government?

Will students and educators be surveyed for feedback on half-day, in-person classes, and how will their input shape the January school semester?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, this is a great question, and I am happy to rise today to address it.

I should say, before I get to the concept of a survey, that I certainly don't disagree that many students have had difficulty adapting to the programming. It is full-time learning. I think I want to note that for Yukoners — and making sure that we also balance the input here in the Legislative Assembly with the idea and the information that we have about some students who are

doing quite well under this regime. It's certainly not the answer for everyone.

We have been told by students that they have time for their lives, that they can play a sport, sometimes they have a job, and that they are really enjoying the opportunity to learn in different ways throughout the curriculum. There are reduced discipline issues in some schools, and there is extra time for counselling with students and time for their work that has not been their experience previously.

There will be a survey of students, staff, and families. I believe that it will go out this week — if not, early next week. The target date is November 16. The concept, of course, is to repeat the survey that occurred in August and to use that feedback.

**Ms. White:** If there are aspects of half-day, in-person classes that aren't working or that can be improved on, the government needs to have a system in place to get that feedback and act on it. This is true anytime, but it is especially true in the middle of a pandemic that has had major impacts on the way we live. A public commitment to improve the success of each Yukon learner exists through the school growth process. This commitment to action focuses in part on the use of evidence to guide decisions and actions.

What evidence is being used to guide decisions and actions about half-day classes and how will this affect the January semester?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I again appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak to families and Yukoners about the importance of the survey that will be coming out. We are surveying staff, families, and students, as I have said — in November, going forward. It will be a small window so that we can gather that information quickly and determine how to increase supports for students and how to increase supports for administrators and teachers as well. I can indicate that school councils are supportive and had input to the questions that are going forward with respect to this survey and that our partners in education have been working with us to determine how best to ask these questions. We will give students time in class to produce and work on the survey so that we are sure to get their input and input from their families as well.

It is due to the hard work of the administrators, teachers, educators, school councils, First Nation governments, and other partners that our plan has been able to be executed — keeping kids in school in a safe way since August 19. We continue this work on a daily basis and look forward to the input that we will have and the feedback we will get in the survey to determine how we can best go forward in serving those students.

**Question re: Shingles vaccine**

**Ms. Hanson:** When the government announced that the Shingrix vaccine would be provided for free to seniors aged 65 to 70, many Yukoners asked why this government is ignoring the scientific evidence recommending that all healthy adults 50 years and older get the vaccine to prevent shingles and the serious complications from shingles. This vaccine is 97-percent effective in those aged 50 to 69 years old and 91-percent effective for adults 70 and older.

The chief medical officer of health's 2018 *Yukon Health Status Report — Focus on Seniors* recommended that the Shingrix vaccine be part of our public health program for seniors between the ages of 65 and 79.

Why would the minister not follow the recommendation of the chief medical officer of health and provide free Shingrix vaccines to all seniors aged 65 and over?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With respect to funding for the Shingrix vaccine — I want to just note that, historically, we haven't funded Shingrix in the Yukon. So, I'm very pleased about that. I think that the decision to go ahead and start funding and supporting our seniors is one that we're very proud of. I think the department has done its due diligence with respect to providing and including additional vaccines. Of course, we certainly want to help the well-being of Yukoners and provide the best quality care to our seniors. The offering of Shingrix vaccine to seniors — expanding access wasn't done historically, so we're very pleased about that. Certainly, we'll take that direction or recommendation under consideration as we go ahead. Being that this is new, we will go ahead as planned and implement the recommendations and that is to provide Shingrix vaccines to our senior citizens aged 65 to 70.

**Ms. Hanson:** In addition to the recommendation of the chief medical officer of health for Yukon, the *Putting People First* report recommends the expansion of the public health vaccine program. I quote in section 2.14: "Expand the department's vaccine program to incorporate new vaccinations recommended by public health available at no cost to clients."

It goes on: "Providing vaccines can reduce system costs, avoid new costs and have public health benefits such as reducing time off work or away from school. Vaccines can also prevent or reduce serious medical conditions that require expensive treatments."

This minister has publicly endorsed the *Putting People First* report, so why is she ignoring the recommendation of the panel regarding access to new vaccines that can prevent serious medical conditions?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I certainly want to acknowledge that we are providing and expanding the public health vaccines. We are taking the direction — following suit, of course, as we look at the programs across the country. We are consistent with Ontario and the BC First Nations Health Authority on this age group. If there are further recommendations, we will certainly take that under consideration.

We have gone ahead and implemented expansion of vaccines specific to Shingrix, but we've also expanded access to HPV vaccines and we are offering coverage for PrEP for Yukoners at risk of contracting HIV. So, we are looking at an expanded scope of practice. We will continue to do that as we look at implementing the *Putting People First* recommendations.

**Ms. Hanson:** The question today is about the Shingrix vaccine. Contrary to what the minister said, it is only available to a narrow band of ages 65 to 70. Almost 35 percent of senior households in Yukon report an income of less than \$40,000 per year after taxes. Given the high cost of living in Yukon, \$400 is just too much for many seniors to pay — yet this vaccine can

prevent serious medical conditions that can have long-term health impacts on seniors, along with increased costs of health care to the Yukon government. Many seniors are unable to afford the two-dose Shingrix vaccine.

Will the minister tell seniors who can't afford the \$400 Shingrix vaccine why this government refuses to make the Shingrix vaccine available and free to all seniors, not just to a few?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I will just reiterate what I had said previously: This is the first time this program has been offered in Yukon. With respect to the comments about expanded health vaccines, we are taking that beyond. We are looking at other health priorities in Yukon.

The decision to fund Shingrix for people 65 to 70 is based on clinical evidence and research on cost-effectiveness, and it is similar to programs in other jurisdictions. As I indicated, the BC First Nations Health Authority provides coverage for Shingrix for those between the ages of 65 and 69.

We certainly are interested. We have taken into consideration the recommendations from our *Putting People First* recommendations. We will consider those as we move forward. Looking at including Shingrix in our vaccine program in Yukon — I am very pleased about that. I want to assure seniors that these vaccines are available at no cost to them, as recommended by the department.

#### **Question re: Yukon Energy Corporation general rate application**

**Mr. Kent:** The 2019 annual report of Yukon Energy Corporation states — and I quote: "Yukon Energy is planning for a General Rate Application (GRA) for future years." This is the process by which the utility requests increases to how much they charge for electricity.

Can the minister tell us when Yukon Energy will be submitting this rate application? How much of a rate increase will the Energy Corporation be looking for?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Just a little bit of background — the Yukon government and Yukon Energy recognize that paying, of course, more for electricity is hard on individuals.

I think it is key to understand this rate conversation. I always like to have an opportunity to speak to it because what Yukoners felt in January and February — many Yukoners had a very significant increase in their electric bill. Really, that was the balancing, or the reconciliation, of the credit card that my friends across the way decided to run up for five years without going to rate.

Coming into my particular job in this role — what we quickly found out was that, previously, the expenditures that were ongoing at Yukon Energy Corporation year over year were not going to rate because, of course, those are tough conversations to have with Yukoners.

The commitment that we made, coming into office, was that we would look at the consistent process of going to rate, working with the Energy Corporation and letting that board make that decision every couple of years. So, in January, we saw people's rates go right up — the opposition, of course,

commenting on that but not telling everybody that, actually, they were their expenditures, for the most part.

I will reach out to Yukon Energy. I know that they are working on a rate application. They want to make sure that, every couple of years, it goes up so that we can see, not those large anomalies, but just small blips as we go forward — which is really important for everybody to balance their budget when they are sitting at the —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Kent:** I am hoping that the minister comes back with information on when he anticipates that rate application to be submitted and how much the Yukon Energy Corporation will be asking for.

I am curious: Has the minister been briefed on the GRA that Yukon Energy has worked on, and did he speak to anyone at the Yukon Energy Corporation or on the corporation's board about the timing of it?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I have, in a briefing, been told that they are working on a rate application. I think that they are trying to get their timing in place as quickly as possible.

We have said, "Do the work that you have to do. Those are your decisions." The only direction that I have ever given is that I think that it would be prudent to make sure that you are going to rate every couple of years. We don't want to see the situation where there is interference.

I am hoping that they get their package together soon. I think that is the right thing to do. We don't want to see situations again where the credit card got run up for five years — with a whole bunch of other stuff that hopefully we get to talk about a bit on expenditures here for Yukoners to know.

So, again, what I will do for the Legislative Assembly — I will reach out to Yukon Energy Corporation to try to get a handle on exactly when they want to file their rate. As well, of course, Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation will be right here, so the opposition will have lots of opportunity to ask about why we have done the things we have done and why they have done the things that they have done.

**Mr. Kent:** We have heard a couple of times on the floor of the House that the Energy Corporation and the Development Corporation are coming. Hopefully, the minister, when he is on his feet for this final response, can tell us exactly when they will be coming before we rise this fall.

We understand that the Yukon Energy Corporation was originally planning a general rate application for the end of last year; however, that did not end up going forward. So, can the minister tell us why the Energy Corporation did not go forward with a rate application for the end of last year?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The Energy Corporation and the Development Corporation will be coming this fall. I don't have the exact date. I think that the member opposite can ask the Energy Corporation and the Development Corporation, when they come in, exactly why they have made their decisions over the last number of years. Hopefully, I will have that information back about when they are going to come here to visit and to answer questions from the opposition.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 321 regarding membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

#### Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 321

**Speaker:** The Government House Leader has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of the House to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 321 regarding membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

#### Motion No. 321

**Clerk:** Motion No. 321, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

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

THAT the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, as established by Motion No. 6 of the First Session of the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly and amended by Motion No. 380 of the Second Session of the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly and Motion No. 71 of the Third Session of the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, be amended by:

- (1) rescinding the appointment of Wade Istchenko; and
- (2) appointing Brad Cathers to the committee.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I have brought this motion as the Government House Leader is required to do. I have done so at the request of the Official Opposition. They are choosing membership of an individual member whom they would like to see on this committee. I am happy to bring this forward and have unanimous consent to proceed with its debate and to make the change on the membership of the committee.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the Government House Leader. I did bring this to her attention last week and she moved very quickly to make this happen. I understand that there is a meeting coming up very shortly of the Public Accounts Committee and we wanted to adjust the membership from the Official Opposition, so I do appreciate her bringing this forward in a timely manner.

**Ms. White:** I would just like to thank the Member for Kluane for his time on the committee and, of course, welcome the Member for Lake Laberge as he takes his spot.

*Motion No. 321 agreed to*

**Speaker:** Are there any further government motions?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 322 regarding changes to the schedule of the 2020 Fall Sitting.

**Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 322**

**Speaker:** The Government House Leader has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of the House to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 322 regarding changes to the schedule of the 2020 Fall Sitting.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

**Motion No. 322**

**Clerk:** Motion No. 322, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

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

THAT, notwithstanding Standing Order 2(1), during the 2020 Fall Sitting, the Legislative Assembly shall:

(1) stand adjourned from its rising on Tuesday, November 10, 2020, until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, November 16, 2020; and

(2) meet on Friday, December 4, 2020, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., or to an earlier adjournment time if so ordered.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** This is a topic that was recently discussed by House Leaders. Each of the parties have — I understand — supported this concept. We are bringing forward this motion for the purposes of officially changing the schedule, which would be affected when the motion passes at the end of this week — actually, at the end of tomorrow — in recognition of the importance of Remembrance Day ceremonies, as well as the schedule for travel for some members who would be returning to their constituencies to participate in those kinds of things and the important community opportunities that would avail them.

I can also note that this motion — the way it has been worded and presented — and I thank the other House Leaders for their participation and interest in this topic — will not affect the 45 days for the Sitting because, while we would not sit on November 12, that has been replaced by a full sitting day scheduled for December 4. I understand their support for this from the other parties as well.

**Mr. Kent:** Yes, I will just quickly offer support on behalf of the Official Opposition to this. It is important to our rural MLAs that they're able to be in their constituencies for any Remembrance Day ceremonies that may be taking place. We appreciate the negotiations that took place between House Leaders to arrive at a solution that would respect the ability of especially rural members to travel back to their communities and not cost us one of the allotted 45 days for the Fall Sitting by agreeing to the five-day Sitting in early December.

**Ms. White:** Although the Yukon NDP caucus is not affected by driving to and from town for Remembrance Day ceremonies, we do support our rural colleagues and I hope that they are able to safely participate in the ceremonies in their communities without the stress of coming back to town for November 12. So, we were happy to support the motion.

*Motion No. 322 agreed to*

**GOVERNMENT BILLS**

**Bill No. 9: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act — Third Reading**

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 9, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McLean.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I move that Bill No. 9, entitled *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate that Bill No. 9, entitled *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** We have covered significant ground during debate on this bill in the House. I want to thank all members for their participation and contribution to the discussion. I would like to take a few moments now to remind all members of the content of the bill one more time before the final vote.

The *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act* will prohibit anyone from performing conversion therapy on a minor. Additionally, to protect vulnerable Yukoners, it prohibits substitute decision-makers from consenting to conversion therapy on behalf of another person. This act ensures that conversion therapy is not an insured health service in Yukon for anyone, regardless of their age.

This act is specifically designed to protect people of any gender identity or sexuality from harmful practices aimed at changing their sexual orientation or gender identity. I am so proud that we are moving forward to protect the safety of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners.

With the passing of this bill, Yukon will be joining three other Canadian jurisdictions that have enacted legislation bans on conversion therapy.

There are also multiple jurisdictions throughout Canada that have taken steps to ban conversion therapy, including the federal government. On October 1, 2020, the federal government reintroduced legislation in Parliament to criminalize conversion therapy. We will continue to monitor this legislation as it proceeds.

In the meantime, I am reassured knowing that many other provincial and municipal governments across the nation are committed to protecting human rights by banning conversion therapy. I believe that this legislation will have a substantially positive impact on the LGBTQ2S+ community in our territory. We are allies. We need to be here for them by actively working to end discrimination and any practices that aim to do them harm.

Several national organizations continue to express serious concerns and opposition toward conversion therapy. This includes the Canadian Psychiatric Association, Canadian Association for Social Workers, and the Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health. The Canadian Psychological Association has stated that conversion therapy, or reparative therapy, can result in negative outcomes such as distress, anxiety, depression, negative self-image, a feeling of personal failure, difficulty sustaining relationships, and sexual dysfunction.

We as a government continue to be lobbied. People are trying to convince us not to have this important change in legislation happen. Stoptheban.ca is a website that became live recently. While it is geared toward the federal government, we have lobbyists reaching out to provincial and territorial governments as well.

The opening statements on the stoptheban.ca are very concerning — and I quote: “Justin Trudeau’s proposed ban on so-called ‘Conversion Therapy’ is an unprecedented assault on civil rights, religious freedom and Christianity itself. If passed, Bill C-6 will jail parents for affirming gender-confused children in the sex they were born, pastors for providing spiritual guidance, and therapists for counselling clients who voluntarily ask for help with unwanted sexual feelings.”

I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, that some individuals might see this important legislation that is aimed to protect our children as “an unprecedented assault on civil rights”, as they put it. It concerns me and makes me question the silence from the Official Opposition all the way through this process — few comments and no questions during Committee of the Whole were asked by the Official Opposition. As we already discussed on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, a few comments from the Member for Lake Laberge were not very well-received by members of the LGBTQ2S+ community.

Where was the new leader of the conservative Yukon Party when this happened? What was the response?

I recall a recent speech from the new leader of the conservative Yukon Party talking about diversity and inclusivity going forward. This is not what we have seen on the floor of the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I can tell you that inclusivity was not reflected during the legislative process on Bill No. 9.

That silence and lack of clear leadership was disappointing at most, and it was rather concerning to me and other members of this Legislative Assembly. I thought about it a lot, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if that was a lack of knowledge on how to address the members of the LGBTQ2S+ community. If this is the case, I invite the members of the Official Opposition to be in touch with Queer Yukon or other equality-seeking groups to ask the questions that they might have. Such an easy thing would have prevented the Member for Lake Laberge from telling us that conversion therapy does not happen in Yukon, when, in fact, we know that it has happened and could be happening at this very moment.

Furthermore, there are also tremendous resources available on the QMUNITY website. This important information is found on qmunity.ca by clicking the “learn” tab. I invite

everyone to go there and learn more. This bill is something that many communities and organizations in Yukon have demanded. I am so pleased that we are ready to now pass this legislation.

The desire for a ban was originally expressed through a petition tabled in this Legislative Assembly, extensive feedback from the LGBTQ2S+ inclusion, public engagement letters, letters from multiple Yukon non-governmental organizations, and the working coalition consisting of the Yukon LGBTQ2S+ societies. I would like to take a moment to honour the youth who were leading the charge for equality in our community. I commend the Yukon Gender and Sexuality Alliance for their advocacy during the past few weeks while the bill was up for debate. Thank you for sharing your voice with us and thank you for your bravery. Thank you for listening into the Legislative Assembly when you were able. I know that we will keep channels of communication open with the Gender and Sexuality Alliance and LGBTQ2S+ organizations as we finalize our government’s action plan on LGBTQ2S+ inclusion.

By developing an action plan based on our engagement with the LGBTQ2S+ community, we are actively examining what services, programs, and policies must be changed to ensure inclusivity and non-discrimination. I look forward to sharing that action plan soon.

I would also like to thank all of our stakeholders, Yukon government officials, and all staff who played a role getting to where we are today in passing Bill No. 9 in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. A heartfelt thank you for all of your hard work and commitment.

I would like to close with an important quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere... Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” By approving this bill, we are removing threats to justice and dangerous practices to valued members of our Yukon communities. This is beneficial for all Yukoners.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill No. 9, the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act*. This legislation will prohibit conversion therapy from being provided to minors or adults for whom there is a court-appointed guardian. It sets out that the substitute decision-maker does not have the authority to consent to conversion therapy for a person and it clarifies that conversion therapy is not an insured health service. We support this legislation.

The legislation came about following a petition of the Legislature that was organized by the students of both Porter Creek Secondary School and F.H. Collins Secondary School. In particular, the work to organize the petition was led by the schools’ gender and sexuality alliances. My colleague, the MLA for Kluane, had the opportunity to meet with the Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance in the Rainbow Room early last year. He was impressed by their leadership and fearlessness in tackling this issue. He has expressed to our caucus how much he appreciated meeting with

the GSA and the concerns, issues, and hopes that they expressed to him.

More recently, the leader of the Yukon Party met with the Porter Creek GSA to learn about their lived experiences and discuss their thoughts on this bill and many other issues facing the LGBTQS+ community. I would like to thank those students on behalf of the Yukon Party for their courage and leadership in bringing this forward. I would also like to thank the Leader of the NDP for working closely with these students to bring forward their petition and for advocating on their behalf here in this legislature.

Beyond the petition, the Yukon government was also urged to take this action by the federal government, who wrote a letter to two Yukon ministers in July of 2019.

In that letter, the federal government urged the Yukon government to take this action. Since receiving the petition from Yukon students and the letter from the federal government, the Yukon government has now brought forward this bill.

We recognize the importance of this bill in signalling to Yukoners that the practices that this bill seeks to address are dangerous and harmful. We believe that it is important to protect vulnerable people from harm. No person should face discrimination, intimidation, or physical harm simply because of who they are. We also believe that all Yukoners should feel accepted and safe in this territory and in our society.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the GSA, who have petitioned the Yukon government, for their efforts and leadership. Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party will vote in favour of Bill No. 9.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Conversion therapy is a reprehensible so-called treatment to convert or change a person from being their authentic self. It harms and stigmatizes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and two-spirited persons. It undermines their dignity and negatively impacts their equality rights and lives. It reflects myths and stereotypes about LGBTQ2S+ persons. Conversion therapy is, by definition and at its very core, harmful. It is critical that we recognize the evil done by discrimination and the practice of conversion therapy — the collective idea that a human must be other than their true selves.

Over 30 percent of the thousands of queer and trans people in Canada who have experienced conversion therapy have attempted suicide. Many have taken their lives. In fact, there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that conversion therapy works; in fact, data suggests that the practice is dangerous, and most medical communities have denounced it as unethical.

As noted above, the word “therapy” is misleading. There is no scientific basis for conversion therapy. Practices often vary widely and are not regulated. It is not medically certified.

It has been questioned in this Legislative Assembly as to whether this bill, Bill No. 9, is the business of government. It is absolutely the business of government to provide safe places, safe communities, and equitable communities. It is also the right thing to do.

Societal change obliterating discrimination and true equality can be slow to come and must be the result of combined and sustained effort. One way in which we signal that change and acceptance is by changing our laws. The federal government has recently reintroduced legislative amendments to the *Criminal Code* to ban conversion therapy, a critical signal to our society that these practices will not be tolerated.

The legislation proposes five new *Criminal Code* offences related to conversion therapy. These include: causing a minor to undergo conversion therapy will be a crime; removing a minor from Canada to undergo conversion therapy abroad will be a crime; causing a person to undergo conversion therapy against their will will be a crime; profiting from providing conversion therapy will be a crime; and advertising to offer to provide conversion therapy will be a criminal offence.

The Government of Canada has committed to working with provinces, territories, municipalities, and other stakeholders to ensure that Canada is a country where everyone — regardless of their gender expression, gender identity, or sexual orientation — can live in equality and freedom.

It is critical that our other levels of government also pass legislation within their jurisdictions to make and support our society’s progress and reduce harm, which is why my colleague has brought Bill No. 9 to this Legislative Assembly. As you have heard from the minister, our proposed Yukon legislation is leading edge and will protect the rights of our youth. It will also protect those individuals seeking information and counselling about their personal lives, which is also like the proposed new federal laws.

The practice of conversion therapy harms people. Banning the practice and the addition of conversion therapy practices to the *Criminal Code* is a good first step, but it must come with education efforts to change the structures and social attitudes that underlie such practices. Repairing the damage that has been done and that continues to occur must be a priority. We need to acknowledge and improve the poor societal supports for queer and trans people and the social and health inequities that they face.

It is one of the first issues that the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister responsible for the Women’s Directorate and I worked on together in early 2017. In fact, it is very important to us and to all of our caucus, both professionally and personally, that our laws reflect an equitable Yukon.

Diversity and inclusion are among Canada’s greatest strengths. Canadians must feel safe in their identities and feel free to be their true selves. Yukoners must be supported to be who they truly are and to live fully healthy and safe lives. I am so proud of the work that our government has led to make our community more equitable, more inclusive, safer, and progressive.

I would like to thank our guests for being here today and for all the days that they have come. Your dedication to change is true, and today we see true change.

**Ms. White:** It's a pleasure today to speak in favour of Bill No. 9, the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act*. Holy cow — it has been a long time to get to this spot. I was reminded today that the radio interview that Mercedes Bacon-Traplin and Aidan Falkenberg did with Sandy Coleman on *A New Day* was actually not that long ago — less than two calendar years, I think. That conversation started — I got the e-mail shortly thereafter that said that denying that conversion therapy was a thing that could happen. Like many, I had no idea. It didn't affect me personally and I didn't know someone who had lived through it, but Mercedes wanted to have a conversation, so she asked if I would meet with her, and that is what started my involvement in this process.

It has been one of those journeys that I feel really privileged to have been on. We have a group of students here — some are new to the Rainbow Room and some have graduated and moved on — but knowing that, when I first met students at Porter Creek Secondary School from both F.H. Collins Secondary School and Porter Creek, we couldn't make eye contact at first. When we were talking about the issue, people wouldn't look at me all the way. When we were introducing ourselves, I got told "These are my preferred pronouns". I said, "Oh, it's not about your preferred pronouns; it's about what do I call you? Who are you?" So, we started building that relationship. In that time, I've seen these beautiful rainbow wings come out of these students as they have gotten stronger and stronger. I know that you keep welcoming people into your space and you build them up and you'll set them free.

Partially, it's definitely in support of the leadership. We have principal Peter Giangrande here today, who was vice-principal before and who has never once not showed up for the kids in his school. When he is asked to participate, he is there. When we talk about leadership, we have to talk about leadership from the top and how you show what leadership is by participating and by emulating and by supporting. So, we've seen that at Porter Creek Secondary School.

We've seen that with the teacher support for the GSA at F.H. Collins. We've seen that across the territory as other schools have tried to replicate what has happened at Porter Creek. But today, when we're talking about this, I think about how far we've come just as society, but also how much further we have to go.

It's really important because the lessons the students taught me was that, in the absence of law, something can happen. So, it wasn't that we knew what was going on was happening, but I've heard anecdotal stories now. I know it has happened in the territory. I know people have been told that they are not valued as the people that they are and that they need to change. So, I'm saying that I know it has happened here.

In the absence of law, something is possible. What we're showing right now is that we as lawmakers are standing up and saying that is no longer acceptable. I think that is the power. As Mr. Cook said to the students today as they were downstairs getting ready to come in, this doesn't affect just the young people who are in the gallery today, but it affects those who come behind them. So, they're making it a safer place for the

students who aren't quite in high school yet and for any kid in the Yukon. They're making it a safer place.

For that, I think we all should be very proud, but mostly I'm proud of all of the work that the students have done. I think Lori Fox said it really well in their opinion piece in the CBC, where they said, "... the safety, equality and autonomy of queer lives is not ours to give; it's theirs to take." I think today we're making that much easier.

**Mr. Gallina:** I just want to take a few minutes to reinforce some of the key points made by my Liberal colleagues here today and points that I brought forward during second reading of this bill.

As I was writing this, I couldn't help but recognize the social divide the US election is causing. Tensions are high around the world right now and we saw a polarizing political election with one particular party allowing bigotry to run rampant and flaunting it at every junction.

This House unanimously supported the motion brought forward by the Leader of the Third Party to support the Mi'kmaq First Nation and their fisheries. Through that motion, this House stood in solidarity and voted to denounce the violence and injustice that they are currently facing. Politicians with completely different priority lists and completely different objectives and views for our people all came together and acknowledge the mistreatment, the miscarriage of justice, and the importance of standing in solidarity with minority groups.

Mr. Speaker, supporting our LGBTQ2S+ community is no different. Without question, conversion therapy of any kind is both physically damaging and mentally toxic. Allowing conversion therapy to exist in any capacity sets a dangerous precedent for the further mistreatment of minority groups. For example, if we don't restrict the use of conversion therapy, we are sending a message that says, "If you're First Nation, we've got your back. But if you're First Nation and gay, we don't care if you're marginalized as long as it's not because of your heritage or skin colour." Discrimination of any kind is simply unacceptable. Intolerance should not be tolerated. Allowing anyone the flexibility to cause mental or physical harm to another human based on personal belief and discrimination challenges the very foundation on which Canada was built — a foundation of diversity and acceptance. It challenges the authenticity of our existing unity and support for marginalized minorities.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge the argument that suggests that freedom of religion supersedes someone's right to be free from discrimination or free from persecution. I am not simply seeing the scientific evidence to support the effectiveness of conversion therapy. We know for a fact that this therapy leads to psychological distress and that it leaves victims with increased depression, anxiety, self-destructive behaviour, and disassociation. If there is to be no shame in being First Nation, Black, Latino, or Asian, then there certainly can be no shame in being trans, queer, gay, bisexual, lesbian, or whichever sexual identification you carry with you.

Canada's historical past of residential schools paints a disturbing picture of the impacts of trying to force a group of

people to be something that they are not. Mr. Speaker, it is encouraging to hear that the conservative Yukon Party will vote in favour of this bill. While parties have shown support, there are some members of this Assembly who see this important legislation aiming to protect our children as an “unprecedented assault on our civil rights”, as they put it. That, coupled with comments from the Member for Lake Laberge that were not well-received by the members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, concerns me and makes me question the lack of conversation from the conservative Yukon Party Official Opposition all the way through this process.

With only limited contribution from this conservative party, with two of their members stating that they will support the bill and another one of their members speaking to the infringement on civil rights that this will bring by adopting this bill, I think that they would very much like this debate to be over with. Frankly, I think that this type of conversation makes them feel uncomfortable, but even if it does make them or anyone of us feel uncomfortable, it is a very important conversation. It is important to the community members whom it represents, and it's important to us as legislators to understand and adapt to new ways of thinking to protect citizens from psychological and physical harm.

Mr. Speaker, where did the leader of the conservative Yukon Party, Currie Dixon, stand in these conversations? What is his response? From a recent speech, the new leader talked about diversity and inclusivity, but we do not see this inclusivity on the floor of this Assembly among the conservative Yukon Party members — certainly not when the Member for Lake Laberge is telling us that conversion therapy does not happen in Yukon when, in fact, we know that it has happened and could be happening here at this very moment.

I would like to ask: Has the Member for Lake Laberge had conversations with members of the LGBTQ2S+ community to ask them if they have been subject to conversion therapy themselves or if they know that this practice is happening here in the territory? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. I don't think the member has had those conversations, and that would lead me to say that the conservative Yukon Party is not diverse or inclusive, contrary to what their leader states.

My colleagues and I have had those conversations with parties on both sides of this issue, and we are firm in our belief that conversion therapy has no place in our society. The LGBTQ2S+ community needs our leadership, and they need our support at every junction of discrimination that they face. We can't paint our crosswalks with rainbow colours for the public to see and then allow physical and mental abuse to continue to plague children behind closed doors. I do not support or condone the physical or mental abuse of anyone, and I expect that every member of this Legislative Assembly would agree with me.

I choose to stand behind the people who need our support and ban the practice of conversion therapy, and I thank those who took time out of their day to join us in these discussions here today.

**Speaker:** Is there further debate on third reading of Bill No. 9?

If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest and an open heart to the remarks of my colleagues in the House on this really important topic. I thank them for their thoughtful contributions and for our discussion on this bill today as we move into the final vote.

Based on the comments from the opposition, I am happy to hear the steps taken recently and I encourage folks to continue to do that and to find ways of understanding. At its heart, we are talking about the future that we want to create for our territory — a future that I think most of us agree should be more inclusive. Our debates and conversations in the Legislature are very important. It helps us to make sure that we are on the right track to creating exactly that future.

Our government has a vision to support healthy, vibrant communities. It is one of our key priorities. Part of having a healthy community is ensuring that it is safe for all Yukoners to express who they are and who they love without fear. LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners deserve the same rights and protection that we all enjoy. That is why this legislation is so important. We have heard from the LGBTQ2S+ community that banning the harmful practice of conversion therapy is long overdue.

As I have said, three other jurisdictions in Canada have already banned conversion therapy, and we know that banning conversion therapy is the right thing to do. As the fourth Canadian jurisdiction to implement a legislative ban, we are sending a message. We must always stand up for what is right. We must use the tools at our disposal to protect all Yukoners, including those who are marginalized.

I think of those members of our community who have been working toward equality for so very long. I continue to learn so much from the members of the LGBTQ2S+ community and their tireless advocacy they do in Yukon. Thank you for all your hard work and your dedication. You have been critical in the development of this legislation but also in pushing governments, employers, and all of us to recognize your rights. Thank you once again to all the students. Thank you for coming here today. Thank you for following through on your commitment.

You're setting the path for the next generation that even comes behind you. I think that your bravery and stepping into your role in our democratic system is really important and it's vital.

This bill is part of a broader approach to creating a more inclusive Yukon. Through the development of this government's action plan on LGBTQ2S+ inclusion, we are developing ways in which our programs, policies, and services can be more inclusive for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. We're working collaboratively — we'll continue to do that. We will do nothing for you without you, as we've stated all the way through. That's our commitment.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all members for their thoughts and contributions on how to make our laws more



inclusive and equitable for all Yukoners. I'm really looking forward to the vote. Let's continue to move forward to make lasting changes together, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question on the motion for third reading of Bill No. 9?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

*Bells*

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

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

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 9 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 9 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:** *Sexual Orientation and Gender Protection Act and Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (2020).*

**Commissioner:** I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.

*Commissioner leaves the Chamber*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.  
Government bills.

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### **Bill No. 16: Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015 — Second Reading**

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 16, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*, be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*, be now read a second time.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The Government of Yukon is pleased to bring forward Bill No. 16, entitled *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*. Today, at second reading of Bill No. 16, I will discuss the bill in detail as well as the context for these changes.

The proposed amendments to the *Condominium Act, 2015* may be divided into the following main components. Firstly, it will modify insurance requirements to create greater flexibility for condominium corporations to respond to the changing insurance market. It will establish a clear reserve fund system. It will change voting entitlements and permit proxy voting under the legislation.

Bill No. 16 will clarify rules related to condominium liens. It will modify timelines for developers and purchasers and the delivery of documents and funds in that process. It will provide a comprehensive legislative framework to create and manage mixed-use condominiums and establish special requirements for bare-land condominiums.

It will clarify the application of some other laws. It will create new and modifying existing definitions. It will expand a list of matters to be governed by the bylaws of a condominium corporation and introduce various technical amendments to reduce inconsistency and conflicting provisions. It will modify the list of regulation-making powers under the act. Lastly, it will modify transitional provisions to allow owners and developers an opportunity to prepare for and implement the new legislative requirements.

Mr. Speaker, as I present the topics in some greater detail, I would like to emphasize that the amendments represent one piece of a broader initiative known as the Land Titles modernization project. The *Condominium Act, 2015* was developed as part of the Land Titles modernization project and is the product of years of engagement with various stakeholders, including the Law Society of Yukon, the City of Whitehorse, the Association of Canada Lands Surveyors, First Nation governments, real estate lawyers, surveyors, the business community, condominium owners, and lastly, the federal Surveyor General Branch.

The act was passed in May 2015 and, to bring the act into force, accompanying regulations are required. In November 2018, the Department of Justice launched an engagement on a set of summary documents outlining proposed provisions to be included in the condominium regulations. In January 2019, the draft regulations were released and a more detailed engagement was conducted through to March 2019.

It was clear during the engagement that many parties believed that further amendments to the legislation were required in order to have regulations that responded to the issues identified during the engagement. Based on the feedback from the land titles drafting committee and the stakeholders advisory committee, an independent consultant was retained to provide an expert opinion on the regulations and any amendments to the act that might have been necessary.

This process concluded in November 2019, and the proposed amendments have been drafted throughout 2020. Those proposed amendments are based on the results of the public engagement process on the regulations, based on the opinions received from the independent consultant, based on the legislative development in other Canadian jurisdictions, based on the consistency between this act — the *Condominium Act, 2015* — and the proposed regulations, and based on the recommended practices in relation to Yukon procedures for property and condominium development.

The first major component of the proposed amendments is the modification of insurance requirements. In recent years, condominium corporations have been experiencing a significant increase in insurance premiums and difficulty in obtaining coverage. The proposed amendments to the act — those contained in Bill No. 16 — create greater flexibility for condominium corporations to respond to the changing insurance market by exempting a condominium corporation from obtaining or maintaining insurance against specified perils if it's not reasonably available.

We'll also do so by providing flexibility to unit owners if a condominium corporation is unable to obtain or maintain insurance against specified perils and they can review and decide — through a special resolution on insurance risks — the amount of insurance and the deductibles against the loss resulting from a particular peril. So, there is flexibility built in for the corporation.

It will also address adding insurance provisions related to managing real property in the case of bare-land condominiums. It will also provide a prioritized scheme in the event of a loss. It will include an insurance provision on fixtures and introduce regulation-making power related to the “standard unit” description.

With respect to reserve funds, the proposed amendments would allow for the establishment of a reserve fund scheme that requires the developer to establish a reserve fund by contributing 25 percent of the annual estimated common expenses into the reserve fund. The reserve fund system would exist for pre-existing condominiums and new condominiums but would not apply to condominiums with two or fewer units. Furthermore, condominium corporations that are created after the day of the coming into force of the act would be required to comply with the reserve fund requirements, including the development of a reserve fund study and contribution schedule. The proposed amendments allow for a transitional period for the pre-existing condominiums to comply with the reserve fund requirements. That is an important component, Mr. Speaker.

Pre-existing condominium corporations that are 10 years old or older on the day of coming into force of the act are

exempt from the reserve fund study for a period of five years so that there is time for this requirement to be met. After that period, those condominium corporations may waive the reserve fund study requirement annually through a special resolution. So, there is some flexibility for condominium corporations and the owners of condominiums who participate in those condominium corporations.

Additionally, pre-existing condominium corporations that are less than 10 years old on the day of coming into force of the act are exempt from the reserve fund study for a period of five years, as I have noted. Finally, I would like to reiterate that condominium corporations with two or fewer units — such as duplexes — will not require a reserve fund or a reserve fund study.

Moving on — the third major component proposed in the amendments contained here in Bill No. 16 is for voting entitlement and proxy voting. During our engagement, we heard that condominium corporations are facing difficulties in conducting condominium business due to the non-presence of voters in general and special meetings. The *Condominium Act, 2015* currently sets minimum quorum requirements to conduct business at a general meeting and limits the number of proxies. Thus, the proposed amendments here in Bill No. 16 provide availability of voters while maintaining the integrity of the voting process. It does so by: allowing unit owners to hold more than two proxies; identifying specific individuals who cannot hold proxies; allowing proxies to be only used for a specific purpose; and enabling electronic voting and specifying a unit's right to vote as per section 11 — that a unit may have more than one vote.

These amendments enable condominium corporations to complete business in a more effective and efficient manner and give people who cannot be physically present for the meeting a way to participate. I think that it is an incredibly important option in the days of COVID-19. We have learned many things during this process, and one is a way to be more flexible and have more participation through alternative means in decision-making — and, in this case, ownership by individuals who have condominiums and want to participate in those meetings.

I would like to turn to another component of the proposed amendments, which is clarifying rules related to condominium liens. The *Condominium Act, 2015* does not provide an adequate system for condominium corporations to register liens against the title of a condominium unit when owners are delinquent in paying condo fees or other expenses. The proposed amendments in the act include provisions to clearly set out rules about condominium liens, what can be included in a condominium lien, and a method of enforcement of liens. I will now turn to highlight some of the important amendments related to those condominium liens.

Under a claim of a condominium lien, it is proposed that a condominium corporation cannot obtain a decision from the court to take ownership of the unit. It is also proposed that a registered claim of a condominium lien is an encumbrance and is enforceable under the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. The proposed amendments also create uniformity in the builders lien

provision of the act with the *Builders Lien Act* — so aligning those pieces of legislation.

The next component speaks to modifying timelines for developers and purchasers to deliver documents and funds. The proposed amendments would modify such timelines by including a 15-day timeline for the delivery of funds to a purchaser in the event of a purchaser's contract rescission. It will also remove written permission as an alternative to an occupancy permit, and it will clarify the list of documents that a developer must give to a purchaser under the following two scenarios: if an agreement of sale for a proposed unit is entered into before the registration of a condominium; and if an agreement for sale of a unit is entered into after the registration of the condominium — so, clarifying the situations in which these provisions will apply.

The six components of the proposed amendments provide a comprehensive legislative framework to create and manage mixed-use condominiums and to establish special requirements for bare-land condominiums.

First, mixed-use condominiums — for clarification, these are types of condominiums that have both commercial and residential components and they are an emerging form of condominiums here in the territory. Establishing a legislative framework to create mixed-use condominiums requires several amendments to various provisions of the *Condominium Act, 2015*. They are included here in Bill No. 16 to remedy that situation. The various provisions include defining “sections” and “mixed use developments.” They also include requiring disclosure of documents — such as proposed bylaws of a corporation in the case of mixed-use developments, enabling bylaw development for sections, for various types of matters pertaining to sections, and enabling and requiring amendment of sections through bylaws. Also, it will allow providing a mechanism related to the expenses of sections and, lastly, define unit owner's responsibilities to pay condominium fees in the case of mixed-use developments.

These are all important components of these kinds of development projects. They are also important components to permit these kinds of development projects in a community or various communities where mixed-use condominiums really enhance the relationship of living in such a building to our communities.

Moving on, I would like to discuss the establishment of special requirements for the bare-land condominiums. Bare-land condominiums such as attached-row house-style buildings are a very common form of condominiums here in the territory. The *Condominium Act, 2015* does not address bare-land condominiums and related matters — such as their creation, their modification, or their use — and it doesn't do that in a manner that addresses the special requirements for bare-land condominiums. They are a different kind of development. The current *Condominium Act, 2015* does not address those issues.

Not addressing this gap would leave bare-land condominiums largely unregulated; therefore, the proposed amendments here in Bill No. 16 are to modify the definition of “bare land units” and “attached buildings” and to integrate the

managed real property concept into various sections of the act along with common property and common assets.

The next component is the application of other laws with respect to the *Condominium Act, 2015*. It is important to note that the act allows a condominium corporation to develop bylaws that restrict the age of persons who may reside in a residential unit; however, the *Human Rights Act* considers age as a ground that is protected from discrimination. Therefore, a consequential amendment to the *Human Rights Act* is proposed that allows condominiums to restrict the age of persons who reside in a residential unit to 55 years of age and older.

The *Condominium Act, 2015* contains a number of “must” provisions that impose legal duties on various parties and may create offences under section 3 of the *Summary Convictions Act*. The *Condominium Act, 2015* already contains an offence provision that states that anyone convicted of an offence under a select number of provisions is liable to a fine of up to \$2,000 or imprisonment of up to six months. Other “must” provisions within the *Condominium Act, 2015* are considered private law matters. It is proposed to exclude the *Condominium Act, 2015* from the application of section 3 of the *Summary Convictions Act*.

In order to create clarity within the legislation, the following new definitions have been proposed in Bill No. 16: “attached building”, “bare land condominium”, “common assets certificate”, “exclusive use common assets”, “fixture”, “managed real property”, “recreation facility contract”, “spouse”, and “substantially completed”.

Furthermore, the following definitions are proposed to be amended in the act: “bare land unit”, “buildings”, “common assets”, “mixed used development”, “section”, and “special resolution”.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, moving to governance, bylaws are a framework for a condominium corporation to manage, administer, control, and maintain a property while enforcing rules in a fair and equitable manner. The list of matters to be governed by the bylaws has been expanded to include the following: insurance, the interest rate charged by the corporation on money owing, exclusive use of common property and common assets, sections within mixed-use developments, decision-making for tied votes, voting by electronic means, fines, and unapproved expenses — all again to provide some certainty to developers and owners. It is also proposed that matters that need to be governed by the bylaws be divided into mandatory and optional bylaw categories.

Moving to administrative matters — technical amendments have been proposed to address inconsistent and conflicting provisions and ambiguous use of phrases and inconsistent use of defined terms. Multiple provisions under the *Condominium Act, 2015* mentioned various types of records that a condominium corporation should produce and maintain. To reduce this ambiguity, a comprehensive list of documents has been proposed. The proposed amendments also ensure consistent use of language with terms such as “approving authority”.

Furthermore, the proposed amendments also modify the list of regulation-making power to include implied easements,

proxies, insurance by corporations and unit owners, standard unit description, records that are to be maintained by the registrar, and condominiums on leasehold land.

Finally, the last component speaks to modifying transitional provisions to allow owners and developers an opportunity to prepare and implement the new legislative requirements. I have already shared details of the transitional period related to the reserve fund studies. The following legislative changes to the act are being proposed to allow for a transitional period for some other topics — including allowing condominium corporations 18 months to transition to the new insurance requirements. It also includes incorporating regulation-making power to manage any difficulty arising out of the transition to this act from the previous act for a five-year period. It exempts agreements and contacts entered into on or before the commencement of the act, including agreements of purchase and sale and developers' management contracts.

These proposed amendments will ensure a logical transition from the old act to the new act without undermining existing rights or interfering with ongoing transactions. The engagement on Bill No. 16 and regulations has allowed us to gain essential feedback so that we could deliver this bill to the Legislature. It will make necessary changes to the *Condominium Act, 2015* to allow the implementation of regulations that will protect the rights of Yukoners who enter into this type of arrangement.

**Mr. Cathers:** We will be supporting this going forward to Committee. We will have a number of questions at that time, including why it has taken so long to come up with the changes. The *Condominium Act, 2015* was passed roughly five years ago and we are now seeing a bill making 80 pages of amendments to that legislation. The regulations themselves are still somewhere mired in process. I do appreciate the fact that this is a significant piece of work, but we have a number of concerns from Yukoners who are affected by this legislation about the speed of the development of this.

So, we will be asking some questions regarding that as well, as well as the specific details and concerns that we have heard from Yukoners, including condo owners. As well, we would note that, if there are Yukoners who continue to have questions about this legislation that they would like to bring forward and they have not been heard yet by the government, we would be happy to ask reasonable questions when this matter comes forward for discussion in Committee. The legislative structure itself is important, and we will be asking a number of questions once we get to the Committee stage.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for her opening remarks on *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*. As the minister noted, this act brings forward significant amendments to the *Condominium Act, 2015*. As she remarked, that's notable — particularly since it was only in 2015 when the *Condominium Act* was modernized.

These are substantive and detailed amendments. Quite frankly, they will take time to work through. The draft regulatory summaries for public engagement pertaining to

governance, reserve funds, and general matters, and the draft regulatory summary for public engagement and guide for condominium owners and buyers — those two documents alone provide extensive background information, and we thank the legislative drafters and policy analysts who prepared them.

As we work our way through the proposed amendments in Bill No. 16, *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*, we will want to explore questions that arise from those documents and others, along with how issues identified have been tracked into the proposed amendments. We also anticipate that there are other questions or issues that we have been made aware of, and we look forward to engaging with the minister on those as well.

We do support the need to ensure that the legislation and regulations governing what has become a burgeoning part of the Yukon's — in particular, Whitehorse's — housing sector are effective, efficient, and equitable and that — most importantly — once passed by this Assembly, they are put into place as soon as possible.

We hope that the work necessary to have the regulations needed to bring the *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015* has largely been done so that the many existing condominium corporations and those in the process of being formed will know the rules of the game.

We are aware that, during the extensive consultation that the minister detailed, there were detailed summaries prepared of proposed key elements of the regulations required to implement the *Condominium Act, 2015*. They were prepared on matters including — as the minister identified: phased condominiums, leasehold condominiums, bare-land condominiums, mixed-use condominiums — in addition to the regulatory guides that I had already identified.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of areas that I just wanted to comment on in terms of the minister's comments in opening this for debate. First of all, I want to just say there are 80 pages to the *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015*. The legislation itself is 156 pages. I will make a plea again — as I did during the briefings and as I have done repeatedly in this Legislative Assembly: When we get a complex piece of legislation, it would be really helpful to have a crosswalk so that, as we're going through the proposed legislative amendments, we can see what the original document looks like and the proposed amendments — so that it shows how we're making changes here. In the absence of that, this is quite a byzantine and bizarre kind of process. I will just put that on the table.

I will have particular interest and concerns — and interest, I guess — in terms of the modifications being proposed with respect to insurance requirements and what the concept of "greater flexibility" means and the definition of specified "perils". I am aware as a condominium owner — so, I'm declaring my interest publicly — that the issue of insurance for condominiums in Whitehorse has not been exempted from — not just resistance, but the refusal from many major insurance carriers to provide insurance to condominiums across the country. That has placed significant pressure on individual condominium owners as well as condominium corporations.

As an example, the water portion of my condominium bill — my insurance bill — which the line item for that went from — when I got the renewal, the proposed increase was from \$16 a year to \$5,600 and something. Needless to say, I declined that, after asking the question: “Was that for the whole building or for just my unit?” I was told that it was just my unit because somehow Whitehorse is like some of the flooded areas in Québec. It’s not true, but then, as you push back, you start realizing that this is a systemic issue that is impacting a housing choice that many Yukoners have made — and are making — and oftentimes, they are finding themselves quite shocked with some of these matters that come before them.

The issue of reserve funds I think is deserving of some discussion in this House. There are a number of elements or aspects of that. I am looking for clarification and a better understanding of what the implications are — because I do agree that this is really important. I think that most people who are moving into a condominium are unaware of the fact that they are buying into an arrangement where they are sharing the cost of the depreciation of their home with many others — possibly a few others. There are many condominium corporations in this town alone, I would suggest, where people will tell you, “Oh, it’s great, because we have very, very low condominium fees.” That’s a danger. It’s a huge danger, because when your roof needs to be repaired or your elevator conks out — or, or, or — there are many big expenses.

The notion that units that are 10 years or older are exempt and then might have five years more — that may mean that it is 15 years. I am putting this out there — because the way in which I heard it and why I think these issues need to be raised — exempt for five years before they have to do a reserve fund study.

There is a combination of factors at play sometimes in some of the condo corporations that we hear about in our office through concerns being expressed by individuals. Democracy is great, except when it doesn’t work. Sometimes condo corporations are not, in practice, very democratic. So, if there are provisions to waive on an annual basis — the need to have a reserve fund study may mean that conscientious condominium owners are at peril, unable to sell their condominium — because who is going to buy a condominium when you don’t really know what the ongoing costs or the liabilities are? It’s like when you sell a home; you can expect that someone is going to want to do an inspection — to have a certified inspector do an inspection of the home that you are trying to sell — to make sure that you are telling the truth and that there are no surprises, such as black mould or a leaky roof.

There are a number of areas around the reserve studies. This is a complex area. As I said before, a lot of people assume that moving into a condominium — and it’s a lot of retirement folks — they just assume that it is an easy and relaxing way to live. Quite frankly, I think the experience of many people is that it is not. The liability continues — and the responsibility — so there are both responsibilities and obligations that owners of condominiums — and I would say that this also applies to the mixed-use ones, but I am speaking primarily of residential ones — so a key element of this is what public education will be

conducted and how, when, and what form will that take so that there is the caveat emptor there so that we have people making a decision to make the transition to condominium life that is well-informed.

The regulation piece — I would ask the minister to confirm — when I see the document, such as the regulations consultation on leasehold condominiums — and all those various consultations — whether it’s the one on regulation consultation on condominium conversion or leasehold or regulation consultation on phase condominiums, which talks about a draft regulatory summary for public engagement — they indicate that these are detailed summaries of proposed key elements of the regulations required to implement the act of 2015, but that doesn’t indicate to me that those are also key elements of what would be required to implement the act of 2020 with respect to amendments to the *Condominium Act, 2015*.

I ask that because there is a significant level of detail in these documents, and if that work has already been done, then I am hopeful that means that the regulations that are going to give effect to the *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015* are not going to be out there for another five years — that we are looking at a defined timeline to see regulations that will bring this *Act of 2020 to Amend the Condominium Act, 2015* into effect, because there is really a lot hanging on this. There is a lot of private capital that individuals have invested from individual condominium owners, from developers large and small, who have, in some cases, invested everything in terms of getting this new form of housing constructed largely throughout Whitehorse and significantly downtown and in Whitehorse Centre. The face of downtown Whitehorse has changed in the last five years with condominiums, and there are significant differences in how they are being managed.

There is a number of questions. I look forward to joining with others and working our way through this legislation. I would really ask, if it is at all possible, to see some sort of crosswalk of proposed amendments to the existing legislation so that the 80 pages of proposed amendments — well, so that we could do this most efficiently and make the best use of all MLAs’ time.

**Speaker:** Is there any further debate on second reading of Bill No. 16?

If the member now speaks, she will close debate on second reading of Bill No. 16.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I won’t be long. I will express my gratitude to the members opposite. I have made notes with respect to some of the topics during this debate that are of interest to the Official Opposition and some more notes with respect to the topics that we will review during Committee of the Whole with respect to the Third Party, the NDP.

I am pleased that there is support for these changes. I am looking forward to the debate and the details — although as noted, they are complex. They are also incredibly important for the developing area of law with respect to these kinds of

properties and the proposed amendments in Bill No. 16 seek to provide a balance between the economic development objectives and the consumer protection measures — an important line to walk and one that we will discuss much more in depth as we review the extensive changes to the *Condominium Act, 2015* that are presented in Bill No. 16.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question on the motion for second reading of Bill No. 16?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.  
*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 16 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 (Mr. Hutton):** I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

### Recess

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

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

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act, 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Chair, there were a couple of questions that were asked the other day.

I have a combination of some of the questions at the end of day — but also, after speaking to some of my colleagues on some of the other questions that we answered in the Legislature during general debate, there is a little bit more detail or a little bit more content from the departments. Again, this is why the departments really want to have the conversation when the departments are here. It is not only about just answering the specific questions, but being able to riff off of that topic on to other things that the departments are very proud of. Those are usually the conversations that we have when we go upstairs and debrief after general debate — the willingness of the departments to expand.

I will do a little bit of expanding now. I do urge the members opposite to ask these questions of the ministers responsible when they have their opportunity, past general debate, to speak to these issues.

The first one was with regard to the secure medical unit and questions therein. My response in the House was that we covered this that day and the Minister of Health and Social Services responded in Question Period as well, but I expanded a little bit further, indicating that the plan has been completed and that the funding was included in that five-year capital review for 2020-21. I also spoke about core funding increases for the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

After conversations with the minister, I just want to kind of expand on that a bit. The Department of Health and Social Services, community partners, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation — they are all obviously planning for that new secure medical unit — SMU, we'll call it for Hansard, moving forward here — SMU at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

In 2019-20, the funding was provided to the Hospital Corporation for planning and design, and the Hospital Corporation provided the department with a business case for review in 2019. During the 2020-21 fiscal year, we're continuing to engage with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and other partners, including the psychiatrists, on the proposed clinic model to ensure a clear, clinical pathway across providers, given the current health system.

From the 2021-22 fiscal year to the 2023-24 fiscal year, funding has been put into the capital budget for the SMU. The new SMU is envisioned as a space that would improve the physical space, leading to better outcomes and safety for patients as well — which is extremely important — safety for the staff and the physicians, providing opportunities for

program enhancements to better support patients and to improve recognition and also respect for First Nation needs and culture.

We continue to meet with our Yukon Hospital Corporation partners about funding and shared priorities. The proposed model of care is a combination of the biopsychosocial model of health and also the holistic model, which includes physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health. This is a leading-edge model of care.

The current timeline for the SMU work has been determined through the government-wide capital planning process based on government priorities in the coming years.

Continuing on with questions to the Department of Health and Social Services in general debate — the member opposite asked about the government's decisions on recommendations for the health review and spoke about consultation with the Yukon Medical Association. Mr. Chair, the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services is one of — if not the most — significant consultations in Yukon history. It involved extensive engagement between the independent expert panel, Yukoners, Yukon First Nation governments, stakeholders, and Yukon health and social care providers.

The 76 recommendations in that final report — they absolutely represent a path forward that will be achieved through obviously continuing that discussion — engagement and involvement from all of our partners. I did mention that on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I just want to reiterate that after speaking with my colleagues.

We're already meeting with our partners to discuss this bold vision. We've had preliminary discussions with some NGO partners and the Hospital Corporation, and in August, we did establish the collaborative medical services committee to form a forum for working through these recommendations with the Yukon Medical Association. We will continue to do this good work. We're going to continue to work with the YMA and the collaborative medical services committee to consider the feedback of our physician partners so that we can work together to deliver the health care system that supports Yukoners to lead healthy, happier lives.

To continue riffing on this topic, we also continue to turn to our health and social care partners, including the Hospital Corporation, NGOs, allied health professionals, health care providers, physicians, communities, First Nation governments, and Yukoners to ensure that we are moving forward in the right direction and that we're doing that together. That's the most important part of this comprehensive review and engagement.

The YMA's support for the majority of the report's recommendations and their commitment to working with our government to deliver a high-functioning, person-centred health care system is a testament to our shared goal of serving Yukoners together.

I will continue to one other before I cede the floor to the members opposite — and I do have a whole list of questions that were asked at the end of our last day in general debate.

The member opposite talked about the cost of implementing the 76 recommendations and talked about a press

release from the Yukon Medical Association. In our response, we talked about *Putting People First* and the implementation and consultation process therein. However, just to expand on that a bit, if I may — we obviously are in a situation because of the global pandemic, and it is definitely putting a strain on the medical system. It is putting a strain on demands in general, but despite these demands, the Department of Health and Social Services is continuing to make significant progress on many other fronts, including the implementation of the recommendations from the final report of the comprehensive health review. *Putting People First* does provide a road map to transform our health and social services system to a more integrated and collaborative person-centred system that will better meet the needs of Yukoners.

The total proposed increase in the supplementary budget for 2020-21 for activities related to implementing *Putting People First* recommendations is \$10.469 million — to put things in terms of reference for the bill that we are debating here today on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

Here is a high-level overview of some of the supplementary costs involved in implementing *Putting People First* during the first fiscal year. Again — as I often do — I want to reiterate how important it is for the members opposite to continue this dialogue with the departments, as they appear after general debate, for a more comprehensive conversation on this. I will just provide that high-level input.

Improving and enhancing our medical travel program — that's an extremely important piece, for example. It is something that all Yukoners have been asking for as well. We have already announced that we are planning to double the medical travel benefit and apply it to the first day of travel for patients who need to remain overnight for medical care.

In addition, we will be providing a subsidy of \$75 for approved escorts starting on the first day of travel and a subsidy of \$75 for those travelling for medical treatment on the same day. The supplemental costs this fiscal year for the implementation and changes to our medical travel system are about \$348,000.

Past that, we have cultural safety training. To help address institutionalized racism and better ensure that our health and social services systems deliver appropriate and equitable care, we are making rapid progress on enhanced cultural safety training. In fact, we will be continuing to make cultural safety and humility training mandatory for all Health and Social Services staff. This training will happen over the next several years. The increasing costs for this fiscal year for this particular training is expected to be \$350,000. Of note, these funds are all fully recoverable from Ottawa.

When it comes to IT investment — again, there is a little bit more of a high level of spending — it is \$10.469 million. To continue on this, we have investments in IT. It is extremely important that we keep on improving our health and social services systems, and they require new investment in technology for integrated primary care physicians — for example, the 1Health electronic medical systems — recording systems — giving Yukoners web access to their health records — two of the *Putting People First* recommendations that we

are moving forward on. To help accomplish this, there is a proposed increase in the 2020-21 Corporate Services capital budget of \$7.4 million. This increase includes a transfer of \$2.5 million from the Highways and Public Works budget to the Health and Social Services budget and also \$4.9 million in capital funding to expand IHealth to primary care. This funding is partially recoverable.

In non-capital funding, the department is also seeking \$750,000 to implement IHealth within the Yukon Hospital Corporation and an additional \$610,000 for ongoing implementation with private physicians and clinics. Complete and accurate health information is absolutely foundational to a person-centred approach to health care, and IHealth will absolutely provide Yukoners with seamless electronic medical records in that system. We are very excited about this modernization.

Nurse practitioners — another recommendation from the *Putting People First* plan is to improve primary care for Yukoners living in rural communities. We are seeking an additional \$92,000 this fiscal year to hire a nurse practitioner in the beautiful community of Carmacks. We plan to hire additional nurse practitioners next fiscal year.

Just a couple more to note — I am sure that my time is running down — the bilingual health centre — this is in order to better serve our francophone community. We have proposed an increase in funding to \$209,000 to continue the planning for the bilingual health care centre. This is 100-percent recoverable.

We also have money in the budget for vaccines and to expand the scope of pharmacists — the total supplementary costs therein — whether it's expansion of vaccine programs to decrease the rates of cancer, HIV, or even for shingles right across Yukon — this supplemental cost this year is \$678,000.

To conclude all this, it is important to note that, while we may not see immediate savings on many of the *Putting People First* recommendations — which was kind of the question — making these changes will help to bend the cost curve and prevent other system costs — this is a long-term investment and it is a long-term vision and one which will improve the overall health and social outcomes of Yukoners.

**Mr. Hassard:** If I could ask the Premier — there was something that he mentioned on November 5, here in general debate — and I quote: “I could riff off of that to universal daycare, using some of our pilot projects and looking in other jurisdictions in Canada about best practices.” I am just curious, Mr. Chair, if the Premier could give us a bit of detail around the work that the government is doing around universal daycare that he spoke of last week.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Yes — I mean, it is no surprise that we have been looking to the Québec model, when we are taking a look at implementation — conversations with the federal government and with the provinces and territories — that seems to be an obvious place to go. It's not the only place to go — outside of Canada, there are some other models of care as well that are very successful in early or universal childcare — but that was the genesis of that conversation, basically.

Again, the minister will have more to share as we go. I know that we have a pilot project right now in Watson Lake and in Dawson for two of the daycares that are in unique situations — and I know that is another model of care. That pilot project is an extremely important piece of the puzzle as well. But I don't have anything new to add at this point from the perspective of the department on universal daycare — but as that information becomes more available, we will definitely make it available to the general public.

**Mr. Hassard:** Another question that I have for the Premier — I was looking through Hansard over the past few days, just looking over Hansard from general debate. I don't see anywhere that the Premier has provided the House with the total number of FTEs for Yukon government. So, I am wondering if it is possible for him to provide us with that number. The number that I'm looking for is the total number of FTEs that will exist, including with this supplementary budget.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** It is interesting that the member opposite didn't see — I am turning to a page here that is getting pretty dog-eared as far as the number of times that we have talked about it.

In the 2020-21 main estimates — which included at that time 30 new FTEs for the year — again, we have had a big debate on the floor of the Legislative Assembly about how small that is for a year increase. If you include the 30 in that conversation, that would have brought our total FTE count at that time — when we delivered the mains — to 5,104.8. In this supplementary, there is an increase of 13 permanent FTEs, and there is also an increase of 75.2 term FTEs. That represents 1.7 percent of the total FTEs from the main estimates.

We've spoken a few times on the Legislative Assembly floor about how — from that 72.5, the majority of this increased support is attributed to our response to the COVID pandemic. That's why they're not permanent.

It also provided a continuing level of service that is expected from Yukoners even during a global pandemic. During the first portion of the year, the government also temporarily redistributed staff among various departments to assist with COVID-related supports as needed. The majority of this staff has now returned to their substantive positions and the government is taking steps to strategically recruit the staff necessary to support COVID-19 measures and public health measures over that long term.

So, when it comes to growth in general — Health and Social Services — we could talk about the several positions to address the early implementation of the *Putting People First* recommendations, including staff to support the successful initial implementation of the IHealth information network and support the virtual care options for Yukoners.

Also, there are a number of time-limited positions related to supporting the COVID-19 pandemic — as I spoke of — including the response unit team — amazing work that they've done there. Staff at the respiratory assessment centre — I can't thank them enough for the work that was done through that centre but also additional cleaning at long-term care homes and other 24/7 facilities. We mentioned as well the new permanent



position of a nurse practitioner in Carmacks. That would be one of those.

Moving to Tourism and Culture — there was additional supports required to maintain border control.

Then we had the Department of Justice and these are — as I list these departments, again, this is the new complement of FTEs in this year's supplementary — Department of Justice, to support the legislative requirements under CEMA — the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* — to establish a unit responsible for leading Yukon government's participation in the administration of justice agreements and justice-related negotiations with Yukon First Nations for restorative justice services and to provide a whole-of-government approach for a two-year pilot therein. Again, I urge the member opposite, when the Department of Justice gets to its feet after general debate, to ask them to expand on that — a really important process and a really important pilot project.

Highways and Public Works — some of the positions there were to maintain and operate the upgraded facilities at the beautiful Mayo airport. French Language Services Directorate FTEs were for the national coordination office to support the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie. Yukon Housing Corporation FTEs were to administer the housing benefit program.

There are three more here, Mr. Chair. We have Energy, Mines and Resources — there was an FTE count there to administer energy programs under *Our Clean Future*; Child and Youth Advocate office youth engagement workers to conduct a review of school attendance; and last but not least, Community Services for wildland fire fuel management.

Mr. Chair, despite the necessary increases to deal with the pandemic response, the government continues to review alternative programs and services that could be more appropriately delivered through the private sector, other levels of government, or non-governmental organizations. While this government is making the necessary progress on cost-saving and efficiency measures, we are not making cuts to services that Yukoners depend on. One only has to look at other jurisdictions in Canada — and our hearts go out to some of the premiers and governments right now with the cuts that have to be made — we, here in the Yukon, are blessed. We will continue to ensure that we have the human resources necessary to assess and protect Yukoners during this ongoing pandemic.

**Mr. Hassard:** My question was: How many FTEs are there in government now — a total number? The Premier has said that there are 5,104.8, plus 13, and plus 75.2. According to my math, that would be 5,193. But just for clarification — I know that someday, somewhere down the road, we will end up with “Well, that was your number”. So, just for clarification: Is that the number that the Premier is saying today for the total number of FTEs in government?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Yes.

**Mr. Hassard:** Perfect. I had a couple of questions regarding the Public Service Commission. It is my understanding that the PSC will not be up for debate, so I'm wondering if the Premier can tell us today how many deputy

heads have hired or are in the process of hiring senior advisory positions?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I don't have that in front of me right now — as far as information. I will endeavour to get the Public Service Commission to get back to the member opposite as to what that number is.

As we are talking about total numbers in Yukon, let's just talk for a moment — and this is a question that was asked previously. It is pertinent to the FTE count when it comes to — I guess that it's a little bit different here because this is about physicians, but it was a question asked from the Yukon Party on the last day about the total number of physicians. I am just adding this to the conversations about human resources. Let's just pivot to doctors for a second.

Based on the 2019 calendar year, Yukon has a total of 69 physicians practising in-territory and an additional 18 specialists. These physicians are supplemented by locums who provide backup and support covering in Whitehorse and also in our communities, obviously. There were 114 visiting and resident locums who provided backup coverage in 2019. Physician numbers are calculated annually, and the total number of physicians for the 2020 calendar year will be available after December 2020. I will leave it there.

This is another piece of information the other day — a question that was asked. I figured that I would add that information at this time as well.

**Mr. Hassard:** As I said, to the best of my knowledge — and unless the Premier can enlighten me that I am incorrect — the Public Service Commission will not be up for debate, so I know that the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission is sitting right behind the minister and they are actually texting jokes about whatever. So, I was certainly hoping that this would be our place to get the answers to those questions. I certainly hope that the Premier can get that information for us and provide it to the Legislature.

I am curious about the number of vacancies in government positions throughout the Yukon — if it would be possible to get a breakdown of those, both by community as well as by department. Again, I am sure that the Premier doesn't have that information at his fingertips, but I would certainly hope that he could either get that information from the minister directly behind him or if we would be able to get that in a legislative return.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I don't have that information in front of me right now. The Public Service Commission isn't appearing because they don't have a budgetary allotment in the supplementary budget, nor does Yukon Housing Corporation. I know that this is where the questions are going to come from, from the member opposite. If he wants to ask all the questions, we will endeavour to get the answers back from those departments. I do have department officials here from Finance ready to talk about the supplementary budget. Both of those two departments aren't in the supplementary budget, but again, I'm happy to hear the questions asked today, and we will do what we have been doing, which is endeavouring to get those answers back to the member opposite.

**Mr. Hassard:** I will just remind the Premier that we only had nine days in the Spring Sitting as well, so we didn't have much opportunity to ask these questions. I think that the Premier probably remembers that the Legislature didn't sit this summer the way we had hoped. Anyway, I will continue to ask the questions and hope that the minister directly behind the Premier can provide us with some information.

Last summer, the government announced the new employee housing policy for Government of Yukon staff, so I am wondering if we could get an update on how the implementation of this new policy is going.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** There are lots of questions this term on housing, which is great. It gives me an opportunity to riff a bit here on the housing issues. We do know that we have changed a lot when it comes to housing in the Yukon under the Yukon Liberal government.

Community housing is now a thing. It's also called "social housing". It's absolutely vital for community resources and sources for housing. A lot of information that I receive from going to general meetings — AYC meetings and First Nation council and mayor and council meetings. We heard loud and clear that a one size fits all for the Housing Corporation is not the best way of going. So, what I've seen is that the housing association has done amazing work in really coordinating the effort of housing for the Yukon Housing Corporation in a way that has never been seen before, and that is community or social housing.

Many Yukoners are able to find housing in the private rental market or through private home ownership. We know that there are Yukoners who are in need of housing and require assistance to gain and maintain housing — absolutely. From April to September 2020, we supported Yukoners who lost income due to COVID-19 by providing a grant directly to landlords. This program helped tenants to pay rent and support landlords who may have otherwise lost income during the pandemic.

We're working on initiatives to support more community housing options and to align our programs with national housing strategies. I mentioned on the floor of the Legislative Assembly the great work that the team over there has done on the national level, chairing national meetings. Sometimes we have the only minister at these tables — the only indigenous minister from right across the country — extremely important information to add to the national conversations. Supporting the development of a full housing continuum where, with the national housing strategy in mind, all Yukoners have a home that suits their needs and that they can afford. That is the ultimate goal of these strategies.

We're guided by our Safe at Home plan — the housing action plan for Yukon, the aging-in-place action plan, the *Putting People First* report — to work with our partners on initiatives across the housing continuum, from emergency shelter to housing with support services, to community housing as the member opposite is asking of today, to the private rental market and into home ownership as well. The level of coordination is amazing right now.

Just a little bit about the major investments this year in housing — again, the economy pre-COVID was definitely booming and with the lowest unemployment rates in Canada.

We saw a new pressure that we didn't see in the previous five years where we have a booming economy and we are trying to keep up with not only social housing needs — affordable housing needs are extremely important as well — but with a boom in the markets. Here are some investments so far, and then I will get to the member a response as far as the staff housing and employees and the policies therein.

Over the next two years, there is \$18.8 million for the construction of the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street 47-unit mixed-income housing development in Whitehorse, and \$1.1 million to plan the new Yukon Housing Corporation housing in Old Crow, Watson Lake, and Carcross. Over the next two years, the 2020-21 and 2021-22 fiscal years, there's \$5.77 million to the Challenge Cornerstone project — we are extremely excited about this one — in addition to funding already provided for the purchase of the land and the project development.

There is a fourth year of funding for the \$3.6 million in the housing initiatives fund, and \$2.4 million will flow to Yukon through a northern housing fund under the national housing strategy that I mentioned earlier. There is \$6.9 million for a First Nation energy-efficiency program and \$8.4 million for social and staff retrofits under the low-carbon economy fund. That fund is provided on a 75-percent Canadian government and 25-percent territorial government cost-matching ratio between the years of 2019 and 2023. There is \$4.1 million for the construction of a Housing First residence for vulnerable individuals. That is at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Wood Street in Whitehorse. Construction was completed in November 2019. Tenants are to be moving in there soon, if not already. I don't know what the update is on that. There is a continued commitment of \$2 million from the Yukon government toward the municipal matching rental construction program for new rental units.

Again, I spoke about the shift to community housing. I could talk more about that if the member opposite wants. I do know that, when it comes to staff housing and housing for employees, we are very proud to have taken significant steps in modernizing our approach to housing for government staff in rural communities.

Our approach is new, and its aim is to decrease rental cost disparities in our communities, to incentivize private sector investment — which is extremely important as well — in rural housing, and to prioritize housing for employees considered to be critical for the community and community well-being.

In late May 2019, the government policy governing employee housing was revised as part of our modernization efforts. The updated policy prioritizes housing to 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 the private market rates in each specific community.

I asked questions of the government when I was in opposition about this one-size-fits-all policy. It didn't make a

lot of sense to me to not incentivize government employees — like myself; I was one of those teachers who was in Yukon Housing. I believed then and I believe now that it was good to have that when I first got to town, but it only took me a couple of weeks to realize that this was where I wanted to be for the rest of my life — so how do I then grow roots in the community? I believe that limiting the tenancy policy to three years gives a government employee enough time to be able to look at some housing options outside of just staff housing.

With the new policy, it is only the second year of implementation. It is too soon to evaluate its impact. We will continue to implement the policy and to collaborate with our partners in communities in the years ahead to strive to achieve that long-term goal of affordable housing options and private market opportunities in the communities, which is extremely important.

Just an update on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Wood Street — I wasn't sure if tenants started moving in or not, but tenants have. They started moving into the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Wood Street Housing First project in February 2020.

**Mr. Hassard:** My next question was what the current wait-list is for employee housing — but then the Premier talked further about the staff housing. I will just remind the Premier that, when the press release first came out, it said: “The new staff housing model will maintain existing housing stock and current tenants will be able to remain in their homes for the next several years.” When the Premier was speaking a few moments ago, he talked about three years — so I guess if I could get him to clarify — when he gives us that current waiting list, could he also clarify if that three years is the length of time that the current tenants have in their current Yukon housing?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** As I understand it, that three-year window is our current policy. I did mention, as well, that it has only been two years since implementation. So I am not sure what more information I can give him in general debate. Also, as far as wait-lists, I don't have that number in front of me.

**Mr. Hassard:** I am wondering if the Premier could commit to getting us that wait-list number, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I believe that the minister responsible has already committed to that. Again, I will talk to my colleague as far as what that number looks like and try to get back to the member opposite with the most up-to-date information.

**Mr. Hassard:** I appreciate that the minister has committed to it — but we still haven't got it, so I was hoping that maybe if I talked to the minister's boss, that maybe we would have better luck.

Just to go back for a minute to the universal daycare conversation that I had with the Premier here a few minutes back — when I asked about the universal daycare, he mentioned Dawson and Watson Lake. So, I am just wondering if he could clarify: Do those two communities now have universal daycare?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** That is not what I said.

**Mr. Hassard:** Okay, so would the Premier be able to clarify what he was saying when he spoke of Watson Lake and Dawson?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I was just highlighting again increases to the expenditures to those two programs. The minister has talked about these pilot projects a lot of times in the Legislative Assembly. I think that the members opposite know that we put these in.

Again, we're very happy to help two daycares that — for years, when I was in opposition, I tried to get the attention of the government as far as their unique circumstances. I'm happy that the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation not only increased the direct operating grant but also significantly invested into both these daycares through a pilot project. Anytime I'm up on my feet with an opportunity to talk about these projects, I will.

Under the context of a universal daycare program, the member opposite is putting words in my mouth as far as whether this means that — I never said that. It's just a great opportunity to again say that we have put in place those two pilot projects. We're pretty excited about it. I know that — working with the board in Dawson, they were thrilled that they could increase the amount of services provided. Again, they were really thrilled with the announcement of, moving forward, a universal daycare system.

**Mr. Hassard:** It's rather interesting, I guess. I asked for details on universal daycare. The Premier spoke about pilot projects in Dawson City and Watson Lake. I guess I just assumed that he was — that's why I actually asked for the clarification because I didn't want to have the Premier later say that I was putting words in his mouth — so I thought this was the appropriate time to actually ask for that clarification. But, Mr. Chair, I guess not.

Anyway — since the Premier has said that they are unrelated, I guess maybe I'll ask the question again: What is the government doing on universal daycare?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I also said that they're not unrelated either. But anyway, the member opposite asked me about housing policies and staff policies, and I took that opportunity as well to talk about the investment that we're putting in housing. On the general topic of housing and on the general topic about daycare, I'm going to talk generally about both topics.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, if he's going to speak about daycare, could we get some information on universal daycare, Mr. Chair?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** As I said again today and before, I don't have anything new to add.

I know that the minister responsible will update the House when we have more information to add about universal daycare. We made good on that commitment. We also said that we would take all the recommendations of the *Putting People First* plan. We know that the Yukon NDP have also said that they would also implement that panel's review. We still don't know if the Yukon Party would implement all of those recommendations or not.

**Mr. Hassard:** It is interesting that the Premier will stand here and say that he made good on that commitment to universal daycare, yet he won't tell us what they've done with regard to universal daycare. I guess I will give him one more

opportunity to make good on his commitment and maybe provide us with a bit of information, please.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** So, Mr. Chair, again, we have nothing new to announce than what we have already announced. We are excited about the fact that Yukon will be providing universal daycare. We are excited about the new plan forward for our health care system. We are excited about our new plan forward when it comes to climate change as well. There are lots of things that we are excited about over here, not only about stuff that we've done in the past and where we are presently, but also looking forward and making major announcements that are going to be very pivotal in Yukon. They will be pivotal for single women, and single moms, as well. The members opposite are having a good laugh right now. We don't think that this is a laughing matter. We take this very seriously, but to answer the member opposite's question, I don't have anything new in general debate on the supplementary budget to say as far as our commitments to universal daycare.

**Mr. Hassard:** Just to be clear for the Premier, we are certainly not laughing about daycare, health care, single mothers, or anything else. We are just laughing at the fact that the Premier can brag about the things that his government is doing, but when we ask for very basic details, there aren't any. He is not able to provide us with anything. I guess that maybe the joke is on him, Mr. Chair, but I will leave it at that.

**Mr. Kent:** I would like to welcome the Premier's deputy of Finance for providing support here to him during general debate. My questions will focus on housing. I did let the Government House Leader know this morning that we would have questions on the Public Service Commission and the Yukon Housing Corporation today, as neither of them will be called as departments once we leave general debate.

The first question that I would like to ask the Premier is with respect to an issue that I raised last week. We received a letter from the J.V. Clark School Council — of course, that is the school council in Mayo. There was an initial letter sent on September 10 and a follow-up letter sent on November 5 that acknowledged that the September 10 letter hadn't been answered. I am curious if the ministers have reached out to the J.V. Clark School Council or the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun and talked to him about these specific concerns that they have with respect to staff housing for teachers in the community of Mayo.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I do know that he asked this question in Question Period directly to the minister responsible last week. I don't have any new information. I haven't talked directly to the minister responsible yet — if she has received any updates — but I know that the minister will endeavour to get that information to the member opposite as soon as she has it.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that, but I am hoping that the Premier can instruct his ministers to reach out to the J.V. Clark School Council. They have raised very significant concerns, and they have put time and thought into both of these letters that they sent. As I mentioned last week in Question Period, the November 5 letter that they sent said that, to follow up with our letter sent September 10, we have not yet received a response. So, I would have hoped that there would be a little more

urgency around that. If the Premier can commit to instructing his Minister of Education and his Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation to reach out to the J.V. Clark School and, of course, speak to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun as a member of the caucus, that would be a good start. I think that would go a long way in helping to address some of these concerns around staff housing that the school council in Mayo has raised with us.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I appreciate the suggestions from the member opposite. I do know that both departments are currently already working on this. They are working on a response, so I don't have to instruct the minister responsible to get working on something that both departments are already working on, but I do appreciate the member opposite's concern. I do also know that both of those ministers have a close relationship with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun and absolutely can provide any information to him if they didn't already.

**Mr. Kent:** Just before I leave this subject then, I am curious what happened to the September 10, 2020, letter? Obviously, it was for almost two months that the letter sat somewhere in the department without being answered, so I am curious if the Premier has an update.

I asked this question last week during Question Period and didn't get a response. I am wondering if the Premier has an update on why an urgent letter from a school council regarding staffing positions and housing within their community essentially has sat for almost two months without being responded to.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I don't have a response for the member opposite today as far as that time. In each department, we endeavour to respond to casework files as soon as possible. From my perspective, I have heard the questions on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I have heard the members opposite inform us that it has been two months. I know that the two departments are working on a response now. So, in getting that response, if there was a delay, hopefully that will be identified in the response — but I don't have anything new to report to the member opposite at this time.

**Mr. Kent:** As I said, I was copied on both of these letters. Hopefully, the school council in Mayo can get an answer on their concerns that they have raised here. Hopefully, it's timely, and perhaps ministers could reach out to the chair of the school council and let her know why there was such a delay in responding to that first letter.

When it comes to the Yukon Housing Corporation — I know that my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, talked about the abbreviated Spring Sitting that we had. I know that we have talked about it a number of times, but we really didn't get a chance to get into some of the details of the Yukon Housing Corporation budget at that time.

On page 20-4 of the budget under capital votes for Yukon Housing Corporation, there is a line item for staff housing — \$2.101 million. I am just curious as to if the Premier can provide us with a breakdown of that amount. How much has been spent so far this year, and what is it being spent on?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** If the member opposite could reference the page again, I am getting my operation and

maintenance and capital estimates out here, and I just didn't catch the page number.

**Mr. Kent:** It is vote 18 of Yukon Housing Corporation, and the page number is 20-4 — and it's capital vote 18-2. The line item is staff housing, \$2.101 million. Again, for the Premier, I am just curious as to what that money is being spent on and where it's being spent.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I do see the number here in the main estimates — \$2,101,000. I don't have a further breakdown at this time. I know that the department is not showing up in the general debate for the supplementary budget because there are no new allocations for Yukon Housing Corporation.

I will say — I'm sure the member opposite will have something to say in response — but we did offer for the members opposite to come in and to ask questions of all of those departments this summer — the "five days in May", we like to call it — where the members could have had an opportunity to come in and question each department, each minister, and deputy minister for those five days. They did refuse to come in for that. But I don't have a lot of detail right now for that number.

I do know that there was money for renovation and rehab. As I recall, that money was about \$800,000, which would have come from that number for staff housing. There was also a number — about \$700,000 for energy retrofits. I believe that's also from this line item. Also, there were unit conversions that we do as well — and that's exactly where that type of funding would have come under.

I believe that number was around \$600,000. I don't have any more of a breakdown for the member opposite right now — again, being in general debate, for the supplementary budget of this year — but we'll see if we can get some more information for the member opposite.

**Mr. Kent:** I don't think it's going to be a surprise to the Premier that we'll agree to disagree on what happened during the summer with respect to calling the Legislature back or not calling the Legislature back and being given an opportunity to debate the budget. But here we are in the fall in general debate on the supplementary, and this is our opportunity, during general debate, to ask questions — particularly of those departments that won't be called individually going forward, so that's what we are focusing on here today. I let the Government House Leader know earlier today as well that we would be talking about the Public Service Commission and Yukon Housing Corporation today.

I am just trying to balance out these numbers that are in the Yukon Housing Corporation's main estimates versus the capital documents that accompany the budget in the tabling here. I am hoping that the Premier can help me out. In the main estimates, I mentioned the staff housing number of \$2.101 million. Then there is social housing of \$15.352 million — so that's \$17.4 million or so between the two. Yet, on table 18 on page 14 of their capital documents, it says that staff and social housing is \$5 million to \$10 million. The capital documents are a little shy of where the main estimates are. I am hoping that the Premier can reconcile the difference there for

me and let me know why two documents that were tabled at the same time appear to have conflicting numbers.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Yes, the second piece that the member opposite referenced is more of a general category, whereas there is a financial breakdown of the numbers in the main operation and maintenance and capital estimates. What you would see here in the table that he showed is building maintenance of \$10 million to \$15 million — equipment, staffing, housing — different categories there. Historical maintenance sites are different from staff housing and social housing — but the building maintenance number there is not just for one or the other. It would be more of an amalgamated number, whereas in the O&M and the capital estimates, you have breakdowns that are specific to staff housing — which I just outlined. That includes things like retrofits as well, which would be outside of that window.

Rest assured — all these numbers do get checked out with Public Accounts and through the work of the Auditor General. So, there's no discrepancy, just different titles on table 18 as compared to the O&M and capital estimates.

**Mr. Kent:** I just want to clarify with the Premier — I'm looking at table 18 in the capital documents. At the top, it says building maintenance at \$10 million to \$15 million, and equipment at \$5 million to \$10 million.

Then it says staff and social housing, \$5 million to \$10 million for this 2020-21 fiscal year. But then, when I go to capital vote 18-2 on page 20-4, it has social and staff housing at about \$17.5 million or so. So, I am looking for some assistance here — this says social and staff housing at \$17 million, and in here, it says that it's staff and social housing at \$5 million to \$10 million — about where the discrepancy is between the two documents.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** When we take a look at table 18, these are ranges — of course, the ranges being anywhere between \$10 million to \$15 million for building maintenance, anywhere from \$5 million to \$10 million for equipment, and staff and social housing being that \$5 million to \$10 million there. When we take a look at the actual main budget, we could give a breakdown of the specific numbers here on the capital and operation and maintenance mains — because these are the numbers that are more specific — to the member opposite. For example, if we want the breakdown, the actual numbers of the social housing — we already took a look at what the staff housing number is. Those are the retrofits, the upgrades to the units — that type of thing — but when it comes to the actual capital vote — the \$15.325 million — we had renovations and rehabilitation of existing stock. That would have been about \$1.2 million — to break that number down a little bit further. We have energy retrofits of \$1.402 million. We have unit conversions here as well on the social housing side of things. As I mentioned before, in the staff housing, there was unit conversions, but also, over in the social housing — a \$50-million breakdown — there were unit conversions in there as well at around \$700,000; Carcross mixed-use sixplex of \$200,000; the Watson Lake Housing First project was \$200,000 in that as well; Old Crow mixed-use tenplex of \$750,000; also in that \$15.3 million was Whitehorse mixed-use housing to the

tune of \$9 million; the northern housing fund was also in that as well, which was \$1.9 million. All of those would add up to the \$15,352,000 amount.

Any of those renovations and rehabilitations — those are contracts for existing Yukon Housing Corporation-owned social housing units. The retrofits are energy retrofits that are identified for around 19 social housing units. The good news there, as we're breaking down these numbers, is that 75 percent of that is recoverable under the low-carbon economy fund. The unit conversions — the \$700,000 that I mentioned — are single-family dwellings that are two duplex conversions to help reduce the wait-list as well as over-housing. The priority there is going to projects that support aging in place within the communities. The \$200,000 that I mentioned in Carcross was for the design for a mixed-use sixplex there.

The Watson Lake housing unit was a design for a Housing First project there. The \$750,000 for the Old Crow multi-use — that was a tenplex in Old Crow. When it comes to the \$9 million, that was the multi-use building in Whitehorse. There is not much more to add on that in general debate.

For the northern housing fund, that is funding that is available for additional affordable housing and third-party proposals as well to build affordable housing. That was \$1.9 million. That is recoverable from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation through the northern housing fund. That is about it for those.

There were a lot of key budgetary changes from 2019 to 2020, including the Carcross multiplex and the Watson Lake housing — increasing and decreasing in different communities for affordable housing units. That is the breakdown of the numbers as they appear in the mains on page 20-4, vote 18.

As far as table 18 goes, again, these are more blocks of funding that have other connotations. You see over on the table here — staff and social housing, looking like it's a smaller amount for 2020-21 — this is for planned other real property and asset projects. That is from this year and moving forward to 2024-25, whereas the number of \$15 million and the number of \$2 million in the mains — I have now provided a complete breakdown of those two values. Suffice it to say, those are the estimates; that is the spending. That will be the spending for social housing, for staff housing, and for the renos therein. Also, since then, into the supplementary estimates that we're debating now — no new money. So that will be the comprehensive list for the social housing and staff housing breakdown.

**Mr. Kent:** We may look for further detail on some of those line items as we move forward.

I know that, prior to the start of the Fall Sitting, members of our caucus, members of the NDP caucus, and members of the government caucus all had separate meetings with the folks from Vimy Heritage Housing, the non-profit that is looking to develop an assisted-living seniors facility here in Whitehorse.

Of course, there is another project that is under construction right now. I think it is on Normandy, so I will refer to it as the "Normandy project" and then the other one is the "Vimy". I am just curious if there is any money in the budget for either of those projects right now, or are there any

commitments made to either of those projects from the Yukon Housing Corporation budget?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I'm not really sure where the member is looking. Is he talking about money in the mains or specific money in the supplementary? I guess it would have to be the mains, but I would like him to clarify what he is asking.

**Mr. Kent:** I'm looking to know if there is any money in the mains under any of these existing funding envelopes or if there has been a commitment made that obviously hasn't shown up in the supplementary budget. But has a commitment been made by the Government of Yukon beyond the land — are we talking just a financial commitment for the capital construction? I know there has been a land promise made to Vimy, but has there been any commitments within any of these funding envelopes or commitments outside of the budget documents that we have here today to either the Vimy project or the one on Normandy that is privately owned?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I don't have anything new to add because obviously there is nothing in the supplementary budget. But when it comes to Normandy, that is a privately owned and operated facility that is being built. There are 84 units — housing with supports — a residence for seniors. It is currently under construction. The anticipated completion is in the fall of 2020. Normandy will be built and operated in a partnership with local businesses — Ketz Construction, Borud Industries, and Northern Vision Development.

Once completed, this facility will meet the needs of seniors who want housing with support services — such as meals and assistance with day-to-day activities — filling a gap between two existing types of accommodations for seniors — government-operated long-term care homes for those who require intensive assistance with daily activities and also professional care on a 24-hour basis and accommodating for seniors in seniors residences where seniors can live independently. We recognize that adequate, suitable, and affordable housing is absolutely fundamental for building and maintaining strong Yukon communities as well as that social determinant of an individual's wellness, as well, which is extremely important.

Just a little bit of background — the Yukon Housing Corporation negotiated \$3.5 million toward a minimum of 10 units for 20 years, with the plan for that 84 units.

This funding arrangement was proposed to Northern Vision. I don't have a lot more information here in general debate, but I know that the minister responsible would have more to add. I know that when it comes to the proposal to Northern Vision, it was a partner in the project to help make up a shortfall in project financing. Northern Vision advised us of the shortfall. It is extremely important to recognize here that, when the private sector comes to us and says that they want to partner, that is when we get involved in these types of projects. We know that we have an excellent private sector. When it comes to providing housing, it's always great to be able to work with them.

When it comes to housing — spent so far for Normandy — it will be the fall of 2022. I think I said fall of 2020; I made a mistake. It will be the fall of 2022 for the Normandy project.

That is the update I have for the member opposite when it comes to Normandy. I do know that the City of Whitehorse is also providing some development incentives over the 10-year project. There is also the municipal matching rental construction grant in there as well. We do know that this is an extremely important partnership between the governments and the private sector. That is the update I have for the member on Normandy.

**Mr. Kent:** I was writing numbers down as the Premier spoke, so I will just ask this question: I think he mentioned \$3.5 million in funding for the Normandy project — so is there any funding commitment being made? Again, leaving aside the value of the land — which I know is an important aspect of the Vimy project — has there been any commitment made to the proponents of the Vimy project for funding or is this strictly \$3.5 million for the Normandy project? Also, where would I find that? Where is that number reflected in the mains? Obviously, there is not a supplementary, but where is that \$3.5 million reflected in the budget? Is it dollars from an outside agency, such as CMHC?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** When it comes to Vimy, we absolutely appreciate the work that was done by Vimy Heritage Housing Society in developing its vision for independent housing with support for seniors. It's extremely important work — senior housing is extremely important to this government. We are exploring a variety of options at this point. I don't have much more to offer to the member opposite at this time. To support Yukoners while keeping sound financial principles in mind is extremely important to us. We're working with the Vimy Heritage Housing Society to explore sources of funding that support a financially viable project.

Most recently, Vimy received federal seed funding and we are providing support to assist with the development of their application for the CMHC's co-investment fund. Just a little bit of background therein as well — in June of this year, the Government of Yukon committed that it would hold the lot in Whistle Bend for the development until May 2021 to allow Vimy Heritage to finalize capital construction for this project.

We also are supporting the aging-in-place action plan as I mentioned — in reference to the Normandy project as well — with our partners to ensure that aging in place is an extremely important part of the collaborative Yukon-wide efforts. Housing is, as you know, Mr. Chair, one of the four pillars of this plan, which is extremely important.

Now, I know that, with Vimy, the current proposal to develop is a 45-suite building with parking and with greenspace. I do know that Energy, Mines and Resources is holding on to the lot — lot 511. It was previously called something else, so as not to confuse — that's down in Whistle Bend subdivision — again, to allow the completion of the business and feasibility plan. The lot will have a market value of approximately \$1 million.

The last note on Vimy — they submitted an application under the housing initiative fund 2019 intake. That's an interdepartmental panel that reviewed the submission and noted that the project was not on schedule to be completed within that 18-month time frame. But Vimy has been encouraged to

reapply when their project meets that program criteria — so just an update there.

When it comes to Normandy, \$1.088 million is from CMHC, and other funding is from the Yukon Housing Corporation budget — all to be absorbing this cost and managing the overall budget for this project.

Mr. Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Silver that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

#### **Chair's report**

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services 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 5:26 p.m.*







# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 61

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Tuesday, November 10, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Tuesday, November 10, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**In recognition of Remembrance Day**

**Speaker:** Before the House proceeds with the Order Paper, the Chair will make a few remarks.

Tomorrow is Remembrance Day. On this day in the Yukon Legislative Assembly, we remember all those who have served, and continue to serve, in the Canadian Forces, the RCMP, and other related agencies and remember the tens of thousands of brave souls who were lost in the line of duty in service to our country.

Across Canada, we would normally gather to hold ceremonies and honour the countless brave men and women who defended Canada and continue to defend Canada. As we are all too aware, in 2020, it will not be possible to hold our usual in-person ceremonies this year due to restrictions caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, this does not mean that Yukoners will not have Remembrance Day ceremonies.

Many Yukon communities are having virtual ceremonies or reduced-attendance ceremonies to allow physical distancing. If you are not able to attend a service, I would encourage Yukoners to view the Whitehorse ceremony on the Facebook page of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 254, where you will be able to find the details to connect to tomorrow's livestreamed ceremony from the Yukon Arts Centre.

This year, as we contemplate the wars that have occurred since the declaration of November 11 as a day of remembrance after the end of World War I, today we are facing one stark common experience with the returning soldiers at the end of that war. For those soldiers who were lucky enough to survive the ravages of that terrible conflict, close to its conclusion in the cold, muddy trenches of France, another deadly and unseen hazard was making itself known to the soldiers.

The inaccurately named "Spanish flu" was actually named in recognition of the origin of the preliminary reports received from the front. The neutral, non-combatant Spanish news services began reporting on a flu that had started to ravage those brave soldiers as they began their long journey home to North America and, indeed, around the world.

Every Canadian child learns in school that the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1918 marked the signing of the armistice that led to the end of the First World War. However, what they are perhaps less likely to learn is that the Spanish flu was infecting many soldiers, and in fact, many died before they were able to return home.

Tragically, the mass movement of soldiers returning home also facilitated the spread of the contagion on a global scale and ultimately killed far more than the number of soldiers lost during the war. Five hundred million — or approximately one-

third of the global population at the time — would eventually become infected by a precursor to today's COVID-19 and it is estimated that at least 50 million persons succumbed to it.

Today we can certainly empathize as we take time to reflect upon the plight of our relatives' world that was in the grips of what must have been a frightening, mysterious, and extremely deadly pandemic over a century ago.

Today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many of the soldiers who served in the two major conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have passed. The last Canadian veteran of World War I passed away a number of years ago, and our remaining Canadian World War II veterans are largely in their nineties.

Importantly, yesterday we heard of the injustices and the deprivation of basic rights that were denied our First Nation veterans during tributes to National Aboriginal Veterans Day. We heard about their sacrifices and of their indomitable spirit when they returned home. Thanks in part through the telling and retelling of their inspiring stories, we can begin the process as a society to fully acknowledge and appreciate their contribution and sacrifice. This is why we remember. It is to always remind ourselves that our freedom comes at a cost and that, for some of our citizens, fundamental rights were late to be recognized at home — in some instances, decades after having made great sacrifices on foreign soil.

As Members of the Legislative Assembly, we, like all Canadians, are beneficiaries of many freedoms that have been provided and maintained for us through the sacrifices of many who fought and for those who paid the ultimate price in defence of them. It is easy to take them for granted. Lest we forget.

While on my feet, I will just introduce the veterans who are present today. I received a notice from our Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms. We have: Joe Mewett, our Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, who is currently the president of the Whitehorse Legion; Doug Bell, my long-time neighbour in Riverdale and the person whom I certainly talk to for advice and guidance, former Commissioner, and World War II veteran — it's great to see you, Doug; Joe Novak, who is also a World War II veteran — hello and welcome; Terry Grabowski, who is our former Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, who is the second president and service officer at the Whitehorse legion branch; and we also have Red Grossinger, who is the past president of the Whitehorse legion. I would also be remiss in not recognizing the Member for Kluane, who is also a Canadian Forces veteran.

*Applause*

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of Remembrance Day and Yukon veterans**

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honour of Remembrance Day and to pay tribute to our Yukon veterans.

I want to begin by recognizing the tragic passing of Corporal James Choi, who succumbed to injuries following a training exercise in Alberta on October 31. We send our deepest condolences to Corporal Choi's family, friends, and also the Royal Westminster Regiment members and all those who were close to him.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, in-person events are very limited this year, but we will be coming together for ceremonies online and in our communities. We will be mourning all veterans who have died in service and show our appreciation for our veterans through online messages as well.

This Remembrance Day is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II, and I want to extend a special recognition to our remaining Yukon veterans. World War II was the most deadly conflict in our history with up to 85 million people dying throughout the course of the war. More than 45,000 Canadians died as Canadians across the country were swept into the fighting and exposed to death and destruction on a scale never before seen. Yukoners were present among the ranks — Yukoners such as Victoria Cross recipient Major George Randolph Pearkes, who was wounded five times in Passchendaele before continuing to lead as a senior officer in World War II.

When the guns finally went quiet, Pearkes finally came home after six years of intense fighting and went on to be elected to Parliament four times, where he served as a Cabinet minister. He was also appointed as Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia. Mr. Speaker, the names of his fellow Yukon soldiers who did not return can be found on memorial plaques and monuments right across our territory. Tomorrow, I will remember their sacrifices and be thankful for the freedom they preserved.

This year of remembrance, I want to recognize the passing of a very special member of the Dawson City Legion. Diane Baumgartner served as a secretary and treasurer of the Dawson Legion for many years. Diane was always an extremely hard-working, cheerful and dedicated individual who lived life to its fullest. When she retired after many years of working in the finance department of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Diane did not slow down despite her health challenges. Dawson and, in particular, the legion were very fortunate that she turned her abundant energies toward the legion and toward serving our seniors in our community as well. She was, without a doubt, the spirit, the heart, the driving force, and the soul of Dawson City's Royal Canadian Legion Branch 1. She will be sorely missed by all. As the legion members plant poppies each year in Victory Garden, we shall remember her.

Mr. Speaker, this year, I will remember and recognize the sacrifices made by all Canadian veterans who have served from World War I through to Afghanistan and those who continue to serve today. You keep us safe; we thank you for your dedication, your courage, and your sacrifice. Our country remains strong and free. We will always remember and honour you for that legacy. Lest we forget.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Every year, at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month, we gather in memorial to stand in honour

of all those who have fallen. We observe a moment of silence to mark the sacrifice of the many who have fallen in the service of their country and to acknowledge the courage of those who still serve. Canadian veterans have served throughout history in many conflicts and situations — peacekeeping missions, crises on home soil, and world wars.

On Remembrance Day, we honour and remember all veterans, whether they served abroad or at home, whether they kept the peace or fought for peace, or whether they found themselves in combat or in support of operations. These wars touched the lives of Canadians of all ages, races, and social classes. On occasions like Remembrance Day, Canadians gather to remember and to pay tribute to those who serve and to those who have served over the years.

The poppy is such an important symbol of remembrance. We must continue to honour this symbol and all it stands for. Children have lost fathers and mothers. Parents have lost sons and daughters. So many have lost loved ones. Family members, friends, and neighbours were killed in action or wounded. Thousands who returned were forced to live the rest of their lives with physical and mental scarring.

We must also recognize and support our military families. These folks have endured alongside our veterans for many years and also deserve our thoughts and, of course, our thanks. Soldiers for decades have returned to a society that is ill-equipped to deal with the broad range of injuries that they face. Much of our society will never understand the lasting impact of war or the stresses of service. We must continue to ensure that mental health and wellness for veterans is a top priority in our health care system.

So, Mr. Speaker, Lieutenant Christopher Edward Saunders was a naval officer in the Royal Canadian Navy. Chris was killed during a tragic fire while serving aboard the HMCS Chicoutimi on October 6, 2004. He left behind a wife and two sons.

His mother, Mrs. Debbie Sullivan, was chosen this year by the Royal Canadian Legion as the National Silver Cross Mother. Mrs. Sullivan will place a wreath at the National War Memorial on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November on behalf of all Canadian mothers who have lost a son or a daughter in the military service of Canada. Throughout the year, until October 2021, she will also be called upon to perform other duties honouring the fallen from all conflicts.

We continue to remember and honour our veterans and the sacrifices they made, because those sacrifices were made so that we can enjoy the freedoms that we do. They believed, and still believe, that those sacrifices would and do make a significant difference in the future of the next generation of Canadians, and it is now our job to ensure that we do the best we can with the freedoms we are given.

As I said earlier, this year marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. Lance Corporal Novak, retired, enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces 1943, at 20 years old. Mr. Novak volunteered for active general service with the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. After being shipped to England, Mr. Novak landed at Normandy, France shortly after D-Day and continued with the First Canadian Army Corps onward to

Antwerp, Belgium from September to November 1944. Then he went to Breda, Netherlands. He recently was recognized by the Kingdom of the Netherlands for his efforts during the war and liberating Holland with a Thank You Canada Medal. Mr. Novak is here today, along with his friend, Master Corporal Terry Grabowski, who is seated next to Mr. Novak in the gallery. He said the following — and I quote: “We became very good friends recently — I, as a younger veteran, look up to and respect Mr. Novak as an older veteran. I enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces in 1998 at the age of 21. I was overseas peacemaking in Kosovo just after the conflict in 1999. We share a bond of duty, comradeship, brotherhood, service beyond self — common to many veterans. Trust, honour and service are hallmarks which forge our chains that link us together.” He goes on to say, “He is a war hero and deserves our respect and admiration. I ensure he is not alone in Whitehorse. With Remembrance Day tomorrow, it is important to pay our respects for those very freedoms and rights we have in Canada. As Mr. Novak says ‘I remember all the boys that never came home.’ I agree. I also think daily, and throughout the year that in addition, I remember those who came home, but were never the same, forever changed by sights, sounds inconceivable to most.’ It is the fallen, those who sacrifice so much we must not forget. Thank you.”

I want to highlight a couple of young soldiers serving in the Canadian Armed Forces today: Matthew Birckel, who is posted in Petawawa, Ontario; and Joshawa Ewashen Dulac, who is posted in Edmonton, Alberta. Matthew’s grandfather is Paul Birckel. Josh’s parents, Marcel and Elodie Dulac, are proud Rangers in the Haines Junction Ranger Patrol.

I am proud to serve my country with these fellow Rangers, and I want to especially thank all those serving today. Of course, I would be remiss if I didn’t again, as I do every year, give special thanks to the Legion Branch 254 and, of course, all of the legions for their tireless work in support of our veterans and serving members today. Having President Joe Mewett, past President Red Grossinger, Terry Grabowski, Mr. Bell, and Mr. Novak here today is so important — “And they who for their country die shall fill an honored grave, for glory lights the soldier’s tomb, and beauty weeps the grave.”

Lest we forget.

**Ms. White:** I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP in honour of Remembrance Day and of veterans past and present. Without community gatherings across the country tomorrow, it’s more important than ever for individuals to remember the importance of November 11.

My friend Rian Turner was an army combat medic from 2001 until 2016. Her tours of service included Germany and Afghanistan, but she says that her favourite posting was here as the camp medic at the Whitehorse cadet camp. In 2016, she was honourably and medically discharged after sustaining an injury from a training exercise. Her thoughts and feelings about Remembrance Day are very personal, and with her permission, I am sharing them with you today.

She says: “Part of me is happy that Canadians have no idea what has been done for them and the sacrifices that have been

made, and the other part is focused on not letting people forget. It’s something I struggle with all the time. I have been actively trying to thank our local business who are in observance of the day and just being an advocate as I live my daily life. This time of year is particularly hard on Veterans. Photos of our dead friends start to pop up all over the place and while my heart is happy to see my friends, it is heartbreaking to witness the sometimes disrespect that some people feel entitled to show. I think the key is to continue the conversation and engaging veterans to make sure this day remains about the observance of service to country and sacrifice for all Canadians. If we drop the ball for one minute this day becomes a holiday...and it is anything but a holiday.”

So, Mr. Speaker, for many veterans, Remembrance Day is every day. We cannot forget the importance of this day and we cannot forget the sacrifices, past and present, made on behalf of Canada. We are in continued thanks and remembrance to veterans and their families.

Lest we forget.

**Speaker:** I would like to ask all present to stand as we observe a moment of silence in honour of Remembrance Day.

*Moment of silence observed*

**Speaker:** They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

Please be seated.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling a legislative return responding to questions from the Leader of the Official Opposition during Committee of the Whole on October 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. 4

**Ms. White:** I have for tabling a petition with 94 signatures that reads as follows:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT at present the OPES 9/PASE 9 programs are housed at F.H. Collins Secondary School at 1001 Lewes Blvd, the CHAOS 10/CHAOS 9 and FACES 10/ACES 10 are housed in portables behind Porter Creek Secondary School at 1405 Hemlock Street, and ES 11 is housed inside the walls of Porter Creek Secondary School;

THAT the programs’ photocopier, office administrator and principal are housed at Wood Street School at 411 Wood Street,

and the equipment for these programs are housed at a Yukon Government storage facility at 426 Range Road;

THAT an equipment drying facility is allocated as a crawl space underneath Porter Creek Secondary School;

THAT teachers at Porter Creek Secondary School facility are prohibited any administrative services, including photocopying — these services must be obtained at 411 Wood Street;

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Yukon government to bring the Wood Street Centre programs of OPES 9/PASE 9, CHAOS 10/CHAOS 9, FACES 10/ACES 10 and ES 11, program equipment, the equipment drying room, school photocopier, office administrator and principal, together under one roof for the commencement of the 2021-22 school year in August 2021.

**Speaker:** Are there any other further petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports creating “Wellness Yukon”, a new arm’s-length government agency that delivers basic health and social services in the territory and contracts with NGOs or other providers to deliver specialty services on their behalf.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to recognize the medical data indicating that all healthy individuals over the age of 50 years should receive the Shingrix vaccination and that it should be made available at no cost for all seniors 65 years and over.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure pad rental fees in mobile home parks are eligible under the Canada-Yukon housing benefit program.

**Speaker:** Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Mayo-McQuesten transmission line

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, our Liberal government is investing in a responsible and sustainable future for all Yukoners. Investing in Yukon’s energy infrastructure is an important part of our efforts. One project I would like to highlight today is the upgrade to the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line.

The project is replacing 31 kilometres of transmission lines that have reached their end of life. The existing line is more than 65 years old and is becoming increasingly unreliable. The Mayo to McQuesten portion of the grid was constructed in 1951 and was identified as being at end of life by 1992. The

increasing unreliability of the line affects both local residents and the overall stability of the grid. The transmission line that is being put in will be upgraded to support up to 138 kV, enabling future growth in the region.

This project will improve the quality of electricity services both in the region, for residents of Mayo and Keno, and more broadly for the electrical grid by increasing the reliability of the transmission line and updating the expanding regional substation. In addition to supporting local residents, the upgraded line will promote further economic development in the region. The project will also support sustainable development by allowing Victoria Gold to connect its Eagle Gold mine to the grid, giving it access to renewable hydrogenerated electricity rather than having to rely on on-site fossil-fuel generation.

This project will allow Yukon Energy Corporation to meet the demand from Victoria Gold’s gold mine, as well as other industrial customers in the community, allowing Victoria Gold to connect to the grid with this more appropriate infrastructure that has a significant environmental benefit for the territory. It is anticipated that, over the lifetime of the transmission line, carbon emissions will be reduced by 834 megatonnes by offsetting the use of on-site fossil-fuel generators.

The total cost of the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line is approximately \$34 million. The Government of Canada is contributing \$22.7 million through its Investing in Canada infrastructure program, and the Government of Yukon, through the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation, is contributing \$11.2 million to the project.

Like all other customers who connect to the grid, Victoria Gold is paying the costs associated with connecting its mine to the grid with this new line, and all major contracts for the project have been awarded through a competitive bid process that evaluated vendors based on contractor experience, price, and First Nation benefits.

The upgraded transmission line is scheduled to be completed in late 2021. I hope that all members of the House support this project.

**Mr. Kent:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to this statement.

I note that much of the technical information is the same as was co-announced in September 2019 by the Yukon’s Member of Parliament and the Yukon government. We are supportive of this kind of infrastructure investment as the line is decades old and is in need of upgrades, and it will help support operations not only at the Eagle Gold mine but also at other projects in the area. We are also pleased that the federal government agreed to partner on this line.

However, I do have some questions for the minister about this project. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the project that the minister is speaking about today is just one portion of a larger Stewart-Keno transmission project which has been shovel-ready for four years.

On May 4, 2017, the minister was asked if he was committed to moving forward with the entire Stewart-Keno transmission line project. His exact response was — and I

quote: “This is a priority for us. You have nailed it.” However, as I mentioned, today’s statement is only about one portion of that overall larger project.

Last year, the president and CEO of Yukon Energy said that this was the first phase of work with more to likely follow eventually.

So, my first question is: Is the entire Stewart-Keno transmission line project still a priority for this government? If so, why the continued delays on moving forward with it? When can we expect the rest of the line to be completed? Is the minister seeking federal funding for that portion? If so, how much?

The minister mentioned in his statement that the Government of Yukon, through the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation, is contributing over \$11.2 million to the project.

So, can the minister tell us how much is coming from the government and how much is coming from the Energy Corporation? When this project was first re-announced, the *Yukon News* wrote about the potential impacts on the electricity bills of Yukoners. An article from September 2019 states — and I quote: “Yukon Energy’s communications manager said it’s unclear what the impact to ratepayers would be at this time. ‘Like all investments we make in Yukon’s electricity system ... we will make an application to the Yukon Utilities Board to include these costs in customer rates when the projects are complete. The YUB (Yukon Utilities Board) will review these costs at that time’”.

Yesterday in Question Period, the minister confirmed that the corporation is moving forward with an application to increase the cost of power bills. So, will this project be part of the upcoming rate increase application or will it be in a subsequent one?

Can the minister give us an idea of how much this project will increase electricity rates for Yukoners?

Last year in that same article, the government stated that this project would be completed in 2020; however, today the minister has announced that it will not be completed until late 2021. This is another example of major projects and files being delayed under this minister and this government’s watch. So, can the minister please tell us why this project is delayed?

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I’m wondering if the minister can elaborate a bit on how the government is partnering with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and its development corporation on this project.

Thank you. I look forward to the responses to my questions when the minister rises again.

**Ms. White:** Energy transmission, generation, and storage is as fascinating as it is complicated. In Yukon, we often fall into the trap of discussing our energy usage as that of electrical generation without taking into account our biggest uses of energy, and that’s transportation and home heating. But since we’re talking about a transmission line, I will stick to generation today.

When we talk about generation, it’s easy to fall back on the idea that the power we’re using is mostly renewable, but the

challenge of that idea is that every day we inch closer and closer to tipping that balance. When the grid needs more power than what is currently generated renewably, our electricity becomes less green. As we increase the number of large industrial users on this grid, we also increase the amount of fossil fuels used to meet this energy gap.

No one will dispute that this transmission line has gone long past its replacement date. If you have ever been to Keno, we can agree that the Keno City pizza parlour, Sourdough Café, the Silvermoon Bunkhouse, the Keno City Hotel, the Keno City Mining Museum, and the community of Keno all deserve a stable power supply. They also deserve a lot more, but I will leave that for another day.

Today’s ministerial statement highlights the benefits of a \$34-million transmission line that will assist a large industrial user to offset their own carbon emissions without referencing what that means to Yukon’s ability to meet that proposed electricity demand or Yukon’s own need to develop renewable energy projects now.

One way to encourage or facilitate the development of renewable energy in Yukon is to compare the true cost of fuel generation, which is incorporating all of the subsidies that exist within the fossil-fuel economy from extraction, processing, and distribution. If we were able to do that, the renewable energy projects on the horizon would be much more attainable, not to mention the fact that, in the summer of 2019, the minister made a commitment at a public meeting to get an order-in-council done that would provide the Yukon Utilities Board with direction to actively pursue demand-side management. This idea is so important that it is listed as an action item in the *Our Clean Future* document on page 45. It reads: “Provide direction to the Yukon Utilities Board in 2020 to allow Yukon’s public utilities to partner with the Government of Yukon to pursue cost-effective demand-side management measures.”

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to having Yukon Energy Corporation appear as witnesses, but until then, as we are nearing the end of 2020, can the minister tell us when this order-in-council will be issued?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I think that, most appropriately, with a number of questions there — probably more than I could answer in the amount of time I have been allotted — I think I will just touch on a few things.

Considering the questions that are coming from the Third Party, my hope is that we will see some of that work completed concerning our OIC by the end of 2020. Of course, that has to go through a Cabinet process and you can’t predetermine that. Also, we have taken the time to understand some of the other really particular items that should be added to that order-in-council. So, we are still absolutely committed to that.

The question from the Official Opposition concerning the pricing mechanism on this — for the member opposite, when you read through the article on September 6, it breaks it all down. They didn’t share that part of the information about the pricing. In the same article that was referred to two or three times by the Member for Copperbelt South, it also talks about how much money was put in — which was one of the questions

but was left out — and it talks about the \$7.8 million that was there, and it also talks about the fact that most of that was covered by Victoria Gold.

Because you can't predetermine the outcome of a Utilities Board hearing, that's why the communications director for the Yukon Energy Corporation didn't give that exact number. So, we are going to have that opportunity when the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation come in later to get into some of those particular questions.

Overall, I think I hear that both of the parties were supportive — I believe, for the most part. We hear quite a bit from the opposition about projects getting executed or built. In that same article, the Member for Copperbelt South states that the previous government wanted to do the project or thought about the project but just didn't get it done.

I think that what we are doing is ensuring that we have those opportunities to work with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun on this project. I know that we just heard today that we are going to actually see a portion of the line electrified in the next day or two. When we go out and talk about mining investment as well, the fact that we have a grid that is so clean really plays such a key role with ESG financing in these projects, and I know that NND are great partners with both Victoria Gold and Alexco.

Concerning the extension of the grid in that first question by the member, I think it is best for us to continue some of those technical questions about when they are going to phase out the extension of the grid — a great question for Mr. Hall. It is something that I support. We are looking, actually — and direction from the Premier is to look at updating across the Yukon wherever we can and to continue to leverage our money from green energy.

This is something that we think is a project that is a long time coming. Another one where we jumped in and went out to get the money for — again, what we saw in the past was a lot of money being leveraged by the previous government. We are still paying on that today. One of our last big transmission lines — if you put that together with the actual infrastructure — I mean, the interest on that is — I have to go back and check, but it's almost \$5 million. Again, this is taxpayers' money.

So, I like when we can go out, put a project together, leverage it from the federal government — we get most of the capital costs covered, and we do that without taking it to ratepayers.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Panache Ventures return on investment

**Mr. Hassard:** Last September, the Liberal government shipped \$2 million of Yukon taxpayers' money to a venture capital fund in Montréal. Yesterday, we asked the minister how much of that money has been reinvested in the Yukon and how many Yukon companies were invested in as a result.

In response, he was only able to provide one example. He said Panache had invested in just one Yukon company: Proof Data Technology. So, we went back and looked at the

investment and it turns out that Panache invested in Proof Data back in May 2019 — several months before the Yukon government ever shipped that \$2 million south. So, the minister's only example of a success story was one that never even benefitted from the government's investment.

So, I will ask again: Since the Liberals gave them \$2 million of taxpayers' dollars, how many Yukon businesses has this venture capital firm invested in?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Just for the information of Yukoners — in the beginning of this fund, what has happened is that we had a number of First Nation governments, led by, I believe — I'll have to go back and check — Kluane First Nation — the first conversation with their development corporation — had come to us. We had a discussion about the opportunity that is here — again, going back to chapter 22 — one of the first notes of that chapter talks about ensuring that indigenous governments have the ability to take part in the modern economy.

So, our \$2 million that we put into this is funds that we are putting into the fund on behalf of the First Nations. The First Nations that are listed — which we didn't have a chance to go through yesterday — but the First Nation development corporations that are here are: Da Daghay Development Corporation, Dakwakada Capital Investments, Selkirk Development Corporation, Kluane Dana Shaw Development Corporation, Chu Níkwän Development Corporation, Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Development Corporation, and Dena Nezziddi Development Corporation.

Actually, that is where the investment sits. They are the owners of the investment. First of all, they have done their due diligence. In most cases, they brought in their financial experts to take a look at it. We did a third-party analysis — the same as the Alberta government, the same as the Québec government, and the same as the National Bank. But, you know what — the member across the way feels that he has a better financial understanding, I guess, than all of those individuals.

**Mr. Hassard:** Again, I will remind the minister that the question I asked was: How many Yukon businesses has this venture capital firm invested in?

We've heard the minister — he was quick to brag about other provincial entities that have invested in Panache, like the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, but there's a big difference between the Yukon government and those other provincial government-owned corporations. They are actually required to provide a return on investment. So, let me quote from the Alberta corporation's documents — quote: "It's an arms-length approach where we contribute to the success of Alberta's emerging technology leaders, while receiving a fair return on investment on behalf of Alberta taxpayers."

So, Mr. Speaker, what return on investment can Yukon taxpayers expect for their \$2 million?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'm glad the member across the way touched on that because that's exactly the structure of this. First of all, you have to ensure that the companies that the fund is investing in are going to produce a return and hit that threshold. What we've seen is a very significant return that they believe will be in place.



We have provided money on behalf of First Nations in the Yukon as a contribution to the project. The First Nations, as a corporation they formed, will then realize the return. So, that's money being invested by First Nations. We've contributed money into that process and, over tenure, the fund will return.

So, if the members opposite think that this is bad investing or bad business, please let us know. We think that it's in the spirit of what chapter 22 outlines. We think working with First Nation governments — the great thing about our First Nation governments and development corporations is that the money that gets returned gets spent in our communities. Actually, when I look across the way, many of the representatives across the way — their communities will see that return spent in their communities.

So, again, I think it's a good investment. Over time, we will see the appropriate companies rise to the occasion in the Yukon for this particular type of investment. When they get to that critical mass, there's a great opportunity for them to have investment here in the Yukon — not to have to go to Toronto and not to have to go to Vancouver, but to have First Nations here investing in them.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, again, no details on \$2 million worth of taxpayers' dollars. But let's compare the deal that the Yukon Liberals negotiated with Panache versus the deal that the Alberta Enterprise Corporation got. Alberta requires a physical presence in the province, it requires a financial return on investment for Alberta taxpayers, and they've seen numerous investments directly into Alberta.

Now, let's compare that with the Yukon Liberals: no requirement for a physical presence in the Yukon, no guaranteed financial return on investment for Yukon taxpayers, and so far, not a single investment in a Yukon company since the government made this deal.

So, I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but that doesn't sound like a very good deal to me. When will Yukon taxpayers see their \$2 million returned to the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Really grasping across the way — first of all, the Alberta investment, after the team from the Yukon concerning a number of First Nations — once they had structured their deal, Alberta has, as I understand it, actually called Panache back and said, "Can we come back and negotiate because of the Yukon deal?" That was because the team did a great job in ensuring the mentorship piece — again, providing mentorship here.

Lots of sounds from across the way, but the facts are — as it was reported to us — that both Alberta and others in that investment came back. Once we see the opportunity in place, we have Panache here to invest. What we heard from many entrepreneurs in this community in the tech sector was that we need to have that type of vehicle. What usually happens is that people invest — maybe from Toronto and Vancouver — and then they try to coax those companies out. We want those companies to stay here. You don't rush to spend the money. You make sure that you look for a good investment because of the threshold of return that you are looking for.

I ask the opposition to please sit down with the Yukon First Nation Investment Corporation and ask them if they think it's

a good deal, and please explain to them why you don't support it.

### **Question re: Mining industry collaborative framework**

**Mr. Kent:** I have a series of mining questions for the Premier and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. On March 17, 2017, the Liberals promised the mining industry that they would develop a collaborative framework to address industry concerns on timelines and reassessments. Here we are, three years and eight months later, and the Liberals have accomplished nothing on this commitment. The government has now entered the final year of their mandate, and there is no sign of this collaborative framework that they promised the mining industry.

When was the last meeting that the government held with industry regarding this collaborative framework, and when will the Premier deliver on this promise?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that the member opposite is speaking about some of the work that was committed to — working with the federal government, First Nations, as well as territorial representatives around our work and framework around the regulatory structure.

I know that there was one particular case where, in that sense, industry was invited to attend and, I think, left pretty quickly that meeting based on some concern around the agenda, but what I can say is that I'm quite happy with what I know that the Premier has reported to me on the work that is being done in the Executive Council Office, digging down to see — both with First Nation representatives and with the federal government — different avenues to go back and be able to really eliminate some of the duplication that happens within the assessment system.

More importantly, I think that we will stand by our record all day long when it comes to working with First Nations as well to see what we have in response to that. We are seeing significant money spent in exploration. I know that when we got here, there was one operating mine. Now, hopefully by the end of the year, we will see three. I think that the record stands for itself. It's a balanced approach, and we do believe that it is the right way to go.

**Mr. Kent:** So, the minister is standing by a record of broken promises. Another big announcement by the Liberals in 2018 was about a sub-regional land use plan for the Beaver River watershed. This was part of the plan around getting a decision document for an exploration road into a project north of Keno City. The minister at the time touted this as a "new way of doing business." Given the years of delays, many in the industry are saying that the minister's way of doing business is creating more uncertainty for them. The initial completion date was announced for March 2020. According to yukon.ca this morning, a final draft plan was to be completed in August of 2020.

Can the minister confirm if that information is correct? If not, when can we expect the final plan?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of comments and shots there.

I would just say that, again, we have made those commitments to build the proper relationships. What I was told, at least when I sat down with major mining companies and investors, was that there was fear, based on the conflict that we saw previously. I know that the Yukon Party doesn't want to embrace a new way of going forward, which is hand in hand on these projects. The sub-regional plan — that particular area is an extremely sensitive area. There is tremendous concern from the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, both for wildlife as well as for impacts.

We continue to do that work, which is very important to do. I will bring back to the House information concerning the timeline and sit down with Energy, Mines and Resources officials to get an updated timeline — but once again, taking on a project like that and taking the time to do it right — I don't believe that is breaking a promise. I think that the way that we used to see things done was where an e-mail was sent and it was a new policy without any consultation. We watched, over those years — it might be three or four years ago — but I can tell you that it was a time when investment was going away instead of coming.

**Mr. Kent:** When it comes to the collaborative framework and the Beaver River watershed land use plan, the new way of doing business is about missing deadlines and breaking promises.

Another placer miner who owns claims within the municipal boundaries of Dawson City reached out to our office last week with concerns about not being able to complete the required assessment on his claims. In a December 16, 2016, CBC web story, the minister said that he would be meeting in early 2017 with First Nations, Association of Yukon Communities, and other stakeholders to discuss mining within municipal boundaries and to develop an action plan. So, here we are — almost four years later, in the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of this Liberal mandate — and we have no action plan.

When will the minister deliver on this action plan around mining in municipalities that he promised would be done four years ago?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** To go back and take a look — I know that we went through our consultation. It was supported through our Cabinet to have a discussion concerning municipalities.

I mean, even this weekend — it's always on our radar to work through these challenges — I spent about an hour with the mayor of Dawson City, Mayor Potoroka. We are going to have a meeting with at least one miner in the short run to work through and try to help people understand the differences between the municipality's responsibility versus the responsibility of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Just because the member opposite puts a number of our projects together and then slights them and says that they have not worked out, that it doesn't mean it's true. Again, sub-regional planning for the first time — and what we are seeing is other nations thinking that this is a good, strong process. We know that land planning — for 15 years, we saw one plan being completed. We know about the instability that it had undertaken. When you stand here and hear people saying that those things didn't get done — you got one land plan done in 15 years. Why? I mean, that's what we are playing catch-up on

— over and over again. Class 1 — lots of promises not followed through on. We got it done. That's what people know.

### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic impact on education system**

**Ms. White:** This morning, the Minister of Education told the public that affected grades 10 to 12 students would remain on a part-time schedule until the end of the school year. While it may not be the news that parents and students were hoping for, at least now they have clarity, and we thank the minister for that.

During that press conference, the minister indicated that, to return all students to full-time, in-person classes, it would have required 35 to 60 additional staff and extra space for learning. While this may not be feasible in the middle of a school year, I think many people today are wondering why the government didn't do this over the summer months.

Can the minister indicate if, at any point this summer, she considered recruiting more teachers to maintain full-time, in-person learning for grades 10 to 12 students in Whitehorse?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the opportunity to answer questions about some of the announcements that were made this morning. We felt that it was important to communicate the latest information to parents, students, and teachers. We have committed to keeping Yukon students and parents informed of any other developments in the school planning. This morning, I spoke about the need to keep grades 10 to 12 students in the current schedule for the next semester.

Certainly, all options were considered with respect to recruiting additional teachers. Of course, that's not the only issue, but it is a critically important issue in returning grades 10 to 12. We must remember that we are continuing to deal with a very serious world pandemic and that spacing is a critical issue in relation to schools and in relation to students being able to participate in school activities. Physical distancing remains one of the key safety precautions.

Lastly, what I'll say — although I'm pleased to answer more questions about this — is that teachers are at a critical shortage across the country — I don't want to speak for the world, but quite likely across the world as well. Ontario has recently reported that they are seeking some 2,600 new teachers.

**Ms. White:** So, I would think that, in the middle of a world pandemic with extra money from the federal government and with many venues empty because of COVID restrictions, Yukoners could have come up with solutions with proper leadership from this government. Our kids are our future and we should spare no effort to make sure that they have the best education possible. We know that many students are struggling, regardless of how well they were doing before the pandemic, and the minister's lack of foresight has led us to this point.

What extra support will the government put in place for grades 10 to 12 students and their families who are struggling with the part-time, in-person schedule?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to address this question. In the attempts to criticize my leadership with respect to this department, I think what's

really happening is — inadvertently, perhaps — but I caution the insults with respect to the individuals — the experts in education who determine these options as a viable one for our grades 10 to 12 school teachers.

I am going to sit because I am not being heard with respect to this answer. I will wait for the next question.

**Ms. White:** We are members in a Westminster system, which means that the minister is responsible. What people want is extra supports for students who are not coping well with the part-time, in-person learning schedule. There is a tutor shortage across the territory, and parents and students can only do so much without leadership from this government. Increasing the number of education assistants would be a first step in ensuring that students have the support that they need.

Can the minister indicate if any extra EAs have been hired to support students who are struggling with the part-time, in-person schedules for grades 10 to 12?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It is critically important in responding to the needs of the grades 10 to 12 students here in the high schools — mostly in Whitehorse — that we recognize that they are in half-day classes with a teacher and ultimately learning for the other part of the day in other ways, with a blended learning model. I can also indicate that these were recommendations made in consultation with the education experts, principals, administrative staff, and teachers in relation to how to best serve these students.

What I can indicate also is that some students are thriving with respect to this process and this type of education. Others are finding it very challenging. The announcements made this morning and our commitment to Yukon students is that additional supports are absolutely required for those who need them. We are asking those students to reach out to their teachers — the teachers, educators, and administrators know who many of those students are — to help them structure individualized plans and additional supports that we can put in place to support those individual students.

It is critical that our focus and our attention go to those students who are not finding the current situation with respect to our response to the COVID-19 pandemic to their best interest, and we support them in that attempt.

#### **Question re: Southern Lakes enhancement project**

**Mr. Hassard:** We have discussed in this House several times the government's proposal for the Southern Lakes enhanced storage project, which would raise the water levels around residences throughout the Southern Lakes. A July 27 *Whitehorse Star* article states that the Yukon Energy Corporation Board was set to make a decision on the project in August. In fact, it quotes the president of Yukon Energy Corporation as saying — and I quote: “The board will be announcing a decision in August.”

As it is now November 10 and we have not seen an announcement, can the minister tell us what the delay is?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** So, Mr. Speaker, increasing the supply of renewable electricity does — is key to of course reducing our emissions. We've talked a lot here about the Southern Lakes storage project. Before coming into this particular role

— I think we can ask the Yukon Energy Corporation's and Yukon Development Corporation's leadership when they're here — but I think that the previous government spent about \$6 million on planning on that particular project.

What we have decided to do is, again, continue to support Yukon Energy to make those decisions at the board level. What I have been briefed on is that they are looking to submit their proposal to YESAB. That's something we've talked about a lot over the last couple years here.

They went out and did consultation. They had feedback from residents. Again, it has been controversial with people supporting the project and others with grave concerns. The great part about the environmental assessment process is that it will formalize that discussion. It gives people an opportunity to do their interventions and it gives an opportunity to really add a lot of technical work.

My understanding is that it's soon to come and I will do my best to find out when they are submitting to YESAB.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, again, this government is four years in and, again, the answer is that it's the previous government's fault.

You know, the consultation of summary for the proposal was released in May and it states — quote: “... there continues to be significant opposition to this project, particularly from Southern Lakes property owners and residents. People in this area are concerned that erosion, groundwater, and changes to water levels will negatively impact the use of their properties/docks/stairs/ septic systems and damage shorelines/beaches.”

So, Mr. Speaker, how will the minister address these concerns from area residents if the project proceeds?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There must be a problem with communications here. I did not say that this was the previous government's fault. I said the previous government spent about \$6 million on the project.

One of the things we know — we've talked about rates; we talked about it yesterday. The previous government loved to run up the credit card just like they did on this project. Until you take it through a process, you can't reconcile the credit card.

So, again, the commitment that was made here was to take it through an EA process. The questions about mitigation to impact — how you deal with all of those things — usually become part of the process — at least the final report from YESAB — looking at how to mitigate that and taking a technical look at that.

I think that Yukoners can hear. On one side, we have heard the opposition say, “No, we don't want to support the project.” On the other side, they are asking me, “When is it going to be submitted?” So, once again, there is a lot of just stirring things up, but the reality is that we can't get a real understanding. Are they behind the project that they spent \$6 million on, or are they against the project? Maybe when the member opposite gets up, just let us know so that Yukoners know where they stand after all that money was spent.

**Mr. Hassard:** I will just remind the minister that it is actually his decision because he is the minister, so we would just like some clarification as to what he is doing.

So, according to the consultation document — and I quote: “... 26% of Southern Lakes property owners felt that their properties would be negatively impacted by the project. Of those who feel their properties would be impacted, only 15% were satisfied with the mitigation that YEC has planned.”

So, how will mitigation plans be adjusted to address these concerns, and what is the projected cost of said mitigation?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that there is an opportunity and a responsibility for Members of the Legislative Assembly, when we have a chance to provide information and inform Yukoners about the institutions and the processes that we use — one is the YESAA process, from the act in 2003.

I find it intriguing that the member opposite is questioning me about what the technical strategy will be around mitigating the impact and what the price will be when the project has not gone through an environmental assessment. I know that the members opposite know the process. I know that some of them have been very close to YESAA. I would think that the best thing is to help inform Yukoners about our processes and let them understand, and then they will have that opportunity to put an intervention in, if it does impact them, or if they have a concern about it.

Many people feel that these clean energy projects are good. Many people feel that, since all that money was spent on it a number of years ago, it should be looked at. Yukon Energy would like to go through a process. I am sure that the great priorities of Yukoners — many stakeholders will have an opportunity to intervene. Then there will be a report. At that point, the Yukon government will review that report and things such as mitigation strategies — and again, looking at costs — will be identified at that time.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic impact on education system**

**Mr. Kent:** Today the Minister of Education announced that grades 10 to 12 will remain on half-days of in-person instruction for the balance of the school year. When we asked the minister what the plans were for next semester, she originally told us that she needed to consult with education partners before she made a decision on next semester. We have had some representatives of school councils reach out to us this morning indicating that they were not consulted before this morning’s announcement by the minister.

Can the minister confirm whether or not school councils or the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees was consulted prior to today’s announcement, as the minister committed — and if not, why not?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** We have been working with education partners throughout this process. This is not something that started yesterday or will end tomorrow. This is an ongoing opportunity for the Department of Education in all its various forms — the central administration as well as the schools — to cooperate and consult with their school councils, with First Nation governments, with the administrators and educators who work in the buildings, and with school councils for the purposes of determining the best interests of students as we go forward.

Of course, we must remember that we are in a world pandemic, and that reality continues today. Physical distancing remains one of the key safety precautions, and that is part of the decision that has gone into this decision today and going forward in the best interests of grades 10 to 12 students. Together with the school administrators at F.H. Collins, Porter Creek, and Vanier Catholic secondary schools and with the support of the Yukon office of the chief medical officer of health, the central administration staff has been working with schools and exploring options for grades 10 to 12.

**Mr. Kent:** I would be interested to hear from the minister how a global pandemic affects her ability to reach out and consult school councils.

As you know, the federal government has given the Yukon \$4 million to assist with the reopening of schools. On October 1, we asked the minister how much of that money would be invested in front-line mental health supports for schools. The minister claimed that she could not provide that answer because she was — in her words: “... working closely with school communities and school councils”. In today’s press conference, the minister stated that 75 percent of the funding had already been committed. However, we have not been able to find any school councils that were consulted on how the funding is being used. This appears to be another case of the minister saying one thing but doing another.

Why did the minister not consult with school councils and school communities on how to spend the federal money as she committed that she would on October 1?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It’s quite unfortunate that the member opposite is not listening to my responses. We have been working with school communities — all broad school communities — since the beginning of this pandemic. Initially, it was to determine how children could remain in school in the spring of this year. Unfortunately, those schools needed to be closed at that time. And ultimately since then, it has been to determine how we could return children to school.

I think it’s important to remember that, unlike many jurisdictions in Canada, we have been able to return some 5,700 students to full-time education daily in their schools across the territory in a safe way. This is critically important. We will continue to work with our education partners in making these decisions going forward in the best interests of our students.

**Mr. Kent:** I guess, then the question for the minister is: Why are school councils not considered education partners? She has certainly not consulted with them on any of these decisions to date and she continues to make the same mistakes. She has developed a track record of failing to engage with and properly consult school councils.

We have also asked a number of questions with respect to school busing. Many parents are finding that the current bus schedules are making their ability to get to work more difficult. This burden is particularly being carried by single parents and low-income families.

Can the minister provide us with an update on the three new school buses that the government has ordered? When will they be in service and where will they be deployed?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that it is critically important for Yukoners to hear that school councils are not only education partners, but they are critically important education partners. Perhaps the member opposite could have reminded himself about the requirements for school councils to be involved in their school operations as set out in the *Education Act*. Perhaps he could review that.

School councils are respected. We have met weekly with school councils throughout the territory during this period of time. We have met through various opportunities. We have had correspondence from them, we have had Zoom calls with them, and we have had biweekly meetings with the chairs of school councils. In fact, we most recently managed to consult with them with respect to the survey that is going to be coming out in the next few days here in the territory. We received excellent input from many school councils with respect to the kinds of questions and responses that they anticipate and how to represent their families going forward.

With respect to busing, the three new school buses have arrived in the territory and they are going through the required safety testing now. Bus drivers have been hired and we anticipate the buses being able to be used within the next two weeks once the safety work has been completed. They will be put into service in the best interests of the students.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair (Mr. Hutton):** Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

### Motion re appearance of witnesses

#### Committee of the Whole Motion No. 4

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Chair, I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 10, 2020, Mark Pike, chair of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and Kurt Dieckmann, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Ms. McPhee:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 10, 2020, Mark Pike, chair of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and Kurt Dieckmann,

president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** This is the annual attendance of members from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. We are pleased to present these witnesses as part of our government business to answer questions of the members of this Legislative Assembly here this afternoon.

**Chair:** Is there any further debate on Committee of the Whole Motion No. 4?

*Committee of the Whole Motion No. 4 agreed to*

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** It is a pleasure to welcome back to the Legislative Assembly my Deputy Minister of Finance, Mr. Scott Thompson. I do have a couple of updates from questions asked by the member opposite.

After leaving here yesterday and into the evening talking to the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, and with conversations yesterday about permanent existing tenants and those types of things — clarifying the three-year time frame and these types of questions — I have some more information there.

As of November 10, 2020, there are three people on the waiting list for staff housing. Two of the individuals are staff from the Department of Education in Faro, and one is a staff member for Health and Social Services in Mayo. That is to answer the question of what the current waiting list is for employee housing.

I believe that the member opposite said that our initial announcement said that there was a new model that would permit existing tenants to stay in their homes and asked us to clarify if the three-year time frame is the amount of time that the tenants have in their current Yukon Housing home. So, that is just a little further to that. The three-year clock started on May 1, 2019, for those previously in staff housing, and this was in consultation with the unions, YEU and YTA.

We did speak a bit about daycare and questions about Watson Lake and Dawson, and I do want to give just a little bit more information and context here. I believe that it was said many times on the floor of the Legislative Assembly that these two communities and these two particular daycares are unique in Yukon because they are not-for-profit daycares in these communities. We know from the *Putting People First* report that it was recommended there that we work toward fully funding universal childhood education for all Yukon children — so, putting things in perspective about where we are now and where we want to go. We have taken initial steps to address this recommendation from the *Putting People First* report, and we are looking at options to improve both affordable and accessible care that supports Yukon families.

As we work toward universal care, there are other initiatives underway that will continue to support young children and the families. We did sign a one-year extension to the early learning and childcare bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada. This extension provides \$2.4 million to support Yukon families and childcare providers, and it's included in this supplementary budget. It includes significant increases to the direct operating grants for licensed childcare providers to stabilize costs.

We have also worked on the implementation of enhanced kindergarten programming that we didn't mention yesterday — I feel a little remiss having not said that yesterday — and also establishing the rural childcare sustainability project in rural Yukon — extremely important projects from the department.

The members opposite also asked specifically about rural communities, so I would like to talk about that for a minute. The sustainability of that rural licensing of early learning and childcare programs is an absolute priority for our government — it is for First Nation governments as well and for Yukoners who live in these communities. It was in March 2020 that our department completed negotiations for rural childcare sustainability pilot projects with these two licensed childcare programs — one being the Little Blue Early Child Care and Learning Centre in Dawson City and also the Watson Lake Daycare. These two programs, as I said, are very unique, as they are the only non-profit, licensed childcare programs in rural Yukon.

Both Little Blue and the Watson Lake daycare agreed to enter into a two-year pilot study on rural sustainability in Yukon from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2022. I am extremely pleased with these pilot studies. On July 1, 2020, we provided the Little Blue Daycare with \$267,177, and we also provided Watson Lake Daycare with \$292,545 for the first year of these pilot projects. Both of these licensed childcare programs can also access additional funding for the second year of the project at a later date. These pilot projects will allow these non-profit childcare services to have sustainability and stability in Dawson City and Watson Lake by helping them to overcome difficulties in recruiting and in retaining qualified staff. Countless times with different boards over the years — talking to Little Blue Daycare both when I was in opposition and in government — we had — in Dawson, anyway — a unique situation where it was very hard to compete with Tr'inke Zho, the daycare

program through the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, because the staff had full-time government jobs in the government of the First Nation. So, we did as much as we could do as far as training and support. We really felt the need to increase the DOG. We also felt the need to take a look at these two-year studies to try to help these two not-for-profit daycares in rural Yukon, being the only non-First-Nation-run programs.

So, we offered training for all licensed childcare programs in Yukon — including Little Blue and Watson Lake daycares — in November 2019, which included a segment on how to incorporate First Nation culture into day-to-day programming. I thank the minister for her leadership on that initiative.

The Government of Yukon does not operate childcare programs, as the member opposite knows. We continue to assess and support individuals and organizations that will be or are interested in opening licensed family day homes, childcare centres, or school-aged programming.

To help support staff and staffing challenges in rural Yukon specifically, we have provided money to the bilateral agreement with Yukon University to provide in-community instructor support to individuals taking early learning and childcare courses through Yukon University. It is extremely important to update the member opposite as to the differences and the ongoing support that we have for our communities.

We were asked also about a letter to J.V. Clark School with a response to housing in Mayo. Thank you to the ministers responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation and Education. That letter has been responded to as of today. In summation from the letter regarding housing in Mayo — and I will quote just this small piece from the letter — but to answer the member opposite's question about whether or not this was responded to, it is now.

With regard to housing in Mayo — and I'm quoting from the letter response: "The recent modernization of housing programs at the Yukon Housing Corporation is helping to address some of the concerns you shared in your letter. The staff housing waitlist has gone down this year and Yukon Housing Corporation is continuing to build partnerships to increase housing availability by incentivizing private home ownership and rental housing development. Yukon Housing Corporation currently has 13 housing units for employees in Mayo, of which three are for teachers at your school. Two of these units are occupied by teachers and another one is on recruitment hold which could be used by a new teacher once the recruitment process is completed."

So, that is a response to the member opposite's questions on J.V. Clark School in beautiful Mayo.

I do also have an answer for the member opposite's questions — he was looking at the differences in numbers of the outlook compared to the O&M and capital estimates and pointing out a graph — page 18, I believe, was where the member opposite was directing our attention on the fly yesterday. Sorry, page 14, table 18 — I knew that there was a "1-8" in there somewhere, Mr. Chair. He was asking why there was a discrepancy between the numbers on table 18 compared to the capital estimates.

So, yesterday, what we did is we went through the capital estimates. We went through the numbers and talked about the projects which would be a line-by-line breakdown there. If the member opposite would turn to two other pages — 16 and also 8, I believe — under table 3 and under table 6, you will see some more information about the remaining dollar values, basically. The project list on table 18 for the five-year capital plan appears in the main estimates as the following line items — on page 20-11, you would have the \$1.2-million capital allocation for renovations and rehabilitation of existing stock. On the same page, you would have the \$700,000 for capital allocation for unit conversions. On the same page, there is the \$1.9-million capital allocation for the northern housing fund, but then on 20-12, there would be another \$800,000 for the renovations and rehabilitation of existing stock, and on page 20-12, the \$600,000 capital allocation for unit conversions.

This makes up \$5.2 million of the \$17.45 million in the main estimate line item for social housing and staff housing that we were talking about yesterday.

The remainder of the \$12.25 million can be found in the five-year capital plan under the following charts — so, under table 3, in the staff and social housing energy retrofits project, there would be \$1.402 million for energy retrofits to social housing, and \$701,000 for energy retrofits to staff housing.

If you go to table 6 in the Budget Address in that tab, there is a \$9-million number there for Whitehorse mixed-use housing. So, this was the one we were scratching our heads about yesterday — where was that? You would have \$750,000 for the Old Crow 10-unit mixed-use housing project and also \$200,000 for the Watson Lake housing project, and a further \$200,000 falls under the Carcross six-unit multi-use housing project. So, these breakdowns would make up the entirety of that \$17.45-million number that the member opposite was asking about yesterday. I'll leave it there for now, Mr. Chair, and cede the floor to the member opposite for any other further questions.

**Mr. Kent:** I join the Premier in welcoming back his deputy minister to provide assistance and advice to him here today.

The Premier read from responses to the letters from the J.V. Clark School Council. I'm hoping that he will provide copies of those responses to us in the Official Opposition as well as to the Third Party New Democrats.

I'm hoping that since he was reading from the letter that he would provide a copy of that letter to us here in the House. There were a number of individuals cc'd on the original letters, including myself and the Member for Porter Creek North and others, so I'm hoping that those in the cc list get a copy of the response as well.

That said, yesterday, we were talking about the two seniors assisted living projects — the Vimy project and then the Normandy project in Takhini that is under construction right now. The Premier mentioned that there was \$3.5 million provided to the Normandy project to address a gap that they had. Now, I think that the number that he provided — he can correct me if I'm wrong — but \$1.08 million of that was from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation — the balance

coming from the Yukon government. I'm just wondering if there's a line item in the Yukon Housing Corporation's budget where we can see this addressed. Obviously, there's no supplementary estimates for the Yukon Housing Corporation. That's why we're discussing this in general debate. But I'm just curious as to where we would find Yukon government's commitment that is just shy of \$2.5 million, according to the numbers the Premier provided us yesterday.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** With Vimy specifically, I would have to say that we very much appreciate the work that the Vimy Heritage Housing Society has done in developing its vision for independent housing with support for seniors.

When it comes to Normandy, in keeping with our aging-in-place philosophy, the *Putting People First* recommendations, and also the housing action plan for Yukon, both Health and Social Services and the Yukon Housing Corporation are working together in partnership to support seniors where they want to be. I think that this is a really interesting project. I want to thank the minister for her flexibility in working with the private sector, trying our best not to step on toes so that the private sector can better do work but, at the same time, when the private sector reaches out for support, being able to be nimble and quickly move to work with CMHC and the private sector on common goals. Those common goals are making sure that we have the housing supports that are necessary, especially for our seniors.

We do know that this is currently under construction. We are anticipating the completion of this project in the fall of 2022. To support this project, as I mentioned, Yukon Housing Corporation is providing that \$3.5 million that will support 10 units in the building for Yukon government use. Also, there is \$500,000 from the housing initiative fund and \$500,000 from the municipal matching rental construction fund. Normandy is going to be built and operated through a partnership, as I mentioned, but it's worth mentioning the companies — Ketz Construction and Borud Enterprises and also Northern Vision Development.

Once this facility is complete, this facility will meet the needs of seniors who want housing with support services. So, it is a bigger continuum of care, basically, than what has been offered in the past. There will be meals, assistance with day-to-day activities, and filling in a gap between two existing types of accommodation for seniors — one being government-operated long-term care homes for those who require more extensive assistance with daily living activities — and that's professional care on a 24-hour basis — but also then the second system being a residence where seniors can live independently.

Again, of that \$3.5 million for Vimy, the \$1.088 million mentioned by me and the member opposite yesterday in Committee debate is from CMHC and the \$2.237 million is being managed within the Housing Corporation's capital budget. It wouldn't necessarily be a line item specifically — as the member opposite is looking for — but I know that five percent of that money is held back until occupancy. But again, they're managing within their capital budget for this expense.

**Mr. Kent:** Again, I just wanted to go back to these J.V. Clark letters and I'm curious as to why the Premier will not provide us with a copy of the response that he sent to the school council. It's puzzling for us because it's a government that claims to be open and accountable and yet he won't provide us with a copy of the letter or even address it in his response.

So, just with the money that the Yukon government is providing to Normandy, again, we'll take the \$1.088 million off from CMHC. I caught a couple of numbers. So, \$500,000 is coming from the municipal matching grant and I think \$500,000 is coming from the housing initiative fund. So, that leaves approximately \$1.23 million or \$1.24 million, less the five-percent holdback. Where is the rest of that money coming from within this capital vote? I'm looking at the detailed capital vote here on page 20-11 of the Housing Corporation mains. I'm just curious as to what other line items are in there — existing line items are being — where the balance of the dollars is coming from.

If I missed one of the line items, then I apologize and I will let the Premier correct the record when he's on — not correct the record, but just give additional information when he's on his feet.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I didn't comment one way or another on the J.V. Clark letter. It is not my letter; it is from two different departments. Those two departments will do casework the way that they always do casework. I am not changing anything as far as being open or transparent. We will send that letter off to the people who are asking for the letter. I don't recall the member opposite sending me an awful lot of his caseworks when I was in opposition, but at the same time, we won't change any protocol when it comes to that particular casework. But the good news is that the letter is out and hopefully the questions will be suitable for the community. I think that they will be, and it does clarify some of the information that has been brought into the Legislative Assembly, for those who are inquiring — which is the important piece, I think.

Again, I answered the member opposite's question. If you take a look, when it comes to Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, they have a \$35.5-million capital vote and within that will be the allocation of the money for this particular project.

Again, at the end of the year, for capital projects, we will see from the Public Accounts a complete final. Again, these are financial estimates — the money that is coming in for the \$35.532 million — to be clear — the estimate for 2020-21. There is a myriad of different projects that are being worked out and the department is able to fund this particular project, which we're very excited about, through the total capital in this line item. Like I said, there is not a specific line item for this project per se, but that is where the money is coming from. It is coming from the \$35.532-million total capital vote for Yukon Housing Corporation.

**Mr. Kent:** So, in that capital vote, there is \$1.65 million for repairs and upgrades, \$3.2 million for home ownership, \$13.229 million for community partnering and lending, \$15.352 million for social housing, and \$2.101 million for staff

housing. I know that the Premier won't have the numbers here with him today, but I would appreciate if he could let us know — with this \$2 million or so — what the adjustments are to the lines or which pot of money those dollars are coming out of. Clearly, if there is no line item, this money was allocated after the budget was tabled, so we would be curious to see which line items in that capital vote will be decreased as a result of funding for this project.

I do want to move on though, Mr. Chair, to some of the other — I'll refer the Premier to page 5 of the five-year capital documents, table 6 — planned social development projects from 2020-21 to 2024-25. The first one on the list is the Whitehorse 47-unit mixed-use housing project. I believe — and he can correct me if I'm wrong — that the budget he mentioned for that project — he mentioned it yesterday — was \$18.8 million. I'm curious as to if he can confirm that number and provide us with a timeline of when that project is expected to be finished.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** So, again, I don't have a lot more detail for the member opposite in general debate. The member opposite knows very well as well that, when it comes to Yukon Housing Corporation and the different departments as well — they have the ability to take a look at grant programs, lapses therein, if there's some delays — that type of thing. There is wiggle room inside of capital projects. But again, that is for the department.

In general, I've directed him to where that money is coming from. The money is budgeted from that \$35.532-million value in the total capital. We are being told by the department that this is where the money is coming from for this amazing project.

When it comes to the 47-unit facility — the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street project — just confirming a nod from the member opposite if that's what we're talking about — that would be from the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street project. We did mention that we budgeted \$18 million over two years — we said that yesterday — for this project. So, as far as a timeline, it's a two-year project. This is supporting clients across the housing continuum — from homelessness to affordable rentals — all in one.

We are really proud of this project, as it will definitely boost Yukon's economy by generating construction jobs and also, at the same time, create affordable housing in Whitehorse, which is extremely important. This particular housing development will be used as the first project that models a mixed-income client allocation.

Again, I would leave it to the department to get into further conversation for that particular model, but it is an innovative design, and this housing development supports achieving the goals that are set under *Our Clean Future*. Other than that, as far as the housing project on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street — \$800,000 last year for design as well. Like I say, we have a two-year window, we have budgeted \$18 million overall, and for completion, we are looking at December 2021.

**Mr. Kent:** I was just jotting down the numbers. So, \$18 million — can the Premier confirm that this includes the \$800,000 design work, or is that in addition? He is nodding yes.



So, it's an \$18-million total project budget and it is due for completion in December 2021.

There are 47 units in this mixed-use housing project. I am curious as to if the Premier can provide us with a breakdown of how many will be market rent, how many will be rent geared to income, how many will be set aside for affordable rent — or that type of activity. Obviously, we won't have the opportunity to question Yukon Housing Corporation officials because this department will not be coming forward for debate, so that is why we are asking these questions in general debate.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I don't have that breakdown — that very specific breakdown — of this particular project on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street, here in general debate of the supplementary budget. I did give the member opposite quite a bit of a breakdown in this general debate. I can give some background on the project. The site is a well-known site; it is nice to see that we are going to be putting stuff here. The public engagement that happened there — there was an on-site session — public engagement on June 18 of 2019.

There was an open house with the Yukon Housing Corporation in December of 2019 which allowed members of the public to ask questions about the project. There was lots of consultation. We met with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, the City of Whitehorse, the Yukon action planning implementation committee, and the Accessibility Advisory Committee to discuss this project as part of a functional housing progress. You know, overall, the feedback that was given on that project decides how we are going to move forward, how we are going to allocate, and what the building is going to be used for. But I don't have in front of me the actual breakdown of those units. Overall, again, there's very positive feedback.

Again, when we're developing these projects, it's extremely important to be in that consulting system. What we hear from that will determine the models of care as we move forward implementing the *Putting People First* report and also the aging-in-place action plan. Overall, this is, like I said, a mixed-use building. It is the most significant investment in housing brought forward during this mandate so far. We do know that it is extremely important for the city, so we are very confident that this will help very much in defining the housing continuum — which, under the minister's leadership, has really seen an expansion of design and consideration when it comes to collaborative care with the Health and Social Services department as well.

I don't have a further breakdown as to how the 47 units will be further broken down. I do know that it includes a blend of bachelor suites and suites that are one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments. I will be corrected if I am wrong, but I believe that 10 will be barrier-free — but I don't have anything further than that in general debate on the supplementary budget, as it doesn't have that department in it.

**Mr. Kent:** The Premier is correct — we are in general debate and we are talking about a department that won't be called any further. So that's why we are asking these questions.

I am hoping that the Premier can speak with the minister or reach out to the Yukon Housing Corporation and get that

information for us. I think that the concern we are hearing from the private sector is specific to how many of these units will be at market rent. How many will be competing with the government in the market? I will leave it to the Premier to get the information for us on how many units in here will be charging market rent, but that is going to be the government in direct competition with the private sector, so I think that those private sector landlords are asking us to find out how many of these units will be assigned for that purpose, which would be market rent.

The next line in there is about social housing renewal. Obviously, with this five-year capital document, the expenditures don't start until 2021-22 in the range of \$500,000 to \$1 million. Then, for the following three years, they are up to \$4 million to \$5 million per year.

I am hoping that the Premier can just give us a sense of what this is for. Is it to refurbish existing social housing stock, or is there replacement contemplated for existing social housing stock out of this particular project line in the five-year capital documents that the Premier and his colleagues tabled in the spring?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I will have to endeavour to get back to the member opposite when it comes to that specific question. Again, I don't have that information here.

To be clear — with the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street project, none of them are market rent; all are rent geared to income.

I do want to clarify — I made a mistake. The \$800,000 is on top of the \$18 million — so it is \$18.8 million in the end.

**Mr. Kent:** I am happy that the Premier said that because we were led to believe that this mixed income — it says "mixed use" here in the documents. We were led to believe that it was mixed income and that there would be market rent. I know that we have asked the minister on a number of occasions during Question Period about it.

You know what? That is good news to those private landlords who are out there. I'm sure that they will be happy to hear that. We look forward to communicating to them that this will all be rent geared to income, similar to the other projects that have been built over the past number of years — whether it's the Alexander Street project or seniors facilities on the waterfront here in Whitehorse or facilities in the communities that have been built.

I'll look forward to hopefully getting some sort of explanation on the social housing renewal project line that, again, doesn't have expenditures assigned for this year, but it looks like there will be significant expenditures in years 3, 4, and 5 of the five-year capital documents that the Premier tabled in the spring.

I just quickly want to move on to the next project on that list, which is the Old Crow 10-unit mixed-use housing project. Again, I'm assuming then — and the Premier can correct me if I'm wrong — that this will all be rent geared to income. It looks like we're spending in the neighbourhood in the range of \$500,000 to \$1 million in this year. I know that the number \$750,000 is in the mains on page 20-11. So, next year is \$5- to \$10 million and the following year is \$2- to \$3 million. I'm

hoping that the Premier can provide us with an overall budget, including any expenditures in previous fiscal years that aren't reflected here for this project. Then, as part of that again, I'll ask for the timeline for when it will be completed.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, this project is mixed use, mixed income. It's called the "Old Crow mixed-use housing project". We're very proud to invest in the design and the construction of a new community housing project in Old Crow. It's an extremely important investment in that community — our only fly-in community in the Yukon.

The development will provide a range of community housing options for Old Crow, which is going to allow us to be flexible with the clients that we serve and to respond to the changing needs as we see them. We spoke about that on the floor of the Legislative Assembly a couple of times in general debate here as we get in past our 10<sup>th</sup> hour of general debate with only one party. You know, this is extremely important to change the way that we do housing so that it reflects each community as opposed to a one-size-fits-all kind of approach from the past.

The Department of Highways and Public Works will be leading this project on behalf of Yukon Housing Corporation and in conjunction with the Health and Social Services health and wellness centre. This approach will allow us to maximize the efficiencies while minimizing the impact on the community during construction of these two projects. As we all know, and as the members opposite know, it is sometimes difficult to get materials in and out of Old Crow, but we are working in partnership with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation to ensure that the overall project best meets the needs of the community. It is extremely important to partner with them.

I can also let members opposite know that the project is being designed as a 10-unit community housing building, and it is currently scheduled to be completed by late 2022. This housing project aligns — as we like to do — with the *Housing Action Plan* for Yukon's goals and also with the aging-in-place action plan — so, same narrative as the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street project that we spoke about earlier.

We are very pleased to support this project. Again, when it comes to boosting our economy — we're creating construction jobs, but also contributing to addressing the needs of additional housing in Old Crow.

I do know that the budget to fund the planning and the design phase is \$750,000. I don't have very much more to update the member opposite on as far as costs of this project, but there is some information for the member opposite — to answer his question about mixed use on this particular project — 10 units — and developing costs therein as well.

Just for the members opposite — when it comes to mixed use and mixed income, we have worked with local housing stakeholders to develop this. I don't know why the member opposite would have been surprised that we were not using a mixed-use and mixed-income housing model here. Mixed use and mixed income is a complementary model aimed at addressing the emerging community housing needs in the context of a growing, diverse, and aging population. It is extremely important to use these models.

In mixed housing, different client groups from our communities — including seniors and housing for families and individuals — they are all housed together in specifically designed multi-unit buildings. This building is specifically designed to allow for a wide range of tenants to live successfully, and that is the model that we have been using. This model means that we can better respond to the dynamic housing needs in the community by, I guess — for lack of a better word — de-labelling housing and focusing in on creating healthy, vibrant communities with multi-unit buildings.

Mixed income — that model is a new approach to allocating housing that will provide homes for clients with a range of incomes, all within the existing household limits — which is extremely important. We will support clients with deep or shallow subsidies according to their need. All tenants will receive the same type of housing regardless of their income.

**Mr. Kent:** Seeing that the time is 3:15 p.m. and we do have witnesses from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board appearing at 3:30 p.m., I move that you report progress.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Kent that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

**Chair:** Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 4 adopted earlier today, Committee of the Whole will receive witnesses from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. In order to allow the witnesses to take their places in the Chamber, Committee will now recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

*Recess*

**Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel):** Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

### Appearance of witnesses

**Deputy Chair:** Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 4 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive witnesses from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board.

I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witnesses. I would also ask the witnesses to refer their answers through the Chair when responding to the members of the Committee.

Hon. Ms. McLean, I believe you will introduce the witnesses.

*Witnesses introduced*

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** The witnesses appearing before Committee of the Whole today are Mark Pike, chair of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and Kurt Dieckmann, president and CEO of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. I would like to sincerely welcome them both here today and to thank them for all of the hard work to keep our workers protected in an ever-

evolving global economic climate and for providing assistance to employers during these unprecedented and uncertain times. An important focus since the witnesses appeared before this House last fall is the review of our two major pieces of legislation: the Yukon *Workers' Compensation Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Public engagement concluded this past January, and we released the “what we heard” report in August.

We are continuing our work toward bringing changes to modernize these two acts in the Legislative Assembly. This work also created much-needed momentum to develop important legislation aimed at preventing psychological injuries in the workplace. We worked on developing regulations to prevent workplace violence and harassment, and I am proud to tell you that the new regulations received assent on September 4, 2020.

Without further ado, I would like to again thank Mark Pike and Kurt Dieckmann for their presence here today, and I look forward to the discussion and interaction with our colleagues from across the way.

**Deputy Chair:** Would the witnesses like to make opening remarks?

**Mr. Pike:** As Minister McLean mentioned, I am Mark Pike and am the chair of the board. With me, I have Kurt Dieckmann, our president and CEO. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. Both Kurt and I look forward to this appearance every year as it provides us with an opportunity to talk about the work that our staff and board do.

When we appeared last year, we talked about change. Little did we know how much the world was really going to change. This change presents us with both challenges and opportunities, and our resolve remains strong that we will meet those and we will stick to our mandate of preventing disability and our long-term vision of zero.

Earlier this year, we started to recognize the negative financial impact of COVID and what it was doing to our local employers. We offered relief to businesses that were impacted. We offered employers the opportunity to revise their 2020 payroll estimates, and we offered businesses the opportunity to defer payment of their premiums without penalty or interest charges.

We also worked in cooperation with other agencies to ensure that the effects of COVID-19 in the workplace are mitigated as much as is practical. This included occupational health and safety officers who continue to provide services to Yukon workers and employers through the COVID-19 pandemic. Safety officers are reviewing COVID-19-related reopening plans for employers who are not required to close by the chief medical officer of health and all safety inspections, including a discussion review of COVID-19 safety measures.

Although COVID-19 has dominated the headlines the last few months, we can't lose sight of the fact that we continue to work tirelessly to promote not only the physical health and safety of workers, but also their mental health. On behalf of the Government of Yukon, in mid-2019, we engaged with Yukoners on the prevention of workplace violence and

harassment regulations. We heard overwhelmingly that these regulations were needed and we are pleased to see these regulations passed this past September. We will spend the next year working with employers and workers — helping them put policies and procedures in place to prevent violence and harassment in the workplace.

We're in a strong position to navigate the changing landscape and we have a stable compensation fund and we made prudent financial decisions to protect the interests of employers, workers, and the integrity of the fund itself. We also have strong and positive relationships with our stakeholder organizations throughout the territory.

The board is proud of the work accomplished each and every day by our staff. We will continually strive to improve as we move forward and we're proud to appear before you today.

Just a note — I believe that you all have our annual report. Inside the front cover is a note of our “year at a glance”, which provides a really interesting quick picture of what has gone on in our world.

With that, I will say thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair.

**Ms. McLeod:** First of all, I would like to thank the witnesses from the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board for appearing in the House today. It's always a good opportunity for us to ask some questions. But before I get to my questions, I wanted to give our sincere thanks to the board and to the CEO — when we have questions that the witnesses don't have the answers to, they are very good about getting us those answers following our session and providing us with full explanations and answers that we had asked for. Again, I want to thank them for that because we really appreciate it.

I have a number of questions today. I will try to organize them by topic, so I hope that I am successful. First, I wanted to ask a general question of the witnesses about the statistics for work-related injuries and how they compare from year to year. I looked through the annual report and didn't see that information, so I'm hoping that the witnesses can give a brief account of how statistics are changing through the years and whether injury rates are decreasing in light of increased safety regulations.

**Mr. Dieckmann:** The injury stats — the lost-time incident rate is actually one of the better indicators of safety performance over the years, so if you look in the annual report on page 22, there is a graph that shows the lost-time injury rate per 100 covered workers over time, going back as far as 2010. As you can see, there has been a general downward trend in the lost-time incident rate. The goal that the board has set is zero. It is definitely an aspirational goal — but as you can see, we have had some fairly high years, but we are down into the range of, you know, 1.7 to 1.8. What that means is that, for every 100 full-time workers, approximately two people are being injured every year out of every 100. That is our best indicator.

The actual numbers — if you want to know the numbers of injuries, that is on the first page — as Mark said, the “year at a glance”. In order to see the numbers of injuries year over year, you would have to go through a number of our annual reports. Fortunately, I have annual reports with me going back to 2015.

In the “year at a glance” in 2014, we had around 21,500 workers covered. At that time, we were getting about 1,200 claims. If you fast forward through the years, 2015 had slightly fewer workers, but it was still close at around 21,500 workers and the same 1,200 injuries — and the same through 2016.

But when we get into 2019, you can see that the number of covered workers has gone up to around 25,000, but the number of claims that we are receiving is still remaining the same. So, we are getting a greater number of workers and the number of injuries has remained fairly constant through that period.

**Ms. McLeod:** I just want to talk a little bit about the surplus. How well funded would you say the WCB is, compared to similar organizations in Canada?

**Mr. Pike:** Just a general comment first that comparability is difficult because each province has their own ways of calculating their funded position. So, really, I will just comment on ours. We are solidly funded. The board has what I consider to be a very, very prudent policy of managing our funds. We are all constantly watching the news for the last few days, with the value of our investments going up and down. But we are solid; we are committed to maintaining our fund. You probably hear this number, but it is in the 121 to 129 percent of our liabilities, and we are taking the appropriate actions to try to be in that range without risking our ability to look after injured workers.

**Ms. McLeod:** So, if the surplus was at 90 percent, how would that affect the day-to-day operations of the organization?

**Mr. Pike:** The day-to-day operations would be unlikely to be affected at all, but what it would mean is that we don't have enough money set aside to care for workers who have already been injured for their expected course of their injuries. We would have money to look after the people in the current year — that would not change — but we haven't set money aside to look after injured workers. Somewhere in the future, you would have to collect that — either from employers or have exceptional year-to-year investments.

**Ms. McLeod:** At the end of 2018, the funded position was 132 percent, and as of December 31, 2019, the funded position was 141 percent. So, in the past few years, has the position ever ended up in the target range of 121 to 129 percent?

**Mr. Pike:** Yes, it has. In my term as the chair, it has ranged from approximately 100 — give or take — to as high as, I believe, 159 or 160 at one point. So, it has fluctuated throughout that range. A huge amount of that is what happens in the markets. As you know, when you look at our report, we have \$200 million-plus invested and five percent changes in the value of those is huge. But it has been in that range over the period of time. It has been below our target range; it has been above our target range.

Just an added point — we have a funding policy that always works to bring you back to that target range if you end up either below or above.

**Ms. McLeod:** So, with the target range set as 121 to 129 percent, I presume that it's that way for the reason of covering off current and future claims. Is there any point that you would consider changing that range either up or down?

**Mr. Pike:** Absolutely. I don't believe that there's anything magical in that range. That range was developed in consultation with our stakeholders. That extra 21 to 29 percent is there to allow for adverse or situations that are unforeseen and to avoid having to issue special assessments to employers because you got too low. So, the number was what the board considered to be prudent at the time. But there is no magic to it. You wouldn't find that in a research study somewhere. It's the range that the board thought was appropriate.

**Ms. McLeod:** I have two questions here. Would the board consider 141 percent to be an excessive surplus? As we know in the past, when there has been a surplus, the board has either adjusted rates or issued rebates. Is the board considering either of those actions now?

**Mr. Pike:** Yes. In fact, both of those. Just a quick comment — our funding policy already requires us to, for lack of a better word, return part of that surplus to employers in the current year's rate. That is automatic, based on our funding policy. The 141 is significantly larger than we want it to be. It is an interesting problem to have. I believe that, throughout COVID, it's down in the 130-some percent range. You can lose a lot of sleep over this. I haven't looked at the last week as the markets have been on a gyration up and down.

The board is committed to getting back into that range. That has not changed and that will not change. I guess we will just have to see how the markets play out — mostly with the US election — and see where we end up.

**Ms. McLeod:** Given that employers are absorbing the effects from COVID-19, has the board considered returning the surplus on a more aggressive scale than its current policy?

**Mr. Pike:** Yes, we have — and, in fact, that's how we ended up with the rebates that we had over those years. The board looked and said, “Our funding policy will get us there, but it's not happening as quickly as we would like.” We determined that we would issue additional rebates on top of the funding policy to get us there. The board will be sitting down this fall — although looking outside, it's hard to remember that it is fall — and looking at the results after the market fallout from the election to see where we stand.

**Ms. McLeod:** Has the board been asked — either by stakeholders or by the minister — to consider any measures to assist employers who are affected by COVID?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** Yes, so when the government announced the relief that they would be providing to employers and to the population of Yukon, we stepped forward as well and said that there are some measures that we could take. As Mark said in his opening statements, there were some measures that we took immediately. We announced that we would provide an ability for employers to restate their assessment rates that they had already paid. They could come back to us and if they were going to be restating it and lowering what their assessments were, they could be eligible for a rebate on what they had already paid, or, if they wanted to, they could use that to spread it out over a period of time.

We worked with the employers in that instance to give them that relief. The other thing that we did is that we offered for them to be able to defer their payments for whatever met

their business needs, and those deferrals would be offered without any interest and without any penalties.

Where we noted that there were employers who hadn't contacted us but were unable to make their payments, or hadn't made their assessment payments, we actually started phoning and reaching out to those employers, working with them and talking to them — finding out if they did indeed need some relief. We worked with them to give them whatever the reliefs were that they needed for their particular businesses. In total, we provided a round \$2-million worth of relief with all the different measures that we had taken.

**Ms. McLeod:** What role does the board play in enforcing CMO directions with regard to COVID and any other health standards within your own legislation?

My question is about what your role is there and whether or not you have had to issue any penalties to employers.

**Mr. Dieckmann:** We have actually worked very closely with a number of other agencies. The direction from the chief medical officer of health is very important in helping all Yukon employers and Yukon workers to remain safe within their workplaces. The guidelines that are issued by the chief medical officer of health are guidelines that we will apply in the workplaces as well. As Mark said also in his statement, there were a number of businesses that were required to close, and with those ones, they had to provide a plan prior to opening that would be approved by the chief medical officer of health. But there were a number of businesses that were not required to close. They also have to have those plans in place, and so what we did is we reached out and offered that, if anyone would like their plans reviewed, they can contact us and we would do those reviews for them. We had a number of employers reach out to us, and we went and did reviews of their plans to help them get back into compliance.

Then, for all the businesses that hadn't been required to close, we started sending our safety officers out to visit those workplaces to verify that they did, in fact, have COVID measures in place, and if they didn't have COVID measures in place, we would work with them to get them in place. We have not issued any fines, but we have issued a number of orders for people to put things in place.

One of the things that we found — the most common thing that we found was that people did have measures in place, but they didn't have written plans. So, that was one of the things that we really worked with the most — to make sure that they got their written plans in place, so that all of their workers would know what was expected of them in the workplace.

So yes, we have worked very closely with other enforcement agencies in the territory to make sure that we are out and getting as much coverage as we can.

**Ms. McLeod:** What work has the board done to re-evaluate its estimated liability, given the abrupt downturn in the economy, and with the interest rates as they are?

**Mr. Pike:** Our liability — we employ an actuary who spends a significant amount of time and uses the appropriate professional standards to determine what our liability is. For simplicity, our liability is the amount that we need to set aside right now and earn a rate of return on, over a period of years, to

look after workers who are already injured. So, that number is what it is. We only do a formal evaluation of that number once a year. It is a very, very large job. The actuary does an actuarial evaluation — and you can see his opinion in our annual report. He does that once a year.

In terms of our investments — I mean, they fluctuate by the minute, by the hour, and by the day. So, on a given day, they could be way up or way down, just depending on what the markets have done. While we are aware of those things happening, we really evaluate them closely at the end of each year, once we have the actuary's evaluation and our market value, and we try to determine where we are. That is where you get the funded position. We would not try to give you a funded position in the middle of a year because there are just so many variables.

**Ms. McLeod:** So, you have already mentioned that you have been phoning employers who seem to be struggling to pay their fees and premiums and that you have applied \$2 million toward relief. Are you concerned at all about employers' ability to pay remittances in 2021 or further down the road?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** So, we are very concerned with the ability of employers to pay because a vibrant economy is good for everybody in the territory. If employers aren't making money, then the economy definitely suffers for it.

But one of the things to consider though is that if in an employer is not employing workers, they don't owe assessment. So, while it really is not good for anybody if somebody isn't employing people and not paying assessments, it doesn't really impact our system — because the system really is that you're paying assessments based on payroll to ensure that payroll if a worker gets injured. So, if payrolls go down, the number of workers typically goes down, and the numbers of injuries also typically go down with that — so, there's an offset there. So, the biggest concern that we have is whether or not the economy rebounds.

**Ms. McLeod:** I'm going to assume then that, maybe this year, the revenue for the organization isn't what it has been.

So, in the short- or medium-term, do you look at reducing your expenses for non-essential expenditures?

**Mr. Pike:** Absolutely. There are two things that happen. As Kurt mentioned, one is that our revenue will be down — absolutely. As our revenue drops, it's likely that our costs related to injured workers have dropped proportionately. As Kurt mentioned, we collect the assessments to provide for injured workers.

We have adamantly looked at our operations and said we have to do everything we can to be lean and mean — or whatever the appropriate words are. These are buzzwords, but we're all in this together. We can't be lackadaisical about how we handle employers' money and we're working really hard at that, and we are working really hard at that for next year as well. We are just in that process of our budget.

**Ms. McLeod:** You have mentioned previously that you considered waiving assessment fees, I believe — or perhaps the word was "deferring". Other jurisdictions have waived them for a year. Have you considered doing that?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** We have not considered waiving assessments. Our legislation is very clear that this is not something that we are able to do, but we have also looked at what all the other jurisdictions are doing. There is only one jurisdiction that actually has waived the assessments for a year, and that is Alberta. What they did — they said that you have a year, and you don't have to pay until 2021. Then for small businesses, the Government of Alberta stepped in and said that they will pay half of that. So, even in the one jurisdiction that has done that, the compensation system will still be getting the assessments that they need in order to cover the costs for injured workers, it's just that where they are getting it from is slightly different and unusual compared to all other jurisdictions.

**Ms. McLeod:** Has the board considered offering assistance to employers required to invest in PPE and other anti-COVID measures? Perhaps, by way of this, it is in the form of a credit against assessments.

**Mr. Dieckmann:** It is actually a discussion that we did have with the Yukon Chamber of Commerce and the board, but we do have our CHOICES program, which is geared toward employers who have proper safety measures in place, who provide training and those kinds of things — so the CHOICES rebates that are available to them is money that they can use in any way that they see fit. If there are some expenses that they have, that is what we would encourage them to do — to apply that to it. But one of the things — as Mark has said, the money that we collect now through assessments is there to cover the costs of injuries that occur now and the costs of those injuries into the future.

So, as soon as we start to not collect assessments, that can have an impact on the fund and the funded position. As you discussed with Mark earlier, if we were to drop down below our target range or below being 100-percent funded, the only way to recover that is either through investment increases or through increasing assessments to employers. So, you are kind of caught in a tough situation there — if you start reducing assessments now and not collecting the money for the injuries that you are incurring now, then we would have to collect it later. So, it really is a zero-sum game in the end.

**Ms. McLeod:** Given that businesses have been forced to accept the need for a multi-year recovery of the economy to get to pre-COVID levels, do you think that the board should or could be showing more flexibility in its approach toward assessments?

**Mr. Pike:** I think that we already are. We have an act that we are bound by, and that act has certain parameters that are not mine to change — one of which is that we are obviously required to collect the appropriate amount of assessments to pay for injuries that occur.

I don't know — other than what we have already done, I'm not sure what other flexibility — we talk about lots of things at the board level, but I'm not sure what other flexibility we could put in place that doesn't violate the principle of making sure that we have enough money right now for a worker who has been injured and to look after them.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you for that. With respect to your organization — I just have a question about how it managed through COVID. For instance, how many people started working from home?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** When COVID struck and the chief medical officer of health made the recommendation that people start to work from home, we moved the majority of our workers out. I think that we had about 80 percent of our staff working out of the building within a week to 10 days.

We never did close our doors; our doors remained open the whole time, and we did have a small contingent of staff who did continue to work to work in the building. We introduced a number of COVID-preventive measures within our building — we do twice-daily washdowns, or cleaning of the building. The janitors come in the evening, but in the middle of the day, we had some of staff volunteering to go around and wash down all high-touch areas. We set up barriers and took all the measures that were recommended by the chief medical officer of health, so that we could keep our doors open and be able to serve people who do walk-in — because we do have a lot of clients who don't have bank accounts, don't have telephones, don't drive — their only access is to come in and actually physically see us. So, we wanted to make sure that we were able to continue to offer those services, but the majority of our workers moved out of the building.

We now have around 50 percent of our staff working in the building, but what we are doing now is we are rotating staff through, so that we have some people working part of the week, and then they'll leave and others are coming in for part of the week. So, we have people rotating through, and we will likely continue that into the foreseeable future until, really, the pandemic is determined to be over.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you for that answer. During the COVID period that we have all been going through, have the services that are provided by the compensation board been reduced in any way?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** We have been offering our full suite of services, with a couple of exceptions. In March-April, when businesses were closing down, we were moving staff out, and the schools closed down, the staff that we have who do our outreach, they were pretty much stood down. They weren't able to go into the schools; there were no trade shows; there was none of that sort of thing happening. So, the staff that we have doing that weren't able to do that, so we shifted them over to doing other work. It actually worked out quite well, because there was a huge flurry then of requests from employers and requests from workers for information on workplace safety and how to manage COVID.

We had a lot of interaction with our partners nationally — the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety and the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation. We were on regular telephone calls with them. We were gathering a bunch of information. The people whom we had working on that outreach actually shifted their focus to doing that and making sure that our website was populated — doing that kind of work. Then the other place where our services were somewhat reduced was that, on the occupational

health and safety side, we weren't sending safety officers to do, you know, the random inspections and the proactive inspections.

We changed our model so that they were responding to inquiries and questions and dealing with that, and they were providing most of their services over the phone. If there were complaints that required a site visit, then we would go to the site. We would have a discussion with the employer before going into the site and see what protocols were in place. We had our own protocols established. So, some of our work shifted. For the services that were reduced, we were able to find really meaningful work to help our employer and our worker communities manage through COVID.

**Ms. McLeod:** After six months of COVID — I guess we're at eight months now — what are the lessons that the board has learned from dealing with this pandemic that could be used to assist its approach should we be faced with this again in the future — or some other adverse economic impact?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** Yes, there is a lot of learning that we have had that are the sort of short-term things. One of the things that we discovered — which I am sure that a lot of people were discovering — is how we envisioned our services in the past, and things that we couldn't do in the past, we were quite able to do. I will give you an example — previously, in our emergency response plan — and we have had a very robust emergency response plan and business continuity plan. We update it and we practise it. We have had that for a number of years. It was always built on the assumption that we would need an alternate site if we lost our facility. Well, we have discovered now that this is not entirely true. Given technology, we are actually able to work and work effectively — and provide all our services remotely. There are only a very few people who actually have to physically be in a place. So, that's real learning — we've realized that we really need to take a hard look at our business continuity plan and make some changes to that.

The other thing that has come out of it that has been really positive is our ability to provide services to people in communities. In the past, if somebody needed to see a doctor or needed physio or if they needed any sort of services from a psychiatrist or anything like that, they had to come into town or we had to ship them out of the territory in order to get those services. What we found though is that the medical community — our service providers — have been really, really responsive in starting to provide those services remotely.

So, we're at a point now where a lot of our services can be provided to our clients in the communities where they live, which is great because, if they can remain in their communities and they have the supports that they need, recovery is generally better and faster. So, that has been real learning for us. The things that were impossible eight months ago are happening on a daily basis now. So that's really, really good to see.

The other thing I think that we discovered or that we learned — and this is more of the whole government learning — is that there are a lot of areas where we can support each other in government — various enforcement agencies working together — the health care agencies working together and the service providers — there's an ability for us to pivot a lot

quicker than we ever thought we could to sort of change our service delivery to meet the needs. I think what I don't want to lose — that has become the norm now and I think it's something that hopefully will continue to be the norm as we go forward.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you for that. You said earlier that the board has been in touch with employers to discuss with them — I think about their remittances, should they be untimely. Has there been any other broad kind of survey done with employers this year since March?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** I guess I would ask if you could be a little more specific on what sort of topics. We have worked with the chambers. The Yukon chamber — we've actually have a pretty good partnership with them, and they have invited us to address employers on various topics related to COVID. As far as surveys go — we have done a lot of surveying of employers on issues surrounding COVID.

**Ms. McLeod:** What I was asking was whether or not you have been in touch with employers — maybe it is not your role — about whether or not they are facing problems throughout this time.

A concern that has been brought to our attention is around PPE, cleaning, and some other COVID-19 guideline applications in workplaces.

One example that was provided — teachers in some schools have been given the option to either wear a mask or wear a face shield. As we understand it, the mask acts as a respiratory barrier, and the shield is simply something that protects the eyes and the skin. In a medical setting, a face shield would only be worn when accompanied by a mask. What are the WCB rules around this, and how are you ensuring that workers are being trained in their respective workplaces? What are you doing to ensure that the training is consistent — or is it your role?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Before you move into the PPE question and those types of answers, I just wanted to address the member opposite regarding the reach-out to employers in terms of surveys and work that government has been doing that informs — the reach-out to employers specifically around access to various programs and different pressures that they may be having. We certainly have done that in Economic Development and Tourism and Culture, checking in with businesses — making sure that we have the pulse of businesses. I have spoken about this several times when I have had the opportunity during Question Period. That work continues. We have also done a reach-out to non-profit organizations as well, in terms of determining what pressures they may have.

So, any information that is gathered — as Mr. Dieckmann has discussed today — moving into that one-government approach and the economic committee of deputy ministers who meets on a regular basis — this work continues and will continue as we navigate through the pandemic.

So, I just wanted to add that aspect to the conversation, and I will allow Mr. Dieckmann to talk about the PPE.

**Mr. Dieckmann:** When it comes to the personal protective equipment — especially as it relates to COVID, we

defer very much to the advice that comes from the chief medical officer of health.

So, there are a number of options that are available, based on the chief medical officer of health's guidelines. But when we look at hazards in the workplace and risk and when we look at the various ways that risk can be controlled, we use what is called a "hierarchy of control" in order to make determinations as to whether or not people are taking the appropriate measures. The hierarchy of control basically starts with elimination. If you can eliminate the hazard, that is the first measure that you take, and if you can't eliminate it, then you go to engineering controls. If you can engineer out the hazard or the risks associated with the hazard, then those are the controls that you put in place.

If that is not available, then the next would be administrative controls. A lot of what has been discussed through the chief medical officer of health and the types of controls that are put in place are administrative controls. When we put controls — like you see in this House, as we sit here — these are administrative controls. We maintain barriers between us — you know, the separation — and that is probably the most effective method of preventing transmission — to make sure that you are far enough away that you can't transmit.

The personal protective equipment is always the last thing in a hierarchy of control. So, whether somebody is wearing a face shield — just a face shield — or whether they are wearing a face shield and a mask or whether they are just wearing a mask — really, you have to assess the entirety of what is being done in the workplace to make that determination. We get a lot of calls from concerned workers or concerned employers saying, "I want to put this measure in place. Is that the right measure?" Our answer is always, "It depends." We're more than happy to go to a workplace and visit the workplace and sort of do an assessment and help them walk through identifying what the hazards are and the risks associated with those hazards and what the most appropriate controls would be to put in place. That's the best non-answer I can give you on that — because really, the answer is that it depends.

But the other part of your question is about if it is our job to ensure that workplaces are safe. To that, I would respond that it is the workplace party's job to ensure. We're not in the workplace, so it's very difficult for us to ensure workplace safety all the time. The employer, the workers, the joint health and safety committee, the structure of the workplace — those are the ones who are responsible for ensuring workplace safety.

Our job is to monitor compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and regulations and to provide guidance, when people request it from us, to go in and help them to satisfy the requirements under the law.

**Ms. McLeod:** I have a question now about mental health in the workplace. There has been a good deal of discussion around that.

There are a number of reports of mental fatigue, distraction, and stress due to the COVID-19 response. Does WCB ensure that mental health supports are in place for the workers who require them — or as you say, is that the responsibility of the workplace safety team who is in the

workplace? Do you just monitor that or are you responsive to concerns that might be expressed by employees?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** That's a big question that I could take a long time to answer, so I'll try to keep it succinct.

When we have injured workers, it is absolutely our responsibility to ensure that they get the proper supports and treatment that they need. We work very hard to provide that in a timely manner. It has been very, very challenging with COVID, especially since people can't travel outside the territory. So, when we're trying to get initial assessments done, we use a lot of multi-disciplinary clinics Outside when it comes to psychological injury to get those assessments done — to start to get initial treatment plans in place so that, when the person comes back into the territory, then we can work with local service providers in order to make sure that the treatment is happening. It has been a challenge, but we're working our way through it.

When it comes to the workplace itself and protecting the psychological health and safety of workers in the workplace — that very much is a workplace responsibility. As both the minister and Mr. Pike stated earlier, the government has passed regulations this year that will really help workplaces to understand what it is that they need to put in place in order to protect the psychological health and safety of their workers. It all starts with a really good assessment of the hazards — taking a look in your workplace and asking what sort of hazards exist in this workplace that can cause mental stress and potential psychological injury. COVID is a great example, because it has really shown how a disruption of this magnitude can cause a lot of mental stress and anguish within workplaces, within families, and within individuals.

Our responsibility in this is that — the regulations don't actually come into effect until September of next year. So, this next year, we will be spending a lot of time working through that, rolling out those regulations, getting them implemented, providing the supports that employers and workers need through training, education, and materials that they can access, and partnering with jurisdictions that have actually been through this and have gone a long way down the road to implementing those types of regulations. That's a lot of the work that we will be doing over the next year. When it comes to mental health and psychological injury, really it is a partnership with everybody, and we all have responsibilities that we need to accept, grab hold of, and help to make sure that all of our workplaces are psychologically safe and healthy.

**Ms. McLeod:** I have just a couple of questions to ask about the new legislation that is on the horizon.

Would the board consider using more neutral and commonplace terms — for instance, "health care provider" — as it relates to occupational and disability health in the *Workers' Compensation Act* and various sections of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and regulations?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** When we went out and did the consultation on behalf of Yukon government, one of the things that we heard loud and clear from all our stakeholders was that, in modernizing the acts — if the acts are going to be modernized, to make sure that the language was as



approachable as possible. That is reflected in the “what we heard” report — and we did provide that to the minister. So, the drafting of the legislation and whether the legislation comes in or not is not in our bailiwick, but if the minister would like to speak to that piece, I would defer to the minister.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** As I stated in my opening comments, we have gone through the initial stages of consultation. That is closed. We have been working within Cabinet — alongside Justice and the Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board — to draft the legislation. Our intent is absolutely to bring forward new, modernized legislation, which we hope to do in the near future.

I am not sure if there was another aspect to that question. Perhaps the member could let me know if that answers the question or not.

**Ms. McLeod:** I have another question for the witnesses. Will the board be providing employer support workshops and sessions to assist companies in complying with new regulations on workplace violence and harassment that are expected to come into force in September of 2021?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** Yes, that is our plan. We were really happy that the government gave a year before the regulation actually comes into effect because that gives us lots of time now to develop training materials, figure out how we’re going to do the outreach to the various stakeholder groups to get the training developed and in place and to start to get people trained and knowledgeable in those regulations and what the expectations are. That will encompass probably most of our outreach for next year — getting those regulations implemented and getting the work done to get those regulations implemented fully.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you for that. Due to COVID, of course, a lot of workers in both the public sector and the private sector started, and in some cases, they continue to work from home. Are they covered by workers’ compensation, because they are not in the workplace? I mean, how is all of that dealt with by employers?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** The short answer is that if a person is working — if they are performing their regular duties and they are doing it from home, if they get injured in the course of performing their duties and the injury is related — it occurs at work and it occurs because of work — absolutely, they are covered. It is challenging for employers and for workers to determine schedules and those kinds of things — but in the end, if a worker is performing work and they are injured in the course of that work and because of that work — yes, they are covered.

**Ms. McLeod:** There has been some confusion around this from some employers — so, would the board consider making a change to, for instance, annual returns that might spell this out a little better or put it on the website?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** Yes. I don’t know that we have anything that lays it out specifically on our website — how it works — but there are expectations on the part of the employer — so, we have expectations on the part of the employer that they are verifying that the workplace is a safe workplace — in some way to make sure that this happens — and that workers

are performing their work in a safe manner. We don’t do inspections in private residences. That is not something that — under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, we don’t have the authority to go into private residences. So, we rely very heavily on the employers and the workers to make sure that they have the appropriate measures in place. If a worker invites us in, we will by all means go and do an assessment, but we don’t do random inspections going into houses.

But I will take that as a really good suggestion and speak to my communications people about maybe putting something in place and putting it on our website about how that works.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you for that. So, can the board intervene if there’s a dispute between an employer and employee on unsafe work practices in a private home? If you cannot, whom do you phone? Whom do you call?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** If there are issues raised and there’s a dispute and we are invited to a home to do an assessment, we will go do an assessment. If required, we will intervene in whatever way that is possible. Typically, that would involve doing an assessment, seeing what the concerns are, and if there are measures that need to be taken by the employer, we’ll write orders for the employer to take those measures. If there are measures that have to be taken by the worker, we could write orders that the worker has to take those measures.

So, we can intervene. The only limitation is that we cannot walk into a person’s house the same as we do with a normal place of business. For example, this building here — we can come in anytime to any part of the workplace and we can do an inspection. But I can’t walk into the Chair’s house and say that I want to do an inspection because I know that the Chair is working at home.

**Ms. McLeod:** I’m going to assume, though, that if there was a dispute, it’s likely the employee who is making it and they’re going to invite you in. So, that’s probably not going to be an issue for them.

We have businesses that are operating in the territory and that don’t hold an office here, but there are employees working for them. They are, by law, required to have Yukon WCB. The same is true if we have employees — Yukoners — working in a BC location — correct me if that’s not right.

Do you think that most employers are well aware of those rules? I’m not sure that they are — so just a comment on that.

**Mr. Dieckmann:** The member is, I would say, 99 percent correct in the assessment. There are certain rules around that.

If somebody comes into the territory — if an employer sends workers into the territory for less than 10 days, they don’t actually have to purchase coverage in Yukon. There is a 10-day grace period, so they would be covered in their home jurisdiction. All Canadian jurisdictions have a time period that you can work in them without — it varies in different jurisdictions. But once you get past that point, there is a requirement to register, and most companies that work transborder — that cross various borders — are very aware of those requirements. It’s actually one of the issues — when it comes to interjurisdictional trade and the ability to work across borders — it has come up on the national level a number of

times when employer groups have asked if there is a way that legislation can be more closely aligned so that the rules are similar. Quite frankly, getting 12 jurisdictions to agree to that would, I think, be a challenge — but it does come up on the national stage quite often and in discussions that we have with the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada.

It's one of the things that we get approached with fairly often, but there are instances where employers do come into the territory, and they work for a period of time and don't register with us. Our staff actually do a very good job of tracking those employers down and letting them know their obligations. Our assessment folks are really good at figuring out who is working in the territory. They go through various City of Whitehorse and Yukon contracts — where contracts are let. They look at those and do comparisons to see whether or not those companies have registered. Where a contract has been awarded, they see if they have registered with us. If they haven't, they contact them. We do a lot of work in that area.

I couldn't tell you the percentage of those coming in that don't register. That would be really difficult for us to figure out because it varies depending on who is coming into the territory and when.

One of the things that we have in our legislation is that, if somebody comes into the territory — not even necessarily into the territory — if somebody hires or contracts a worker to do work for them and that worker or that employer was required to register with the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board and they did not register, the company that brought them in or that hired them could be held responsible for paying those assessments.

So, when we send our assessment auditors out, they go into workplaces and businesses and do audits to see whether or not people are paying the appropriate assessments. They do look at all the contracts that the employer had, and then they will do a verification that all of those contractors they had used had, in fact, paid assessments.

There are ways for us to collect those assessments, but the member is absolutely correct that there are instances where people crossing borders don't understand what the rules are.

### Deputy Chair's statement

**Deputy Chair:** Just a reminder to please refer questions and answers through the Chair.

**Ms. McLeod:** We have heard concerns from companies in the transportation sector about a clause that is being discussed as part of the new legislation. The concern is around subrogation. Can the chair or president explain how this clause would work? Who would be affected? When will a final decision be made about its inclusion — or not — in the legislation?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** I can't speak to what will be in the legislation if legislation does come forward. What I can tell the members is that there is currently a clause in our legislation where, if an injury occurs because of a motor vehicle and the injured worker is not working for their employer — for example, if somebody driving a vehicle runs into another

vehicle, causing an injury to the worker — there is an ability, under our current legislation, to move forward with what is called a "vested action". The action is vested in us and we can try to recover the costs of those injuries from the insurance company of the vehicle that caused the collision.

So, that is in our current act. It gets utilized once or twice a year. It isn't common, but we do have a couple of instances a year where we use that section and we do recover costs from a third-party insurer. It is a very viable method for keeping costs down for employers in our system by recovering from a much larger pool of insurers, really.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the witness for that answer.

So, this is just a bit of a — and it will probably be my last question today. We have been hearing recently about banks denying service to companies who are investing in or pursuing the development of oil and gas projects in northern Yukon. I am wondering if the board has received any pressure to follow suit.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Deputy Chair, I am having a really difficult time hearing the member. I am sure folks sitting close by may be able to hear, but I am really having a difficult time hearing.

**Deputy Chair:** Maybe we can turn the mic up a little.

**Ms. McLeod:** I don't know if the witnesses heard the question or not, but if they did, they can just proceed with answering.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Deputy Chair, I would prefer if the member would repeat the question so that others members in the House can hear it.

**Ms. McLeod:** My question was — because it is quite topical right now — that major banks are publicly coming out against funding companies — not funding — loaning money to — doing business with — companies that are pursuing oil and gas development in northern Yukon. My question was whether or not the board has received any pressure to follow suit.

**Mr. Dieckmann:** I will start answering, but I will actually maybe ask the chair to step in at some point here as well. So, we don't directly invest — we don't go out and purchase stocks, et cetera.

We have investment managers who handle all of our investments. We have an investment policy that they must adhere to so it outlines the types of investments — the classes of investments and bonds and those kinds of things that they can invest in. We do, on a regular basis, meet with them at least once a year. We meet with both of our investment managers. One of the questions that the board asks them fairly regularly is about if they do have policies around ethical investing or investing in ways that would meet that ethical standard. They both have policies around their investments on how they — what types of companies that they will invest in, and they do have rules around it. We don't put any restrictions on whether or not they can invest with a bank or if they can invest in oil and gas or what they can invest in. We leave that up to them. But they do have certain criteria that they look at when they are making those investments.

Did you have anything you wanted to add, Mark?

**Mr. Pike:** Just one quick point that we certainly have not received any pressure on us to do anything specific. At the board level, we discuss all those issues. We talk about ethical investing. So, the subjects do come up for discussion.

But again, our role is to get a rate of return on our money so that we can look after injured workers. We haven't had any outside or inside pressure to take a specific course of action.

**Ms. McLeod:** I want to thank the witnesses for their time today. I appreciate the discussion, and I'll turn it over to my colleagues from the Third Party.

**Ms. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I thank the witnesses for their presence here today.

I just wanted to make a comment at the outset that you don't often say that — it's not my experience very often that an annual report of an entity like the Workers' Compensation Board is actually very interesting to read. I would like to commend you on this year's edition of the report. What I thought when I was reading it through was that it was very helpful and it also set out to me — there's a whole section here on modernizing your foundations. We've talked a lot over the last number of years about the history of the workers' compensation.

I think what it reflects to me — and I'm hopeful, as we move forward, that the kind of language that's employed in the document that was tabled in the Legislative Assembly is also reflective of the kind of culture that is in place at the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. If so, that bodes really well for that workplace as a workplace, as well as for Yukon government, Yukon citizens, and — most importantly, from my perspective — Yukon workers.

I just wanted to go back to the statistics — the “year at a glance” that you had referenced earlier. It is my understanding that these were the statistics to the end of December 2019. Every death is one death too many. We saw a decrease of one death — so three deaths in 2019. My question is in two parts. What sectors were those three worker fatalities engaged in? What, if any, statistics are there for the year to date in 2020?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** I thank the member for that question. First, I would like to respond to your question about the culture in our workplace. I have been there 20 years — proudly been there for 20 years. A large part of it is because of the culture and the people who are there. They really do care.

You were asking about the fatalities. Mark will tell you that, whenever there is a fatality in the workplace and he comes into our office, he can tell that something has gone horribly wrong. I know that our minister dreads a phone call from me on the weekend. Everybody really cares.

As far as the sectors where the fatalities occurred last year — one of the fatalities was in the outfitting industry and two were in the aviation industry. This year, I believe that we have had two fatalities. One of the fatalities was in the mining industry — a motor vehicle — and one was an occupational disease. We really feel it whenever there is a fatality.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for those comments. It is pretty clear that this is a shared value.

I just want to go back to one of the deaths — one of the fatalities. This is going to sound strange, but I don't mean it in

a negative way. Earlier, there was an assumption that because we have a decrease in the number of workers employed in the territory generally as a result of the pandemic, in fact, we might see a decrease in the number of claims opened with respect to workers' compensation issues. I guess that doesn't necessarily correlate with the areas where we are seeing a sustained and increased level of employment, which is the mining sector. We have had sustained employment with one large mine and another reopening.

So, I guess my question is: Is that going to be forming data for the next year? My understanding is that you do keep data with respect to the sectors, obviously — in terms of where the trends are for open claims or workers who are covered, as well as workers who may sustain an injury on the job. Is there a sectoral breakdown? Maybe I missed it in the report. Yes, there is a sectoral report, sorry. Is there a year-to-date change from last year that you have noticed in terms of a sustained employment sector, which is mining?

### Deputy Chair's statement

**Deputy Chair:** Ms. Hanson, just another gentle reminder: Would you mind putting your questions through the Chair, please? I know it's difficult in the room, but that is our protocol, and we would appreciate it.

**Mr. Dieckmann:** That is actually a really good question. As you can see on page 21 of our report, we do actually have the sector breakdown of the injuries. We saw a decrease in the numbers — although I have to qualify this a little bit, Mr. Deputy Chair. We had seen — for the end of the first quarter and through the second quarter — that the numbers of injuries coming in the door were definitely down. We don't have a breakdown by sector yet — that is work that will be done as we get into the beginning part of next year when we start preparing our annual report and really crunching those numbers.

So, I can't really make a definite statement on where we are seeing the injuries for this year, but it does make sense that the sectors that we are operating would be the ones where we see the injuries coming in the door, but we did see a definite decrease. As of the end of the third quarter and now, the numbers that we are seeing compared to the same quarters last year have come back up and we are seeing about the same numbers coming in the door as what we had seen. So, in the third quarter of last year and in the third quarter of this year, there are very similar numbers and there are very similar numbers so far in this quarter to what we had seen in the fourth quarter of last year. But we won't actually have the breakdown until we do the annual report and crunch the numbers.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for his response.

I just have another follow-up question from the question asked by my colleague. There was some discussion about site visits made with respect to occupational health and safety. I just wanted to clarify — what I had noted was that there was contact made in advance of site visits. I guess one of the things that we have seen in other jurisdictions — and we all acknowledge that we have been incredibly lucky in this jurisdiction with respect

to no community transmission and the low numbers that we have. But we have seen in workplaces where there have been, in other jurisdictions in this country, serious outbreaks of COVID that one of the challenges is having basically occupational health and safety site visits that are actually able to address the issues without having circumstances adjusted in advance. Is it normal practice to contact in advance if you are dealing with an occupational health and safety issue or concern?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** We handle inspections in a variety of different ways, depending on what it is that we're doing and where we're going. As I stated earlier, our sort of random inspections that we do, during the first part of the year, did drop off and we were in those instances only responding to complaints that came in. So, if we got a complaint, we definitely would be notifying the employer, coming in, and finding out what sort of measures we had in place. That isn't the norm, but we did do that at the beginning of the year. We're now back to doing our random inspections and going into workplaces that are open and doing those inspections.

But there are some instances where we definitely have to contact in advance. For example, if we are going into a remote mine site — we're flying in, we have to book planes, we have to do those kinds of things, and we need to make sure that there are people who are going to be there when we get there. So, in those instances, we will.

Quite frankly, my experience as a safety officer has taught me that, if there are things not operating properly in a workplace, it's pretty hard to hide that just because the inspector is showing up. I used to tell staff, when I was the director of Occupational Health and Safety, that we knew that if we phoned an employer telling them that we were coming in and that they would change their behaviour and that everything would be fixed up that day, then that's what we would do — just phone employers every day and say, "We're coming to your workplace" and it would have solved the problem. But it doesn't work that way.

Those places that we do have to go into — the large employers where they have multiple things going on — our inspectors do often contact them and let them know we're coming because they need to make sure that there's somebody there who can provide us with guidance, inform us of what the hazards are in the workplace, what equipment — we might have to bring our own personal protective equipment or other things that we may need. It doesn't really affect the outcome or the ability for us to effectively assess the safety management in that workplace.

With smaller employers, we tend not to — like, if we're going out to the placer mines or things like that, we're not contacting in advance because it's easy access; you're driving down public roads, pulling in, and checking on them. In those instances, we don't. So, it really depends on what we're doing.

There are other times when we'll have focused initiatives where we'll see increased injuries in a particular sector and so we'll be really looking to see — okay, what's going on in that sector? Why are we seeing increased injuries? Why are we seeing certain types of injuries that are occurring?

In those instances, what we will do is advertise in advance that we're going to be looking at that industry and looking at the issues in those industries, so we're not necessarily contacting the employer directly, but we're letting the industry know that this is what we're focusing on and we're going to go in to try to assess what's going on in the industry. There are a variety of ways in which we do it. COVID did change it at the beginning, but we are back to sort of our normal practices now.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that. Just on the issue of linking it back directly to COVID-19 and your website, the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board website talks about — and the witnesses have already identified some of the initiatives that they made available to help with reopening efforts. My question is, first of all: What is the uptake in terms of hazard assessment and control? How many COVID-19 operational plans have been reviewed? In light of the focus on prevention when we are talking about occupational health and safety, how many site visits related to ensuring that these safety measures that have been — they are not required for all businesses, but they are encouraged. Basically, I am trying to get a sense of how thorough that initiative is for work sites throughout the Yukon with respect to the confidence of both the work site — the employers, the employees — as well as the general public. The assumption could be made that sites that are open — I will just use the word "site" — businesses that are open are safe.

**Mr. Dieckmann:** Mr. Deputy Chair, let me start with the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health. All employers are required to have a plan in place, whether they were ordered to close or not. When we go into workplaces, with every inspection that we do, part of that inspection is an inspection to verify that appropriate COVID-prevention measures are in place. We look at: (1) Do they have the measures in place; and (2) Do they have a written plan? Is it actually documented, what is it that they are supposed to have done, and have they done the hazard assessments? We have done that.

As far as the number of reviews of plans that we've done, I do have the number, but for some reason my computer is not opening, so I will get back to you with that one. I will see if I can get my computer to open here. It is causing me grief right now.

**Ms. Hanson:** I can tell the witness that he is not alone in that experience in this building.

There was a reference earlier to some of the new policies that have come into effect. One of the ones that I'm interested in is the one that has to do with adjudicating psychological injuries. When I look at that policy, EN-09, the question I have is — in the language of the policy, it is unclear whether or not this policy is limited to post-traumatic stress or if that was only used as a policy to merely illustrate it as an example of psychological injury. Can the witnesses please tell us if it is intended to be a broader scope than limited to post-traumatic stress? In itself, that is a serious issue, but there are other kinds of psychological injuries, as we know.

**Mr. Dieckmann:** That is a great question. We do cover more psychological injuries than post-traumatic stress disorder.

For example, in 2019, we had 20 accepted claims for psychological injury. Of those 20, 10 were for post-traumatic stress disorder. Three of those were in first responders, and it fell under the presumption. The others were different psychological injuries. As you are aware, there are a broad number of psychological conditions that could affect people.

One of the ones that we do see a lot is generalized anxiety disorder. We see post-traumatic stress disorder. We will see things like, where someone has suffered a serious physical injury, the physical injury is dealt with and they have recovered from that, but then they could possibly have some sort of other dissociative disorder or something that arises from it — a fear of going into the workplace. So, yes, there is a broad spectrum, and we do accept a lot more than just post-traumatic stress disorder.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that.

On page —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Deputy Chair:** I'm sorry, Ms. Hanson has —

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I wanted to provide the information from the previous question. The information that I have — there will probably be more updates, but that is information that Mr. Dieckmann can provide — is that, as of August 25, safety officers had reviewed 53 voluntary COVID-19 safety plans, referred 27 mandatory plans to public health officials for review, and issued 36 orders related to COVID-19 safety plans — most for lack of properly documented plans.

So, if there is further information, Mr. Dieckmann can provide that — like the updated statistics from August 25 to today's date.

**Ms. Hanson:** As I was saying, on page 20 of the annual report, it talks about "Accepted claims by event or exposure". I didn't go back and look at the previous years, but just over the last two years, there is a pretty steady number of incidents, or claims accepted, with respect to assaults, violent acts, and harassment. It raises a number of questions. When we look at the "what we heard" report — and as you were looking at the issues that people identified in the context of reviewing both pieces of legislation — my question is: Is occupational health and safety involved when there are safety concerns raised, such as we saw recently at the Whitehorse General Hospital? Can you outline — does a safety plan get put in place, or what kind of action is taken? Are there recommendations for training that are put in place for staff? What is involved in making recommendations for improvements from an occupational health and safety standard when we see violent acts or assaults occurring in a workplace?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** Just as a little update, I did get my computer open, so I can update what the minister had provided.

The safety officers reviewed 58 voluntary safety plans, referred 34 to public health officials, and issued 43 orders for COVID-19 safety violations — so just a little bit different from what the minister has.

So, yes, we do investigate where there are incidents of violence that occur in a workplace. If there are injuries that occur and we're aware of it, we will go in and do an investigation. What comes out of the investigation can really

vary, depending on what we find. If we go into a workplace and find that they have proper policies, procedures, and things in place and they're not being enforced or not being followed, then the order may be to start following your safety plan and start doing the things that you've outlined that you're doing.

If we go in and we find that there are no measures in place, we may look at it, and if we look at it and say, "Based on what we're seeing here, it looks like there are some things that aren't in place" — let's use the Hospital Corporation as just an example. If we were to go in and take a look and if we don't have the expertise to do the full assessment, we may either order them to bring somebody in to do a full assessment or we may bring somebody in with the expertise to do a full assessment, and then, based on that assessment, we would issue orders for corrective actions. That's sort of the first level.

Let's say we've been into a workplace previously and had found that there were issues, and it continues to happen, and we go in and find that they hadn't put in place the corrective measures that had been ordered — or they had just disregarded what we were saying — then it could result in administrative penalties or prosecutions — or any level.

It really depends, in any workplace, on what we find when we go into that workplace as to how we're going to respond, but in all instances, our primary concern is to make sure that the appropriate health and safety measures are established and followed within that workplace to prevent injuries from happening.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witnesses. Are the recommendations or the findings of the occupational health and safety review binding on the employer?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** If somebody is not following the requirements of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* regulations and we issue an order, it is a binding order. Anyone can appeal an order, however — so the final decision-maker is not the safety officer. All orders can be appealed. Sometimes people do choose to appeal, but it doesn't happen very often that we get appeals. If somebody doesn't follow those orders, there are remedies laid out in the act. We can issue administrative penalties, we can prosecute, and we can issue stop-work orders. Probably one of the strongest tools that we have in our toolbox is to actually issue a closure order or a stop-work order if somebody has conditions in their workplace that are immediately dangerous to life and health and they can't be remedied immediately. We can say, "Stop what you are doing until you get it fixed."

We have very robust measures in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* for us to intervene if we do see that there are issues in a workplace and if the workplace is not complying with what we are requiring.

**Ms. Hanson:** Those are significant and far-reaching implications. It is one thing on a construction work site; it's quite different when we are talking about a medical facility. But I guess that we have seen that in the context of COVID with long-term care facilities in different parts of this country — so who knows?

We have such a short time today. One of the questions that I have asked before — and I notice that it was certainly a subject

in the discussions in the “what we heard” document — was on the issues of how older workers are treated under workers’ compensation.

My first question is: Does the Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board have data on the number of seniors — or people who are over 65 — who are currently working in Yukon? I raise that because, as I understand it, the current policy doesn’t cover them, with the assumption that, once you get to 65, you should get the old-age pension. I will say that and the witnesses can correct me, Mr. Deputy Chair — but that is my assumption about that policy. There is a trend that more people over 65 are working and not all of them are working because they want to work — they need to work.

I note that in the accepted claims by age group — again, there is a relatively consistent number of people over the age of 65 who had claims accepted by the Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board. It would be interesting to know what percentage of the senior workforce that data represents but also how many of the senior population — this Chamber excluded — are working?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** For the first part of your question, no, we don’t have the numbers of people over 65 in the workforce. We don’t track that. We rely on the Bureau of Statistics and their labour surveys. We rely on the same information as everyone else does on that one. So, it is not something that we are able to track. What we can track — as you can see from our annual report — is the number of workers in certain age groups who are getting injured. As a percentage of the workforce, it is difficult for us to come up with those types of numbers.

I will correct the member on whether or not someone over the age of 65 is eligible for compensation. If someone is over the age of 65 and they are working and get injured, they are eligible for compensation for up to two years. That is in the current act. As you probably noted from the “what we heard” report — based on the conversation that occurred last year in this House, the minister did direct us to include that in part of the consultation, so that consultation piece is captured in the “what we heard” report. It was one of the questions that was asked during the consultation.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I was going to stand and confirm that this was the direction that we had given and it was certainly an area of concern for members opposite. It is an area that we are contemplating in the new legislation.

**Ms. Hanson:** I don’t want to be argumentative, but it’s my understanding it was over the age 63 and it got you to 65. When I read the “what we heard” document, it talks about workers aged over 63 — and of loss or based on a person’s age — those were just the comments made but I was just wondering — I’m not going to belabour it, but I thought it was 63.

In the “what we heard” document on page 15, the Workers’ Compensation Board — one of the areas that was discussed was the ability for Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board to be able to examine Government of Yukon records.

My question was: What’s the current situation? Does Workers’ Compensation have access to Government of Yukon records for the purposes of compliance with the legislation?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** I’ll start with the first question — clarifying the first one.

So, what the legislation says is that, if somebody is 63 or older, they’re eligible for two years of compensation once they get injured. So, if they work past 65, they are still eligible for up to two years of compensation. It’s clarified in our policy — so it can be found there. But yes, that is a very common misunderstanding of the way the legislation is written and I’ll admit that it’s not particularly clear in there — so just to clarify that.

As for your second question — it jumped right out of my mind. Could I get the member to —

**Ms. Hanson:** Sorry, Mr. Deputy Chair. I’m trying to rush through too many — it had to do with the Workers’ Compensation Board in its “what we heard” document. One of the things that was noted was that the board — in doing the review, the board had introduced the issue for consideration — the Workers’ Compensation Board being allowed to examine the Government of Yukon’s payroll documents and other related information to ensure compliance with the legislation to confirm that all earnings and contractors were properly reported.

My question was: What’s the current situation now?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** Yes — under the current legislation, Government of Yukon is the only employer whose records we aren’t able to examine.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that answer. On page 19 of the “what we heard” document, there is a section that talks about prohibited reprisals — an issue that Government of Yukon asked that the review consider. One of the issues that had been raised was that the difficulty of finding a proper selection of third-party decision-makers is important — it was identified that this could be hard in a small population base. But I am wondering, from a current perspective, how this is dealt with when we have PIDWA for whistleblowers — the protection of workers’ disclosure of wrongful actions in a workplace. Is that not already contemplated under other legislation? Would this be a significant concern — being able to have third-party decision-makers — so an adjudicator — how difficult would that be, really, in this territory?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** The issue that arises under our current legislation is that the only body that can provide a remedy if somebody is disciplined for bringing forward a safety issue is through the courts. What we had gone out to consultation on was — did stakeholders think that it would be better to take that out of the court and put it into a tribunal’s hands or an independent adjudicator or somebody else where, if there is a finding that there was a reprisal, they could order a remedy? That was the question.

In our documents, all that we were bringing up on that is that it could be challenging to find somebody with the knowledge, training, and experience to handle these types of adjudicative decisions on a regular basis, as they happen so rarely. I don’t think that the issue is that there isn’t anyone in the territory who could do it — it’s just that, in a small territory, sometimes finding the appropriate people or people with the

knowledge and experience to do it could be a challenge. So, it was just simply noting that.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that response. I am sort of jumping around a little bit because of the time. One of the issues that was discussed in the “what we heard” document was the issue of earnings loss benefits for low-income earners. I will just read the statement and then I will ask a question about it. So, this would be “That earnings loss benefits for all workers whose pre-injury earnings are at or below the minimum amount be increased to 100 percent of their pre-injury earnings, regardless of whether they are partially or totally disabled.” This would be intended to “... enhance fairness and encourage an early and safe return to work.”

There were some cautions identified in the feedback that the review received. My question would be: Do the witnesses have an estimate of the number of workers who might be captured by this?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** We do have an estimate. I don’t have it with me, so that is something that I will get back to the House with.

**Ms. Hanson:** In the joint health and safety committees, there was a fair amount of discussion in the “what we heard” report on this. Again, the Yukon government has put this forward for discussion and there was some feedback on this significant agreement, with the notion that a joint health and safety committee should be required when an employer has 20 or more workers who are regularly employed without reference to the hazard classification.

One of the concerns that had been raised was that there is no consideration for the types of work and hazards involved. Is there a difference currently in terms of the type of requirements of health and safety committees if it is more of a hazardous work site than a non-hazardous work site in terms of the classification of the work site?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** Yes, there is a difference. So, the way that the legislation is currently is that, if a workplace is classified as an A or B hazard under the first aid regulations, then they have to have a safety committee if they have 20 or more workers. A workplace classified as a C hazard under the first aid regulations wouldn’t need to have a safety committee in place. The proposal is to just say, straight across the board, that if you have 20 or more, you have to put a joint health and safety committee in place. So, get rid of that reference back to the regulations and the hazard classifications that are established in those regulations.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that. I realize that the time is just going by, so I just want to touch on one last area. There was a consideration introduced in the “what we heard” document to clarify the criteria that must be met by domestic service workers to be considered a worker under the *Workers’ Compensation Act*. There was general support for the proposal. There were some concerns raised with respect to the potential for worker discrimination.

I am just wondering if the witnesses could identify for us: How is this dealt with in other jurisdictions? Are we talking about an employer/employee relationship with a domestic

worker, or are we talking about domestic workers who work for Molly Maid or something like that?

**Mr. Dieckmann:** All jurisdictions handle the issue of domestic workers differently. It is an issue that every jurisdiction struggles with, and everybody has sort of come up with different ways of handling it. What I can do is get the jurisdictional scan, provide it to the minister, and get her to introduce it to the House so that people have an understanding of how it is dealt with in different jurisdictions.

**Ms. Hanson:** It feels like we do speed questioning here; it is like speed dating or something. I think that we have to find another way, but I thank the witnesses for their patience. I have many more questions, but we are not going to get to them today, so I do thank them for their presence here today and for the changes in the website and the report, which I thought was great.

**Deputy Chair:** As it is before 5:30 p.m., are there any more questions for the witnesses?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** On behalf of Committee of the Whole, I would like to thank Mark Pike, chair of the Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board, and Kurt Dieckmann, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board, for being here today as witnesses. Thank you for your thoughtful answers and for the work that you do on behalf of Yukoners.

**Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Ms. McLean. The witnesses are now excused.

*Witnesses excused*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by Ms. McPhee that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### **Chair’s report**

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

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 4, witnesses appeared before Committee of the Whole to discuss matters related to the Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board.

**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.

If members are travelling to their respective communities over the course of the long weekend, I wish you safe travels.

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

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*

**The following legislative return was tabled November 10, 2020:**

34-3-44

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 204, *Fourth Appropriation Act 2019-20* — variable message boards (Mostyn)





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 62

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Monday, November 16, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

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

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<b>Brad Cathers</b>	Lake Laberge	<b>Patti McLeod</b>	Watson Lake
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#### New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Monday, November 16, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Kent:** I would ask all members to join me in welcoming my wife, Amanda Leslie, here today. She is here for the tribute to World Diabetes Day and World Diabetes Awareness Month.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of United Nations International Day for Tolerance

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the United Nations International Day for Tolerance.

In 1994, UNESCO marked the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, which paved the way for the United Nations to proclaim November 16 as the day for tolerance. To people around the world, Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent resistance serves as a symbol of tolerance and peace. Tolerance is the acceptance, respect, and appreciation for all people, cultures, political beliefs, and forms of expression.

I feel that, this year, tolerance is more important than ever, as we see an increase in inequality and extremism around the world. We must work actively against this.

The United Nations notes that there are concrete and tangible ways that we can fight for tolerance. We have the power through laws, education, and community solutions, to spread tolerance. Here in Yukon, I am heartened by the multitude of community organizations that are helping to spread tolerance in our community. The Multicultural Centre of the Yukon is one organization that is helping to make newcomers feel welcome in our community. We are privileged to have many individual multicultural groups such as the Canadian Filipino Association of the Yukon, the Japanese Canadian Association of Yukon, Chinese Canadian Association of Yukon, Yukon African Caribbean Association, and l'association franco-yukonnaise — to name a few.

The people behind these organizations are not just providing a warm welcome and assistance to newcomers from around the globe; they also serve as an important reminder to celebrate and share our diversity. These organizations make

Yukon a richer place through special events and providing a supportive network for new Yukoners.

Yukon women's organizations are also a critical part of promoting tolerance. The Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, the Yukon Status of Women Council, Les EssentiElles, the Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, and many others are providing critical services in support of Yukon women and raising awareness of the inequalities that continue to threaten the equality and status of women in our community.

In Canada and around the world, we know that indigenous peoples everywhere are resisting intolerance and oppression. The Council of Yukon First Nations, the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association, and all of our 14 First Nation governments are doing important work every day to move us closer to a more tolerant society.

Tolerance of gender identity, expression, and sexual orientation is advocated by Queer Yukon, All Genders Yukon, and the gender sexuality alliances. As we saw just last week with the passing of legislation to ban conversion therapy, their voices are instrumental in change and calling for greater inclusion and tolerance.

There are so many other organizations in Yukon, like Special Olympics Yukon, that are working to create opportunities to support people with differences in their abilities.

There are many, many other organizations working to support and promote diversity and tolerance. It is a good sign and something to be proud of that there are simply too many of them to name here today. I apologize that I simply cannot mention them all.

I thank each and every organization and those individuals in Yukon who spread tolerance through their work or simply through their own kindness, understanding, and respect for others. No matter our background or beliefs, tolerance is about celebrating the differences and recognizing how those differences can make the world a richer place. Gandhi famously said that you must be the change you wish to see in the world. I am proud of the countless Yukoners who have always lived by those words, especially in these unprecedented times.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party in recognition of the United Nations International Day for Tolerance.

"Tolerance" isn't a word that I like very much. Initially, on hearing about today's tribute, I thought about all the words that I like so much more than "tolerance" like "acceptance", "respect", and "appreciation". But in reading the *Declaration of Principles on Tolerance* that was adopted on November 16, 1995, I have softened my thoughts on the word "tolerance", at least in this context.

These are the words from the 1995 declaration, and I think that they're important: "Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought,

conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.

“Tolerance is not concession, condescension or indulgence. Tolerance is, above all, an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. In no circumstance can it be used to justify infringements of these fundamental values. Tolerance is to be exercised by individuals, groups and States.

“Tolerance is the responsibility that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism), democracy and the rule of law. It involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism and affirms the standards set out in international human rights instruments.

“Consistent with respect for human rights, the practice of tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one’s convictions. It means that one is free to adhere to one’s own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behaviour and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one’s views are not to be imposed on others.”

“In the modern world, tolerance is more essential than ever before. It is an age marked by the globalization of the economy and by rapidly increasing mobility, communication, integration and interdependence, large-scale migrations and displacement of populations, urbanization, and changing social patterns. Since every part of the world is characterized by diversity, escalating intolerance and strife potentially menaces every region. It is not confined to any one country, but it is a global threat.”

Today, in commemorating the International Day of Tolerance, simply said: Let us recognize our differences and celebrate them.

*Applause*

### In recognition of World Diabetes Day

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I rise in the House today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to acknowledge November 14 as World Diabetes Day, the world’s largest diabetes awareness campaign, reaching a global audience of over one billion people in more than 160 countries. Diabetes Canada estimates that more than 10 million Canadians are living with diabetes or pre-diabetes. Every day, more than 480 people in our country are diagnosed with this life-changing disease. Every year, the cost to Canada’s health care system is nearly \$4 billion.

World Diabetes Day is marked every year on November 14, to coincide with the birthday of Canadian Nobel Laureate Sir Frederick Banting, who co-discovered insulin along with Charles Best in 1922. Since that ground-breaking discovery, Canada has been leading the way in diabetes research, education, and treatment.

Type 1 diabetes is usually diagnosed in children and generally affects a small percentage of the population. Type 2

diabetes, which is predominantly a lifestyle disease, is much more prevalent. Here in Yukon, diabetes affects more than 2,000 people. According to the International Diabetes Federation, up to 70 percent of type 2 diabetes cases could be prevented with a change of lifestyle. That’s why it is so important to fight this rising tide on many fronts, including supporting those with diabetes.

In recent years, Yukon has become a leader in supporting individuals with diabetes. This year, Yukon became the first jurisdiction in Canada to fully fund constant glucose monitors for all Yukoners. I want to thank all those who are working in our territory to support Yukoners with diabetes. This year, the World Diabetes Day campaign focuses on promoting the role of nurses in the prevention and management of diabetes.

Here in Yukon and across Canada, nurses are the backbone of our health care system. They play a crucial role in educating and informing people about their lifestyle choices.

Mr. Speaker, our government has funded new public health nurses in Yukon communities to focus on prevention in addressing the factors that lead to chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes. Following the *Putting People First* report, we will be increasing the number of public health nurses in our communities. I want to thank the more than 500 nurses working in our communities for their ongoing work to improve health outcomes for our citizens, including those with diabetes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize and pay tribute to World Diabetes Day which took place on Saturday, November 14, and to this month as Diabetes Awareness Month.

It has been almost a century since the discovery of insulin in 1921 by Dr. Frederick Banting, whose birthday was November 14. His discovery — which led to the award of the Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine in 1923 — has effectively changed the lives of people suffering from diabetes for 99 years. It is hard to imagine a world without access to insulin for those without proper pancreatic function. For many, insulin-monitoring pumps and injections are central to their daily lives. Types 1 and 2 diabetes and everything associated with the disease are often central to the lives of not only the individual but the entire family. Events, activities, trips, schools, and meals are focused around diabetes monitoring and control.

I would like to thank the Yukon T1D support network for their endless advocacy for individuals with type 1 diabetes in Yukon. This incredible group of individuals worked on behalf of and alongside the type 1 diabetes community since the creation of the network, and they have a lot to be proud of. They not only educate and advocate for individuals and families facing diabetes, they go beyond in their fundraising and lobbying efforts to ensure those living with type 1 diabetes — a life-threatening autoimmune disease — can continue to live life to the fullest with access to technology critical to their health and well-being.

This year, the Yukon T1D support network is celebrating an incredible milestone in their journey. Their efforts to secure continuous glucose monitors, commonly referred to as “CGMs”, for all Yukoners has finally paid off. Going forward, Yukoners living with T1D have full access to this lifesaving technology. I would like to thank the organization for their continued work toward this goal and congratulate them on this achievement for all Yukoners.

As so many not-for-profit organizations and charities throughout the territory have done in order to adjust to the realities of the pandemic, the Yukon T1D support network has also adapted its approach to fundraising this year and is launching its boulevard of hope in January 2021. Throughout the entire month, 35 trees to represent the \$3,588 cost of a CGM for one Yukoner for one year will be lit up in blue, the diabetes awareness ribbon colour, along Robert Service Way. The boulevard of hope founders and organizers, Jill Nash and Amanda Leslie, and key sponsors, Kilrich Building Centres, ATCO, CKRW The Rush, and Arcrite Northern, in addition to the countless private sector businesses that have sponsored a tree on the boulevard hope that this display lifts all Yukoners’ spirits during January’s dark days while creating awareness about living with type 1 diabetes.

I would also like to give special thanks to those who provide support to Yukoners from the Diabetes Education Centre located at the Thomson Centre. Services provided to Yukoners include support and education on type 1 and 2 diabetes, gestational, and pre-diabetes. Staff at the centre work with health care providers to ensure care and support from diagnosis onward. Yukoners living with diabetes and their families, educators, and other caregivers are fortunate to have access to the supports available in our territory.

I would like to thank those who continue to donate time, support, and funds to the ongoing efforts of the Yukon T1D support network who are navigating the experience of living with type 1 diabetes.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus in recognition of Diabetes Awareness Month and World Diabetes Day.

November is a month-long global diabetes awareness campaign when communities around the world team up to bring awareness to diabetes and encourage action to tackle the diabetes epidemic. This year’s World Diabetes Day theme is “The Nurse and Diabetes”. We all know the crucial role that nurses play in our lives, but the role that they play in supporting folks living with diabetes is even more essential. People living with diabetes face a number of challenges and education is vital to equip nurses with the skills to support them. As the number of people with diabetes continues to rise across the world, the role of nurses and other health professional support staff becomes increasingly more important in managing the impact of the condition.

We’re lucky that in Yukon we have two more amazing people currently working toward their certified diabetes

educator certification. Jamie Trainor is a licensed practical nurse who also happens to be the mom of the youngest child ever diagnosed with T1D in Yukon. She is committed to changing the landscape of type 1 diabetes education in the Yukon. Brayden Kulych is a registered nurse, a board member of the T1D support network, and has type 1 diabetes himself. His goal is to make sure that Yukon residents with T1D are always able to access the help they need when they need it most. We know for certain that these two nurses are going to make a serious impact on diabetes education in the life of diabetics in Yukon.

We’re also lucky to have an epic champion here in Yukon, and that’s the Yukon T1D support network. They aim to help Yukon citizens who have type 1 diabetes. They do so through education, advocacy, and support. During the month of November, they have been sharing a series of posts on their Facebook page to help educate and celebrate the work being done globally and right here at home in support of those living with type 1 diabetes. Through the advocacy efforts of the T1D support network, any type 1 diabetic, regardless of their age, now has access to their choice of technology to help better manage their glucose levels.

Yukon has blazed a trail for the rest of the country and we look forward to the day when others will follow suit and make this technology accessible.

*Applause*

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 4 — received

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 4 of the Third Session of the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King on Tuesday, November 10, 2020.

The petition presented by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

**Speaker:** Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 4 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 4 shall be provided on or before Thursday, November 26, 2020.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

**NOTICES OF MOTIONS**

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

THAT this House supports implementing a population health approach that considers the social determinants of health to reduce inequities and improve the health of the entire population.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to publicly release the criteria used to determine whether or not to maintain an exception to self-isolation requirements for people travelling from British Columbia.

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

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT****Yukon highway border enforcement agreement with Liard First Nation**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I rise before the House today to highlight the importance of measures in place under the state of emergency in the Yukon during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In particular, the state of emergency enables measures that aim to reduce the risk of importation and transmission of the virus, including isolation requirements, border controls, and enforcement. Border controls ensure that those coming into the Yukon are informed of the rules in place in our territory and know what is expected of them as they travel in, around, and through our territory. They improve our ability to track and manage the public health risk and keep Yukoners safe.

Partnerships are key as we respond as a territory and as a community. I am thankful for the great work and cooperation across all levels of government and give my thanks in particular to mayors and councils and their staff, chiefs and councils and their administrations, and our federal counterparts — in particular, those with the Canada Border Services Agency. Partnerships with communities, including municipal and First Nation governments, are integral to maintaining a coordinated response to the pandemic, in keeping our case count low and manageable.

Today I want to highlight a recent partnership established between our government and the Liard First Nation to support border control, including information-flagging services at border stations at both Watson Lake and Junction 37. This partnership expands our collective efforts to respond to COVID-19, built on respectful relationships and with opportunities for local jobs and capacity.

From April to October 2020, our borders were staffed with natural resources officers, conservation officers, the wildland fire team, staff of Tourism and Culture, and with support from local contractors.

Starting in November, the Liard First Nation is providing staff and hiring local contractors for highway border controls. The Yukon government is providing liaison staffing and some training to assist with the transition. We will continue to have

our *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, or CEMA, enforcement officers available to the community of Watson Lake for any issues of concern.

Mr. Speaker, we have also had a close working relationship with the City of Whitehorse which has embedded a bylaw officer within the CEMA investigation unit to work full time and side by side with our investigators. Bylaw services also conducts regular patrols in Whitehorse to monitor the presence and compliance of out-of-territory vehicles.

In our rural communities, Government of Yukon has designated CEMA enforcement officers to follow up on issues of CEMA compliance in the communities. These CEMA enforcement officers are very familiar with their communities and they are committed to the collective efforts to respond to meet local needs. The RCMP further serve as the point of contact in communities and provide a bridge for the work of the Canada Border Services Agency and Yukon's Emergency Coordination Centre. They work closely with the Canada Border Services Agency throughout the course of the pandemic and are grateful for their support, both on the ground and at the administrative level, in helping to keep our territory and the rest of our country safe from the spread of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, the relationships with Yukon communities and partnerships with all levels of government have been integral to our government's ongoing response to COVID-19.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement today. I appreciate the minister for highlighting this information.

First off, I want to say thank you to all the Yukoners who worked tirelessly over the last several months staffing our borders and keeping Yukoners safe. Many of these individuals found themselves doing a new and unique line of work that they were not used to, and they performed admirably. Your hard work was appreciated, so thank you.

With respect to the border control measures that the minister highlighted today, I have a couple of questions that I'm hoping he can answer. The first is with respect to the staff for the flagging services at the check stops. This service was previously provided by a local Yukon company that competitively bid through a public RFP tendering process; however, they found out near the end of October that the government would not be renewing their contract, nor would the government be going through a public tendering process.

So, if the minister could explain why the government chose not to go through a public tendering process again for this service, that would be helpful. Also, if he could provide us with the cost for the new partnership and the cost for the previous model to allow us to compare, that would be helpful as well.

I also have a question about the new schedule for border enforcement. On September 30, the government announced that our borders were switching from being staffed 24 hours a day to only being staffed from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Travellers arriving outside of those hours are required to sign a declaration and submit their self-isolation plan along with a contact

number. However, this honour-system approach does leave some questions about enforcement.

I am wondering if the minister could elaborate on how enforcement of entry into the territory outside of business hours is working. Since the transition, how many travellers have entered the Yukon during these unstaffed hours? Is the government confident that all travellers arriving outside of those hours have complied with the honour-system approach? How has the government ensured compliance with this new model? Finally, does the new partnership highlighted today in the ministerial statement adjust the hours that the border is staffed or will it remain from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.?

I will leave that with my remarks and look forward to the minister's answers.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Liard First Nation and First Kaska on getting this contract. We wish them success in the important work that they are taking on.

We also want to sincerely thank all government employees who have worked hard over the last months to keep Yukoners safe. Your work was and is critical in keeping our communities safe. You made sure that Yukoners and visitors alike were aware of the safety precautions needed while travelling to or through the Yukon. We know that some of you faced many challenges, like your pay being delayed or not having access to adequate outdoor gear. You were far from home, in some cases, and not doing the jobs that you love. We know that you shouldered the onus of responsibility for our collective safety every day while on the front lines of an unsecured border.

We know that the communication around the transfer of the contract was far from ideal, and we are sorry that you weren't informed ahead of the decision being made public, because this must not have felt very good. This is unfortunate, and we want to make sure that you know that Yukoners appreciate the work that you have done.

In terms of the measures in place at the border, many Yukoners are wondering if the measures that were put in place in the summer, when COVID-19 numbers were much lower, are still appropriate. We are seeing the numbers of active cases increase very rapidly across the country, including in British Columbia. I'm hoping that the minister can provide some clarity in his responses as to how border controls might evolve over the next few months. If we have learned anything in the last number of months, it is the importance of information. I think that one thing that would help alleviate concerns from Yukoners is if the government would be transparent about what criteria will be used to decide whether or not to keep allowing travel to BC without self-isolation requirements. What criteria will be used and when will this information be shared with Yukoners?

We know that self-isolation was imposed in other parts of the country when case counts were much lower than they are now. How will government decide when the risk is too big? When it comes to enforcement, we know that currently the borders are only staffed from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Could this change if we see border restrictions evolve? Can the minister

please provide information and statistics on compliance outside of those hours?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking both of the members opposite. I completely agree with them that those staff who have worked to set up the border and keep us safe over the past half a year or more have performed admirably, so thank you. They have shouldered the onus of keeping our roads and our routes safe into the territory. I agree with the members opposite that they have done tremendous work to keep us all safe, so thank you so much to them.

I should note for the Member for Porter Creek North that all people entering into the territory are required to sign a declaration if they are to self-isolate. It's not about what time they come across; all will sign that declaration so that we can follow up with them, contact trace with them, and work in confidence with them.

I will also say that we did have a couple of flagging contracts over the summer in the period up to the end of October. I know that, for the particular flagging company that we had in place most recently, we extended their contract for the month of October. We let them know that we were going with the Liard First Nation and they are doing their procurement process — it's not ours. I am happy to ask the Liard First Nation what procurement process they will be using. I want to thank all those flagging companies.

The member opposite asked for the amount of money we spent. I think it was several hundred thousand dollars for flagging over the summer months. I will get the numbers back here for everyone, and I will also work to get the numbers for the dollars that we are transferring for the Liard First Nation to take on this task.

With respect to how we set criteria for deciding on what to do with our borders, we laid that out in a document very early, called *A Path Forward*. I will happily share it with the members opposite. It highlights the criteria we use to move from one phase to another. I know that the Premier is speaking often with the chief medical officer of health. I spoke with him last week as well. We continue to be in dialogue to get his advice on the epidemiology of British Columbia, and we will continue to make sure that our borders are safe.

Right now, the number of visitors who are coming into the territory from our land borders is dropping. I think that it dropped 15 percent last week alone. Those numbers continue to drop. We have put in place measures to consider after hours — for example, video cameras and CEMA enforcement officers coming forward to do random checkpoints in the evenings. We will work to make sure that it is safe. Can this change in the future? Absolutely. That is the whole point of continuing to monitor and continuing to work to keep Yukoners safe and healthy during a pandemic. It is a lot of work.

Again, I would like to thank all of the staff who have worked there and the Liard First Nation for stepping forward. We have been working closely with them and the Town of Watson Lake. I think that this move is appreciated by all, and we will work to make sure that it is successful.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Panache Ventures return on investment

**Mr. Hassard:** So, last week when we asked about the \$2 million of taxpayers' money that the Liberal government shipped south to a venture capital firm based in Montréal, the minister said — and I will quote: "... a number of First Nation governments ... had come to us" with the proposal. Can the minister confirm that this statement was accurate, and which First Nation governments proposed investing in Panache?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** As the department had communicated to me, the organization that came to the department was Kluane First Nation. I think there were other First Nations that were involved in this, but that is what I was informed of through the department.

**Mr. Hassard:** Again last week, when we asked about that same \$2 million of taxpayers' money that the Liberal government shipped south to a venture capital firm based in Montréal, the minister said that the government did due diligence on the investment and he said that his government did a third-party analysis.

So, can the minister confirm that a third-party analysis of this investment was done by the Yukon government, and would he be happy to share that with us, Mr. Speaker?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, there was a third-party analysis that was completed. The Department of Economic Development contracted Gilles Duruflé, an independent consultant on venture capital. Gilles' track record includes advising the Government of Nova Scotia on setting up some venture funds and investment strategies for governments, and he also did the recommendations to our department. He is well known in the field, and I will endeavour to speak with the department about getting in touch with the work, making sure that there is a not a non-disclosure and making sure that there are no contract specifications around that. I am happy to do it — once again, very open.

I am quite curious about where this is going. It really seems to be a lot of mudslinging. What we do have here is an investment in Yukon First Nations and development corporations with a multitude of benefits. It's not just a return on the investment over the period of time on the fund — which we see the Québec government, the Ontario government, the National Bank of Canada, and others looking at — but also the opportunity when the right investment comes along to be able to support that in that growth stage. Again, it's interesting — it seems like just mud being thrown across the way. Those in the sector feel that this was a good investment.

**Mr. Hassard:** We now know that, unlike in Alberta or Québec, Panache will not be required to have a presence in the Yukon in return for the \$2 million of taxpayers' money that the Liberals shipped south. We also know that Yukon taxpayers won't receive a financial return on investment for this deal, unlike the taxpayers of Alberta or Québec. We know that, since the Yukon government has shipped \$2 million down to

Montréal, not a single Yukon business has been invested in. One benefit that we were supposed to receive was mentorship and networking for local businesses.

We know that Panache hosted a three-hour meeting in Whitehorse a year ago. So, with the minister unable to provide examples of what Yukon taxpayers received, we are left wondering if all that taxpayers got for their \$2 million was one three-hour meeting. Other than that one three-hour meeting last year, has Panache offered any other opportunities — virtual or otherwise — for mentorship to Yukon businesses?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I am going to go back to the department to ask if they could reach out to the First Nation Investment Corporation. What their representatives have let us know is that Panache has mentored nine Yukon companies through one-on-one meetings, business introductions, and strategic advice. Some of Yukon's high potential start-ups, including Proskida and Appendo — great companies that have really come into their own over the last number of years — have received advice and worked with Panache to assess their investment readiness. This investment is already benefiting Yukon companies and will again drive future investment. The individuals in this sector who work here feel that this is a really important asset to have for us to be able to see that fund there.

We're still doing the work on angel investment — of course, we have done the NACO piece. We've seen significant growth, again, in this sector. Once again, I'm curious to see where this continues to go. Others who are around it feel that it's a good investment and they're looking forward to the return and to be able to help Yukon companies grow.

### Question re: Mixed-use housing project

**Mr. Kent:** The government is building a 47-unit, mixed-use housing project at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street here in Whitehorse. On April 11, 2019, the minister stated that this facility would contain market rental units. Her exact quote was that the project would support — and I quote: "... a cross-section of clients in the housing continuum — from homelessness to affordable to market rental housing — all in one development".

However, last week, we asked the Premier how many of the units were allocated for market rent and his response was that none of them were for market rent.

So, I'm just hoping the government can clarify: Why did the minister tell us last year that there were market rental units in this facility, but last week, the Premier told us there weren't? Was the minister wrong when she provided Yukoners with this information last spring?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I'm proud to support this project as it will (1) boost Yukon's economy. It will generate construction jobs, but it will also address and create affordable housing here in the city. This community housing development will be used as the first project that models a mixed-income client allocation.

By its innovative design, this housing development supports achieving the goals set out in *Our Clean Future*. The building has 47 units that include a blend of bachelor suites and



one-, two-, and three-bedroom units. Ten units will be barrier-free, with a targeted completion of December 2021.

We have budgeted \$18 million over two years for this project, which will support clients across the housing continuum from homelessness to affordable rental all in one development.

**Mr. Kent:** So, my question was about last year when the minister said there would be market rental units in there. Last week, the Premier said there will not be market rental units in there. So, I was asking the minister if she was incorrect last spring when she provided us with that information.

As I mentioned, we are just seeking clarity on the scope and design of this project. On April 11, 2019, the minister stated that there would be market rental units in this housing development. On November 10, 2020, the Premier stated that there would not be market rental units. So, either one of them is wrong or at some point during the development of the project there was a change made.

I am going to assume that neither of them was wrong and ask the minister: When was the change to this project made?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The objective of the Yukon Liberal government is to create safe, affordable housing for Yukoners. It is a priority for the Liberal government and we are making significant progress toward this goal. We know that housing is a basic necessity and that Yukoners have a right to access housing that meets their current needs.

Over the past three years, we have invested significant resources into building safe homes. We have used the guiding principles of the Safe at Home plan, the housing action plan for Yukoners, and we will continue to use these plans as guides as we go forward. Our focus is really on transforming social housing to ensure that it better addresses the housing continuum, and improves community housing and outcomes for Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, this current housing project is funded through the national housing strategy and aligns with the housing action plan and our goals and objectives. We will look at ensuring that we take the recommendations from *Putting People First* and aging in place and address the current needs of Yukoners. We are very proud, again, of this project. It will meet a diverse need for Yukoners as a mixed-use housing unit.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the minister heard my question. It was about the fact that, last year, she announced that there would be market rental units in this building. Last week, the Premier announced that there would not be market rental units. I am wondering when the scope of that project changed.

However, I do have another question about the changing scope. When it was first announced in March of 2019, it was advertised as being a 48-unit housing development. Additionally, a government press release from November 19 of last year, when the design contract was awarded, still referred to it as a 48-unit facility. On November 5 of this year, the minister stated that it had been reduced in size slightly to only 47 units, which again was repeated by the Premier on November 10 and by the minister again earlier today.

I am wondering if the minister can let us know why the facility was changed from the original plans. Was this due to budget constraints or some other reason?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to just acknowledge the efforts of the corporation, the efforts of Yukoners, and of the Safe at Home action group in looking at addressing and meeting the needs of Yukoners. The objective of the 48 mixed-income client allocation model is there to address the needs of Yukoners and that's why the 47 units are broken down into various units — one-bedroom, two-bedroom, three-bedroom units, and 10 units that are barrier-free — to address the needs of Yukoners. That's our objective and I'm very proud of that work.

The major investments in housing that has been put on the market in the last four years is substantial. Over 600 units were added to the Yukon market to address a lot of what we're seeing in our Yukon communities that have been long left vacant — and pressures in our communities. The \$18.8 million to support this 47-unit, mixed-income housing development in Whitehorse is one that was done in partnership with the city. It was done through our municipal matching grant and other federal initiatives as well.

#### **Question re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre policy on safe physical contact with inmates**

**Ms. Hanson:** Friday's *Yukon News* told a story of intergenerational trauma happening right now in Yukon's justice system. An inmate who gave birth while incarcerated was forced to stop breastfeeding because of COVID restrictions implemented at Whitehorse Correctional Centre. She has not been able to have physical contact with her baby since March 24. Contact between a mother and a newborn is critical for a child's emotional, mental, and physical development.

How does the minister justify that, under her watch, a nursing mother at Whitehorse Correctional Centre was forced to stop breastfeeding?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think it's important to remind everyone that the health and safety of all of the inmates and the staff at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre must be top of mind. We're currently managing a world pandemic — a situation that requires contact to be limited and visitors to be limited. The story recently from British Columbia shows exactly what sort of risk can occur when an outbreak occurs at a particular institution. We've seen across the country how the effect of COVID-19 reacts and affects thousands and thousands of Canadians in relation to outbreaks at senior care facilities and those kinds of situations where individuals cannot leave the premises. As a result, the decision has been made in the operations of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre to protect the inmates in a world pandemic.

**Ms. Hanson:** A government policy forced an indigenous mother to stop breastfeeding and has prevented her from having physical contact with her baby for nearly eight months. The minister can't just blame this on COVID. The minister's refusal to recognize this impact is shameful. This can have serious negative repercussions for the child's entire life. Nothing justifies penalizing a baby — a newborn baby, Mr. Speaker. It's

not about creating future trauma. This is intergenerational trauma actively reinforced by Yukon government policies and institutions, and it has to stop.

Will the minister take responsibility and immediately direct that policies be implemented to allow for safe physical contact between mothers and their babies at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** This is certainly a situation that is being reviewed at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. The experts there are doing their work to determine the health and safety not only of their staff but, more importantly, of the inmates who reside at that location and are subject to the health risks that exist should COVID-19 become an issue at that facility.

The individual case that is being asked about here will, of course, be reviewed.

**Ms. Hanson:** A newborn baby faces negative lifelong consequences because of government policies. An indigenous mother at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre was forced to stop breastfeeding and has had no physical contact with her baby for nearly eight months. The *Yukon News* has called this — and I quote: “... cruel and unusual punishment.”

The mother’s lawyer has stated — and again, I quote: “... we’re perpetuating systemic racism and colonialism through our institutions.” These institutions are this government’s responsibility. How can the Premier tolerate that this is going on under his government’s watch?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that this is a difficult situation. As I have indicated, it has been reviewed by the experts at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and those at the Department of Justice who are ultimately responsible for the health and safety of all the inmates.

The elimination or non-introduction of COVID-19 into a facility like the Whitehorse Correctional Centre has been a top priority for the department and for this government in order to keep Yukoners safe. What I am able to say is that we are very proud of how hard Yukoners have worked to make sure that we have not had the increased cases that our country has seen and certainly other countries in the world have seen and that the health and safety of the inmates and the staff who work at WCC — all of them — and those who are required to reside there are a top priority for protection. That unfortunately may have required that the introduction of external visitors has been limited. The case is being reviewed.

#### **Question re: Canada-Yukon housing benefit program**

**Ms. White:** Last week, the government announced the Canada-Yukon housing benefit program. The very existence of this program acknowledges the fundamental problem in our housing market, and that is that people can’t afford rent — even those with a full-time job. People who qualify will receive a rent subsidy to help with the cost of rent. This stop-gap measure is certainly welcome for folks who are struggling to make ends meet, but let’s be clear — this doesn’t address the housing shortage that leads to skyrocketing rents.

Does the minister recognize that the Canada-Yukon housing benefit program does not actually solve the lack of affordable housing in Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to just acknowledge that the Canada-Yukon housing benefit — the supports that it provides — that wasn’t readily available historically. We had the Yukon rental assistance program. That has concluded and now we have taken up the Canada-Yukon housing benefit initiative, and that is to assist those Yukoners who require assistance in the rental markets. We are very proud of that. Does it address the housing shortage? That is certainly not the objective. We have major investments in Yukon.

With the next question, I can respond to the investments that we have made in the Yukon with respect to the added resources in Yukon for the housing benefits for units.

We now have in excess of \$30 million that we are spending through the housing initiative fund, through the partnership build fund, and I would be happy to respond to the next question.

**Ms. White:** Many individuals seeking affordable housing end up in long-stay hotel rooms. Their stays in these hotel rooms usually come to an end in the spring, and they are asked to leave for the tourist season. Because their stays are under six months and there is no rental lease signed, they would not be eligible for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit.

Can the minister explain to long-term hotel tenants why they do not qualify for the rental subsidy and what options they have to help with their rental affordability?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** There are two things happening. One, rent-assist is to provide for those clients who are not the responsibility of Health and Social Services. We do provide supports through Health and Social Services to ensure that we provide necessary shelter, food, and the necessary resources for those clients who fall under the social income stream.

Now, the housing benefits initiative — the rent-assist program — is intended there to support those clients who are not in that stream. We are reaching far into the Yukon to support Yukoners who come forward requesting assistance. I’m very proud of that and I will continue to certainly reach out. I ask Yukoners that, if they do require assistance, to please reach out to the department and we would be happy to provide you some guidance in terms of where you can get the resources and supports that are readily available.

**Ms. White:** So, just to be clear: Not all individuals staying in hotels are on social assistance or accessing existing housing subsidies. Many individuals and families live in mobile home parks. Some own their homes while others are renters. Regardless, pad rents are charged on each unit every month. These amounts can vary, but approximately \$500 a month is the standard in Whitehorse.

Can the minister tell those in mobile home parks if they qualify for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit program?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that the rent-assist program is to provide for those clients who are on rental arrangements. I would certainly be happy to have that discussion with the minister responsible for the mobile homes. I certainly want to have an internal conversation to look at

alternative options if that seems to be an area that is not addressed.

Right now, the objective of the Canada-Yukon rental benefit is to provide for those clients who are on the list that's required to support some rental assistance initiatives that perhaps are not able to meet the rent due to the global pandemic or other measures that are available. We would be happy to ensure that we provide assistance to them through other means that are available to us that are maybe currently defined in our — and through Yukon Housing Corporation.

**Question re: Diabetes treatment**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, a huge thanks is owed to the Yukon T1D support network for their determination and advocacy in securing continuous glucose monitors — CGMs — for all Yukon residents with type 1 diabetes. Anyone who knows about diabetes understands that a CGM not only allows a person to live a near-normal life, but is also a life-saving device.

In a release after October 1 announcing the fully-funded CGMs, the government said in the “Quick facts” section — and I quote: “Physicians will apply for coverage on behalf of their patients.” However, we have learned that some who require this important device are receiving mixed messages on how to secure coverage.

Can the minister clear the air and explain to those with type 1 diabetes what the parameters are to access continuous glucose monitors?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, let's perhaps have a discussion about the T1D support that has been provided to Yukoners.

When we first took office, the early initiatives in terms of the pilot project took effect by having a meeting with the families, looking at working with Health and Social Services, physicians were involved. We had a conversation about an initiative that would support young Yukoners who had been diagnosed with T1D. The objective there was to ensure that parents could successfully return to the workplace. Children who are going to childcare centres are appropriately monitored. It was a very successful initiative that ran for two years. I just want to acknowledge the department for doing such an exceptional job in working with the families and the young people who have come forward and addressing their needs.

From there, we've worked with the department, yet again, and we've listened to Yukoners. We are pleased to announce that we are now covering constant glucose monitoring for all Yukoners with type 1 diabetes. It's the first of its kind in the country. I'm very proud of that. I'm proud of the fact that we are supporting Yukoners.

**Question re: COVID-19 pandemic — impact on education system**

**Mr. Kent:** The pandemic is having serious consequences for our students, particularly those in grades 10 to 12 here in Whitehorse. The minister has decided that they will remain with half-time in-person learning for the balance of this school year. This follows the cancellation of all in-person

learning territory-wide from this past March until the end of the last school year. We've talked about mental health impacts and economic impacts of this decision. However, my question today is about educational impacts. Can the minister tell us how much of the curriculum she expects to be delivered in this school year?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I expect all of the curriculum to be delivered, and we have said this on many occasions. The grades 10 to 12 high school students here in Yukon, and particularly in Whitehorse, are learning full time. They are attending classes half time. They are supported throughout the day, should they choose to avail themselves of those supports, with tutoring, with study halls, with additional work with their teachers, and with additional support from their schools and from the Department of Education throughout the process.

As part of the modernization of the Yukon school curriculum, the Department of Education modernized how teachers assess and report student learning. Teachers — I take the opportunity to thank them for their dedication, for their resilience, and for their flexibility in how they do their jobs in the midst of a world pandemic. They are focusing on their students, and we thank them for that. They are focusing on innovative ways and imaginative ways to deliver the curriculum, and we expect that students in grades 10 to 12, as well as all full-time students here in the territory, are adjusting, and we all thank them for their efforts in doing so.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for saying on the floor of the Legislature here today that all of the curriculum will be delivered this year, because, as we know, this is an extremely important topic. As we have heard from one student who feels that they are approximately one month behind in some of their classes — this, and we haven't even hit three months of school yet. Another student has told me that they have been told that, if they want to cover the entire curriculum, they will have to do so on their own.

Teachers are, of course, doing their best without the addition of significant resources by this government to assist them, and we continue to advocate for the addition of more resources for our teachers and school staff. But that said, I am wondering: What measures is the minister contemplating to help students get caught up to where they should be in the curriculum delivery, and when will we see those changes implemented?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, the learning — and incredibly dedicated teachers in Yukon schools are doing what is being suggested by the member opposite on a daily basis. They are working individually with their students. I happened to be in two schools today for the purposes of visiting and also expressing to our teachers and to our administrators how incredibly important their dedication has been.

I took that opportunity — and will do so here today — to thank the teachers and the administrators for their dedication and for their caring in reaching out to their students and families. We know that feelings of stress of this situation are affecting teachers. Frankly, they are affecting everyone. We

thank them for their continued energy and enthusiasm for their students and urge them to take care of themselves.

Yukoners are, of course, appropriately concerned with respect to individual situations and the broader scope of the situation. I hesitate to remind Yukoners who are feeling anxiety that there are places for them to go. Particularly with respect to education, we ask them to reach out to their schools. Education and learning are very individual experiences. I note that Nunavut has had to close all of their schools today.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I look forward to sharing the minister's responses with those students and families who have reached out to us with concerns about curriculum delivery and the fact that they are behind in their learning this year.

As mentioned, all schools closed in-person learning at the end of last year as a result of the uncertainty around the pandemic. Many in our school communities expected that a portion of the start of this year would be dedicated to catching up on last year's work — and this is across all grade levels and in all communities.

Can the minister tell us how long it took for students to get caught up on the work from last year? If they aren't caught up yet, when does she expect them to be?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, as I was saying earlier, education and learning are very individual experiences. We have known this long before COVID-19. Of course, this situation, perhaps in some cases, has exacerbated the individual experiences. Each student will experience this time differently. It is even more challenging for some individuals.

We have indicated that supports are available and that they should reach out to their teachers. Frankly, teachers know which students are needing individual help; they are experts. We will leave it to the experts. I certainly wouldn't, in my role — as proud as I am to have this role and as dedicated as I am to Yukon students — ever presume to tell individual experts or administrators how to deliver the curriculum. That is a role for our teachers and administrators. It is a role that they have taken on seriously. It is a role that they have taken on with much enthusiasm and innovation in this very difficult time. They are doing what we should all be doing, which is thinking about what is best for the students.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### Bill No. 13: *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)* — Second Reading

**Clerk:** Second reading of Bill No. 13, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I move that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*, be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 13, entitled *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*, be now read a second time.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be able to rise today in the Legislative Assembly to speak to these amendments in the *Elections Act* for the Legislative Assembly's consideration. These amendments will establish that general elections for the Yukon government will be held on a fixed date. The amendments show that the first fixed date election will be held on Monday, November 3, 2025, and that subsequent elections will be held on the first Monday in November in the fourth calendar year following the last election.

Finally, the amendments confirm that nothing in the new legislation will affect the power of the Commissioner to order an election at the discretion of the Commissioner.

Currently, the date for the election of the Yukon government is ordered by the Commissioner, at the advice of the Premier, with a five-year time frame, as set out in the *Elections Act*. The *Elections Act* is currently silent on the timing of an election. Establishing a fixed polling date in legislation for the Yukon government election strengthens the overall democratic process and will support the democratic principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability.

When preparing for an election period, fixed polling dates for elections will support planning and financial efficiencies as well. Costs associated with elections can be more effectively managed when each election cycle is known and therefore can be planned for strategically.

The first Monday in November as a polling day is a day that is least likely to conflict with statutory holidays or with fixed dates of Yukon municipal elections, which are held on the third Thursday of October every three years, or with a federal election, which is held on the third Monday in October every four years.

However, given that it is difficult to predict and to account for all circumstances, there may be an occasion in a year in which the fixed date is not suitable for polling. That is why the proposed legislation confirms that the Commissioner retains the ability to call an election at the Commissioner's discretion, which could be at a date that is earlier, but not later, than the fixed date.

This power is essential to the principle of responsible government and is confirmed in the *Yukon Act*. Overall, these amendments will strengthen our democracy by being open, fair, and transparent about when the next government election will be held.

Establishing those fixed election dates for elections within the *Elections Act* is a recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer's 2019 report to the Legislative Assembly. I thank the Chief Electoral Officer for this report and assure the House that we are considering all of the recommendations in this report. In recommending legislated fixed dates for elections, the report states that uncertain election dates may reduce public discussion and engagement. The report states that fixed dates will support planning for elections and the recruitment of elections workers and may provide for greater participation of candidates and voters as well.

Currently, Yukon is one of only two jurisdictions in Canada that does not have fixed dates for elections within its

legislation. The important amendments before us today will create consistency with the federal government and most other Canadian territories and provinces that have fixed dates and four-year election cycles.

More importantly, these amendments will further improve the Yukon electoral process. It is my intent, in tabling these amendments today, to have something that all members support, since fixed election dates will enhance our democratic process and they are the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer.

It has been a privilege to be here today to speak on this, and I look forward to hearing from other members on this bill.

**Mr. Cathers:** In rising to this as our critic for democratic institutions, I note that, first of all, we do not have a problem with the concept of fixing the election dates — in fact, we are supportive of that concept. However, as the Premier should be well aware, we are not supportive of unilateral decision-making on elections being made, especially by a party that was elected to a majority government but with far less than half of the votes. In fact, over 60 percent of Yukoners voted for someone other than the current government.

It is unfortunate that we have seen the government — the Premier and his colleagues have talked a good line on collaboration, but — just as we have seen around other matters such as those related to the imposition of a civil emergency this year related to the pandemic and proposals for all-party committees to discuss matters related to that — we see that this Liberal government is interested in all-party collaboration only on its terms. As in this case — although the Premier indicated that he expects everyone to support it, there has not been discussion of the details of this proposal prior to the act being tabled.

So, I remind the Premier that he and some of his candidates — both in the election and the leadup to it — talked about fixed election dates, but they also talked about collaboration. In fact, one of his colleagues sitting right behind him — the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — speaking on behalf of the Liberal Party — and I'm quoting from a CKRW article from Wednesday, November 2, 2016, that was regarding the Liberal Party at the time — their commitment to fixed election dates. In an article entitled "Yukon Liberals commit to fixed election dates", the commitment was made by the Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes candidate at the time who said that "... this would bring clarity and certainty to when the election would be held, and stop the campaigning leading up to an election call."

He also was quoted as saying that "It will allow people to plan better."

The now-Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes indicated as well — quote: "It will allow Yukoners to plan for when they know when an election is going to be, and how they can vote, and it will allow Elections Yukon to plan, and everybody just to have a heads-up about when these things are going to come, and..." — and this is the most notable part of the quote — "... stop making it a political football about choosing the date."

Again, the commitment was made to stop making it a political football, but — just as we've seen with some other matters such as the government fumbling and flailing on their commitment around an independent commission on electoral reform and their absolute refusal to work with other parties on the terms of reference or to allow them a say in the appointments — we've seen that this government, unfortunately — every time they talk about election changes — seems to be fixated on trying to make it a political football.

With this legislation — Bill No. 13 — the government had a very easy option open to it. They had the option that traditionally would occur with changes to the *Elections Act*. It would not be a new process; it would be following past practice. They could have proposed these changes to an all-party committee. Typically, these changes would go to Members' Services Board. The Premier — in the past, we've seen him, in response to — in Question Period — members, including the Leader of the NDP, talking about proposed changes to campaign financing rules. The Premier has insisted that changes of that type have to go to Members' Services Board first. But when the Premier and his colleagues want to make a change, their rules are just a little bit different. Had this change been brought forward to Members' Services Board or another all-party process, there would have been ample opportunity to talk about the details.

I would note that, for a party that campaigned on fixed election dates, it's also notable that this fixed election date doesn't apply to them. It doesn't bind the current government. It sets out a timeline for five years down the road, binding a future government. That — among the concerns we've heard from people — is a question about timing. The Liberal government has chosen that — they believe November should always be the time for an election. Well, some would ask, "Why not October? Why not September?"

There are some practical considerations beyond statutory holidays — which seem to be the Premier's excuse — that relate to the ability to campaign, particularly in some of the rural and remote ridings — the ability to do everything as mundane as putting up signs to simply the comfort level of both candidates and citizens when door-knocking is occurring — are other potential factors that could lead some to suggest it should be sooner or perhaps, instead of earlier in the fall, it should be a spring date.

Ultimately, what this Liberal government has chosen is that, rather than asking Yukoners when they would like a fixed election date to be set for — what time of year — rather than consulting with anyone, it appears that they've made the decisions themselves and brought forward this legislation.

Had they followed the long-standing practice and brought this before Members' Services Board, we would have had the opportunity to debate the merits of any proposed date. Again, we emphasize the fact that we're not opposed to the concept of a fixed election date. But why is it just up to the Liberal Party, elected with less than 40 percent of the vote — probably a one-term government — to set the date of every Yukon election in the future and to decide that it should be the first Monday of November?

It unfortunately seems to be a fixation of this government to refuse to work with other parties when they can — for example, with the pandemic. As the Premier and his colleagues know, we have proposed — multiple times — working together through an all-party process regarding various matters related to the pandemic. The Liberal government has had absolutely no interest in working with other parties, except for the one specific proposal that they made, which has been criticized by people — including the former Clerk of the Assembly — for the fact that it was effectively putting the Minister of Community Services in a conflict-of-interest position where he would be expected to do a review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* while continuing to act and issue orders under that act.

Again, we need only turn a little back in time to remember how badly this government bungled their approach on an independent electoral reform commission where, by steadfastly refusing to show the terms of reference to other political parties, they set up a process that had the strong perception of bias and stacking the deck right from the start. We saw a situation where, in fact — though we believe that people who put their names forward did so in good faith, they were unable to effectively work on that commission due to the way in which the government had tainted it with its partisan tactics and political gamesmanship.

I mentioned a commitment from 2016 and cited a CKRW article at the time. I also have a copy in front of me from the *Klondike Sun*, complete with the now-Premier's smiling face, talking to his constituents before the election about what a government under his leadership would do. I would just note for the record and Hansard that this from Wednesday, March 25, 2015, in the *Klondike Sun*. I will, of course, as per usual, when quoting from articles where it mentions the Premier by name, refer to him by his title since I'm not able to use his name.

The now-Premier said — and I quote: "... a Liberal government would spend more time consulting with people to find out what they want and need, rather than spending its time telling people what they were going to get without proper consultation." Maybe I need to repeat that sentence. They "... would spend more time consulting with people to find out what they want and need, rather than spending its time telling people what they were going to get without proper consultation." So, we see this lovely top-down piece of legislation in front of us — Bill No. 13. What consultation did the government do with anyone but themselves on the content of the legislation, the date that would be fixed for future elections, or the fact that the legislation does not apply to the current government, because it doesn't take effect and set a date until 2025? In fact, depending on the nature of the next Legislative Assembly, it could potentially be past yet another election cycle if a minority government were to be elected and not make it a full term.

Returning to *The Klondike Sun* article on March 25, 2015 — again, not using the Premier's name — I quote: "... he was in favour of developing a model for electoral reform, but felt that most of the ones currently under discussion seem to favour

whatever party is advancing them. He would like to see an independent select committee come up with some proposals and see what might emerge."

Again, prior to the election, the Premier's indication to his own constituents was that it would be an independent select committee — of course, the term "select committee" refers to a committee of the Legislative Assembly — yet, after the election, we saw a different approach, where the Premier and his colleagues decided that, instead of doing what they said they would do, they would rather write the rules themselves, set the terms of reference for a commission themselves, and appoint all of the members themselves. This approach, again, is another case where this Liberal government has chosen to depart from the long-standing practice of seeking all-party consensus on changes to the *Elections Act* before tabling legislation.

As an interesting note from this article in *The Klondike Sun*: "Asked if he was in favour of recall legislation referenda..." — the Premier — "... said he wasn't about to go into details at this kind of meeting, but he tended to favour those ideas and was open to finding ways of making them work better than they have in some other jurisdictions."

Again, we haven't seen those commitments followed through on either.

So, again, Mr. Speaker, at the heart of our democracy is the expectation that no party should be allowed to stack the deck or gerrymander the system. Past governments of every stripe have respected the importance of ensuring that any changes to elections laws here in the Yukon are fair and unbiased and are done through an all-party process.

I have to remind the Premier that, when the *Elections Act* was changed during the Yukon Party's time in office, the all-party Members' Services Board reached unanimous agreement on the changes, including when we tabled legislation in 2015. As the Premier will recall, he supported that legislation and was provided the opportunity — through the work of myself, as Government House Leader at the time, and the now-Leader of the Yukon Party, Currie Dixon, reached out and worked with all members of the Members' Services Board, inviting them to express any concerns that they had with the contact. We went through every bit of the bill with the Members' Services Board —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

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

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that, if I understand the member opposite correctly, he is expressing information and opinions that were given at a Members' Services Board meeting, or several meetings, which I understand were held in-camera to give the opportunity for members to express their thoughts and points of view in those meetings and that those meetings are not to be noted or that information disclosed in a public forum.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** I think that the Government House Leader, in her urge to shut me down, would find that if she went back to the record from 2015, members from all parties, including myself as the minister who tabled the legislation, spoke about discussions at Members' Services Board — confidentiality had indeed been waived on those discussions.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** The current Speaker has absolutely no way of being the arbiter of what may or may not have been discussed and the confidences that may have been waived some five years ago now. The current Speaker cannot do that. So, we have a dispute between members as to the narrative.

But the Member for Lake Laberge, in my view, cannot continue along the path of advising what his recollection was of Members' Services Board discussions in 2015 — which in fairness, may be correct; it may not be correct. But the Speaker — the current Speaker — just cannot know that and is in no position to provide any guidance to the 34<sup>th</sup> Assembly on that topic. So, my inclination — I'll listen further to the Member for Lake Laberge, but my inclination is that he should be going in a different direction on his comments on second reading of Bill No. 13. Thank you.

**Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If it would make members more comfortable, I could read into the record the Hansard from 2015 so members can see what was talked about at the time. I will of course respect your ruling, Mr. Speaker — but I do have to point out that I know this is the most secretive government in Yukon history; they reflexively do not want to talk about anything that might potentially be embarrassing. But I am quoting from matters that have been discussed on the floor of this House and can be found in Hansard from five years ago, if they wish to make reference to it — as well as the fact that the Premier seems to forget that he himself was in a press release supporting the tabling of legislation in 2015 to change the *Elections Act*. That is not a matter of secrecy or confidentiality; that is a matter of public record.

But I will move on to other matters here, Mr. Speaker. I will in fact actually, just briefly — and thank you to the Leader of the Official Opposition for handing me this. Just for the Premier's reference, I have the press release in my hand now from October 29, 2015: "Proposed Elections Act amendments tabled" — Hansard will of course find this on, I believe, the government website.

That includes the *Elections Act* — again, this accompanied the tabling with myself as lead minister at the time.

"The Government of Yukon tabled amendments to the *Elections Act* in the Yukon Legislative Assembly today.

"The proposed changes to Yukon's *Elections Act* will help modernize the legislation and make it easier for Yukoners to vote," Premier Darrell Pasloski said. "Updating the act will allow for a more streamlined, clear and consistent experience for voters in Yukon's territorial elections."

"The proposed amendments include: more accessible and efficient voter registration, including a permanent registrar of electors; a simplified special ballot process that allows absentee

electors and others with special circumstances an extended opportunity to vote; and enabling the creation of an independent elections Yukon office."

Then, just briefly referencing the former Leader of the NDP's quote from this — and, of course, I can't reference her by name, though the release did — the Member for Whitehorse Centre — and I quote: "'I'm happy to see the legislature's all-party Member Services Board come to an agreement on some of the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations from her last review of the *Elections Act*,' Yukon NDP Leader..." — name of the member — "... said. 'These proposed changes are a good first step in modernizing Yukon's elections laws.'

"Several of these amendments stem from recommendations made in the Chief Electoral Officer of Yukon's December 2014 report 'Recommendations for amendments of the *Elections Act*'."

Here's a quote from the current Premier: "'I want to thank Elections Yukon staff for the work they have done to make these improvements to our *Elections Act* possible,' Yukon Liberal leader..." — the name of the member — "... said. 'The amendments address concerns raised by voters in the last territorial election to modernize our legislation.'

"Elections Yukon is responsible for ensuring members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly are elected through transparent, fair, and open elections."

Again, that's the October 29, 2015, release — which, as I mentioned, is speaking to comparing the process that was used for amendments to the *Elections Act* five years ago versus the Liberals-only process used for Bill No. 13. As I pointed out, in fact, the press release and the quote from one of the leaders of the other parties at the time made reference to the fact that Members' Services Board had come to an agreement on changes. That is clearly not a breach of secrecy; it's in the press release.

Unfortunately, if we look back in past discussions that have occurred, we note that, in 2017 on the floor of this House, the then-Leader of the Third Party raised concerns about matters, including the government's commitment to fixed election dates.

For Motion No. 19, on November 22, 2017 — just for the reference for Hansard, I am referring to pages beginning at 1767. Motion No. 19, standing in the name of the then-leader of the Third Party, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, said — and I quote: "THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to fulfill its election commitment and immediately appoint a non-partisan commission on electoral reform to engage and collaborate with Yukoners in order to:

(1) propose the best system to replace the first-past-the-post voting system, including consideration of proportional representation;

(2) consider fixed election dates;

(3) consider legislative amendments in order that voters have the final say when a Member of the Legislative Assembly changes caucus affiliation after being elected; and

(4) consider banning corporate, union and Outside contributions to political parties."

That was some of the past discussion in this current Legislative Assembly that occurred on that day related to electoral reform, including the government's commitment to fixed election dates.

Following the introductory remarks by the then-Leader of the Third Party, the Premier got up and talked a good line on collaboration. I am going to quote from a few of the excerpts from it that struck me as notable and relevant to both today's debate — and the fact that, again, the Liberal government didn't even make an attempt to reach an all-party agreement on this legislation. They simply chose to frame it in a way that they thought was most advantageous to the current government.

As the Premier will recall, that is a departure from the tradition of working with other parties to try to protect the integrity of the process and avoid there being the types of suspicions about the integrity of the process that can occur. If we look south of the border to the United States — that, of course, is a more extreme example, but a cautionary tale that all members would be wise to heed of the potential that, if parties act unilaterally when they have the power to change laws and if that becomes a pattern over time, it can lead to the type of lack of confidence in the integrity of the system that we have seen become a real concern in the United States.

Now, the Premier may think that this is a laughing matter, but I do not. The first step at avoiding that begins with the fact that the government doesn't need to act unilaterally in matters of this type.

Quoting the Premier in debating the motion regarding matters including fixed election dates, the Premier said — quite ironically — and I quote: “The last thing we want to do, though, is to make this a partisan exercise.”

The Premier also made reference to statements that he made before the election. He said — and again, I quote: “I always look at that statement and I wonder if I might have just boxed myself in, but anyway.”

The fact is that it seems like the Premier decided that he didn't want to be boxed in anymore and they are taking action unilaterally — but unfortunately, that conflicts with the Premier's claim that he doesn't want to make this a partisan exercise. I will again quote from his statements at that time in the House, and the Premier noted: “We have to take a look at a larger community and we have to take a look at all options. We have committed to that. As soon as we have a date ready, then we will absolutely engage with the opposition parties and the greater public ... and others to make sure that the terms and how we go down that road get defined in an open and transparent manner.”

The Premier also makes reference to — again, I will quote from page 1771: “I spoke to the leaders of the two opposition parties today, and I have every intention of involving them in those conversations moving forward.”

Again, it's unfortunate that we heard, prior to the election and early in this term, the Liberal government talking a good line on collaboration, but they made a choice — which they have yet to provide anything resembling a reasonable explanation for, both with this legislation and with their hand-picked commission on electoral reform — to step aside from an

all-party process, go it alone, and set the terms that they feel are most advantageous to them.

It is notable as well that the Premier's short remarks on this make it seem that they are almost ashamed of this act. From his limited contribution to what was a marquee platform commitment, it is clear that their bungling has made them uncomfortable about the conversation.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** A series of points of order, actually. The point of order that we just experienced again was Standing Order 19(g) — against the Premier — speaking about his approach to this particular bill — imputing false motives.

I have also heard — just a moment ago — Standing Order 19(b) by the Member for Lake Laberge, trying to compare — a bit of political science 101 — the US election to the destabilization of our democratic system. Then, of course, earlier on — Standing Order 19(i) as well — which could actually be Standing Orders 19(g) and 19(i) — which would be “... uses abusive or insulting language...” — talking about our government and how it is the most secretive government. This coming from a member who quit his party because of secretive dealings on the other side.

So, again, I find this a real stretch, again — and also with Standing Order 19(g). Thank you, Mr. Speaker — those are the points of order that I see.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** On the shotgun point of order from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — first of all, I would note that, based on your rulings regarding Standing Order 19(g), I do not believe that I was imputing false or unavowed motives to the Premier. I think that is a misinterpretation by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Regarding Standing Order 19(b) — the fact that the minister does not see the relevance between my view that the lack of collaboration on changes to elections laws can lead to the type of lack of confidence in the system that occurs south of the border is not in contravention of Standing Order 19(b), but simply the minister not understanding the relevance.

The minister suggested insulting language. I did not accuse the Premier of being the most secretive premier in history; I accused the government collectively of being secretive. Based on your past rulings, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that is a point of order.

I think that he threw one more dart at the wall, which was again regarding Standing Order 19(g), I believe. Again, based on your past rulings, I don't believe that I imputed false or unavowed motives to the Premier in contravention of Standing Order 19(g).

#### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** Order, please.



In a general sense, I am listening to the Member for Lake Laberge. I have certainly provided some leeway and latitude for him to analogize other government decisions with respect to what he is arguing is the process for the implementation of Bill No. 13; however, perhaps at this juncture, it might be useful for me to take about five minutes to read into the record some of what is probably in Hansard somewhere over the course of the last four years.

I will just take us on a trip down memory lane on Standing Order 19(g) and deal with some of the scenarios so that members can review them for future reference.

In one scenario, Standing Order 19(g) says that members shall be called to order by the Speaker if the member "... imputes false or unavowed motives to another member".

It is common for members during the course of debate and during Question Period to offer their interpretation of the positions or policies of parties other than their own. These characterizations — which tend to be unflattering — frequently give rise to points of order. Procedurally speaking, characterizing a party's policies or positions in an unflattering manner is not the same as attributing a false or unavowed motive to another member. This exchange — subject to me reviewing Hansard in greater detail — I think falls into that category.

In addition, the Chair recognizes that the members are here to debate important issues — issues about which they, and their constituents, hold strong views. Strongly held views often lead to strongly worded statements. All members will have to accept that. However, members should also be mindful of the role that they play in ensuring that proceedings are orderly. Procedurally, the Chair has no interest in the positions that members take on issues before the House. The Chair is only concerned with how members express themselves. Sticking to the issues, and wherever possible, not personalizing the debate will assist in this regard.

To violate Standing Order 19(g), a member would have to suggest that another member's reason for advocating a certain policy or position was one that is unworthy of an honourable member of the Assembly — that is, another member adopted a certain position in order to put partisan self-interest or some sort of other self-interest ahead of the public interest. Determining the true nature of a party's policy or position on an issue is a matter for members to resolve through the process of debate, questions, and responses. It is not a matter of procedure on which a Speaker can rule.

Finally, in another scenario, members may not, pursuant to Standing Order 19(g), accuse one another of acting based on motives that are unworthy of a member of the Assembly. I have said a number of times over the course of the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly that this would include any suggestions of illegal or unethical behaviour. Members must be especially careful not to suggest that another member is engaged in a conflict of interest. An accusation of a conflict of interest is a serious matter, and the existence of a real or perceived conflict of interest is for the Conflict of Interest Commissioner to determine, pursuant to the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*.

That is obviously not a comprehensive review of the scenarios that can arise in Standing Order 19(g), but I would ask members, once Hansard is complete today, to review that.

I think that is all I have to say right now. Like I said previously with respect to the Member for Lake Laberge — I understand that he is debating, arguing, or putting a position forward by analogy, which generally is permitted. But I will certainly continue to listen for an ongoing nexus between his submissions and second reading debate on Bill No. 13.

The Member for Lake Laberge can continue.

**Mr. Cathers:** I just want to note that talking about the importance of not departing from the tradition of trying to reach all-party agreement on matters in the Yukon was not just something that, as I reminded the government — and I know they don't like being reminded of this fact — in fact, during the time the Yukon Party was in government, we actually had agreement from all parties in all of the changes we made to the *Elections Act*. They, in contrast — both with Bill No. 13 and with previous processes — including their botched electoral reform commission, which was supposed to be one of the crown jewels of their platform, and voting against their own electoral boundaries report — the legislation that the Premier has tabled — I should say, their own legislation and the electoral boundaries report — we have seen this departure from the past process and an unwillingness to follow the tradition of all-party collaboration. This ultimately is not in the best interests of democracy here in the Yukon.

As the Liberals will know — indeed, as all members should know — in fact, not only was this government not elected with a majority of votes from Yukoners, but typically, majority governments in the Yukon have not had the support of over 50 percent of the people who have cast their ballots.

One of the reasons that, in the past, parties have respected the importance of working together in an all-party manner is, first of all, to not be accused of gaming the system or rigging it for their own interest and, secondly, for the fact that they have not wanted to see a situation where they lacked democratic legitimacy in moving forward with changes when they themselves do not have the support of over half of the public.

I'm going to take a moment to quote the former clerk, Dr. Floyd McCormick, in his current capacity as a private citizen — some comments that he made in the public domain on social media on October 25 regarding Bill No. 13, *Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*.

I'm quoting from Dr. McCormick: "Bill No. 13, Act to Amend the Elections Act..." — I should just note for the reference of Hansard that these are found on Dr. McCormick's social media account on Twitter. "Bill No. 13, Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020) proposes 'the first Monday in November in the year that is the fourth calendar year after the date of the previous election' as the fixed date for Yukon general elections beginning on Monday, November 3, 2025 ... Nine provinces (excluding NS), NWT, NU & Parliament have fixed-date election laws. 39 general elections have been held in Canada pursuant to fixed-date election laws (1st in BC in 2005). 24/39 (61.5%) actually occurred on the

prescribed 'fixed' date... Six (15.4%) happened earlier or later to avoid conflict with a federal election (NL 2015 & 2019, MB 2016, PEI 2015, SK 2016, NWT 2015); 6 (15.4%) happened early by choice of a First Minister of a minority govt (Canada 2008 & 2011, ON 2014, QC 2014, NB 2020, BC 2020)... and 3 (7.7%) happened early by choice of a Premier of a majority govt (AB 2015, MB 2019, PEI 2019). So, the extent to which a date is 'fixed' depends on the govt. The odds of an election occurring on the fixed date are high (but not 100%) if you have a majority govt... If you have a minority govt the probability, historically speaking, is 0%. But no assembly has continued past the fixed date except to avoid conflict with a federal writ period. So, the 'fixed' date is really an end date. Elections can always occur earlier...

"Bill No. 13 won't change the Commissioner's powers to dissolve the assembly at any time (on the Premier's advice) & order the Chief Electoral Officer to issue election writs. Like other Canadian jurisdictions, an election before the fixed date is still possible... either because the government has lost the confidence of the Assembly or as a strategic choice by the Premier. This is not a problem created by fixed-date election laws. It is a reality of our current system that will remain. But expectations (politicians & voters) should change..."

"Bill No. 13 also raises some questions: Like, why pick the first Monday in November for the fixed date? Weather-wise, campaigning in September and voting in early October seems like a better choice than campaigning in October and voting in early November... Fun fact: Every Canadian jurisdiction with a fixed election date (except AB & ON) schedules their elections for October. AB has spring elections and ON elections occur in June. Yukon would be the only jurisdiction that deliberately picked November for its elections..."

"Since the Assembly's spring sitting will be the last before an election, why wait until November to vote? An early October election also raises the odds that the Assembly can meet before Christmas to elect presiding officers, appoint committees, & maybe do other work... Getting on track sooner will be better if the assembly and the govt are facing a 4 year term, not a 5 year term. Also, Monday is the usual polling day for Yukon, but BC held its latest election on a Saturday. Is that a good idea, is it feasible? Might Yukoners want that?"

"Also, Bill No. 13 doesn't contain provisions to delay or advance a polling date that conflicts with the federal writ period. Do we need that option (where possible) or are we willing to conduct an election as usual, even if there is an overlap with a federal election?"

"A fixed election date is not a guaranteed election date because that kind of certainty can't exist in a system based on cabinet maintaining the confidence of the House. But Yukon govts have recently chosen to go 5 years between elections. That's too long. Four years is... standard in Canada & there is no reason the Yukon needs longer terms. If nothing else, Bill No. 13 should end 5 year terms & in so doing perform a necessary service for Yukoners. I hope the bill gets the consideration that it deserves before (if) it becomes law."

That is the end of my quotes from Dr. McCormick, former Clerk of the Assembly, on October 25, 2020, regarding this legislation.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Would it be useful — perhaps in the circumstances — to file that, in that you are asking Hansard to search social media? Would it be useful for the member to file it? If the member could file it, please.

**Mr. Cathers:** I will just ask staff to print off another copy and provide that to Hansard directly, if that is acceptable to you.

**Speaker:** Yes, if you have notations or there are certain things that you do not wish to file, that's fine, but I think that, for the benefit of Hansard, they should receive a hard copy of what you have just referred to.

**Mr. Cathers:** Of course — I would be happy to do that, Mr. Speaker.

So, what I wanted to point to — in noting some of the comments that the former Clerk, in his current capacity as a private citizen, has provided — is that with this type of legislation, even from those who support the concept of fixed election dates, there is room for debate on the details. There is, in fact, a lot of room for debate on the details, as outlined in the comments that I shared of Dr. McCormick's perspective on this legislation. The timing — the fact that the current government has chosen November as a date is unusual — unique, in fact, in Canada — when most jurisdictions have chosen to go earlier, with most of those provinces that fall into the earlier category being somewhat more temperate, in terms of climate, than Yukon.

My point in illustrating this is not to specifically say that it shouldn't be in November, but to note that there are a lot of good arguments for why it should perhaps be earlier. While I tend to agree with it myself, the real point is that deciding when a fixed election date should be should not just be up to one party to decide. Again, the past tradition in this territory is to attempt to reach agreement on election legislation. In fact, when we look at this bill itself, it is a pretty tiny bill — it has one page of text. Compared to the size of the elections legislation that I tabled, as the lead minister for the government in 2015 — and I read from the press release to remind the members of the fact that not only did Members' Services Board reach agreement on it, but it was in fact publicly stated in a joint press release that agreement had been reached on the legislation.

We provided that legislation to Members' Services Board and gave the opportunity for members to go through it in detail with the legislative drafter and the Chief Electoral Officer at the time, and — surprise, surprise — we reached agreement — all-party agreement — to table the legislation.

Now, unfortunately, in this case — yet again — the current Liberal government isn't even attempting to work together. Now, the Premier in the past — on November 22, 2017, he told this House: "I will just start by saying that working together is difficult." That's on page 1773.

He again went on to note on that page: “I can see why silos happen — because working together is difficult. We will continue to try our best to work together on as many things as we possibly can.

“This is what I am trying to accomplish.”

Well, that’s fine as a statement, but with Bill No. 13, we see yet again that there wasn’t even an attempt made to work together and to come up with an agreement.

While the Liberal government may see the comparison to the United States as a comparison to a problem where things have developed far worse — my point in that is that the tendency in the States — we’ve all been aware that there have been concerns going on for years about allegations of parties using the opportunity to gerrymander districts in the States and to use it to their own benefit when they have the power in their hands to make changes that will benefit them down the road. Those types of concerns go beyond the short-term problem to — potentially, if they build — lead to a long-term distrust by citizens that the system — the electoral system — is fair and impartial.

Ultimately, beyond the time that any one of us serves here in this Legislative Assembly, there is a fundamental value in having Yukoners’ confidence in the fairness and integrity of our electoral system. The root of that in the Yukon has been based on the tradition of all-party cooperation. That is also why, when government departs from that, we feel it is our obligation to challenge them on it and express strong disagreement with their choice to bypass an all-party process and go it alone.

We are proud of the work that we did in the past with the unanimous agreement of all political parties of the Members’ Services Board and continue to be of the view that, when any changes are being made to the *Elections Act*, it is important that there be a sincere effort to seek all-party agreement on those changes. We were successful in doing that twice. It is very important that any changes made to election laws are not made by a party with the majority in an attempt to serve their interests or their views. It should be done in a manner that is fair, balanced, and following a sincere — and hopefully successful — attempt at reaching all-party agreement on those changes.

Again recapping some of the history regarding this government’s previous floundering around the issues of electoral changes — we saw with the *Electoral District Boundaries Act*, where they became — to the best of my knowledge — the first party in Commonwealth history to defeat their own bill regarding *Elections Act* changes. The Premier, at the time — in Hansard of November 19, 2018 — cited concerns related to the addition of a 20<sup>th</sup> MLA. I am just going to briefly quote from that. The Premier said, on page 3646 — and I quote: “We have heard concerns mostly on two different issues. One was a lack of consultation on adding a 20<sup>th</sup> MLA and, quite simply, the lack of demand for more politicians.”

The Premier goes on to say — and I quote: “Very late in the process, after most of the consultation was completed, the suggestion of a 20<sup>th</sup> riding entered the conversation. The final report ended up recommending 20 ridings.”

The Premier went on to note, “I have yet to meet a Yukoner who believes this Chamber needs to add another member at this time, and that speaks to the second point here: the lack of demand for more politicians.”

So, that was the reason cited by the government. There were others who simply saw it as a situation of government believing that the redistribution would have been contrary to their political interests and chances in the next election. In contrast, if one is comparing the cited reason for not accepting a report that came out of the Electoral District Boundaries Commission in comparison to the fact that this government has added 568 full-time equivalent government employee positions since taking office, it rings quite hollow to hear them use the cost argument against adding a 20<sup>th</sup> MLA and, meanwhile, their actual record is growing government by more than a small town the size of Carmacks or Mayo and giving everyone a government job — 568 employees being the growth of government according to the government’s own numbers.

I want to go back to the comments that we have seen made by the former Clerk, Dr. McCormick, in his capacity as a private citizen when he mentions the issues including some of the details of this legislation.

We have also seen previously — Dr. McCormick noted, regarding a previous process proposed by the government that is very relevant to Bill No. 13 here. His criticisms of that approach relate very directly to Bill No. 13.

I will quote from a CBC article that Hansard should find online dated October 24, 2019. If not, of course, we can provide a paper copy of it. The title of that article is “Yukon MLAs debate electoral reform process as former clerk rebukes gov’t” — “Floyd McCormick says Liberal commission ‘undermines’ Legislative Assembly”.

At the time — and it was in the context of debate beginning on a motion to establish an all-party committee on electoral reform — Dr. McCormick — and again, I am quoting from the CBC article: “In a letter to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Floyd McCormick says the government is overstepping its bounds in overseeing an electoral reform commission, struck by...” — and it says the Premier’s name — “... this summer.

“McCormick says the Liberals’ approach is not fair, and undermines the authority of the Legislative Assembly.

“Both opposition parties — the Yukon Party and the NDP — accused the government of being heavy-handed, and not including them in the process.

“McCormick, who retired as clerk last April after 18 years in the job, waded into the fray with a ten page letter to speaker Nils Clarke on August 2.”

It gives the Speaker’s name again and then notes: “... is chair of the all-party Member Services Board, which makes decisions on assembly policy, finances, and administration, including election matters.

“The letter was tabled in the assembly on Tuesday by the NDP.

“Process ‘fails the fairness test,’ says former clerk.

“In the letter, McCormick echoed the opposition’s concerns.

“The ‘ICER [Independent Commission on Electoral Reform] process... undermines the ability of the Legislative Assembly to perform its core constitutional function — holding the executive accountable for the way it governs Yukon.’

“McCormick wrote that...” — name of the Premier — “... electoral reform process ‘fails the fairness test because only one political party — the Yukon Liberal Party — has had a hand in creating the ICER process.’”

I’m going to step aside from the article for a moment and point out that, while those comments were made in reference to the Liberal government’s aggressive approach on electoral reform — where they wrote the terms of reference themselves and appointed all the members — it relates very directly to Bill No. 13 because the same principle is at hand — government having been the only ones that have a hand in creating the process and the reference the former Clerk made to the importance of the Legislative Assembly performing its core constitutional function of holding the executive accountable.

So, again returning to the article that I was quoting, he — and that is Dr. McCormick in this case — says — name of the Premier — “... is ‘mistaken’ in thinking that the Liberal Party’s control of the commission process is legitimate because they are the government, and goes on to say that a political party shouldn’t control the electoral reform process, because it has a ‘vested interest in the outcome of elections.’”

“McCormick says the process ‘marginalizes’ the Legislative Assembly, by developing bills that affect the authority of the assembly.

“‘This problem cuts to the core of the Westminster parliamentary system of democracy, one in which cabinet governs the territory and the Legislative Assembly holds cabinet accountable for how it governs,’ he wrote.

“‘Put simply, the Legislative Assembly cannot fully perform its constitutional function if its authority and that of its House Officers can be unilaterally determined and altered by the entity it is supposed to hold accountable.’

“McCormick ended his letter by offering to meet with the Member Services Board.”

I’m going to stop quoting from the article briefly for a moment to note again that, in my view, the same principles are directly at hand with Bill No. 13 — that the unilateral approach undermines the Legislative Assembly and its constitutional function.

Returning to the article: “McCormick ended his letter by offering to meet with the Member Services Board.” The Premier “... defended his commission, taking exception to McCormick’s criticisms.” He said, “I am going to have to disagree with the ... former Clerk...”

We know that he has disagreed with independent experts in the past. We know that ultimately that commission’s process failed and floundered because of the government’s unwillingness to “play nicely with other children”, if I may say. But in all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, the principles of working with other parties, when you are talking about changes to elections acts or electoral boundaries, are very important. This is not a small matter. As I mentioned, if we look at where a small thread in unravelling the confidence of political parties in

the process and undermining the public’s confidence in the process can go if it continues to unravel, we see the situation in the United States where it didn’t happen overnight, but eventually a pattern of politicians and citizens not having confidence that the party in power wasn’t rewriting the rules to its own benefit has led to a situation where the United States is very polarized and divided. We are all aware of what has occurred in the lead-up to the presidential election this year and in the aftermath.

While we are fortunately not there as a society, any party that steps aside from an all-party process does so at the risk that they begin to start that thread that unravels public confidence in the fairness and impartiality of our institutions. We know that ultimately, in the past, their approach on electoral reform led to a situation where their chair resigned and other members were not able to perform the function that was envisioned.

I do want to just note that, for all of the members who served on that commission, I don’t take away for a moment from any citizen who put their name forward who wished to contribute to that process, nor do I make assumptions about how they would have conducted themselves. But the government itself, in setting up a process under a cloud of partisanship, doomed the exercise from the outset.

Mr. Speaker, I think at this point that I will wrap up my comments on this legislation. I would note, in closing, that this Liberal government — this Premier — chose to go it alone and act unilaterally. That was not the only option open to them. They chose to go it alone instead of presenting their proposals to Members’ Services Board or some other all-party committee and attempting to reach consensus. While the Premier may rise — or perhaps some of his colleagues will — and argue that they don’t think we would have been able to reach consensus, I will point out that the record very clearly shows that, during the two times that the legislation was changed during the 14 years that the Yukon Party was in office, we did reach agreement with other members on the content. There was discussion, there was debate, and there were changes made throughout that discussion, but ultimately we reached a point that everyone could live with and no one saw it as being to the benefit or detriment of any political party.

Just in wrapping up my remarks, I would note that, while I’m limited in what I can say about the current Members’ Services Board until and unless either there is an agreement to waive confidentiality around recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer or at such point as the motion brought forward by my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, were to pass — that being urging MSB to waive confidentiality of the recommendations — I would ask the question of why, at this point, we’re not seeing and discussing, along with this proposed change to the legislation, any changes that the Chief Electoral Officer of the Yukon may have recommended related to operating an election safely and effectively during a pandemic. Why are we not discussing that topic at this point in time?

I would note, in conclusion, that, while I am not really able to go further in talking about that without risking compromising Members’ Services Board confidentiality, the Yukon Party supports waiving confidentiality on any recommendations that

the Chief Electoral Officer made to the Members' Services Board this year regarding safely conducting an election during a pandemic.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will be wrapping up my remarks and noting that we will not be supporting this bill at second reading not because we disagree with the concept of a fixed election date, but because we strongly disagree with the government's choice to go it alone and write the legislation themselves instead of taking the simple step that they could easily have done of working with all political parties and making a sincere attempt to reach agreement on an outcome that all parties could support.

**Mr. Gallina:** I will take the opportunity to thank the Member for Lake Laberge for expressing concerns around the process for this bill and the amendments to the *Elections Act* coming forward. I would just like to take a moment to unpack a little bit of what was said.

The member spoke to this as political gamesmanship. I don't see political gamesmanship in bringing forward this bill that would set fixed dates here in the territory. I see this as certainty for Yukoners. I see this as certainty for those who support government. I see certainty for Yukoners engaging in our electoral system.

I appreciate that the member has concerns around the collaborative nature in which this was brought forward and that the member is looking for an all-party discussion around this. He references the steps that his government had taken to work toward all-party collaboration in Members' Services Board.

He calls this "political gamesmanship", but I would note that the Member for Lake Laberge is prepared to waive confidentiality for recommendations brought forward by the Chief Electoral Officer at Members' Services Board. He is prepared to do that — only for that one specific topic, though. The rest still remains confidential.

For Yukoners to understand, Members' Services Board is an all-party committee that meets to discuss different types of business that is brought before the House — how the House conducts itself. I am not part of this committee, so I don't know all the details, but what I do know is that there are no minutes that are shared from this meeting. We are not able to discuss what happens within Members' Services Board here in the Legislative Assembly. That is the structure of that committee. That has been the structure of the committee for many, many years. The Member for Lake Laberge calls that "political gamesmanship", and he is prepared to waive confidentiality on only one specific aspect — only on his terms only on the terms for the Member for Lake Laberge.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

### Point of order

**Deputy Speaker (Mr. Hutton):** Mr. Cathers, on a point of order.

**Mr. Cathers:** I think the member is in contravention of Standing Order 19(g) — putting words into my mouth. I am certainly prepared to entertain waiving confidentiality on a wide range of matters before Members' Services Board, but I

was simply expressing the importance of waiving confidence on the matter related to safely operating an election in a pandemic. I would ask you to have the member retract his statement.

**Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Porter Creek Centre, on the point of order.

**Mr. Gallina:** I was just reiterating what the member had spoken to about 15 minutes ago — in waiving that one clause within Members' Services Board. I don't think that I am putting words into the member's mouth. I am simply reiterating what that member had stated. I am making my conclusion on the statement that he made.

### Deputy Speaker's ruling

**Deputy Speaker:** I don't see this as a point of order. I am going to characterize it as a dispute among members at this point. I will take it under advisement with the Speaker, and if there is a different conclusion, I will bring it back to the House.

**Mr. Gallina:** I do appreciate that there is a long-standing process in discussing issues within Members' Services Board to come to consensus on certain topics. I think that is a good thing. I think that Yukoners would think that is a good thing.

One thing that I didn't hear from the Member for Lake Laberge was: What is the member proposing? The member had a shotgun of various different approaches. So, there could be an all-party committee, Members' Services Board, we could take recommendations from the public who have brought forward ideas — that's great. I didn't hear specific recommendations.

For the public, this bill has been on the Order Paper since October 6. So, since October 6, the public has known about these specific changes. I am sure that MLAs have all reached out to their constituents — those electoral matters are important to them — and have said, "Hey, this is important." MLAs would have brought recommendations forward. They could do that through motions. They could have private members' motions and we could discuss options for addressing fixed election dates or how we move forward with elections here in the territory. So, that is an option.

I am not saying that it is the only option — and I see that the Member for Whitehorse Centre is grimacing — I am merely stating options that are available. I am stating that the public has had an opportunity to review this bill — this important bill — since October 6, and I am not hearing specific recommendations made by the Member for Lake Laberge.

I would argue that — as a new member to this House — yes, we have been here for a number of years — but going through these processes — this is new to me, frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would actually look at the process that we are going through right now in second reading as an all-party contribution. I would say that — again, the Member for Whitehorse Centre is grimacing — as I am making note. This is the ability — all of us have the opportunity to speak to this bill right now. We can make our recommendations. We can talk about what we think should happen and what we think shouldn't happen, but I am not hearing that, and I haven't heard from any other members. I have heard from the Member for

Lake Laberge, and his issue was with the process. His issue was with the lack of collaboration that was used in bringing this bill forward.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy to be speaking to Bill No. 13, *An Act to Amend the Elections Act (2020)*. I am not going to take much more time, but I do want to highlight a few points that I think are important to Yukoners

When I was campaigning in the lead-up to the 2016 territorial election, I, along with my Liberal colleagues, made a number of commitments to Yukoners. Establishing fixed election dates was one of those promises. I'm happy to be standing here today speaking to this bill that would see fixed election dates set here in the territory. By taking this step, we will be providing more certainty to Yukoners so that they know when a territorial election will have to take place.

I do see benefits. I see benefits to public servants who will work with the sitting territorial government members, members of this Legislative Assembly. They will certainly have clear direction on the length of the government's term and the time that they have to work to deliver on a government's mandate.

I see certainty for Yukoners who want to make a difference and run for office. Those folks will be able to manage their time accordingly and have an opportunity to strike a balance between work, volunteer time, personal time, and family time — all of which have the potential to be negatively impacted when there's uncertainty around election dates.

With this bill, I see a stronger connection and greater clarity between Yukoners and our electoral system. I feel as though Yukoners have a very strong grasp of the political landscape here in the territory, but with fixed dates, people will know when territorial elections are going to take place and it will allow them to have more pointed conversations.

By eliminating the guesswork in elections, Yukoners will be able to be more engaged and up to speed about what their elected officials are doing and how much time they have in office to deliver on their commitments. As I look to some of the commitments that this government has delivered to Yukoners to be more open and more transparent and accountable, I'm proud of the progress that has been made on this front. Because of these actions, I do believe that Yukoners have a stronger connection and stronger confidence in their elected officials and to this House.

This government created a publicly disclosed lobbyist registry. The Yukon lobbyist registry contains information for the public about who is lobbying the government and what issues they bring forward. Its purpose is to make lobbying in Yukon more transparent for the public.

As well, fixed calendar dates for legislative Sittings are now in place. As the chair of the all-party Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, I am happy to report that, early on in this government's mandate, fixed Sitting dates were brought forward as a result of this committee's work and agreed to by all members in this House. By setting fixed Sitting dates, there is certainty for public officials and those supporting and covering the Legislative Assembly.

During the mandate of this Liberal government, it has been a requirement for all Yukon government entities to appear

before the Legislative Assembly once a year. This didn't happen under the previous government. With the amount of engagement and questions asked by opposition members, I feel as though this has been a positive and productive step forward in being able to gain a deeper insight into government entities and the decisions that they make.

I have spoken about the importance of Public Accounts previously in this House. While hosting public hearings on the Public Accounts themselves was not a promise that I made to Yukoners, I am happy to report that, for the first time that I can recall in the territory, public hearings have now been held on the year-end audited financial statements of the Public Accounts. This is an open public forum facilitated by an all-party committee to scrutinize government spending and ask questions of department officials. I do see this as a sign of openness and transparency, and I expect these hearings to continue.

As I close, I will reinforce my support for the amendments to the *Elections Act* and for fixed election dates here in the territory. As I have stated, by establishing fixed election dates and a new consistent standard that is set for everyone, it limits uncertainty and allows people to work toward defined timelines. I am supportive of this bill and of the other commitments and efforts made by this government to operate in an open, transparent, and accountable way.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate the opportunity to speak at second reading of this bill today. I wasn't going to comment but, after listening to the Member for Porter Creek Centre, I think it's important to put a few things on the record. Obviously, the first thing I wanted to talk about was the comment made by the Member for Porter Creek Centre about waiving the confidentiality for the Members' Services Board. He cited one example. My colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, stood up on a point of order and mentioned that there were numerous examples to waive confidentiality of the Members' Services Board. It sounded to me like the Member for Porter Creek Centre was also in favour of waiving a number of confidentiality from the Members' Services Board. My suggestion would be to have the leaders of the three parties here in the House meet and talk about which confidentiality we should be waiving from the Members' Services Board. Of course, there was a letter that was sent to the Members' Services Board that became a topic of discussion on the floor of the House.

That is one of the issues. There are a host of issues that I think we could get the leaders together on — to talk about — and that are before Members' Services Board where we could waive those confidentiality. I'm certainly pleased that the Member for Porter Creek Centre seems to be in agreement with that. It's important to have members from all sides of the House — both sides, all three parties represented here — supportive of waiving those types of confidentiality so we can get that information out to Yukoners.

There are a couple of the other things that my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, talked about. Of course, we have witnessed the Premier's attempts and this government's

attempts at electoral reform and the bungling that has gone on with that going back to a private member's motion introduced by the Third Party, talking about setting up the committee — and the terrible job that the government has done since then in bungling that to the point where I think we've run out of time in this current Legislative Assembly to get anything meaningful done. Any electoral reform will have to be accomplished by the next government after the next election.

Of course, we've also seen this government — I believe one of the few times in parliamentary history where they voted against their own bill, the electoral boundaries redraft. Government members voted against that bill, and now we see a situation where the Member for Porter Creek Centre has a riding almost three times the size of the Member for Porter Creek South's. The Member for Porter Creek South's riding now, I believe, is the second smallest riding in the territory — behind Old Crow — as far as population goes. The people of Whistle Bend in Porter Creek Centre will be underrepresented because the government chose to vote against their own bill. It was an all-party structure that was put together and included now-retired Yukon Supreme Court Justice Veale, as well as nominees from each of the three parties. They came up with a plan that could have worked, but again, in some strange manoeuvre, the government decided to vote against their own bill — something that has happened very rarely when it comes to democracies where the government will vote against their own bill.

Finally, when it comes to the bill that is before the House — these changes to the *Elections Act* to put in a fixed election date — the Member for Porter Creek Centre suggested that we come up with ideas to make changes and change the bill.

This bill was introduced by the government. I guess that if they are willing to see some changes to the date that they have proposed in 2025 — I believe that is when we will see our first fixed election date — those changes can be made in Committee of the Whole. Those changes can be proposed in Committee of the Whole. They are not to be proposed at second reading. I think that he mentioned as well that the bill was first introduced on October 6 — I believe that is the date that he said. We are only halfway through this current Sitting. After today, we still have 22 more sitting days. We are here until December 22, so there is lots of time to discuss this in Committee. There are other opportunities to raise concerns that we are hearing from constituents about this.

In trying to fulfill a promise, they have come up with something that rings hollow with many Yukoners, from what I understand from the individuals whom I have talked to. They see something that is being imposed in 2025. There is an election, obviously, between now and then. Many members in this House who are here today may not be back for that next Legislature. That's where we are at. We are curious as to why this fixed election date wasn't set for this mandate. Obviously, other members may wish to weigh in on this, and if we do have some proposed changes, we will propose those during Committee of the Whole, which is when we will be in clause-by-clause and general debate on this bill.

That said, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time this afternoon. I will conclude my remarks.

**Ms. Hanson:** I just want to start by commenting that, in fact, I was grimacing. I was grimacing a lot during the conversation this afternoon — the comments made by the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I take democracy really seriously. When I hear members regurgitating the governing party's spin over the last four years, my facial expression, in fact, is a grimace. If the Member for Porter Creek Centre finds that offensive, so be it.

I will remind the Member for Porter Creek Centre and the members opposite that the grimace is borne out of the fact that this government committed during the last election campaign in 2016 — and I was optimistic, Mr. Speaker. I was optimistic because I heard them talking the language of electoral reform. They did talk about — as did the NDP — the notion of including, in that broad discussion, fixed election dates.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker — it didn't start in 2016, and the debate in this Legislative Assembly about how we reinvigorate the democratic process did not start when people got elected in 2016. Sorry if people weren't aware of it before, but many members of this Legislative Assembly and many of our predecessors — some still alive, some deceased — going back over 20 years, have taken this very seriously.

As much as the issue of Bill No. 13, in and of itself — and if the Premier doesn't want me to speak to this bill —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Ms. Hanson:** I will not stop speaking and he can —

**Speaker:** Order, please. The Member for Whitehorse Centre has the floor.

**Ms. Hanson:** The Premier can catcall as much as he wants. That's fine because I don't have a problem with that. That's part of the democratic process in the Legislative Assembly. Let him continue, and I will continue.

As I was saying — before I was so rudely interrupted, Mr. Speaker — the issue of Bill No. 13, the notion of fixed election dates in and of itself is not a bad thing. It's something that we've discussed and that I have raised in this Legislative Assembly. The fact that we're having a debate solely on one aspect of what could have been a broad, deep, and fulfilling conversation with all Yukoners is a sad commentary on this failed Liberal government's commitment that they made to offering Yukoners a fair and free opportunity to engage in an unfettered discussion about the cornerstone of our parliamentary democracy — that is the process by which Yukoners select and elect from among their fellow citizens those who will serve them as elected members of this Legislative Assembly.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I have only been a member of this Assembly for going on 10 years. Yet I know — as I have said — that in addition to the many motions and debates in this Assembly brought forward by the NDP on the importance of democratic renewal — working with and listening to Yukoners about ways that we can improve the exercise of our democratic rights and responsibilities and ensure that the processes that we

set in place ultimately play a role in determining who is elected, how they are elected, how election campaigns are financed and by whom and what constitutes a fair, balanced, and equitable approach to ensuring the representative nature of the Legislative Assembly — particularly given the concentration of voters in Whitehorse — this notion of equity was entirely ignored by the Liberal government when they voted against their own bill on electoral boundaries. They might want to go back and read the case law on that.

All these and other matters have been raised and debated in this Assembly. As I have said, it's not just the last 10 years, but prior to that.

Yes, when I grimaced when the Member for Porter Creek Centre was speaking, I was thinking about a process that my predecessor, the MLA for Whitehorse Centre and the former Leader of the New Democratic Party, Todd Hardy, had put forward in this Legislative Assembly. He put forward a number of private member's bills. He introduced, among others, a democratic reform bill. In 2009 — so not 2016, but 2009 — there was Bill No. 108, the *Legislative Renewal Act*. That was to establish an all-member select committee on legislative renewal. It received the approval of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to establish that select committee. Liberal and NDP members and the Yukon Party agreed. Then, somewhat similarly to what we've seen in the recent past with the Yukon Liberal Party, the Yukon Party wasn't interested, and that select committee did not meet before they called the election.

So, as you'll recall, Mr. Speaker, during the debate in 2017 when we discussed a proposal that the NDP had put forward with respect to trying to reignite the conversation around democratic renewal — whatever you want to call it. There are so many aspects to it — but the notion that we would look at aspects of electoral reform. We went back and looked at so many of the previous exercises that had occurred, all to be thwarted by the government in power.

So, it was disappointing from the outside watching that process 11 years ago. It has been incredibly frustrating to watch the process from a government that says — I don't know how many hundred times I've heard in this House that they're open, transparent, and accountable, except it's only on their terms. We saw that on November 22, 2017, because the government did as they do so many times when opposition members bring forward motions for debate. They contain it because they have an incredible need to control. "If we didn't say it," they say — "If it's not our idea" or "We didn't put it in our platform" — "it's not valid." So, therefore, the motion comes forward; they have to amend it so it comes down to what they narrowly promised.

So, Mr. Speaker, this has been repeated many times.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Ms. Hanson:** And she does have a need to speak, she is speaking, and she'll continue to speak.

We've been through this before. We've tried to have an open and frank conversation in this Legislative Assembly and to get this Legislative Assembly to agree to a fair process so that we can engage with Yukoners to talk on ideas about our

system of voting on fixed election dates, campaign financing rules, et cetera that would ensure that the government is accountable to individual Yukoners above all and not to Outside interests or corporate interests or deep-pocketed vested interests.

I am going to continue to hold out the hope that the Liberals will live up to their mantra about listening to Yukoners, but it won't happen, because from what I have seen as time has gone on, it has become evident that the only voices listened to — we saw this clearly when it came to the whole issue of electoral reform where the inner circle of Liberal advisors and spin doctors — who had led the Premier and his caucus to believe that they, as the executive, had the right to dictate to the Legislative Assembly — this body of all elected members whose core constitutional function in a parliamentary democracy is to hold the executive accountable in the way in which they govern the Yukon. That is what it is. That is what democracy is about.

I have grimaced because I have experienced and listened to them as they insisted, and continue to insist, that they alone have the sole prerogative to determine — had the sole prerogative to determine — the terms of reference, the timelines, the membership, the budget, et cetera for that whole failed process on electoral reform.

Much has been said both inside this Assembly and outside about the ham-handed approach — the "my way or the highway" intransigence — of the Yukon Liberals in seizing defeat from the jaws of victory. That is what they did. It would have been so easy to have an easy win — to engage with Yukoners — but they had to control it, and therefore they just seized defeat.

The Liberals clearly feared that loosening their control on the form, function, and outcome of any discussion on ways to improve and possibly change the electoral status quo — as it has been with the relentless Liberal focus over the past four years on process, where citizens were invited to offer their views on a wide range of matters, only to see the Liberal government respond: "Hmm, nice, but that is not our mandate. We have decided what is best for Yukon and Yukoners."

This was clear, as I said in November 2017 — when the Premier, in response to the motion that we put forward for debate to establish a commission on electoral reform — that it was his prerogative — the executive's prerogative — to determine what and how it would be discussed by the public.

He stated — and I quote: "The background work ... is currently being done by the Executive Council Office ... When we are ready to make an announcement on this ... we absolutely will."

So it goes in a majority Liberal government that values control over democracy — they amended the motion to reflect the exact wording of their election platform, and that's what we have come to expect. Here we are today, three years later, the Liberal-controlled independent commission on electoral form — air quotes — imploded. Scratch that campaign promise. So, we see an amendment to the *Elections Act* to establish fixed election dates.



Arguably, if they had been serious about this — if they had been serious, as this is one of their election platform commitments — it would have been a priority. The Liberal majority government could have — perhaps should have — introduced this immediately after the last election. We would have seen a fixed four-year term commencing this fall — that is, November 2020 — if they were serious about it. But no, it's just another aspect and a demonstration of this government's cynical and controlling approach.

Instead, the Liberal government has demonstrated again that the line between the Liberal government and the Yukon Party government is not so clear. The Yukon Party gamed the system to govern for five-year terms. This government is doing the same when it can. Then, pushing out to the future some time, another government will be required to do four years.

The Yukon Party did five-year terms because that was the constitutional limit. As we've heard over and over again, it's so unusual in Canada for governments to do that, but they can, they will, and they are. Liberals will say, "Oh yeah, but we promised to change. We promised to change." When? Oh, in 2025. Well, isn't that lovely.

So, Mr. Speaker, I grimaced and I'll continue to grimace when I hear these platitudes — meaningless platitudes.

As I said at the outset, in and of itself, there is nothing wrong with an amendment to the *Elections Act*. We will support this bill. We support clear four-year terms for government. We do question why this is the only recommendation of the many suggested changes that the Chief Electoral Officer has tabled in this Legislative Assembly and that he made with respect to improving Yukon's *Elections Act*. This is the only one that the Yukon Liberals have chosen to act upon — but as they have made clear, they have the majority and will continue to ignore the rights, roles, and responsibilities of this Legislative Assembly, other than the taxpayer-funded opportunity to give daily, televised, self-promotional, campaign-style announcements, or re-announcements — the so-called "ministerial statements" — because they can. It's a misuse —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Ms. Hanson:** Of course, as the Premier says, we have to get our message out, because that's what we do. We use taxpayers' dollars to televise re-announcements of re-announcements of re-announcements. They can do it, Mr. Speaker, because they don't really care, as long as they are able to control the message. It's hardly democratic, but that's the way they do it.

That being said, the NDP will support this bill as one small step in regulating the electoral process, if only to place a time limit on the unfair, unfettered majority governments.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to thank all of the members for their comments today. Bill No. 13 is, of course, about fixed election dates. There have been lots of other conversations that we have had today about other issues around electoral reform, all of which are important.

I have a fundamental faith that all of us, as elected representatives, will take our role here seriously and bring all integrity to this Legislature in order to try to represent citizens

across the territory. I don't for a moment think that this is an easy thing to do. I respect that there are different perspectives that each party brings. However, I feel that, underneath that, all of us believe in this immense, awesome responsibility of trying to represent the Yukon — our constituents, but the whole of the Yukon.

I think that one of the things that we're trying to do with this is to provide clarity and certainty that will allow Yukoners to plan. So, let me begin by echoing the remarks that I made — and I thank the Member for Lake Laberge for quoting me earlier. I will say again: I think that's very important. In fact, when I was thinking about this piece of legislation — this bill before us — I thought that its main purpose is to help Yukoners to be able to plan — whether that's individual Yukoners, whether that's businesses, whether that's public servants — that foreknowledge of when there will be an election. I went back and I looked at when Canada brought this in. It was in 2007 and it was under Prime Minister Harper. I'll quote from the Prime Minister.

He stated at that time — quote: "Fixed election dates prevent governments from calling snap elections for short-term political advantage ... They level the playing field for all parties and the rules are clear for everybody." That is a great point about fixed elections.

The Member for Lake Laberge went on to talk about — that we have not engaged with Yukoners on having fixed election dates. Actually, I disagree. We did run on it. We did stand up and say to Yukoners that if we were elected as a government — if we had the role, we would bring forward legislation here to this body — to this Legislative Assembly — that proposes fixed election dates and that is what we're doing. I disagree. I think that there was engagement with Yukoners.

I also will say that — the Member for Whitehorse Centre said that we haven't brought forward anything else, but we were here last fall also bringing forward other amendments to the *Elections Act* that were brought through — I believe through the Members' Services Board — and again, there was that all-party work which is what the Member for Lake Laberge has stood up and said we didn't do this time — and yet they voted — the Official Opposition voted against that legislation. They said, "Sorry, it went through Members' Services Board, but there wasn't a chance to engage the public so we're going to vote against it."

Then the members opposite from Lake Laberge and Whitehorse Centre both spoke about the work on the electoral boundaries. Why did I vote against that? Why did I believe we voted against it? It was because, at the eleventh hour, the commission changed everything and brought forward a new riding. It wasn't about re-aligning boundaries for Porter Creek Centre; it was about adding a riding and not engaging the Yukon on that. That was the challenge. How did that happen? We felt that was a fundamental change. We did engage the public on fixed election dates. We ran on it, Mr. Speaker.

I will just provide a few details on it. I look forward to Committee of the Whole — if the Official Opposition has other suggestions. We already heard the Member for Lake Laberge read into the record the social media feed from Dr. McCormick.

I thank him for doing that. In that, Dr. McCormick pointed out that there are only two legislatures in the country that go for spring elections. All the rest go for fall elections. If we go with the norm of Canada and we go for fixed elections in the fall, I don't want them in September because there are too many people out on the land. I think that's a challenge. I have heard from Yukoners about that. I am glad that we are not going in October because we have municipal elections during October and federal elections during October. That is why it landed on November.

If they have another suggestion, I really do want to hear it, because I think the Legislature is the embodiment of democracy here in the territory. This is where we are supposed to work, bring forward our debate, and have this discussion so that as we move bills into acts, we all express that opinion about what we believe is correct for the Yukon, for our citizens, for constituents, and for the betterment of this place.

So, yes — I think that this is an important piece of legislation that will improve elections. Do I think it is everything? No. Do I think that there is more needed? Yes. Do I look forward to that? Yes. Will I work for that? Yes. But do I think that this is not worthy? I think that it is a worthy piece of legislation. Frankly, when I came in here and we were heading toward this fall, I wondered whether we would be in a fall election, but do you know what? A pandemic hit — and I, for one, am pretty glad that we didn't have to have an election this fall because I have looked at some of the other jurisdictions that have gone through elections — and how do you make that hard choice? In the USA today, their case count is through the roof. It has to have been hard — how to have an election?

I am not saying that it was done inappropriately — although I was a little surprised to hear the Member for Lake Laberge compare us to the Republican Party. I was pretty shocked at that. I don't think that is a fair comparison. I will say here in this Legislature that I respect the range of views that are here. I will never find myself standing up in this Legislature and denigrating the opposition because they hold a different perspective. That is not what I intend to do here.

I worry, though, that you have to make this hard trade-off between how to knock on doors and talk to the public or to hold an election. When I look at the provinces — British Columbia didn't need to go to an election, but they chose to go to an election, and I worried for them because they are in the middle of the second wave of a pandemic, and I am sure that was tough.

Saskatchewan, on the other hand, did have a fixed election date. I thought they were going to go — terrific — but it is still hard. That is a hard choice. So, if you had the opportunity about whether to go this fall or not — I am glad that we didn't go, just because it is a troubling time. That is not to say that I don't believe in democracy. I hope that, through my rising today to speak to this piece of legislation, it is clear that I believe in democracy.

I think that it is very important that we have fixed election dates. I agree with Dr. McCormick — let me state that. I agree with him that fixed election dates are very important. I think that November is a good choice to avoid other conflicts, plain and simple. I look forward to hearing from members opposite,

if they think there is a better date. I will remain open to hearing what they have to say, but I am going to continue to believe, at this point — from everything that I have heard from Yukoners, from all the debate that has happened in this Legislature — that fixed election dates are the way to go.

**Ms. White:** I have just a couple of thoughts as we are talking about Bill No. 13 right now. First, I am going to point out that there is a contradiction that the Premier keeps making — he said that changes to the *Elections Act* must go to Members' Services Board when I asked him questions about political financing, including the \$100,000 that he and his party received from anonymous sources. When I asked questions about that, he told me that I should put that on the list for Members' Services Board. But here we are — somehow, the changes that we are seeing in Bill No. 13 — well, they didn't come to Members' Services Board first. When we went to the briefing, we were told that, for one, the question of when the election — if we were going to make it fixed — that was not put out to the public, nor was it discussed with Elections Yukon. That Elections Yukon part is interesting because, although Elections Yukon has made a whole list of recommendations for changes to the *Elections Act* to both improve accountability and transparency, they aren't included in this bill, unfortunately. That's one thing.

Like I said, it appears to be a little bit of a double standard. But I think the most obvious double standard in this bill is when it comes to the next year, this coming election. The Premier himself just recently said that a fixed election date is more transparent and accountable. So, why does this bill set a fixed election date only in 2025? Why are we talking about the future, and why is the Premier excluding the upcoming election in 2021 from this bill and keeping the next election date secret?

In media scrums, he said that it was going to be the Liberal election committee that would decide when the next election was. It's fascinating, because I would have thought that it wouldn't be just a partisan committee making that decision and that it would be a government, for example — or if we have fixed election dates, it would be that.

So, when the Premier said that it would be more transparent and accountable for future governments, here we are, not knowing if there will be an election in the spring or the fall. That doesn't seem very transparent.

Maybe in his response, before we vote on this in second reading, the Premier can tell us: Why is a fixed election date so important for 2025 but not for 2021? I look forward to Committee of the Whole because I think this is going to be a good one.

**Speaker:** If the member now speaks, he will close debate on second reading of Bill No. 13.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thank you to everybody today for their comments. I know that this is an important issue, obviously, by the conversations from the members opposite. It is interesting to note that we really didn't hear a lot of questions

on the actual bill. We heard questions on engagement. We've been in the Legislative Assembly many times talking about our record on engagement compared to the previous government. I think we stand on that right now. We did hear from external stakeholders and other governments. They have told us in the past about engagement — has very much ramped up — and their capacity is a barrier to meaningful participation in that pursuit, so we're very careful about how we continue to engage. But we have set records. We've set records in the last four years in engagement with the tourism strategy, climate change, energy, the green economy strategy, talking Yukon parks, and LGBTQ2S+ inclusion, just to name a few, Mr. Speaker.

Members opposite say we didn't engage on this. Well, again, this was a platform commitment and we're making good on a platform commitment. This is the one platform commitment that we engaged with — it was our commitment on our platform and we're doing well on this. So, we're doing well on this particular piece.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** As the members opposite speak off mic again as they always, always do — I can wait.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order, please. As I provided the members on the opposite side, the —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Speaker:** Yes, but the government side was admonished at the time too.

So, anyway, the Premier has the floor right now.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

So, again, yes, I did go out of character today and decided to imitate the member opposite, and she did not like that very much.

I will continue to talk about the actual questions that were asked. The Leader of the Third Party did ask a question in the end: Why not this time? Why into perpetuity but not this time?

Well, this is a decision that wasn't made lightly; that's for sure. We had a lot of conversation with people during our platform commitment. We had a lot of conversations internally as well, and we know that if we did change the current Sitting, we would get so much scrutiny from the opposition for changing the rules of the current Sitting. So, again, that's what we would hear here in the Legislative Assembly: "You went ahead and changed the rules when all of these people..." — about 19 different ridings, with at least three candidates in each riding all making decisions on their next five years, knowing full well that the rules will be —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** It would be five years — if the member opposite would listen to me, she would be able to hear what I'm talking about.

When you move forward in the election process and you know that there are going to be people running in each riding from each party, knowing that it's a five-year term, it would be very hard to change that to a four-year term and not get the scrutiny of the opposition, saying, "You changed this from a

five-year term to a four-year term. All of our candidates knew that it was going to be a five-year term and now you changed it." In that case, we would get the same type of scrutiny from the opposition. So, we felt that it would be smarter for us to make sure that we have the ability to move forward after this term and have four-year terms after that. We are changing the rules for that.

If the members opposite don't like that and if they form government after the next election, then they can move that out again, but until then, this is something that we are making good on — a platform commitment to Yukoners — so we are doing that. We made this commitment in 2016, and we are very happy to deliver on this commitment to Yukoners. We believe that all Yukoners are going to benefit from this transparency.

What changes are going to be made? Well, the proposed changes will set those fixed dates for the territorial elections to the first Monday in November every four years. Currently, the government determines the timing of the election within a five-year period, and that is not what happens in all the other jurisdictions that have gone to fixed election dates. That is why we made this decision.

The first election date, as we said, is going to be on Monday, November 3, 2025. After that, it's going to be the first Monday —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order, please. The Premier can sit down for a moment.

I am sure that the Member for Whitehorse Centre can have a fruitful conversation with the Premier outside of the Assembly. They can meet and perhaps exchange their perspectives. Recognizing that this House is not a bridge club or whatever analogy — no disrespect to bridge clubs at all — and that the temperature can rise, I have been listening to the Member for Whitehorse Centre engage basically in a conversation with the Premier over the course of the last three or four minutes.

As I said at the beginning of my comments, if the Member for Whitehorse Centre wishes to continue that conversation with the Premier, it is up to the members to do so outside of the Assembly. This Chamber does not have to be still or silent, but I think that we've gone a bit far over the last three or four minutes. I caution the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, this is why we are here today on the floor of the Legislative Assembly to hear from the opposition about this bill that we intend to pass. We believe that this is an extremely important piece — a piece where Yukon is now catching up to other jurisdictions. We know that the Yukon Party didn't have a lot to say in terms of changing from five-year terms or getting out of the practice. We know that they've gone to the very last day and beyond, and that has caused problems. We saw problems with severance payouts to the MLAs. With moving over one day of that five-year term, the new Leader of the Yukon Party personally benefitted to the tune of more than \$29,000 more in severance for going over that

time into the last day of a five-year election term. We changed that. We thought that this was not the proper way in which the severance packages were supposed to be determined. We already corrected the way that a politician's severance is paid there and it's now based on the years of service. This is extremely important.

Another piece of this is coming to fixed election dates for a four-year term. We were asked again: Why November? I said in my opening comments in second reading that the first Monday in November was established as a fixed date, considering the appropriateness of the time of year compared to annual or seasonal events, but also considering municipal elections and also federal elections.

There weren't many more questions, so I assume that we're going to be getting a lot of questions during Committee of the Whole. I relish the opportunity to engage with the opposition as to why this is an important change for this government to consider. We've heard that the Yukon Party is not in support of fixed election dates, and we've heard that there is going to be support from the NDP. We'll continue the conversation in Committee of the Whole. I want to thank everybody for their comments today.

**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. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Disagree.

**Mr. Kent:** Disagree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Disagree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Disagree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Disagree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yea, five nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.  
*Motion for second reading of Bill No.13 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 (Mr. Hutton):** I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will come to order.

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

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Mr. Kent:** I would like to welcome back the Deputy Minister of Finance here today to provide guidance and advice to the Premier and Minister of Finance as we work our way through general debate on the supplementary budget.

As I have mentioned before, the Yukon Housing Corporation doesn't have a line item identified. That is where the focus of my questions has been — and, for the most part, will continue to be as we move through the balance of the afternoon here today. I do have a couple of issues that were raised in Question Period today that I wanted to follow up with the Premier on.

The first one is a health-related matter. I know that the Department of Health and Social Services will be coming forward at some point. We don't know when yet, but it will be before we rise on December 22, but my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, asked a question about the CGM coverage today. Obviously, in the preamble to that question, we wanted to thank the Yukon T1D support network for their determination and advocacy. We now have CGMs covered for all Yukon residents with type 1 diabetes and we should all be proud of that.

We are the first jurisdiction in the country to do that. I know that the Saskatchewan Party, in their recent election down there, promised these devices for kids or for Saskatchewan residents up to the age of 18. I'm pleased that we were able to go beyond that.

My colleague mentioned this afternoon that, in a release from October 1 which announced the fully-funded CGMs, the government said in the "Quick facts" section — and I'll quote again here: "Physicians will apply for coverage on behalf of their patients".

In conversations that I've had with some individuals and some families that have family members or themselves have

type 1 diabetes, there are some mixed messages around that — whether or not the physicians will apply for the coverage — or I've heard that perhaps it's a prescription-type system. I'm hoping that the Premier can provide some clarity or provide a contact whom I can refer these individuals to within the Department of Health and Social Services just to get the proper information when it comes to how individuals become eligible for these CGMs.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I don't have that information in front of me. I do know that we recognize the extreme challenges that Yukoners and families who live with type 1 diabetes have had over the last couple of decades when it came to the supports that the government had for it, so I am extremely happy that this minister has moved forward in creating a policy that is the best in Canada when it comes to type 1 diabetes.

We're doing this investment because it will improve the access to care and we're very proud to be the first jurisdiction in Canada on a lot of different fronts on this file. For example, the continuous glucose monitoring for youth — the pilot project at first was for those under 18 years of age and then moving forward on that — taking the lead along with — there are other jurisdictions, including Ontario and Québec, that have provided coverage for flash glucose monitoring for diabetes. But to continue on and to see the minister work within the means necessary — but at the same time, identifying and prioritizing something that was not a priority in the past — it's extremely important. So, we're very happy to move forward and be the lead in Canada on that.

The member opposite asked about a specific contact in health. As you can imagine, Mr. Chair, as I'm here in general debate for a department that is not being discussed in general debate. I don't have the contact information for a type 1 diabetes individual in Health and Social Services that the member opposite could access. But I will speak with the minister responsible and get that information for him.

Before I cede the floor, there were some questions from the other day that I would like to address as well and give the member opposite some information on.

On November 10, I was asked about the Normandy project. I gave some information and talked with the department. I have just a little bit more clarity and a little bit more information for the members opposite. In total, there is a contribution from the Housing Corporation of \$4.5 million. That includes — a little bit more of a break down here — \$500,000 under the housing initiative fund, which includes \$450,000 paid in 2019 and an additional \$50,000 to be paid upon completion of the project. These funds are to be paid from the existing funding program. This can be found on page 20-10 of the main estimates of the corporation's capital vote. There is \$500,000 under the municipal matching grant, which includes \$450,000 paid in 2020 and the \$50,000 to be paid upon completion. These funds are to be paid from the existing funding program. Like I say, that can also be found on page 20-10 under the main estimates under the corporation's capital vote. \$175,000 is to be paid in 2022-23 upon occupancy and \$3.325 million will be paid in 2020-21, which includes \$1.088 million from CMHC deferrals. The remaining \$2.237 million is being funded through the

project reprioritization. The Yukon Housing Corporation has identified potential options to offset the unbudgeted support for the Normandy project. We'll continue to update as progress is made on a great project here.

I was also asked on November 10 about an item in table 6 of the 2021 five-year capital plan. We did answer on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, but I just have a little more context. The item in that table was for social housing renewal. I can confirm that the funding from 2021 to 2025 listed in the capital plan is for existing stock — which was one of the questions from the member opposite and we just clarified. This is the budget to replace out-of-service units in various communities.

The project supports YHC's strategic goal of community housing renewal and rebalancing. It does this by addressing aging infrastructure and shifts in housing need priorities and programming as well.

There was a question also about the 10-unit mixed-use housing in Old Crow on November 10 from the member opposite. I was asked about that. We did respond about the funding in the design phase as \$750,000. We also talked about the five-year capital plan. There is \$8.96 million in the five-year capital plan for this project. We broke down some of the years and the funding there — but for just a little more context: The 2020-21 five-year capital plan identifies a range of \$7.5 million to \$14 million for this project. The range for 2020-21 was \$500,000 to \$1 million. I confirmed on November 10 that we are spending \$750,000 on the design phase in 2020-21. The project is scheduled for completion in late winter of 2022. The current budget for this project, including previous years, is \$10.3 million.

I just want to also talk for a moment about budget ranges in the five-year capital plan. We have had a few questions from the opposition on this. It is important to remember that — this information is worth repeating — we are always looking to provide the best information and estimates over a five-year horizon. Projects have a varying level of planning and estimating done. Of course, you throw into that things like negotiations of NAFTA or you throw into that COVID, as well, and we can see why estimates are estimates. Projects that are closer in the plan have more planning and better estimates while projects deeper in the plan have preliminary estimates which are often subject to change as the planning process progresses.

This can be in either direction, but it is not always an increase. They give an indication of the scale and magnitude of a project without signalling the precision that an exact estimate may have. So, certainly there are going to be changes in the planning process, and if so, those estimates will be refined as they go.

In a small market, we also tend to not release pre-tender estimates for most procurements, as price is a significant component of competitive tendering, and we want proponents to give us their best price rather than there being an opportunity for bidding up the price.

This practice may differ in different jurisdictions where there are more competing firms, but this has been the methodology used for quite some time here in Yukon.

I will check through my notes. There might be some more from the member opposite, but I will cede the floor for other questions and see if I have some more answers from November 10.

**Mr. Kent:** Just quickly on the CGMs — I understand that the Premier doesn't have a contact here on the floor today. I just hope I don't have to wait until the Health department comes up for him or his minister to e-mail us a contact that we can send on to the constituents who have reached out to us.

Again, we are very pleased that this coverage has been extended to Yukoners of all ages. I've heard it from other ministers across the way when we have had motion debates surrounding coverage for CGMs for type 1 diabetes that a lot of the time they will say that the previous government didn't do anything when it came to CGMs, but one thing that I want to flag for the Premier is that this technology was not approved by Health Canada until November 14, 2016. I think that is an important thing to flag when it comes to the Premier saying that we didn't do anything when it came to CGMs. I guess, obviously, the reason that we didn't is because Health Canada hadn't approved this type of technology and this type of device for Canadians before the 2016 election.

Again, I hope that the Premier can get some information either to our staff or from his minister to me when it comes to who to contact for some clarity about how to get coverage.

The other question that I raised today in Question Period is a housing question and is with respect to the 47-unit mixed-use housing project on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street. As I said today in QP, on April 11, 2019, the minister stated that this facility would contain market rental units. I will read again her exact quote at the time: "... a cross-section of clients in the housing continuum — from homelessness to affordable to market rental housing — all in one development."

Then, as I mentioned earlier today, we asked the Premier last week how many of the units were going to be allocated for market rent, and his response was that none of them were for market rent. When I asked this question today, I didn't get an answer from the minister, so I'm hoping that the Premier can let us know when this project changed from 2019 when his minister of housing said there would be market rentals to last week to when the Premier said there would not be market rental units in there.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I'll start with the last question and work backward.

Again, when we're in Question Period and we're being told that we said one thing one day and another thing the other day — with all due respect to the members opposite, we'll take a look to see exactly what context they're speaking of to see if we're comparing oranges to oranges instead of apples to oranges.

In this case, the member opposite talked about early-day discussions — early discussions which did have in that a consideration for market rent matched to mixed-use, mixed-income projects in other jurisdictions which is a more common model. Of course, those were earlier conversations with full disclosure. The minister responsible has talked about where we were at that time. But once conversations and engagement got

underway, it was confirmed that this was not a gap that the Housing Corporation needed to support — no market rental. Instead, they're providing capital incentives to support the public sector to develop affordable units, and that's through the housing initiatives fund.

So, again, the member opposite asked: Has there been a change? Consultation — yeah. So, from there, we — the member opposite is laughing at consultation over there; I'm not sure what that's all about. But he asked. We looked into his question. We're answering it, and we said we're telling him here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly that the difference is: After initial models were being discussed — consultation — we decided to go in the direction that we went in right now. So, that's where we are. But no specific dates for the decisions were made on market rental. There was an open house that was held June 18, 2019 — just for the record.

When it comes to the question about type 1 diabetes — members opposite should know from the news release that, to be eligible for the benefit, Yukoners with type 1 diabetes who meet the benefit criteria must register with the chronic disease and disability benefit program.

There is a phone number attached to that from the news release. For members opposite, it is 867-667-5092, and people aged 65 or older can contact the pharmacare program at 867-667-5403, but this is by physician referral. Physicians will help to determine if CGM is the most appropriate to manage the diabetes, so it is extremely important that it is by a doctor. To apply to chronic disease programs, doctors provide confirmation of type 1 diabetes on a case-by-case basis. You can also call the chronic disease benefits program or pharmacare and extended benefits programs for people, as I mentioned, over 65. The direct step is to apply to the chronic disease program.

**Mr. Kent:** So, again, on April 11, 2019, the minister stated that this would contain market rental units. There was another announcement — a press release that was put out last fall, I believe — so there was another reference to it there. We have asked about this project a number of times, specific to market rental units, on the floor of this House. Obviously, people in the landlords association and others were quite concerned that it appeared that the government was going to be competing with the private sector, especially after the Premier has mentioned and his Minister of Economic Development has mentioned that they are getting out of the business of doing business. This seemed to be the exact opposite to us, so we are not criticizing the fact that the government has decided not to proceed with market rental housing in this development. We are just wondering when that decision was made.

The quote that I introduced is from Hansard, and it is from the minister. Those were her words on April 11 of last year — 2019. She stated that the facility would contain market rental units. So, I am curious why the Premier or the minister don't know when they made that decision to not have market rental units in there.

When we talked about this on November 10 of last week, just before we broke, the Premier — and I have the Blues in front of me here — said: "To be clear — with the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue

and Jeckell Street project, none of them are market rent; all are rent geared to income.”

To me, what that suggests, then — and again, I’m looking for some clarification from the Premier — is that there would be some individuals off the social or seniors housing list who would be eligible for some of these units and, with what the Premier said, that would appear to be all the units. I’m wondering if he can give us a breakdown. Of the 47 units there, how many of them are rent geared to income? I suspect it’s not all because the minister and the Premier have said that some will be for affordable housing. How many are rent geared to income? How many will be designated for affordable rentals?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, I’m very proud to support this project. As we’ve said a few times in the Legislative Assembly, not only will it boost Yukon’s economy, but it generates construction jobs and creates affordable housing in Whitehorse. The community housing development will be used as the first project that models a mixed-income client allocation. We can speak more about that if the member opposite needs a breakdown of that.

It has a very innovative design — and the housing development support achieving this goal that was set out in *Our Clean Future*. The minister spoke today about the building having 47 units that include a blend of bachelor suites and one-, two- and three-bedroom units. Ten units will be barrier-free. The project is due to be completed in December 2021. We have budgeted \$18 million over two years from this project, which will support clients across the housing continuum, from homelessness to affordable rent, all in one development. This is exactly what the minister said the other day in the Legislature.

We also know that the housing project is funded under the national housing strategy as well, to be clear, which aligns with our housing action plan, which helps us to meet those Yukon goals and achievements. The project will also align with the recommendations of *Putting People First* and also the aging-in-place action plan.

I had mentioned that 10 units will be barrier-free. This will not have market rental. This is non-market housing to support our transformation to community housing. None of them are market rent — just to be clear.

Mixed use is based on demographics — singles, families, seniors — but again, for mixed use, mixed income. Again, I could go into more detail on mixed-income client allocation if the member opposite wants me to, but I believe that I answered his question. Just to be clear, all are rent geared to income — for all 47.

**Mr. Kent:** So, we’ll find an opportunity to follow up with the minister on this. The Premier spoke about mixed use and mixed income and rent geared to income, which would suggest to me that this is a 47-unit social housing development only and doesn’t include affordable rentals, but we’ll hopefully find another opportunity to follow up with the minister on this.

I have just one quick question before I leave here. As was mentioned again in Question Period today, when it was first announced in March 2019, it was advertised as being a 48-unit housing development. Then there was a press release from

November 19 last year when the design contract was awarded — still referred to it as a 48-unit facility. So, I am just curious. On November 5 of this year, the minister stated that it had been reduced in size by one. Was that a design element, or was it a budgeting element? Why did the facility shrink by one unit since it was announced?

While the Premier is getting advice, I am curious as to if he can also let us know when that decision was made. Obviously, it was between November of last year and this year, but when was the decision made to shrink the size of the number of units?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I believe that both press releases said it was up to 48 units. It didn’t confirm that it was 48 units, but there definitely was a design issue. I don’t know if that is humorous to the member opposite. He seems to be laughing about it, but that gives me an opportunity to talk a little bit more about mixed use and mixed income.

I am very pleased to see that we worked with local housing stakeholders and developed our mixed-use and mixed-income housing model. There has been a lot of consultation. Now, having mixed-use and mixed-income housing as a complementary model, which is addressing the emergent community’s housing needs in the context of a very diverse and growing population — and an aging population as well — in mixed-use housing, different client groups from our community — including seniors, families, and individuals — are housed together in specifically designed multi-unit buildings. The building is specifically designed to allow for a wide range of tenants to live successfully. This means that we can better respond to the dynamic housing needs of a community by de-labelling some of the housing and focusing on creating healthy and vibrant communities within multi-unit buildings.

A mixed-income building is a new approach to allocate housing that will provide homes for clients from a range of incomes. It is affordable housing, Mr. Chair, with all of the existing household income limits. Now, we will support clients with deep or shallow subsidies, according to their needs, and all tenants will receive the same type of housing regardless of their income. That is a breakdown of mixed use compared to mixed income. When it comes to mixed income, this is a community housing approach that enables social diversity and supports better social outcomes and fiscal responsibility as well.

All tenants will pay an affordable rent in a mixed-income model to be below the median market rent. I believe that it is important to give that distinction. There are several models of mixed-income housing in Canada that all have a consistent goal of achieving financial and social stability in the community, and it is exciting to see the minister taking us on this route.

We will take into account best practices during the development of models that reflect the housing needs here in Yukon, but also with a lens to best cases and best practices across the nation as well. As an element of modernizing the social housing toward community housing, some of our new developments will be used to test a mixed-income allocation model with mixed-use design. So, again, that is a little bit of a breakdown of the differences or the concept of mixed income

and mixed use. I don't have a lot more detail here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly when it comes to the great work that the Yukon Housing Corporation is doing when it comes to all of these models, but I thought that it would be important to give the member opposite some context of the community housing that we are doing with the department. It takes things onto a more sophisticated plane than the corporation was using in the past, which was a model that was for all of Yukon. Now we are having a mixed model that includes best practices right across the nation — a real presence on the national stage, as well, with Yukon being right there in the chair position on some conversations nationwide, but also the good work done by the corporation right now to really revolutionize how the Yukon Housing Corporation is looking at all communities and how every community is different. So, I am really embracing it and I'm happy to see the Yukon Housing Corporation doing so much tremendous work on changing the model to community housing.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that update from the Premier. I will take him back to table 6 in the five-year capital documents here. It says the Whitehorse 47-unit project is a mixed-use housing project, Old Crow is a 10-unit mixed-use housing project, and Carcross is a six-unit mixed-use housing project. Are there any mixed-income projects planned for the next five years? I don't see any here. If the Premier can just give us a sense on where we would find the planning for a mixed-income project, because all of these say "mixed use".

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** The member opposite referenced a few other projects. It gives me an opportunity to discuss some of the projects in the rural communities. I know I don't have to tell you how important it is that we consider every community when we take a look at housing.

We'll start in Carcross. We're currently actively working with all the communities — whether it be Carcross, Watson Lake, Old Crow, or Mayo, for example — trying to find unique solutions to these community housing needs. When we work with Yukon communities, we work with municipalities and First Nation governments to identify housing needs in each one of their distinct communities through direct investment and infrastructure. The capital building, planning, and maintenance is important as well — the delivery of the subsidized housing and then transforming our community housing programming, as I discussed here on the floor.

Each of our Yukon communities or municipalities, as I mentioned, have very unique and very different housing needs. Our programs and services are both designed to be flexible and to be responsive. When we start planning new projects in communities, we reach out directly to community stakeholders to ensure projects are meeting those local needs. That's an extremely important piece as we look toward models that are going to work in the communities.

One example would be in Carcross. We worked with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation to discuss the new six- to eight-unit Yukon Housing Corporation building in their community.

The current discussions are focused on potential locations for that building and ensuring that they meet the local needs

there. As that progresses, we will continue to reach out to local stakeholders and members of the community as well.

Also, we are excited to work with the community and Carcross/Tagish First Nation as they, too, advance new housing projects, which is really exciting to see. We are working together on housing solutions there, so a shout-out to the Haa Shaa du Hen for the amazing work that the First Nation is doing in that area — government-to-government work when it comes to looking at the social needs in that community.

In Watson Lake, we are in discussion about land options for a Housing First supportive housing project with that community as well, based on a housing needs assessment recently completed by the community. Again, working with the community to identify the needs is extremely important. We know that there is a significant need for supportive housing in that community. When we have identified the land options, we will continue to work with the community for further input on that project.

In Mayo, we have been in contact with the community of Mayo to discuss Yukon Housing Corporation's five-year capital plan and how it can support the needs in that community. We are very much looking forward to continuing this conversation in Mayo with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. We are also working to renovate and repair two of the Yukon Housing Corporation's community housing units.

I did mention Old Crow earlier regarding the tenplex. I won't go into too much detail there. For communities that we are not yet working directly with, we will continue to support those needs in those communities through our outreach at the First Nation town hall in November. The Safe at Home and housing action implementation committees and local housing staff were in many communities, but we will continue to tailor our programs to each of the communities to make sure that they meet those communities' needs.

To answer the member's questions specifically, projects are still in the planning and design phases. I told you about a few of the programs that are going on in different communities. I won't say on the floor of the Legislative Assembly what decisions have been made on those because, as you see, a lot of them are in the design stage and that type of thing. As community engagement occurs and continues, we will be able to further update as those updates become available, but again, it comes down to determining what the needs are in those communities. As I outlined the work that we have been doing in each community, that is the context in which we are going to make the decisions about mixed use versus mixed income or hybrids therein. But working with the communities to determine mixed-income needs is an extremely important part of that conversation.

Our home ownership loan program this year is really helping us to focus in on Yukoners living outside of Whitehorse as well to buy or to build homes, which also has to be taken into context as we decide on the use of these projects per community. Our home repair program as well — extremely important to remember that — includes the accessibility grant therein and the emergency repair grant and home repair loan to help Yukoners keep their homes safe and healthy. All of these



things contribute to limiting the need in certain communities. If we can keep people in a repaired home, an energy-efficient home, a retrofitted home — or through the home ownership loan programs — these are other initiatives from the government that help us to reduce the strain on the system.

I'm very pleased to see an uptake in the municipal matching rental construction program, which is designed to incentivize the development of affordable market rental units in Whitehorse and in the rural communities, including Teslin, Dawson City, Carmacks, and Watson Lake. Also, we're offering the housing initiative fund program this year. This is the fourth intake, and it will be launched this fall. Over the past three years, the housing initiative fund has contributed to over 350 new affordable homes for Yukoners. There is lots of work to be done, lots more information as far as mixed-income needs, but I'm very proud to say that there have been many, many different ways that we're working with communities to support affordable housing for Yukoners. It's not a one-size-fits-all type of answer — but by community engagement in each community. We're listening and we're incorporating the advice and feedback from the stakeholders into the day-to-day working of the Housing Corporation. We're very committed to continue to work with our partners in that pursuit.

**Mr. Kent:** When we started discussions here this afternoon, the Premier did provide an update on the social housing renewal. He said that he had answered the question last week. I looked up the Blues from last week, and maybe this is why we have a disconnect here sometimes in the Legislature between what the minister says is an answer to a question and what we perceived to be a non-answer.

I asked the Premier about that specific spend on social housing renewal that is in table 6. I'll just quote myself: "I am hoping that the Premier can just give us a sense of what this is for. Is it to refurbish existing social housing stock, or is there replacement contemplated for existing social housing stock out of this particular project line in the five-year capital documents that the Premier and his colleagues tabled in the spring?"

The Premier's answer to me — and I'll quote again: "I will have to endeavour to get back to the member opposite when it comes to that specific question. Again, I don't have that information here."

To me, that jumped off the page as sometimes why we have a challenge. If the Premier perceived that as an answer to the question and he was just answering it again here today, that's why we often have disagreements on the floor of the House as to whether or not the Premier is answering a question or not.

That said, I wanted to ask about a couple of other line items here on this table 6. The Premier mentioned Mayo community housing. Now, that doesn't start until 2023-24, according to this document. It's a range of \$0 to \$500,000, which I'm assuming would be for planning, and then \$5 million to \$10 million in the following fiscal year. I think the Premier said that they are having conversations with the community now on that. I'm curious why it will take three years to get to a point where they can spend some money on community housing in Mayo.

I want to jump up a couple of lines to rural community housing. Again, we're a couple of years out before any money

is spent — it looks like design money — and then there is a more significant investment in the following two years — if the Premier can explain to the House what that line entails.

I know he referenced as well the Carcross six-unit mixed-housing unit that's here as well. In this fiscal year, \$0 to \$500,000, and then there's a gap of a fiscal year, and then they spend \$3 million to \$4 million. I'm just curious why there is a gap for that 2021-22 fiscal year when some of the other projects obviously are moving through in consecutive years.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I apologize to the member opposite. He mentioned specifically Mayo and Carcross, but there was a third and I didn't catch it.

**Mr. Kent:** The other line item in table 6 looks like more of a catch-all line. It's rural community housing, and there's a range of \$7.5 million to \$10 million, but it doesn't start until the 2022-23 fiscal year.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Yes — as in the past, if I don't have the information in front of me, I will say that I will endeavour to get back to the member opposite with that information. What I am doing today is getting back to him with that information. I was asked on November 10 about an item in table 6 on the 2020-21 five-year capital plan. The item in the table was for social housing renewal. I can confirm, as I did earlier today, that the funding from 2021 to 2025 listed in the capital plan is for existing stock. This is the budget to replace out-of-service units in various communities. The project does support the strategic goal of the housing renewal rebalance and this does address the aging infrastructure and shifts the housing needs. I was asked that question and I'm responding to it now.

I think there was also another question specifically — no, it was the Old Crow piece that I already answered.

The member opposite is now asking about the Mayo project and the Carcross project. We talked about the Mayo project and where we are right now in discussions with Mayo and with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and working to renovate and repair two of our community housing units in that community.

When it comes to the Carcross unit, that was discussed. We are also working with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, discussing the six to eight units, and just to ensure that it is "six to eight" units. I don't want to come back and hear "You said it was six and eight units", but it was "six to eight" units in the Yukon Housing Corporation's building in their community. We are currently focusing on the locations therein. We already talked about those things.

The rural community housing is definitely going to help with the Yukon Housing Corporation on replacement housing. This is planning for housing replacement — the "catch-all" that the member opposite is talking about is planning for housing replacement, which happens on a regular basis as we take a look at need, take a look at aging infrastructure — that type of thing. As far as — I believe that is what the reference is — is to the "catch-all" as the member opposite calls it — it absolutely will be helping with Yukon Housing Corporation on replacement of housing. So, it's planning for the replacement of these housing units.

We don't have very much time here until the end of the day, so what I will do is sit and see if the member opposite has

some other very specific questions for the department. If he wants me to endeavour to get back to him on any, we can use this minute or so for him to have the floor and then have it for him when we come back to general debate next time.

**Mr. Kent:** What I will do to close out the day is just ask a question around the Challenge Cornerstone project. It is well underway. Construction is well underway at the top of Main Street here in Whitehorse. It looks from the budget documents like there is \$4 million for this year and then \$2- to \$3 million for next year.

Can the Premier — perhaps I will get him to get back to us with this response. I am just looking for the overall commitment from the Yukon government to this project. I can't recall if there is also a commitment from the Challenge organization as well — if it is being matched by them or where the other funding is coming from. That is what I would be looking for when we return to debate on this.

Just quickly, I have a couple of other things to flag, then, for the Premier for when we come back. There is the rent supplement program — a constituent of mine reached out and had applied for that. It is the same application as social housing, so they applied to the rent supplement program and someone from the Yukon Housing Corporation got back to them and said, “Congratulations, your social housing unit is ready for you”, but that was not what they were looking for. I am just curious if the Yukon Housing Corporation has given any thought to changing up those application processes.

People who had applied for the rent supplement program in the prior budget item — do they have to reapply or will those applications just be transferred over? If we could get that information. The final piece that I'm looking for from table 6 when we come back is with respect to the deployable mobile home units. Are those for social housing or are they going to be used for staff housing? Is there any idea at this time about where they will go?

Those are the final questions that I will have for Yukon Housing Corporation. Hopefully, the Premier is able to get those responses back to us when we get back to discussions around this next time.

Seeing the time, Mr. Chair, I move that you report progress.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Hon. Mr. Kent that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 63

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Tuesday, November 17, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

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

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<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Tuesday, November 17, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.  
Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Restorative Justice Week

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government in recognition of and to pay tribute to Restorative Justice Week, held globally every year during the third week of November.

Restorative Justice Week offers us the opportunity to reflect on the efforts made to find alternative ways to deal with harm caused by crime.

Restorative justice provides opportunities for those who have been harmed and those who have caused harm to be active participants in their journey for justice, accountability, and reparation.

Criminal actions not only harm victims but also communities and the offenders themselves. Restorative justice is an approach that focuses on repairing and healing the harm caused by crime, grounded in the values of respect, inclusion, healing, compassion, and truth. It promotes offender accountability and responsibility, and it can respond to the needs of victims, families, and communities.

In the Yukon, restorative justice is delivered through the hard work and dedication of members of community justice committees, community justice coordinators, First Nation governments, federal and territorial government officials, families, elders, and individuals who take part in restorative processes. These programs are an investment in the safety and wellness of Yukoners and communities.

While there are restorative justice practices across Canada, Yukon has always been a leader and continues to be. Our government, along with Yukon First Nation governments and community-based organizations, administers many programs and services, including peace-making circles, healing circles, talking circles, diversion circles, parole board pre-release circles, family group conferencing, mediation, pre-charge diversion and post-charge diversion, circle sentencing and providing recommendations to the Territorial Court on interim release and sentencing, Gladue report writing, court support for victims and offenders, court order follow-up and support, probation supervision and reintegration, land-based healing, and community education, awareness, and crime prevention initiatives.

The Government of Yukon has recently committed to the development of an integrated restorative justice unit, which combines the internal restorative justice resources of the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Services. Through the Yukon Police Council, we have also heard that Yukoners want to see healing and working together that can address the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples in Yukon's criminal justice system. Ongoing implementation and increased use of restorative justice options is a policing priority, conveyed to the RCMP in the Yukon this year.

Thank you to all those who hold up the ideals and practices and continue to make Yukon a leader in restorative justice.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Restorative Justice Week in Canada, which takes place from November 15 to 22 this year.

In particular, I would like to take a moment to recognize the success of the Yukon's Community Wellness Court, which began in April 2007. It was created in response to a high percentage of offenders before Yukon criminal courts dealing with issues including addiction, trauma, poverty, mental health problems, and other cognitive disabilities.

When an individual has pled guilty and has been accepted into the Community Wellness Court, a wellness plan is tailored to their needs and includes counselling supports and court check-ins. For some offenders, where there is an acceptance of responsibility as well as a commitment made by the offender to take action, we have seen positive results through this Community Wellness Court, including statistically decreased rates of reoffending.

I would like to thank the staff and professionals involved with this court and indeed across government for their work in building safer communities across the Yukon.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** On behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus, I join in paying tribute to Restorative Justice Week. The theme this year is "Inspiring Innovation". Yukon has been inspiring innovation in justice for decades. At a national conference on justice held here in Yukon in 1991, then-Justice minister Kim Campbell spoke in praise of the work being done by Yukon First Nations to implement their innovative indigenous vision for a return of meaningful community engagement and control of justice matters, suggesting to then-Teslin Tlingit Council Chief Dave Keenan that an administration of justice agreement would be completed in six months — not the first disappointment, nor the last. However, that has not deterred Yukon First Nation leaders and others in the community leading justice counsel and judges from seeking to find a path for reconciliation through a just justice system.

Restorative justice is founded on a vision of justice that heals and restores, and it is based on an understanding that crime is a violation of people and relationships and that justice is served when those most directly involved in an offence are given opportunities to redress the harm caused.

In Yukon, it is based on aboriginal healing traditions. It brings the offender and the offended together in circles of discussion and decision-making, and it involves the community in the justice process. It is an approach to justice that emphasizes healing of victims, accountability of offenders, and the involvement of citizens in creating healthier, safer communities.

Restorative justice is not about excusing crime or letting people off the hook. It's not about forcing forgiveness or even about forgiveness per se. It's not about removing important safety considerations from our communities.

It's not easy to measure the success of restorative justice. The object of stopping an offender from committing future crimes is a relevant goal and can be measured, but restorative justice goes beyond recidivism. It is a life-changing and a community-changing process that prevents future crime and that cannot be counted in numbers.

Clearly, what restorative justice is makes it powerful, and it makes it challenging to put it into practice precisely because it goes against how Canadian and Yukon legal and correctional systems have operated and continue to operate.

The hope found in restorative justice models is that they will foster healthier communities and prevent crime through education, advocacy, and community development initiatives. We salute those working across Yukon to establish innovative restorative justice practices because we know that it is not easy work. To the many volunteers who continue to work toward restorative justice, we thank you. We also thank those professionals whose insight and commitment lends energy to this movement for justice. We hope for the day when Yukon's justice system is truly ready for the systemic changes necessary to expand this humane and productive approach to justice.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I have for tabling a legislative return — the visitor exit survey report from 2017-18 arising from debate during Motion No. 297.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

**Mr. Hassard:** 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 the third-party analysis completed by Gilles Duruflé contracted by the Department of Economic Development as well as all corresponding departmental briefing notes on Panache Ventures.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that the Silver City solid-waste transfer facility stays open.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize that its new agreement with the City of Whitehorse which allows commercial waste haulers to dump waste from outside city limits at the Whitehorse landfill fails to address the need for rates to be affordable and predictable for commercial waste haulers and their customers.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the Leader of the Third Party to meet in order to discuss:

(1) the concerns brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek Centre regarding confidential deliberations of Members' Services Board; and

(2) increasing transparency and improving accountability by making information about Members' Services Board discussions public when it is possible to do so without compromising sensitive matters such as those pertaining to personnel.

**Mr. Hutton:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports partnering with First Nation governments, municipal governments, non-governmental organizations, and members of the public in the long-term planning of health and social services that meet community needs and are culturally safe.

**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.

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

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Lastraw Ranch agricultural land lease

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to share with members of the Legislative Assembly and all Yukoners an update about innovative work done by Yukon's Agriculture branch with Megan Waterman and her family's Lastraw Ranch.

Ms. Waterman runs Lastraw Ranch at Bear Creek outside Dawson City. Her family-owned ranch has been producing eggs, chicken, and pork since 2011. Increasing demand for products meant that the farm was outgrowing its location and was in danger of infringing on zoning regulations. To address

this, Megan approached a nearby placer miner last year to discuss rearing livestock on the surface of the claims in areas set aside for remediation. They reached a cooperative agreement, and Ms. Waterman asked the Agriculture branch how she could lease the surface of this land for seasonal production.

In late 2019, the branch began working on a novel lease agreement to allow Lastraw Ranch to use the surface of the placer claims on a seasonal basis. In early 2020, the Agriculture branch began consulting the farm's neighbours and continued consultation with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other parts of the Government of Yukon. On July 3 of this year, Yukon's first-ever seasonal lease for meat production was crafted and signed. With access to additional land through this lease, Lastraw Ranch successfully expanded pork production by 38 animals this past summer.

Lastraw used Yukon's mobile abattoir for harvest of inspected, certified pork, and the entire harvest was delivered to BonTon & Company for butchering and retail sales. As Shelby Jordan, co-owner and butcher at BonTon, noted, in order to achieve food security in our community, a sustainable food network needs to be in place. All Lastraw farmhands were on deck at BonTon, learning the value-added skills to produce food after farming is complete.

Lastraw Ranch's use of a seasonal lease to produce pork for local consumption is a great example of innovative land lease arrangements, cross-industry cooperation, and community support for local agricultural business development.

I would like to take a moment to thank the placer mining family in Dawson for their generous cooperation and the assistance of the Agriculture branch Lands manager, Jonathan Lucas, and legal counsel, Carmen Gustafson, for developing this first-ever seasonal lease.

This out-of-the-box thinking about land use has the potential to encourage new entrants to Yukon agricultural production at a low start-up cost and encourage local food production in keeping with the goals of the new Yukon agriculture policy. As a result of Ms. Waterman's determination and innovative approach, Yukoners will indeed be putting locally raised pork on their forks.

I hope to see more of this kind of creative leasing and land use to encourage more local food production in Yukon in the coming years.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would like to begin by congratulating the owners of Lastraw Ranch on the completion of this lease agreement and their success in increasing the local production of food. My colleagues and I support the growth of the Yukon's agricultural sector and are pleased anytime that we see businesses take steps to increase the availability of Yukon-grown food. We think that this is positive news and certainly something we are supportive of.

However, the announcement itself should have been made in a different manner, as it is clearly not in keeping with the intended purpose of ministerial statements in this Legislative Assembly. A seasonal lease agreement, while great news to the

people who signed it, is not a major new government announcement or policy change. The Liberal government's infamous use of ministerial statements for re-announcements of old press releases or smaller initiatives such as today's takes time away from the Official Opposition and the Third Party being able to hold the government accountable, including our ability to ask questions during budget debate and to scrutinize the government's actions.

During the last full Spring Sitting, the Legislature had only 4.4 percent of its time to debate two of the largest departments — Health and Social Services and Education. The combined total for these two departments was \$657.9 million — or 45.8 percent of the government's planned total expenses for the year. That sitting, the Liberal government wasted many hours on ministerial statements, almost as much as we had to debate \$657 million of spending of the taxpayers' money.

Today's statement is another example of why the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges needs to establish clear rules for ministerial statements to prevent the government from continuing to purposely use them to reduce the time available for budget debate.

In closing, I note that the Liberal government has done very little to support the development of new agriculture land and is, in fact, threatening the value of existing titled agricultural lots through its new draft wetlands policy, which, in its current form, would undermine the rights and title of existing farms.

Additionally, their lack of action to resolve the loss of commercial garbage service for farms and other businesses in the Whitehorse periphery is causing increased costs and hardship to many farms in my riding, as well as south of town. This is causing problems for many farmers, including some of our territory's largest food producers. Yet, instead of taking action to fix that major problem, the minister passes the buck while farmers struggle without commercial garbage service.

One good news agriculture story does not make up for a lack of action on the commercial garbage service crisis, the wild elk problem, and increased costs due to the Liberal carbon tax. If the current Yukon government is serious about supporting the growth of our agriculture sector, you need to fix the problems caused by government that are threatening its success.

**Ms. White:** The way Yukon chooses to address food security will continue to define what our future can look like. We see leadership from Yukoners who have turned toward the land for answers, individuals who actively garden at home to supplement their own tables, farmers who produce vegetables and livestock to those working within the Agriculture branch in support.

Anytime that Yukon government is able to support and encourage farming, it's a good news story for Yukon. Learning about the diversity of Yukon agriculture is important, and understanding the diversity of crops, regions, and land availability is all part of a bigger puzzle.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and those in the Dawson region have a long history of farming and addressing food security in

the north, and we've just heard how, this year, an additional piece of the puzzle was added with this first-ever seasonal land lease for meat production. This innovative solution to expand pork production in the Klondike is one that we hope we can see replicated. What a creative way for agriculture and placer mining to work together in an unconventional way. From an apple orchard to a dairy farm, market gardens to a world-class teaching farm, and long summer days, the Klondike is ideally suited for agriculture. We hope that this innovation and creativity continue in our collective efforts toward food security. Congratulations to all involved in this project.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I want to thank the members opposite for their comments today. This is a good news story and a great example of a one-government approach to moving forward. I do believe — even if the members opposite don't believe — that this is a significant policy announcement. On this side of the House — and if you asked the agricultural community and even the placer community, I would think that they would think differently.

This summer, we released *Cultivating Our Future: 2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy*. It is the result of several years of working consultation with the agriculture industry representatives, First Nations, and the public. *Cultivating Our Future* outlines how the Government of Yukon will support the continued growth of Yukon's agriculture industry and our ability to be more self-sufficient in food production over the next decade.

This out-of-the-box thinking about land use has the potential to encourage new entrants to Yukon's agricultural production at a low start-up cost and to encourage local food production in keeping with the goals of the new agricultural policy. I hope to see more of this kind of creative leasing and land use to encourage more local food production in the Yukon in the coming years.

This story, of course, has a next chapter. The Lastraw Ranch will be using a seasonal lease on their placer claim again next season with plans to raise at least another 42 pigs on what is becoming known to locals as "Fort Pork". I understand that half of that herd is actually already pre-sold.

So, congratulations to Megan Waterman and the Lastraw Ranch. Thank you for the comments from the Third Party.

Concerning the comments from the Official Opposition, I think that the only conflict in the comments is the fact that I think we have had almost 10 hours of general debate so far on the budget here. I know that, this morning, I had a citizen stop me on the street and ask if the entire session was really going to be hearing from the Member for Lake Laberge — although I know we all enjoy that, and I know he preps immensely for that work — but really, it's a divergence from what we heard throughout the summer where the Official Opposition had so many questions about the emergency debate and how we handled that. We're just not getting those questions. So, there's a bit of a conflict in that, but we'll see how the proceedings go today.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Dempster fibre project

**Mr. Hassard:** So, the Dempster fibre project has been mismanaged by the Liberals. In 2016, the project was ready to go and the Liberal platform even promised to — and I quote: "... accelerate the completion of the fibre optic redundancy project."

In 2018, the Premier said that you can be guaranteed that the road has been picked and the work will be done this summer. Yet despite the promise by the Liberals, they would accelerate the project and, despite the guarantee by the Premier that the work would be done over two years ago, the YESAB application was only submitted in August. The application says that construction is now not expected to be completed until 2025 — just another example of the Liberals being unable to get things done.

Can the minister tell us why the Liberals have delayed this project by almost a decade?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm very happy to talk about this successful project on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon.

The member opposite has mischaracterized the vast amount of work done by this government over the last four years. I take exception to that, but I will talk about the Dempster fibre link. I know that the citizens of the territory are interested in this project. What it's going to do, Mr. Speaker, is actually provide a redundancy to the territory's Internet connectivity, which will allow us to really have a high-tech industry that flourishes in this territory.

That is really what the work of my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, and several others on the floor of this Legislature are really trying to foster and perpetuate, Mr. Speaker. That is really what the foundation of this work is.

We are building this 800-kilometre fibre optic link along the Dempster Highway from Dawson City to Inuvik. It will connect to the existing Mackenzie Valley fibre link in Inuvik and actually help the Northwest Territories as well. In that, it is a Canadian project. We are very happy to be proceeding with this project this year.

I know that already we are doing brush-clearing and preparing the ground for next year — doing the initial work this year. Next year, the job is going to continue. We are going to spend \$3 million starting next year. I am happy to handle more questions from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Hassard:** Here is the timeline: In 2016, the Liberals promised to accelerate the project; in 2017, the Deputy Premier had hit the pause button and slowed the project down; and in 2018, the Premier guaranteed that the work would be done that summer. In December 2018, the government released a fact sheet that said that construction would start in 2019. Later that year, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said that the work would begin in the fall of 2019, but fall of 2019 documents sent to the Mackenzie Valley Review Board changed the construction date yet again — this time, to the spring of 2020. They further said that it would be completed in two years. We now have a YESAB application from the government that says that construction will not be completed until 2025.



Why have the Liberals missed every single deadline that they themselves have committed to?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the timeline. I think that there is one important date at the front of that timeline that was missed. Actually, the member opposite, who is asking the question, walked into a business meeting and announced that this line was going to be built. The sense that we got was that he had everything in place. What we quickly found out was that there was no work done. Sorry — I should say that there was a basic report that was done really without any funds identified.

What we did in that first year was meet with our federal counterparts. This project was at the high end from a capital expenditure perspective. It could be as high as \$85 million. Yukoners — from our framework, we are looking at about \$4 million of that. What we also saw with the Mackenzie Valley line in the Northwest Territories were really significant cost overruns. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but I think that the project was approximately \$100 million. It ended up coming in at about \$200 million. I apologize if I am off on that.

What we did see was the importance of ensuring that we risk-manage this and we made sure that we brought this in at the right price. Every one of these lines that have gone through challenging terrain like this, with 1,100 different water crossings and really significant directional drilling underneath the Mackenzie Delta — let's take the time to get it right. Let's ensure we're looking after taxpayers' money. We do have a plan in place, we're doing the work, and we have it funded.

**Mr. Hassard:** The timeline on this project doesn't paint a very pretty picture for the Liberals. As I said, in 2016, the Liberal platform promised that they would accelerate their project, but the very first action was to put the Deputy Premier in charge. Anyone can tell you that's the last person you want in charge of a project if you actually want to get it done, because the very first thing he did was hit the pause button. Now this key infrastructure project has only seen delay after delay after delay by this government.

Let's walk through the timelines a little more. A 2019 government newsletter on the project states that the construction was supposed to start in March 2020. Well, that was eight months ago and the construction hasn't started. Now we know that the construction won't be completed until 2025.

Can the minister tell us why this Liberal government has yet again missed another deadline?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I was waiting for this day — and for all Yukoners, this is a walk down memory lane of the tone and approach of the Yukon Party of old. You probably remember the nasty approach they took for a whole mandate. What we're seeing today is absolutely the same set of values and absolutely not a different approach. Their leader came out and said they would change the channel. We see today that's not the case. Whether the members opposite are not taking direction from the new leader — that might be a challenge — or they've decided — again, we see them getting upset. I think this has to do with the fact that we've answered their questions and they're taking shots.

For Yukoners who are listening, this really isn't about the question about fibre; this is about personal attacks. We will continue to see this. It's being driven by their chief of staff. I look forward to the next questions here today.

### **Question re: *Putting People First* report recommendations**

**Mr. Cathers:** This summer, the Liberal government accepted all 76 recommendations in the final report on their comprehensive health review. Can the minister of Health and Social Services tell us what the estimated cost of implementing this report will be to the government?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to take this opportunity to really acknowledge the great work of the independent expert committee that oversaw the work of reviewing health services across Yukon. The comprehensive review looked at very substantial consultation with Yukoners. The *Putting People First* report is a result of significant engagement between the independent expert panel, Yukoners, Yukon First Nation governments, stakeholders, and health care providers.

We have shared the report broadly with Yukoners. We are extremely proud of that work. I think it is an indication of the direction that Yukoners want us to go in. Perhaps the members opposite haven't reflected a bit on what they have not gotten done. We have certainly taken efforts to meet the needs of Yukoners. This is a true fact of reconciliation. It is a true fact that we are looking at modernizing the way we do business in Yukon and looking at supports required for rural Yukon communities that have long been forgotten.

So, our government is committed to consulting and engaging. There are 76 recommendations in the report. It is a path forward to be achieved through continued discussion and engagement and involvement of our partners.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, the minister didn't answer the question. Before accepting recommendations in a report, it is very important to understand the implications of those changes. A key tenet of good governance is that, before accepting a major report, you should understand what it will cost.

So, I will ask again: What is the cost of implementing the 76 recommendations from the comprehensive health review?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** What I can say is that this question was asked last session as well, and we provided to the Legislative Assembly the breakdown of the report. The independent expert panel was here; they presented to the Legislative Assembly and to Yukoners. I want to just say that, as we look at implementing the recommendations, we will certainly consider all the factors as we move forward. Fiscal responsibility is on the forefront of everyone's minds. Ultimately, we want to ensure appropriate program service supports and modernize the way we have done business — rather than looking at acute responsibilities and acute care, looking at expanding the scope of practice and bringing essential services and supports to all Yukoners where they reside, no matter the circumstances in their lives.

I am very proud of the work of that committee. We will certainly look at working further with our partners. It is a bold vision forward and we will embrace that and work with our

Yukon partners and our stakeholders to ensure that we implement appropriately the recommendations.

**Mr. Cathers:** The minister still didn't answer my question. Before you commit to major changes, it is good governance that decision-makers do a cost estimate as part of due diligence. Instead, we see this Liberal government again making a commitment without understanding the full costs. This means that they have no realistic plan to deliver it and don't even know if it's feasible to do what they promised to do. The comprehensive health review proposes replacing privately owned medical clinics with government-owned polyclinics.

The Liberals did not properly consult with the Yukon Medical Association before accepting this recommendation.

Why did the government go ahead with this proposal without properly consulting with the Yukon Medical Association or having any idea of the cost of delivering on that commitment?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Taking advice from the Member for Lake Laberge on fiscal responsibilities, I think, is not something that I would consider.

I remind the member opposite that, when I took office, we had the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — the \$14-million facility with no services, no supports, and no O&M expenditures around that. We took over a 350-bed facility — the Whistle Bend facility — that had no program supports and no staffing.

So, with respect to the recommendations that we are considering under the *Putting People First*, I would like to acknowledge the expert panel and their involvement — many, many years of experience — of course, oversight in terms of bringing forward some recommendations, a new way of working, and a new approach to taking population health direction from Yukoners in addressing social determinants of health and looking specifically at reconciliation.

The panel members did not provide an overall costing to the report. Currently, the department is working, of course, on the cost-savings but also looking at how we can better look at implementing the recommendations appropriately to meet the needs of Yukoners.

#### **Question re: Fixed election dates**

**Ms. White:** The government has introduced a bill to set fixed election dates for Yukon and the Premier said that this would bring — and I quote: "... increased fairness, transparency and accountability..." We couldn't agree more. Having fixed election dates prevents majority governments from setting an election date with their own interests in mind.

For some reason, the government bill only takes effect in 2025, and the Premier refuses to tell Yukoners when the next territorial election will be. It seems like the Premier's belief in transparency will only kick in after the next election.

Why does the Premier think a set election date will bring fairness, transparency, and accountability in 2025 but not in 2021?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I think I addressed this question yesterday in the Legislature.

We would probably be getting just as much criticism if we curtailed what everybody thought was a five-year term in the last election to a four-year term in this mandate. We would get the same level of criticism from the opposition, so we believe that the most fair thing to do is to change the elections after this term and to join the rest of Canada — other than maybe one other jurisdiction — with fixed election dates.

**Ms. White:** Last month, the Premier was asked by the media when the next Yukon election would take place. He answered that the decision would be made at least in part by the Liberal Party's election readiness committee. This is a committee of the Liberal Party and, just like any party committee, they are accountable to the Liberal Party. Their job is to do what's best for the Liberal Party.

What concerns the public is that a partisan committee like this one will be deciding Yukon's governance for the next year, so will the Premier tell Yukoners if the timing of the next election will be decided on what's in the best interests of Yukoners or the best interests of the Liberal Party?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** This is the second time that the member opposite has said this in the Legislative Assembly. If I was misquoted, then I was misquoted, but I've never said that our party is going to decide the next election.

**Ms. White:** I am not sure why the Premier is so defensive, because those are his words and they are actually recorded.

First the Premier said that fixed election dates would bring transparency and accountability. Then he made sure that the bill to bring in the fixed election date would not apply to him and only kick in for 2025. What is worse is that he told Yukoners that a partisan committee of the Liberal Party would decide when the next election will be. Mr. Speaker, elections belong to Yukoners, not to the Yukon Liberals.

Will the Premier show transparency and tell Yukoners when the next territorial election will be, or will he leave it to the partisan Liberal committee to make this decision?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, we are not contemplating an election right now. We are busy providing programs and services during a national pandemic — an international pandemic.

The member opposite is saying that I said something that I didn't. I had a great conversation with the media that one day where we talked for about a half an hour about a whole bunch of things. I did mention that we did have an election readiness committee, and they are going through a process of interviewing folks and getting ready for an election, as I'm sure are the two other parties as well. However, the decision for an election is not in their purview.

Right now, we are concentrating on the work at hand. We are concentrating on getting this mandate completed, making good on the promises to Yukoners, and getting us through a global pandemic. We made good on balancing our budget a year ahead of schedule before the pandemic. We have led Yukoners so far through this pandemic. We are hearing great news about a vaccine, and we will continue to concentrate on the pandemic, vaccines, the economy, and the environment,

whereas the members opposite are playing political games in the Legislative Assembly.

**Question re: Fixed election dates**

**Mr. Cathers:** Yesterday, the Liberals claimed that fixed election dates will improve democracy by giving voters certainty about when an election will be held. They argued that a fixed election date would take political game-playing out of our system and prevent sitting governments from using the uncertainty of election timing for their own partisan gain. The problem is that the Liberal government doesn't think that this applies to them. They deliberately waited until the eve of an election to table this bill and chose to have their new rules apply to everyone except themselves.

Why does the Premier think that fixed election dates are a good idea and important for everyone except the Liberal Party?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I don't think the member opposite is paying attention to the Legislative Assembly today. I just answered the question. We would be getting just as much criticism from the Yukon Party if we shortened this session from five years to four years. Every single MLA or candidate of the 19 ridings ran under an understanding of the five-year terms. At the same time, we are going to change things, which the opposition — the NDP, the Yukon Party — never considered — going to fixed election dates — and now they're critical of us doing it. We will change this narrative, and we will make it so that there are four-year terms.

Now, if the Yukon Party gets into power and into government again and if they decided that they want to go back to the old way of five-year terms, that's well within their mandate.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, the Premier — his government is spinning their tires, and he is trying to spin the words of members in this Assembly.

The Liberals promised fixed election dates in the 2016 platform, but we learned in the briefing on the bill that government didn't actually begin working on it until May of this year. This means that the Premier deliberately held off on the commitment until late in the Liberal term to try to maximize their partisan advantage, which ironically is exactly what they argued is wrong with the current system.

After breaking their promise on electoral reform and using a loophole to accept over \$100,000 in undisclosed donations, this last-minute change to the election rules is just another reason why Yukoners are suspicious of the Liberal's intention.

Why did the Premier and his Liberal government wait until the last year of the mandate to introduce this legislation?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We introduced this legislation because we are making good on a campaign promise. We are setting the fixed election dates on a four-year cycle for the territorial elections in order to strengthen the democratic process. Fixed election dates for elections will support that democratic process and principles of fairness and transparency, and we will be moving into that arena.

The Yukon Party had no interest in having fixed election dates. The Yukon Party even went to the very, very last day possible the last time around to support the prince and princess

and to extend their severance packages by \$29,000 each for those candidates who didn't make it in. We don't think that's fair. We don't think that's transparent. We changed the severance package piece already. We're now changing the elections to set election dates because we believe that's the right thing to do.

**Mr. Cathers:** Despite the Premier's spin, the Liberal record is big deficits, red ink, and a record of broken promises.

There is a long-standing tradition in the Yukon that changes to the *Elections Act* have been dealt with collaboratively through an all-party committee.

After breaking the Liberal promise on electoral reform and using a loophole in finance rules to hide the source of over \$100,000 given to the Liberal Party, the cynical decision to bring forward legislation in an election year is the latest in a pattern of actions that show lack of respect for our democracy by the Liberals. Yesterday, the Liberals said in debate that it is important that Yukoners have certainty about when elections are held. They argued that this certainty would strengthen democracy and show respect to Yukon voters.

So, will the Premier live up to his words yesterday and answer a very simple question: What is the date of the next territorial election?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, clearly, the member opposite is not paying attention. That question was already asked in the Legislative Assembly. It is very interesting that both opposition parties are so concerned about an election, where we are concerned about running a government during an international pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, we have balanced the budget a year ahead of schedule, contrary to the members opposite's assertions here in the Legislative Assembly. If you take a look at the per-person spending on COVID compared to any other government in Canada, we are at the forefront there. We are making sure that we are accountable for Yukon taxpayers' money, but at the same time, we are making sure that Yukoners are safe. We are here to do business; the opposition is here to play political politics and to ask: "When is the next election?"

I thought they had questions about COVID. I thought they had questions on the orders-in-council. All summer long, we heard: "We need to get back in and talk about these orders-in-council." We offered them an opportunity to come in this summer, but they refused. We are here in the Legislative Assembly — 10 hours in general debate, Mr. Speaker — 10 hours in general debate, not asking questions about the actual supplementary budget, but asking about: "When is the next election?" — and asking every other question underneath the moon.

Mr. Speaker, we are here to do the business of government. The opposition is obviously here to play politics.

**Question re: Pharmacare coverage**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, a constituent of mine is having difficulty navigating their pharmacare coverage and getting their medication. I wrote the Minister of Health and Social Services on July 17 about this. That is exactly four months ago. The minister has ignored the letter and has still not

replied. Unfortunately, this means that a Yukoner who has concerns about their coverage for medication has been left hanging for four months while the minister ignores the letter. We are talking about an individual's health care.

So, will the minister agree to stop leaving this Yukoner waiting and deal with this issue today?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, what I would like to say to Yukoners is that, if there are issues and concerns that are brought forward, you bring that to the attention of Health and Social Services and we would be happy to respond to the questions.

We certainly take great care in providing appropriate services to all Yukoners. Health is of the utmost priority, as we just heard in a previous question around the comprehensive health review. That was the objective — to ensure that Yukoners are provided specialized supports and services that they so readily need.

As mentioned by the Member for Kluane, certainly there are many individuals in Yukon who are, during these pandemic times, challenged in getting services. We are doing our best to work with our health professionals. I want to just acknowledge the department for doing such a great job.

With respect to the specific question around the individual, I would be happy to go back to the department and see where that has been case-managed and where the response is. Personally, if I neglected in getting back, I will take responsibility for that, but I will certainly endeavour to seek the information from the department.

#### Question re: Nurse practitioner staffing

**Ms. Van Bibber:** In 2012, the previous Yukon government brought in legislation to license nurse practitioners. Nurse practitioners bridge a gap between a physician and the registered nurses at the community health centres. They have all the skills of a registered nurse and can independently provide health care, diagnose illnesses, order and interpret tests, prescribe some medications, and admit people to a hospital.

Across Canada, nurse practitioners are proven to be highly effective. Last Monday, the Premier indicated in general debate that the government is seeking a further \$92,000 this fiscal year to hire a nurse practitioner in Carmacks. Can the minister tell us where we are in the hiring process for this position? Is there a target date for getting the new person in place?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With respect to nurse practitioners, the objective of providing collaborative models and an expanded scope of practice to our hospitals was really to look at ensuring that we provide the services that a nurse practitioner could bring. Historically, we relied on our registered nurses. This is an opportunity and I am very pleased to make that commitment to Yukoners.

The nurse practitioner that was implemented in Mayo — the scope of practice and expansion of that service — allowed us to deliver services to Selkirk as well. The Blackjack inquest, which was a coroner's inquest, recommended that we must look at a scope of practice in the community of Carmacks, so we committed to moving the next nurse practitioner position into

that community. We are working very closely with our colleagues in the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We are working very closely with our communities to identify where we would then bring the next targeted positions, very succinctly aligning with the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The health report notes that, of the five nurse practitioners practising in the territory, only one is outside of Whitehorse. We know that person has been doing a wonderful job for the community of Mayo; however, the health report notes that this position in Mayo was only done as a one-year trial.

Can the minister confirm if this position is or will be extended beyond the one-year trial?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With respect to the target date for the position in Carmacks, we've been working with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The target date for that position is January 1. Of course, we are certainly right now looking to the list of potential candidates and finding the right fit for the community, appreciating the fact that it's an indigenous community predominantly, so we want to ensure that cultural integrity is in effect.

With respect to the future of nurse practitioners in the Yukon, this government is committed to expanding the scope of practice across the Yukon. Ideally, we would like to see that in the future. We permanently funded the position in Mayo. We tried it out on a trial basis and now we've committed to doing that and providing support to Pelly Crossing as well. We will look at the future of nurse practitioners in the Yukon and aligning that alongside the work with physicians and community nurses and other allied health professionals.

We certainly want to ensure that we take into consideration the recommendations that were presented to us from Yukoners and of course from the *Putting People First* report.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The health care report also indicates that currently nurse practitioners are not able to practise to a full scope in Yukon due to the lack of hospital privileges. It suggests that these are negatively impacting outcomes for Yukoners.

Can the minister tell us if she is addressing this concern and what specific actions has she taken to do so?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** What I can confirm is that the physicians from Watson Lake are supporting the nurse practitioner in Mayo.

We are looking at other opportunities. I certainly want to say that, given that it's a new initiative, we have the recommendations that have been brought forward. We will continue to endeavour to look at opportunities and certainly want to look at the supports that we currently provide in our health centres, continue to expand the scope of practice and align that with our mental wellness hubs and align that with our specialist clinics that we're bringing to the Yukon as we look at the advancement of polyclinics and the advancement of our "Wellness Yukon" initiatives. There is a lot of great work happening right now, and we will continue to work with Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that nurse practitioners are able to work to the full scope of practice in our hospitals.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

### Notice of government private members' business

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of government private members to be called on Wednesday, November 18, 2020. They are Motion No. 236, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North, and Motion No. 237, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

**Speaker:** We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### Bill No. 15: *Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)* — Third Reading

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 15, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that Bill No. 15, entitled *Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 15, entitled *Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I just would like to begin by thanking all of the members who stood up to speak here in the Legislature. I appreciated their comments. I think that the debate in the Chamber has contributed to a fuller understanding of how the amendments to the *Business Corporations Act* and the *Cooperative Associations Act* as well as our new *Societies Act* will improve all stakeholders' experiences.

As we stated before, Mr. Speaker, we developed the Yukon's new *Societies Act* using feedback that we received from extensive public engagement, which I was happy to be part of. We also modelled our act after BC's *Societies Act*, and prior to drafting this bill, we took the opportunity to review BC's proposed amendments to their legislation and draft it as part of their own engagement. We looked at some of that feedback to see how we could improve our legislation as well. Where appropriate, we have applied some of their technical amendments to our new act. I spoke about those during Committee of the Whole and also in second reading. We have developed a new set of regulations for the new act as well, so those are now ready.

The prime purpose of the previous bill and this one has been to modernize our new *Societies Act* and to improve certainty and clarity for Yukoners. I am not sure if they are all active, but I think we have more than 800 societies. It's not necessarily well known. Entities created under the *Business Corporations Act*, the *Cooperative Associations Act*, and the *Societies Act* are all forms of corporations with significant similarities regarding their creation, organization, and governance. That is why within this bill we included

amendments that provide consistency regarding incorporators' and directors' qualifications among the three acts.

Mr. Speaker, there is a large focus in this bill on directors' roles and responsibilities because of the legal and financial decisions that they make for societies. Amendments in the bill reinforce transparency with clear reporting requirements, including filing deadlines, contact information, and changes regarding directors. They clarify the use and access to information obtained from society registers and documents. They also provide societies with access to model bylaws if they so choose.

In particular, we looked to try to make our societies and our corporations as inclusive as possible for all citizens depending on their ability to manage both financial and legal affairs.

We are certain that, with these amendments, our new *Societies Act*, supported by new regulations, will provide societies with clear, easy-to-understand guidance on virtually all processes regarding their creation, governance, and operations and will allow them to continue their important contribution to the benefit of all Yukoners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to final submissions.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thanks to the minister responsible for bringing this act forward. The amendment act has been through some very good discussion, and we feel that the language included is clear and understandable. It gives guidance regarding boards' and directors' responsibilities and clears up some qualification guidelines when citizens or Yukoners take on any board position.

We would also like to thank the drafters in the department for their continued work on ensuring that these acts are brought up to date for societies and organizations.

As we said during second reading, we be will supporting Bill No. 15, *Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)*.

**Ms. White:** The Yukon NDP is supportive of changes that clarify the roles and responsibilities of societies and those on boards, and we look forward to seeing this come into action.

**Speaker:** If the member now speaks, he will close debate on third reading of Bill No. 15.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Again, I thank the members opposite for their comments. I will make sure to pass those on directly to the folks from the legislative counsel office who were doing the drafting and also to the folks from Corporate Policy and Consumer Affairs who have been doing the work to update the *Societies Act*.

Thank you to all the members for their contributions, and I look forward to the vote.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

**Division**

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

*Bells*

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.  
*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 15 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 15 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 (Mr. Hutton):** Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I know that the Member for Copperbelt South has 17 minutes left to ask questions, but I've been told that he's waiting for me to answer the questions that he put on the Legislative Assembly yesterday, so I will start down that route.

Most of the questions were answered. He had a few at the very end there. I think there was a question about Mayo community housing — the question being: Why will it take three years to get to a point to spend money on community housing in Mayo?

Mr. Chair, the Yukon Housing Corporation is planning a future community housing development in Mayo; however, at this stage, it is still uncertain what form this project will take as it is still several years out. We are just giving as much information as we possibly can in a timely fashion.

The Village of Mayo has expressed the need for additional affordable housing. The Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation has expressed a desire for a partnership with the Yukon Housing Corporation as well on future construction projects to support ongoing housing needs. As of January this year, the project was still in the very early stage of planning and the scope was not entirely defined. This does not mean that no money was spent on the community housing for Mayo, or that there will be no money spent in the next three years either, as the Yukon Housing Corporation does have recurring capital budgets for renovations, repairs, unit conversions, and energy projects for the entire housing stock, which will include existing units in Mayo.

Currently, the Yukon Housing Corporation continues to maintain and upkeep 32 units in that community for staff and social housing. I believe that there is currently one staff client on the waiting list in Mayo. Future details will become available, and we will share them as we can on that particular project.

There were questions about rural community housing. We responded — basically reiterating several times — that housing renewal — talking about the budget to replace out-of-service units. We spoke about that a couple of different times. The Yukon Housing Corporation is, as we said, currently proposing capital projects in Old Crow, Watson Lake, Carcross, and Whitehorse; however, the communities of Ross River, Teslin, Haines Junction, and Dawson City have also expressed interest for support of their housing needs when it comes to rural community housing. On the specific line in table 6 of the 2020-21 capital plan — specific to that particular budget that they are talking about — the budget for this item is a placeholder, as we said, for future years. We will further define it following more engagement with communities.

Questions on Cornerstone — we answered most of those. They did ask if Cornerstone itself was putting money toward

this project. Yes, they are putting in approximately \$500,000 as a cash investment from Challenge.

Also, has the Yukon Housing Corporation given any thought to changing the application process for the rent supplementary program? The rent supplementary and the rent-gear-to-income program have the same eligibility requirement criteria. The Housing Corporation has found that the majority of clients prefer to be considered for both programs to help them get assistance, if possible.

**Mr. Hassard:** I would like to thank the Premier's Deputy Minister for being here today with us one more time. He looks like he is enjoying it every time he gets here.

Just before I begin, the Premier has spoken a few times — and again in Question Period today — about this being a record — having to be in general debate for 10 hours, but I would just like to remind the Premier that 10 hours is not even a full day for a lot of folks in many industries here in the Yukon, so I certainly hope that he is not looking for sympathy in that regard. I can assure him that we probably won't be here too much longer, so he can get his beauty sleep.

I had a couple of questions regarding community banking. I guess, first, this is an issue that has come up in Question Period a couple of times, so maybe I will just give the Premier an opportunity to give the House a bit of an update on where we are at with community banking.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I appreciate the personal attack from the member opposite as far as beauty sleep goes. I am happy to answer questions. I am just pointing out that, yes, it would be nice to actually have a conversation about the budget at some point.

Approved responses for the community banking — we have talked about this a few different times. We have talked about the different needs in different communities. I don't have much of an update for the member opposite, although we have talked about the fact that there has been a competitive procurement process and the Government of Yukon has a new banking contract in place with CIBC, with the transition to this provider taking place — effective, as we have said — it was through September to October. We encouraged community members to continue checking on yukon.ca for the most current information in that transition.

**Mr. Hassard:** The last time that we spoke about this issue, Mayo, of course, still had no bank, and I'm sure you're well aware of that, Mr. Chair, as it is your riding. My understanding is that they do now have someone coming down from Dawson to run the bank in Mayo two days a week, I believe. I was hoping that the Premier could have updated us on that and maybe given folks a bit of an idea of where things are going. We still don't know what's going on in Carmacks or Pelly.

I guess — my question that I would ask the Premier is — I know that the Member for Kluane, in particular, and I have heard this countless times — daily. I'm curious if the same issues, Mr. Chair, are coming from your riding or that of the Member for Old Crow. The question to the Premier would be: Have you heard of banking issues from the rural MLAs in your caucus? What are the issues that they are bringing forward? I

know that the issues I have raised with you in Question Period regarding customers not being able to pay bills, not being able to cash US cheques, being forced into online banking — those types of things — I'm curious, Mr. Chair, if the Premier has heard of any of these issues from his own rural MLAs.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We know that there have been some issues with the company itself getting some workers; that's for sure. We do know that Mayo is up and running and operating Tuesdays and Wednesdays each week on a temporary basis until final arrangements are made, and they are working very closely with the development corporation.

Carmacks is now open and operates on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and CIBC is working through the staffing issues that they've had in Pelly. They've had a staffing issue in Pelly — so has the previous bank company — for a while now. They are still very committed to opening by the end of November, so that's good. We hope they can get the staffing that they need there.

CIBC is working with anybody who has issues and getting them up to speed on how the services work. There were issues with the tendering contract; however, what we're seeing right across Canada is a transition of banking companies as well to online banking. So, that is going to be an issue in a lot of communities right across Canada, northern communities and more rural communities, but this is the transition that's happening, not just in Yukon; it's being experienced in other jurisdictions as well.

We do know that bank tellers and folks are helping clients that aren't used to the online banking in these areas to come in and be able to use the computers there at the agencies. There's no requirement for them to buy any new gear or new equipment to be able to allow them to do banking — maybe not the way they used to, but a more modern approach to that.

I myself am getting a little bit used to online banking — you know, being able to send cheques and pay my bills, especially when I spend a lot of time down in Whitehorse. To be able to make sure that my driveway is still getting plowed, I use the online banking services down here in Whitehorse — thanks to the Grenon's for taking up my cheques online. But yes, as I see it, there are two issues here: one is a modernization piece and the private sector helping out the clients to make sure that they have the capacity to learn maybe some new skills or come in and see how the banks are operating, and also the issue that the CIBC had with staffing. Mayo is up and running. Carmacks is up and running. Pelly is seeking an arrangement and looking for a new employee.

**Mr. Hassard:** It's great that the Premier has now learned how to do online banking, as have I, but unfortunately, this isn't about the Premier or me. This is about citizens in rural Yukon who are unable to do this. The fact that the government put this tender out — the government chose not to work with the Association of Yukon Communities to hopefully ensure that we wouldn't have some of these issues.

So, the question is quite simple: What do we as rural MLAs tell our constituents when they say, "Why can we not continue to do banking the way we've done in the past?" Are we supposed to say, "Well, the Premier says we need to all get on

board and learn a new way of doing things.” As I said, unfortunately, a lot of people in the communities and in Whitehorse are not capable of doing that and never will be, so what is their alternative, Mr. Chair?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, where the look and the feel of the banking experience may be different, the access to basic banking services will continue. This is what I hope the members opposite are telling their constituents. In order to ensure that the customers are able to continue to deposit cheques at their local branch, iPads are being installed so that individuals can now deposit into any of those big five banks or the First Nations Bank of Canada. Agents are able to assist individuals through this process.

I do recognize that change is difficult for people, especially when it comes to technologies, but paying those bills — there are agents there who are assisting those customers. If you come in to do your banking, it will be different from you talking directly to one individual. There’s going to be a bit more technology, but there are people there to help you through that process. With people in place, you will be able to pay your bills. Agents are there to assist customers with paying online or via telephone banking. It’s also important to note that the banking industry is continuing to shift to online banking models. We want to make sure that Yukoners are as up to date as other jurisdictions, as every other jurisdiction is going to these models, especially when it comes to serving more remote communities, whether in provinces or territories. To have the help there and make sure that clients coming in can use the services that are there is extremely important. Individuals without access to technology or to cellphones can access the online banking using the provided iPads in the local branches.

There is no requirement or expectation that individuals will need to buy any new hardware. If members of the community are having a difficult time going through the new process, the good news is that CIBC, the private sector company here, is there and able to help them work through this new system. Again, the feel is different, for sure, and that is going to be a learning curve, but the existing basic banking services will continue in those communities.

**Mr. Hassard:** Just because everyone else is doing it — that’s not a reason to me. There is an old saying — if your friends jump off a bridge, does that mean you think you should? Why is this government jumping off the bridge because their friends are? You know as well as I do that there are many people out there who cannot do this.

There are issues of people who worry about the security of their money when they’re doing online banking. We have people who are just so uncomfortable with it because they’ve never dealt with something like this in their 60, 70, or 80 years of life and the government put the tender out. The government had the option to say, “Look, whoever has the tender for community banking, these are some of the things that must be kept intact for Yukoners.” I don’t think that it’s fair that the Premier can say, “Well, that’s what’s happening down south and other places in the north are doing it, so we had to do it too.”

I’m wondering if the Premier would reconsider and maybe have someone reach out to the CIBC and try to encourage them to maybe not be in such a hurry to catch up to the modern world.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** This isn’t about a lemming mentality. This is about making sure that we have access to banking services in the rural communities, and we do; all the services are still being used.

I remember, as a boy, my first banking account and the processes back then, and the changes that have happened since then are remarkable — completely different from back then. This is a banking institution across Canada, across the States, and everywhere else that is moving to a more modernized fashion. We do understand that it’s difficult for folks who are not used to technologies to use that, but the good news is that it’s there and there are people there who can walk them through that process.

Individuals without access to technology don’t have to buy any new technology. If you’re skeptical of online banking for some reason — I don’t think there’s a reason to be skeptical that you’re going to lose any kind of security by using — I don’t know if that’s what the member opposite is inferring. I do get that people have a lack of familiarity with new technologies. The good news is there are people there to walk you through the process. If you want to deposit a cheque as opposed to passing it to a teller, you take a picture with a camera that’s provided on the iPad and the money goes into the bank. They can walk you through these processes.

I find that whether it’s in a rural community or in an urban community, knowing that you can have access to the most modern technologies as well — I think that’s an important piece. Making sure that Yukon doesn’t fall behind other jurisdiction when it comes to online technology — that might be a consideration as well.

In this contract, the private sector who took on this contract is lending their expertise and lending their hardware to make sure that everybody in these rural communities to whom these banking services are being provided have access to these banking services.

I appreciate that the member opposite thinks that this is not a good thing, but we believe that this is a modern approach. You can still pay your bills. The company that took this responsibility on has the resources to make sure that people have access to the technology. The same banking services will be provided; it is just that the feel and the look is different.

**Mr. Hassard:** I can appreciate that when the Premier says how things have changed since he had his first bank account when he was a boy. Things have changed — absolutely — but those things changed over time, and the Premier grew with that and learned along the way. I have grandkids who can deposit a cheque now, but I have parents who can’t, because they don’t have an iPhone and they wouldn’t have any idea of how to take a picture of their cheque and put it in their bank account. Then, I guess, on top of that, even to make things worse — let’s take the bank in Mayo. Now we have someone coming from Dawson two days a week. So, you have an elder in Mayo who is going to take their cheque to someone they have never met before and say, “Oh, yes, you’re going to take a



picture of my cheque and put it in my bank account for me”? I’m sorry, but people have a problem with that, and I don’t blame them. I mean, this is not just a simple change; this is a major change. It’s a major change in the way that people do their banking and how they pay their power bills or whatever the case may be.

As I said, Mr. Chair, the Premier is the minister responsible for this contract. I have asked this question numerous times: Why did he not work with the Association of Yukon Communities when they asked? I read their resolution into the record here in the Legislature, but the government chose to just do this on their own and not listen to any rural concerns. Will the Premier — since it is his contract — go back and talk to CIBC to see if they will reverse some of these decisions?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** So, the member opposite makes it seem like the arrangement with Dawson right now is a permanent thing; it’s not. It’s a temporary patch, and we will get over this situation as well, and the services will go back to normal in that community.

The member opposite talked as well about how things didn’t happen just overnight. Well, actually, again, if the members opposite care to listen — they’re just talking off mic as I’m answering his questions. I do remember the first day that I brought my grandfather in because CIBC in my town just had for the first time the remote ATMs — the automatic teller machines. That was overnight. That was one day they weren’t there; the next day they were there. Yes, at that time, you still could go in and do banking, but the new modernization piece was a new thing and it was right away a new direction and it was a piece of a modernization of the financial institutions.

So, what we see here again is — yeah, it is a change; I recognize that it is a change. I hope the member opposite recognizes as well that, once the staffing issues get dealt with, it doesn’t mean a lack of services; it means a modernization of those services.

Also, it’s not as if we just dropped an ATM in these places and just said, “Fend for yourself.” The company is there. There are people and agents there. Of course, there are some staffing issues, but once we get over that, these folks will help to make sure that the banking that was done in the past continues to be done in these communities. Again, if that is something that we see after the next few years of this service — that this is not providing an ample service or if people are still having problems, well, we’ll have to take a look at that. These contracts aren’t forever and they do get renewed. There will be a process there.

I did say in the Legislative Assembly last time when answering these questions that we didn’t change anything as far as how the government does these contracts. I don’t know if the Yukon Party, when they changed their contracts, was working with the AYC. If they were, then I’ll take a look at that.

Again, we have great conversations on a regular basis through Minister Streicker and the AYC. I’ll ask him if he’s getting questions —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

### Point of order

**Chair:** Mr. Cathers, on a point of order.

**Mr. Cathers:** The Premier just made reference to one of his colleagues by name which, of course, is contrary to our Standing Orders. I would ask you to remind him not to refer to members by their name in contravention of our Standing Orders.

### Chair’s ruling

**Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Silver, do you understand?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think I understand. Yeah, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I don’t do that very often. I apologize.

Again, we can go over this over and over again. The services are in place. There’s the same level of services. You can still do the same things. It’s just a more modernized approach.

I recognize that the member opposite feels that the elderly people in the community will not be able to adapt to this. I believe that they will. I believe that, because the supports are there, you could come in and say that you don’t know about this at all, and people will be there to walk you through it. They will be there to walk you through it for the complete three years of this contract. Again, if there are any issues at these branches, I would love to hear from the MLAs and from particular people. Time will tell as we move forward.

Just for the record, we have agreed — I don’t know what the member opposite has done in the past with the Association of Yukon Communities and bank contracts — to talk with the Association of Yukon Communities in the future, so that is a change. Again, here we are listening and moving on that.

**Mr. Hassard:** A couple of things there — first, the Association of Yukon Communities part — you know, they brought that motion forward at their AGM in 2014. There were no contracts let on banking services until this Premier was the Premier. We are not asking if he is doing anything different from the previous government; we are asking why he would not work with the Association of Yukon Communities when they brought forward a resolution asking for this exact thing.

The Premier talks about banking going back to normal in your beautiful community of Mayo once they get staffing in place. I think that his “back to normal” is quite a bit different from my “back to normal” or probably the “back to normal” of many of your constituents. He used the example of ATMs coming in when he took his grandfather to the bank. The key difference there is the fact that, if you chose not to use the ATM, you still had the option of walking past the ATM, going to the teller, and doing all of the things you could traditionally do. There is a significant difference here as opposed to the times that the Premier is talking about.

The question I asked twice now — I will ask one more time in case the third time is the charm — is: Will the Premier go to CIBC to ask them to reinstate services the way they were before?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Chair, with the declaration from the Association of Yukon Communities — again, they wrote expressly that they want to be involved. There were no explicit recommendations, though, in that particular year.

Since then, we have agreed to talk to AYC in the future on contracts. I'm not going to make decisions on the floor of the Legislative Assembly when it comes to contracts that have already been tendered.

However, I disagree with the member opposite that this is a horrible new system — in his mind. I don't think so. I think that this is an example of what's happening with all businesses right across the country. CIBC has the contract. They're providing the same level of service but in a different capacity. You can still walk into the bank with your cheques. You can still do your banking that you're normally used to doing. It just looks a little bit different.

**Mr. Hassard:** It's unfortunate that the Premier thinks that the only thing that has changed here is the way it looks, because that's in fact not the case. It's really, really unfortunate that the Premier refuses to even listen on this issue. This is an issue that is affecting many, many rural Yukoners.

The banker in Teslin right now has almost zero customers because people won't go there to the bank anymore because they can't do things the way they did. For the Premier to say that, well, they are going to get used to it and everything will carry on — again, he's out of touch because that's not the case. If people stop going to the bank, I guess soon there won't be any reason to have a bank in the communities because nobody — or very few people — is actually using them.

The Premier has stood here and said that I said that this is a horrible system — in my mind. I don't believe that I said it was a horrible system. I think there are plenty of people out there in rural Yukon who would say that it's a horrible system. I'm just bringing this forward on behalf of constituents throughout the entire Yukon, not just in Teslin or Pelly-Nisutlin. I'm talking about all of rural Yukon, with the exception, I guess, of maybe Watson Lake and Dawson City because they have had CIBC in their communities traditionally. There hasn't been as much of a change maybe for them as there has been for the other communities and maybe that's why the Premier doesn't think that this is a big deal because people in his community maybe don't see that it's as much of a change as it is for constituents in my riding or your riding, Mr. Chair.

"Every community matters" — you know, I heard that for the first two years, yet as quickly as we come forward with an issue in a community, the Premier says that this is how it is going now — get on the bus or get off, I guess. It is really quite frustrating, and I apologize to all of those rural Yukoners who are having this difficult time because of the fact that this Premier just sticks his head in the sand and refuses to listen.

But, Mr. Chair, there is no point in beating a dead horse, I guess.

I think I had one more question in regard to community banking — well, maybe two, depending on how the answer goes, I guess. Can the Premier tell us when the bank in your particular community — your hometown of Mayo — will be

moving out of its current location and where it will be moving to?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** So, Mr. Chair, all personal attacks aside, the member opposite is paraphrasing — like I did, so fair enough. I didn't say that you have to get on the bus or that's it — whatever he said. What I am saying is that we are working with CIBC daily to ensure that communication is provided in each community, making sure that folks who are using the banks have access to those services and that each community is also opening their hours and providing those services. CIBC also has committed to work with anybody who has issues and get them up to speed on how the service works, and we are in regular contact, as I said, with CIBC. I do appreciate the member opposite telling me about Teslin — from the bank teller at that place. We will pass this information on to CIBC, if they are not already aware of it, that the member opposite is saying that they have zero customers there now because people —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I think the member opposite said "no customers right now" —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** "Almost no customers" — I will check the Blues and just pass that on, so that is great. Thank you for the information from the member opposite.

But, again, the department is listening and responding to any issues as they come up, and if we are finding that people are not coming into the bank, we will address that issue as well, and we will make sure that folks have the access to those open doors in those banks and make sure that, if they have any reservations about using modern technology, we address that and make sure that they have the access that they deserve in those communities.

All shots about my community versus other communities — that is not how we work here.

Every community does matter, and I completely agree with that. Making sure that we have services in these communities is very important to us on this side of the Legislative Assembly.

I don't have an answer for the member opposite right now as far as the current facility in Mayo and when the change is on that. We do know that there are no final decisions there yet, but we don't have any update on that.

**Mr. Hassard:** That certainly wasn't a shot about Watson Lake or Dawson City. Actually, I think that there are a lot of communities that are envious of Dawson City and Watson Lake right now when it comes to the banking issue, because they aren't having to go through these challenging times.

Mr. Chair, I have one more question for the Premier on the banking. He said that he didn't know when the transition would take place in Mayo. I am curious if the Premier is in negotiations or in talks with the Village of Mayo with regard to the space that they had initially, I guess, hoped to rent to the bank and if that, in fact, is still one of the possibilities for space for CIBC in Mayo.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, CIBC is responsible for the location. I know that they are working with Mayo. I know that

there is no final decision made. I wish I had more for the member opposite, but I don't.

**Mr. Hassard:** Okay, we'll leave banking.

I have a question brought forward from a constituent, and I am hoping that, if the Premier isn't able to provide us with an answer to this, he can point us in the right direction or maybe have the minister who is able to provide us with the information do that. It is with regard to the business relief fund through the pandemic. I have a couple of constituents who are curious if that is a taxable income.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** That tax will be a CRA question. I believe that it is taxable, but that's a CRA question and not necessarily a ministerial question. We could have the Minister of Economic Development, when he's up during debate, to talk about the program itself, but those taxes there will be paid through the Canada Revenue Agency.

**Mr. Hassard:** I appreciate that information from the Premier. Once again, I thank the deputy minister for his time here today and previous days.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 205?

Seeing none, we will proceed to clause 1. Clause 1 includes the bill schedules. Among the bill's schedules is Schedule A, containing the departmental votes.

The matter now before the Committee is Vote 51, Department of Community Services.

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 Vote 51, Department of Community Services.

Is there any general debate?

### **Department of Community Services**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Just to begin, I would like to welcome Deputy Minister Matt King and our director of Finance, Phil MacDonald. It's always a pleasure having them here in the Legislature. I am sure that the members opposite will also pass across their thanks.

When I gave the second reading on the budget speech, I went over, quite a bit, the plans for the supplementary budget with respect to Community Services.

So, just in terms of opening remarks here today, what I am going to do is try to address a few questions that I have had posed to me by the members opposite just to try to get them in the record, and we can talk about whether there is any follow-up to those questions.

First of all, with respect to a question from the Member for Porter Creek North, and I think it was from October 6, but it was a question about the timeline for the development of Whistle Bend. It is a bit of a complicated answer. The simple answer is sometime over the next decade. The complicated

answer is that the city has been expanding, a little bit, its perspective on how Whistle Bend should be developed. My recollection is that it started off with eight phases, but they have been subdividing those phases and adding phases, and now they are scoping up to phase 15. They went through a YESAA process recently, and they are currently in an official community plan process. I even expect to be in a conversation with the city later this week on their work on that process. That will adjust timelines somewhat.

So, the way to think of it is — Whistle Bend has been in development for the past decade or so. We have been accelerating in the amount of development — the investment that we do year over year. That is reducing the amount of time — we are, I think, roughly a little over halfway done — and we're accelerating, but at the same time, the city is thinking of expanding or putting more in and around Whistle Bend. So, I can't give a precise answer, but that is how the department has relayed it to me — is that it depends on how far the city wants to go with the development, and it depends as well on future investments. Will it continue at this pace, or more or less?

Another question that came up was from the Member for Lake Laberge — talking about lapses. So, let me try to provide some background on the lapses. The question was around the \$19.7 million that was lapsed last fiscal year on capital projects.

First of all, I am going to divide it out into both land development and infrastructure. With respect to land development, we have just been talking about it here with respect to Whistle Bend. Our total budget was \$27.1 million for last year in Whistle Bend.

We lapsed under \$8 million — \$7.8 million — and so the total spend ended up being \$19.3 million. The bulk of that lapse had to do with Whistle Bend itself, and it had to do with a couple of things. Phase 6 was tendered slightly later than we anticipated, and that led to some delays for our contractors. The delay was due to — in our development agreement with the City of Whitehorse, there were some late changes that they wanted to see in the design work. That caused us to pull back the timeline somewhat. Then we started to hit weather. You will recall that we had that November snowstorm, and we weren't able to put in curbs — or the contractors weren't able to put in the concrete and things like that. That caused a delay. That was \$5.4 million of the lapse — so the bulk of that lapse.

The member, during Question Period when he was asking about it, said that he was concerned that we weren't getting that money spent. Well, we are getting that money spent this year, and so it is happening. As well, I think it's worth noting that, even with that lapse, our total spend was \$19.3 million.

I looked back over the years — 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 — to see how the Yukon Party did in land development. Over those years, I see that they have a total — the three years combined — of \$11.3 million. That's compared to the \$19.3 million that we got out last year. Yes, there were lapses, but the main story, I think, is that we're investing heavily in land development.

With respect to infrastructure, our total budget for the year was \$75.5 million. We lapsed \$11.6 million. The total spend is just under \$64 million. Where was the bulk of that lapse? It was

really on transfer payment agreements. We've been working — you will know, Mr. Chair — to go to each community. In our conversations with municipalities, for example, and First Nations, we identify their priorities for infrastructure projects. If they ask us and if they want to take on that project, then we work with a transfer payment agreement to give those dollars to that government for them to take the project on. We think that's a great approach. The challenge for us is that sometimes our partners do lapse funds, and we had quite a bit of lapse last year with our partners. Kwanlin Dün First Nation, for example, lapsed \$3 million; Vuntut Gwitchin lapsed \$2.2 million; Selkirk First Nation, over two projects, lapsed \$1.9 million; and City of Whitehorse, over two projects, lapsed just under \$1 million, et cetera. It adds up. Those lapses add up to \$8.5 million. That is the bulk of the \$11.6 million overall that was lapsed.

Again, I ran a comparison. The member opposite is correct that we did lapse some dollars, but the main message that I want to get across — and just a shout-out to both the Land Development branch and the Infrastructure Development branch for how much they are investing in the territory and moving dollars. The total that the Infrastructure Development branch got out the door last year was \$63.9 million. That compares to approximately \$56 million that the Yukon Party did over their final three years. Again, over that one year, we are surpassing three years of investment in infrastructure. Overall, what I want to say is that we really are investing heavily in infrastructure around our communities.

There were a couple of questions that came up yesterday regarding the border. I felt that I had answered them here but, through the media, there were some questions. I am just going to read them into the record as well. This is about border enforcement. The contract in place with the Liard First Nation to provide information and flagging services south of Watson Lake on the Alaska Highway and at Junction 37 is for \$584,000 for five months — from November through to the end of March of 2021. To give an idea of a cost comparison, we contracted out flagging for the prior six months, May to October, at a cost of \$374,000. During that time, of course, we also had an average of nine full-time equivalents staffing those two border sites.

We are going to continue to monitor the number of incoming travellers by road and air, in close contact with the Liard First Nation, the Town of Watson Lake, and the Canada Border Services Agency. We will continue to inform travellers and enforce measures in place under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. We are considering a variety of options at the Yukon's southern border, including video cameras and random checkpoints. We will continue to review the situation to protect the health and safety of Yukoners. I am happy to answer any further questions.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I would like to thank the minister for his opening remarks and welcome the staff and deputy minister to the Chamber today.

We were just talking about the different aspects of this very unusual year, especially for the Department of Community Services, because of their involvement in the government's

pandemic response and front-line work — so I want to note our appreciation for all your hard work — and to the staff in the departments. I am particularly aware of the important role that the EMO has played throughout the pandemic and the leadership role that they may have assumed within the government.

Of course, today we will ask questions about the budget and the ongoing operations of the department and issues that a number of the communities have brought forward to us, but I am sure that it will come as no surprise that we have many questions on the pandemic and the government's response to it. I will ask some initial questions, and then we will pass it over to some of my colleagues and they will also have some questions.

When the COVID-19 virus was discovered and was spreading so quickly and the state of emergency was ordered by the Minister of Community Services, the unknowns were very many and the reaction time was, of course, very short — so, acknowledging that the decision-making processes were strained — but we do have questions about those decisions that were made — when they were made and by whom.

Let me begin prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Can the minister remind this House and those listening what the role of the department is with regard to emergency planning and, in particular, pandemic planning?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Emergencies are the responsibility of the Emergency Measures Organization. There are several things that we take as our responsibility. First of all, the overall plan for government — ensuring that we have continuity of services that are provided for the public. So, even in the lead-up before the Arctic Winter Games were cancelled, for example — as we started to see that COVID was not going to be contained overseas in China or other countries and we saw that it was starting to spread — then work was done to update the pandemic plan.

We have a responsibility for unincorporated communities, but we also work to support municipalities and First Nation governments in their pandemic plans, and we also want to coordinate. That coordination happens internal to government and external. On the internal side, it would be across departments to make sure that they are supported. I know that we took the previous pandemic plan and worked to redevelop it to get it more up to speed. I know that, for example, we had even fired up the Health Emergency Operations Centre long before we thought that COVID was actually going to arrive here in the territory. There was a concern that it could arrive in the territory, so the first centre that we got operating was the Health Emergency Operations Centre. That centre works predominantly out of Health and Social Services, but it is supported by the Emergency Measures Organization, the EMO, and ultimately, then, is coordinated by the Emergency Coordination Centre, which then fired up afterward.

What else can I say? The broad goal of the EMO is to make sure that plans are in place to support government to provide the services for the public to keep them safe. That's the broad goal.

Overall, the other side that we fire up is around communications and how we get talking within each of those branches and making sure that we're informing the public. Then finally, we also liaise with the federal government to make sure that — that's probably on a minister-by-minister basis across all of us, but my role would have me talking with Minister Blair about Canada's borders and emergency response.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Which department is responsible for ensuring that PPE, or personal protection equipment, is stockpiled within various locations throughout Yukon?

I know the minister mentioned that he worked in coordinating the pandemic plan with municipalities and First Nations. Can the minister please explain the overarching plan for emergency preparedness with them in this regard?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Under the Emergency Coordination Centre, under the plan, there is a subgroup that deals with critical infrastructure. Personal protective equipment, PPE, is considered part of that critical infrastructure. At the highest level, it's the Emergency Coordination Centre. However, Canada worked through the Public Health Agency of Canada to make sure that they were coordinating how the PPE was flowing to each province and territory. They wanted to streamline it down to one single conduit, so we made the choice for the lead — because most of this PPE is dealing with health — to coordinate that through the Health Emergency Operations Centre and in particular through the hospital. That was the main point of coordination into the territory. Then, through the Health Emergency Operations Centre and the Emergency Coordination Centre, it is redistributed out to communities to make sure that we were getting that PPE around the territory to all of the community nursing stations and to the hospitals and also in support of other governments.

That, and how we work with municipalities, is all coordinated under the *Yukon Government Emergency Coordination Plan*. Part of what I think the other question was from the member opposite was about how we work with other local governments — municipal and First Nations. On top of working to keep our services going in order to make sure that residents were safe, we worked very quickly to try to engage and inform our communities and to support them throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, so we created a community outreach team. They have been in place since March with two groups in support of them — one was the Community Affairs branch, which is part of Community Services, and another was the Aboriginal Relations branch, which is part of Executive Council Office — to assist both municipalities and First Nations by providing information, answering questions, and supporting citizens in their communities throughout the Yukon. This team also coordinates with industry and other government departments to try to get information into those communities to make sure — they are sort of a go-to team. If there is information that is needed, they will go out and find it from wherever they need to get it back to them.

I recall that, when we started, in the first week, there were — I have to remember. I am not sure about the first week, but

within the first couple of weeks we were at three meetings a week. We might have been doing them right after each of the livestreams, or before. There were so many meetings. I just have to say that, at first, we had, at minimum, three meetings a week. Later on, maybe a month in, we went down to two, and maybe a couple of months in — once things got, sort of, mostly worked out — we went to one meeting a week, but we would bump it up whenever there was a specific issue that was raised. Sometimes there would be specific concerns or questions and we would do an additional meeting on top of those, so that was how we coordinated with those other orders of government.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I thank the minister. So, all of the PPE that was rolled out to all the communities — and I think I heard him say that everyone had adequate supplies and provisions — PPE and other supplies — for the pandemic. Was there adequate training to go along with all of the supplies that were arriving on doorsteps, and who was giving that training?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I didn't say that there were adequate supplies. I do think that there was adequate supply, but there were a lot of questions at first from communities about the protocols around how that PPE should be used — for example, N95 masks. If you are using them as per the protocols that we had established, everything was great. If you were, on the other hand, asking everyone to use one every day, then, no, you were running out. I think that there was a significant supply in the territory and it was what we believed to be enough to keep us all safe, but there was a learning curve as well as we went through.

There was a range of training that happened. I know that there was training — for example, some of our community nurses were doing training within the communities. We had EMS doing training for EMS staff across the territory, so it really depended on which group we were dealing with, but there was not just training — and I even recall here in the Legislature, back before we adjourned, maybe on that last day — we were answering a question about the protocols for keeping our teams safe. I indicated that, yes, we indeed did have protocols around COVID-19 and, in fact, we had, at that point, already updated them — I think that it was seven times.

So, throughout the pandemic, we continue to update the protocols as the science changes, as the epidemiology changes, as the phases change in which we are in, and the criteria in order to keep the public safe. I would say that training is still ongoing because the pandemic is not a stationary thing. It's not a "one and done" — it's an evolving thing. We continue to evolve our training as needed to accommodate those improvements and issues.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Can the minister tell us what role the federal government plays in this type of preparation along with the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The federal government's role was multifaceted. The Premier, for example, spoke with the Prime Minister and met with other premiers to talk about broad strokes. I know that I met with several counterparts. I've already mentioned Minister Blair and folks who deal with emergencies. We met often. Each department met with counterparts nationally.

Now, we're doing that for a range of reasons. One is to keep lines of communication open so that we're all sharing what's going on in each of our jurisdictions and so that we can hear from other jurisdictions and can understand where there are critical pressures and where there are solutions that are being used and found to be successful. We were working pretty closely with our counterparts, not just federal but across all jurisdictions.

I hear Dr. Hanley talk about that. For example, there is a network of the chief medical officers of health. They meet to discuss, and they have teams that are pulled together to address specific issues and look at them from a range of perspectives.

Those meetings were similar in the sense that, in the early days of the pandemic, we would have sometimes a couple or a few a week and then later on it went down to fewer. Now, typically, it's more one a month.

We've also had one-on-one meetings, for example, with Minister Blair because we would have very specific questions and concerns about our Alaska-Yukon borders and how we can coordinate with them to make sure that we're keeping Yukoners safe. For example, Americans were in transit, either south to north or north to south. For example, we met with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the City of Dawson to discuss the Top of the World Highway and that border crossing. Based on the input that we got from the community of Dawson, from both orders of government, we made the recommendation back to Canada not to open that border crossing because we didn't want to open up a second route through the Yukon for Alaskans or Americans in transit to or from Alaska. Those are examples of how we coordinated with the federal government.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I would like to now turn to the early days during the pandemic. Can the minister discuss how government's response evolved from observation to action and ultimately to your first declaration of the state of emergency?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have a full spreadsheet that I kept at the time about significant milestones. I'll highlight a few of those. I'm happy always to go deeper as members wish.

We cancelled the Arctic Winter Games — I believe it was on March 7. We got a presentation from the chief medical officer of health, or the acting chief medical officer of health, who came in and explained that, because there had been a community transmission in Canada, it changed everything for us. We never thought, even at that point when the chief medical officer of health was presenting to us — her description was that we didn't anticipate getting COVID here, but that we would need to isolate a team — if there was one athlete on a team who got something like a cough, we would need to isolate that whole team and their chaperones. Suddenly you realize that, well, we could maybe handle one team — two teams.

As soon as you got more than that, it was just going to be overwhelming. We didn't think that COVID was coming here at that point. We cancelled the games on March 7 and, within a week, things had changed. I think that the Legislature reconvened on March 9, but it was early in there. At that point, we still didn't know, but we started putting precautions in place. I remember having very early meetings with the chief medical officer of health, Health and Social Services, the Health

Emergency Operations Centre folks, and our own Emergency Coordination Centre folks to just begin talking about what we would need to do if this did become a pandemic here in the territory.

The state of emergency got declared. I want to clarify for this House that it was not me who declared the state of emergency. That is an order-in-council. That comes from Cabinet. That is where the decision for a state of emergency comes from. Once a state of emergency is declared, then I have the authority to put in place ministerial orders.

Again, I will say in this House that I am happy to answer any questions about them. All of them were there to protect the health and safety of Yukoners and to make sure that our society functioned as best it could in the face of a pandemic. I have the authority to put those in place, but I also had the opportunity to speak to Cabinet and get their direction on each of them.

That was the lead-up to March 27 when the first state of emergency was called. Even between the Arctic Winter Games and the state of emergency, we had the Health Emergency Operations Centre up, and we also had Dr. Hanley, or the chief medical officer of health, declaring a public health emergency. That allowed for certain rules to be put in place, so it sequenced pretty quickly between when we first understood that COVID might be coming here to when we ended up with the state of emergency.

By the way, I will just say for everyone, out of interest's sake, that after the games were cancelled and the Arctic Winter Games made the choice to refund those people who had purchased tickets, the Arctic Winter Games got a note back from one of those people asking for a refund who said, "Good thing that you cancelled the games because the person who was coming turned out to have COVID." I won't say from where, but they turned out to have COVID, from outside of the Yukon, and they would have been here and would have discovered it right in the middle of the games — when the games were scheduled.

Overall, everything leading up to the state of emergency was to make sure that we were prepping and, from the state of emergency, it was to support immediate measures. I have said in this Legislature that the three main things that the state of emergency got for us, and still gets for us today, are: isolation requirements, border controls, and enforcement. Those three things are there under the authority of that state of emergency. The whole notion is to support immediate measures in support of a public health response, and it communicated to the Yukon the seriousness of what was coming and what we still see here today.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** When the initial lockdown occurred, can the minister explain how various professions, occupations, and workplaces were identified to be shut down or not shut down? Was that something done by Community Services, the chief medical officer of health, or some other department?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I want to describe it in two ways, Mr. Chair. First of all, all of the departments — and those calls that I was talking about with municipalities and First Nations — that conversation was happening all along to try to provide feedback about where there were critical government services

being provided — or critical services being provided across the territory — and where there were concerns identified, but it was the chief medical officer of health's role to talk about the health risks. In my conversations with him — the way he identified it — it was really about the safety of citizens and whether you could maintain safety. We knew right away, even back when the Arctic Winter Games were being cancelled and it was being explained to us — and still, at that point, said it was unlikely that COVID even comes to the Yukon. But they referred to it as “shoe-leather medicine” — meaning that it is not a bunch of technology. It's about washing hands, keeping one caribou apart, making sure to wear a mask if you're going to be too close, being conscious of not congregating, and keeping our community safe by getting it down to essential travel. That's how they described it to me. It was just about practices that we would all need to take as the public.

In terms of which businesses, it was based on the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. It depends on whether it's before the state of emergency or after, because some of those — and I would have to go back and check the historic record, but the first orders were brought forward through the public health emergency as declared by Dr. Hanley. Afterward, we moved to the state of emergency, which allowed for the broader rules around border control and isolation requirements.

I just want to be careful with this term “lockdown”. There were businesses to which we said, “You need to close.” But the territory did continue. For example, yes, we closed schools, and, yes, we closed restaurants, but we kept grocery stores open. It was never a lockdown as in there was nothing happening. I would categorize it more as restrictions where, at first when we had more uncertainty and significant concerns about the risk, those restrictions were stricter. As we moved through phases and were able to establish those protocols to keep Yukoners safe, we were able to relax those restrictions

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Can the minister tell us how the department interacted with the federal departments once the Yukon state of emergency was declared?

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Not a problem. Can the minister tell us how the department interacted with our federal counterpart once the Yukon state of emergency was declared?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Again, we had regular federal, provincial, and territorial calls on public emergency but also, in my case, infrastructure — there was a range of calls that we had. I know that ministers of health had regular calls. I know that ministers of tourism had calls, ministers of natural resources and energy, mines and resources had calls. Each one of our groups would have calls. We also would have specific direct calls, as I have already said.

Another thing I can relay is that I also spoke with neighbouring counterparts. For example, there were times when I called counterparts in British Columbia. For example, when we were first putting in place border controls, we didn't want to isolate Atlin or Lower Post. We called Minister Farnworth from British Columbia and talked about trying to support his communities in BC because we just felt that this

made better sense. These are examples of how we worked together with our counterparts across the country.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** We might return to that topic later, but I would like to now turn to travel limitations and the minister's role in self-isolation enforcement.

What are the roles of the different departments with regard to enforcement of travel restrictions — in particular, the requirement that people self-isolate when arriving from outside of the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Under the Emergency Coordination Centre, we brought together staff who have the ability to deal with enforcement from a range of backgrounds. I think that I have said here in the House that we had natural resources officers, we had conservation officers, we had bylaw officers, and we had liquor inspectors. So, we brought all of those officers — I won't say “together” — but depending on where they were dispatched, they would work under what I would call the “*Civil Emergency Measures Act* enforcement team”. We also coordinated, for example, with the RCMP. If there was something that we were concerned about, we could refer to the RCMP. At the same time, the Canada Border Services Agency would also refer things to the RCMP. The way in which we worked was dominantly through education. So, even though we had enforcement, the main role was to educate the public and to help them to do the right thing.

We put in place, for example, a call centre with a 1-800 number so that if people had concerns they could call the call centre. It is still in effect. We put in place an e-mail line, a COVID-19 enforcement e-mail, and a COVID-19 information e-mail. Those e-mails then fed back. We also put in an online form for people if they had any concerns.

Since the first declaration of the state of emergency to today, we have had roughly 1,000 concerns raised with us across that time. Looking back at that roughly 1,000, somewhere — 83, 84, or 85 percent of those were concerns that were raised but were not actually something that was happening that was incorrect or wrong. The education that was needed there was for the person who was raising this question or concern. What we did was reach back out to help inform them and to help them to understand what the rules were and why those rules were there. That dealt with, you know, 83 out of 100 concerns and calls, or 830 out of 1,000.

In the remainder, there was something that was going wrong and, again, our main role was just to find the issue that was of concern and to correct it through education if it was obvious that the people just didn't have a clear understanding. Most of those were corrected.

To date, we've handed out 24 sanctions for failure to self-isolate or failure to transit properly or breaking either the self-isolation or the border control rules. Those tickets were handed out — it depends; it could be charges or tickets — from our side. Of course, the Canada Border Services Agency has also issued charges. Together, those represent a small portion — roughly two percent — of the overall numbers of complaints that we've had.

We knew that it was going to be important to educate the public to make sure that they would — because, in order to keep

the public safe, we all need to work together to do that. That's, again, coming back to all of those practices that we've continued to foster and encourage throughout the pandemic.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Can the minister elaborate and tell us who made the decision on which jurisdictions to allow travel from and which not to?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** If what we're referring to here are the ministerial orders, then it is my responsibility or my signature for those ministerial orders. But at all times we sought the recommendation of the chief medical officer of health. As I stated here earlier in the Legislature, for each ministerial order that I signed, I first turned to Cabinet to seek their direction, as I said, based on the advice of the chief medical officer of health, who considers a range of factors in providing that advice to us, based on the epidemiology.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** What is the process for someone to apply for an alternative self-isolation plan?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There is an application that can be found online. It can be for a business or an individual. They submit that application suggesting that they would like to do something that is still self-isolation and that they believe can be done safely. They apply to me. Again, at all times, I turn to the chief medical officer of health's office to ask for their advice on whether the plan that is being proposed is safe.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** To follow up, can the minister confirm how many alternative self-isolation plans he has approved during this time?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** To date, Mr. Chair, I believe that the number is just over 400. I should clarify that this is the number who have applied. I would have to look back to see roughly how many have been approved and how many have been denied. We have had approximately 400 applications to date.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Of those 400, I'm looking for a number — although the minister can't verify how many he has actually signed. Can the minister provide a breakdown of how many were from Alberta or from the US, or were they returning Yukoners? What other jurisdictions would these people be coming into the Yukon from? Where would they be coming from?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The first thing I want to say is that typically Yukoners are not applying for alternative self-isolation because they're just carrying out their self-isolation as necessary when they return. It's not typical for them to apply. Second of all, it's not typical for Americans to apply because it is a different situation for them. They would be talking to the federal government to decide whether or not they could come into Canada, and they would have isolation requirements through the federal laws — the *Quarantine Act*, I believe.

If there was an American who was already resident in Canada, they might have applied, but we would have thought of them as a resident of that other place. That's possible, I suppose.

Let me give a few numbers just to help form the picture for the member opposite. We've had, for example, about 160 applications from Alberta, about 70 from Ontario, and about 20 from Québec. I asked to get a number for how many have been

denied. The number that I have is 34, so that would leave about 370 applications that were approved.

Mr. Chair, if I can just add — typically, I write a letter back to each of those applicants. So, I don't just write a letter back to those applicants who are approved; I write a letter denying and sign that for those who are denied. For each one who applies, there's typically a letter in response.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Of all those alternative self-isolation plans, how many were coming to the Yukon for work? How many were government-related duties that they were coming into the Yukon for?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We haven't been keeping running total stats on that. What it would take is asking folks to go back through and re-read each one, but I can give a bit of a sense for the member opposite.

First of all, you would also need to decide — let's say there's a piece of infrastructure that you're building, but it's being done by a contractor and that contractor has now applied for some alternative self-isolation. Is that government or is that not government? If it's a municipal government that's doing the project, is that government or not government? So, there are a few challenges around the question as posed, but I would say that the lion's share is not government; they are just people who are applying to us.

So, just the lion's share I don't believe are government. Even if we counted all of the infrastructure projects that relate to a government project, still I believe that the number — there were many more which are not government.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I would like to now turn to border controls. Yesterday, when you gave your ministerial statement on border controls, I asked the minister in my reply about controls at the Watson Lake border after business hours, and the minister stated that they had put in place measures for after-hours, which included video cameras and CEMA enforcement officers conducting random checkpoints. Could the minister elaborate a bit more on these measures and how they are doing?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Just moving back to the last question, the department has shared with me that the vast majority of the alternative self-isolation applications are just general citizens; it is not work-related at all, or those that are work-related are dominantly private sector workers — for example, mining or construction. I could talk about the individuals who come up — around what they are looking for. But the vast majority — what the department has let me know — are not government.

Yesterday in the House, what I said — I apologize if my language wasn't clear enough — was that we were considering how to work to protect — I am now quoting from Hansard, the Blues — "... to consider after-hours — for example, video cameras and CEMA enforcement officers coming forward to do random checkpoints in the evenings."

Those things are not in place at this time. We are monitoring the situation.

When I first stood up in my initial remarks, I also tried to very expressly state that these are not postures or activities that are in place at this point, but we are looking at them as a way to ensure that there are no concerns with evening transit.



I will say, as I did yesterday, that all those who are coming into the territory from outside of the travel bubble are required to complete a declaration.

**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 before the Committee is Vote 51, Department of Community Services.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Can the minister — I'm still on border controls — outline the government's approach to the border control checkpoints, the location of these stops, and the cost of each?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I don't have a breakdown of individual borders. What I did say earlier today was \$374,000 for flagging, but that is a small thing. That is a piece of the overall puzzle. Where we chose to put in the borders, of course, was wherever we had people arriving from outside of the territory — not counting the international borders because those are dealt with by the Canada Border Services Agency. Our number is a rollup of all of that. Currently, in the supplementary, I think that it is \$2.2 million for that work.

I will just share that we used staff — and I have already mentioned this — from Energy, Mines and Resources natural resources officers; we used conservation officers from the Department of Environment; we used Tourism and Culture folks to deal with information at some of our stops; and we used the Liquor Corporation. Those departments will deal with the staffing costs for their staff, as they were additional. So, we are still working to pull all those numbers together to roll it up to be able to share it across — that this cost that amount of money.

So, I have the overall dollars for Community Services — \$2.2 million.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The people who were staffing the checkpoints, as you just said, were from various departments across government. Were they volunteers, or were they directed by their departments to attend to these positions? Was any type of training provided to these employees? Another addition to that is: What authority were they given at these checkpoints?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Just to clarify on my previous response about the \$2.2 million, if the members are looking at the supplementary, the list there for the border control is for \$2.82 million, but that includes the Emergency Coordination Centre, which is roughly \$600,000. That line item is approximately \$600,000 for the Emergency Coordination Centre and \$2.2 million for the border control activities — again, not counting the staffing that comes from other departments.

It is worth noting, Mr. Chair, that the role of the people at the borders is typically information. It is not typically enforcement, but still, everyone is trained. There was training on health and safety, of course — on how to keep everything safe. There was training, for example, on de-escalation.

There is training on the rules, because those rules were changing over time about where the travel bubble was or was not and the declarations, et cetera. Those things changed over time, so that always had to be relayed to the folks on the front line at the borders. Today, we are in Watson Lake training with Liard First Nation — doing that same level of training again to get their teams up to speed on the issues.

Enforcement is dealt with more by the CEMA enforcement team, which isn't necessarily located at the border. We have some CEMA officers around the territory and some here in Whitehorse — a specific unit — who do a lot of that follow-up. I was talking about when those complaints or those concerns are raised.

The member asked where the authority lies for that. Well, under the declaration of a state of emergency — and I stated this earlier — under one of the specific ministerial orders, that's where the authority comes for that enforcement.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The minister has discussed the agreement that his department has with Liard First Nation for the border checkpoint and just mentioned that training is happening today. Can the minister elaborate on other First Nations or if it's providing funding for checkpoints? It was noticed this summer that both Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had their checkpoints going into their communities for fear of spread in small, rural Yukon. Did the department support these checkpoints financially or otherwise?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We did not support those checkpoints financially. They're not at our borders with other jurisdictions. We did work with those checkpoints to help them be good information checkpoints. We did support them in the sense that we went to those communities, talked with them, and provided them information.

We also had an information-sharing agreement where we would take our information that we had about, for example, people going to self-isolate, and as long as the partner government would sign an agreement to maintain the individual confidentiality of that information, we then would share it with them, government to government. That, for example, was established with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and the Teslin Tlingit Council. That opportunity was made available to First Nations as they wished, or we worked with them directly.

I would say that we did support our communities, including both municipal and First Nation governments, but we did not support checkpoints financially.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** That was a good clarification. Can the minister now clarify if, in their agreements, verbal or otherwise, these First Nations had the legal right to obstruct a public road? Did the department authorize these installations of checkpoints by blocking the public road?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** At all times, we were supporting our communities to take measures where those measures were around education and helping people to achieve compliance. We supported that wherever we could, so what I will say is that we spoke often with communities. We heard from them about concerns.

When checkpoints were initiated, we worked to support their endeavour to educate. That is what we worked with them

on. It certainly was never — as I understand it — about enforcement. As I said earlier, enforcement — even at our own borders — it is dominantly about information, about education. It is not about enforcement. Enforcement is managed through our *Civil Emergency Measures Act* enforcement team.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I would like to thank the minister and the staff who are here today, and I will turn it over to my colleague from the Third Party at this time.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister and, of course, his officials who are here.

Just a heads-up — I will be bouncing all over the place, and I will try to do it as coherently as possible. I am going to start with waste and waste management. So, waste management in communities and transfer stations continues to be an issue. I won't get into it right now, but we are going to talk about Johnsons Crossing.

Are there tipping fees in all communities? Have they been instituted? Are there weigh scales? Is there fencing? Is there staff? Is there a way to stop people from going in? I will just start there.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I know that this is a topic near and dear to the member opposite's heart, near and dear to mine, and also near and dear to the Minister of Environment's heart.

The plan was always to begin with charges at those solid-waste sites near Whitehorse. That included Marsh Lake, Tagish, Carcross, Mount Lorne, and Deep Creek. Then the plan was, for next spring, to get to the regionalized sites as set out in the *Yukon Solid Waste Action Plan*, including closing down some of those very small sites in order to gain efficiency.

So, most of those sites — all the ones that I've just listed — and most municipalities — in fact, I think all — have fencing. Are they all gated? Not necessarily — I'll have to check on that. Do they all have weigh scales? No, not yet. So, that is a work in progress.

I should note that, as we work through questions of liability and agreements with municipalities, there still are many hurdles to overcome. I don't want to paint a picture like it's all clear sailing; there's a lot of work that has been going on and needs to go on. Some of that work has been challenged and compromised by COVID-19. When COVID-19 hit, a lot of our waste facilities had challenges — for example, with free stores and things like that.

It has been a lot of work and made difficult by COVID-19, so I'm not sure today of the timelines, but I am sure of the intention.

**Ms. White:** When the tipping fees are collected, where do they go?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Tipping fees that are now collected at the five sites that I listed off go to general revenue.

**Ms. White:** The minister sent a letter to folks who were concerned about the Johnsons Crossing transfer station. The one that I have here is dated November 9, and it's in response to the initial communication that started in February of this year and followed up with meetings in the summer and in ongoing communication.

One of the concerns of the folks at the Johnsons Crossing transfer facility catchment area is that they wanted to know how

many residents the government identified in that catchment area — so if I could have that number.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Let's talk about Johnsons Crossing. I heard the Member for Kluane put forward a motion today about Silver City as well. What I can tell you is that every small facility where there is an existing small facility that we are suggesting should close would wish for that facility to stay open. That's pretty clear.

I will get to the specific answer for the member about the numbers.

Those small facilities are part of this overall plan to create a regional system — which is what has happened generally across the country — because we recognize that the economy of scale is poor where you have a lot of small facilities and the liability is high. If you can concentrate that, you can come away with a more efficient system. Of course, that will mean that some people who used to have a solid-waste facility next to them no longer have that.

The specific question that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King asked was about the number we used. I'll have to look back in the report, but there is a page on the back of the report where it lists off all of those stats that are in there. I think they used an estimate — taking the Bureau of Statistics numbers that they had, but just effectively doubling it. I think the number that was used was around 50. I'll have to confirm that, and maybe the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin can let me know if I got that wrong, but that's roughly the number I think that we were using. I think that the community felt that they had a lot more residents. That's fair; I understand that. But the challenge is that sometimes they're counting seasonal residents. But if we count seasonal residents, then I need to count seasonal residents everywhere and change the numbers accordingly.

We ran the math in a couple of ways, and even if the number was double that, it still showed that this was one of the facilities that was at the small end and not terribly cost-effective to keep running, and so it was better that we go with a regional choice than with Johnsons Crossing. The answer, I think, for the number — and I will review the solid-waste plan, but I believe it is 50.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that number. One of the challenges is that, in that entire process with the folks out at Johnsons Crossing — and I appreciate that you're talking about seasonal and non-seasonal — there were concerns that the numbers that government was using were inaccurate — not including seasonal.

One of the highlights that was made there was that, no matter which direction you chose to go in — whether you chose to go to Teslin or whether you chose to go toward Marsh Lake — you were looking at over a 125-kilometre round trip to get to the nearest facility, and so they had concerns. If you were right there on the highway and you had to go 64 kilometres in one direction or 64 kilometres in the other direction, what was going to happen with people who were just going to put waste in the woods? What was going to happen about attractants, bears, and all those issues?

I think that when we look at other places and other locations, I guess it comes down to how far — is there a

distance, for example, that we want to have between a group or settlement of people? Obviously, more than 10 but less than 1,000 — and where we find that balance in there. The reason that I say this is because, if you are looking at a 125-kilometre round trip and we talk about how we want to do the right thing for the environment, which means not putting waste in the woods, and we want to make sure that we are not driving unnecessarily and all these things — how do we make that decision? This is an ongoing issue.

One of the questions that I have is: What is the response about the concerns about bear attractants or the 125 kilometres or an aging population? These are people who pay taxes. They are part of the reason why the highway is kept open. They are an important part of the community. What is the answer with those concerns? If you live in a rural place, you pay for that privilege, and now you are being told that there is a 125-kilometre round trip to take your garbage to town. How do you address those concerns?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Chair, these are really valid concerns. Let me just start there.

I live in a rural community. I don't live right next to a landfill, but I am closer than 120 kilometres round trip, although I tend to think of it as a one-way trip, but that's fine. I am 20 or 25 kilometres from the solid-waste facility. Heck, as Yukoners, we all call it "the dump".

So, what do I do? Well, what I do is I work to manage stuff that's not going to attract wildlife, like bears. For example, any food waste, I stick in the freezer until I am ready to head into town. When I am going to town, whenever that trip is — let's say I'm going for groceries or whatever — on the way, I take my garbage. That is how I manage it.

I am not saying that this is a perfect solution for all folks, but I am saying that, as a territory, we are looking to make our solid-waste system, overall, more sustainable, and it's not right now. This is an important step in that. I am just, flat out, trying to say that regionalization was one of the big recommendations that came out of this Solid Waste Advisory Committee, which is made up of communities and government folks — but folks who, I think, really know their stuff around solid waste and sustainability.

So, the idea is that we need to not have a lot of landfills situated every place, but we need to concentrate them. Once that recommendation was adopted, then you are down into the hard choices about where they would go. These four facilities that we are recommending or that we are intending to close — that recommendation comes from the fact that they are not as heavily utilized as the rest. That is how the line got drawn. I have had conversations regarding every one of those four facilities — hard choices, for sure.

What I said directly to the wonderful folks at Johnsons Crossing — they posed questions. They invited members of the department and me out to talk to them a couple of times. Actually, I went three times, although I missed a meeting. There was some miscommunication, but I just wanted to show my sincerity to get there and to talk to them in person. There was even one meeting that we held during COVID time, with full precautions to try to make sure that it was safe for

everybody. That was all about trying to respect their perspectives and concerns. I said to them that I would take their concerns and rerun the numbers and consider whether it made sense; and in the end, I am saying that it does not. I am saying that respectfully because I appreciate that there are still concerns.

But as Yukoners, we do have to figure out how to deal with attractants, how to deal with landfills that we live next to and landfills that we don't live next to. It is a challenge, but that is part of the reality of living here.

I also want to say that I don't believe for a second that our tax dollars pay for the full cost of solid waste here in the territory. For example, the charges that are there in Deep Creek or in Marsh Lake today are meant to be level with the nearby community of Whitehorse. But in reality, the cost of running those solid-waste facilities is several times higher than those fees. The fees are not paying for that solid-waste collection. What we're trying to do is say that every Yukoner should pay roughly the same amount and that we all do the heavy lifting together.

With respect to people who are dumping — don't dump. It's illegal. Please don't do it. It's awful, it's lousy — I'll refrain from saying a word that would be unparliamentary. What we were doing, as well, is to increase the fines and to increase our ability to try to catch those folks who are doing that, but I just say to those folks: Stop doing that. That's not a good thing.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the minister's personal ways in which he deals with his waste and compost, et cetera. The 25 kilometres from the facility on his way into town — possibly. But when you're in the middle of a place — for example, Johnsons Crossing — or let's look at Keno. Keno is an example.

I had the pleasure of going down again this summer and hanging out in the community. I recently had a conference call with the community, which is pretty fascinating because you can have a conference call with the entire community, which is very fun. But one of the things that they highlighted was the concern of their transfer station being closed.

Driving to Keno in the winter — it's an adventure, and it's an adventure that the people in Keno will shop really a lot for to try to avoid, which then means that they're storing garbage outside around their properties for an extended period of time. Then one would hope that you have a pickup truck in which you could then take months' worth of garbage, recycling, and stuff in with you to the transfer facility.

I understand the minister's point about transfer facilities and the cost. But when the minister said that the tipping fees don't cover the cost, well, Yukon doesn't cover her cost in Canada. The decision is that, well, it's important to have us here because it's important that we have a presence in the north and Alaska can't just amalgamate us — so you make those decisions.

I don't think that the minister is suggesting that people move in from rural Yukon so that they're closer to transfer facilities, but when you're looking at Keno, you have to drive to Mayo and back to get to the nearest facility. That is a bit of a haul, and it's a haul for Johnsons Crossing.

I am just going to put it out there that this is going to be an issue for whoever is in the position of Community Services. Who knew that you could spend so much time talking about waste, but we could. We could spend hours talking about it, Mr. Chair, and I don't even think we could solve the problem. We can't really, in the hours that we have.

At the beginning of the pandemic after both of the recyclers in Whitehorse closed down — both P&M and Raven Recycling closed down — to protect their staff, which, of course, I don't disagree with — one of the questions that I sent to the minister was: What is the Yukon government doing about recycling right now? I was told, well, we're not. That is a concern to me. The Yukon government has a lot of yards. They have government property that is fenced in. I wanted to know if the minister has an idea of how much waste, which was really recycling, went to our facilities when there was a closure of the recycling.

To me, Yukon has been in training since I was in school to be good recyclers. I know that people were trying to store it as long as possible and then hit a tipping point. My neighbour actually asked me one time when I was heading to the transfer facility if I could take his recycling. I said, "Oh, heck no, because when someone takes a picture of me putting your recycling in the garbage, I am going to have to talk about it and I am going to have to answer to it, so you have to deal with that." I want to know what kind of diversion we lost when the recyclers were closed down.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will work to try to see if we have a number. I am checking with the department right now to see if there is an estimate. It will be an estimate at best. It was a real mix out there with a lot of Yukoners working to do their best to store their recycling. I think the member opposite is right.

I am so thankful that we have our recyclers here in town. I sure missed them when they were not open.

I will also say that I have been to Keno. I love that community. With each of the communities that we have been talking with — talking about closing it down — what we have said to them is: "Hey, let's work with you to try to find solutions that will make sense."

I know that they would like us to please keep going. I have said to them — including, I think, the last time that I was physically in Keno — I think the Premier was there with me — and we talked it through and just explained that this was about trying to do it all together as a territory. I know that road, especially in the winter, can be rough, but I also know that people make the trip now and then. They often do go for groceries now and then and that is the time, right. Or, we could, through maybe a commercial operator, get them a bin, or they could get a bin where things are locked up. We had conversations with them about what solutions might work for them, so I don't want to say, "This is the solution that will work for you," but we are there trying to say, "Can we help to find a solution to deal with this new reality?"

The other thing I will say is that I know that we — it is here in our supplementary budget — gave an additional \$78,000 to support the adaptation of recycling facilities to make sure that

they were safe for COVID-19, so we did work with them to try to get them back up and open as quickly as possible.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

Just on the lines of Keno, while we're here. I heard a story from Keno — so, they have no fire protection right now, because they have volunteers — they do have volunteers, but what they are missing is a fire truck. I was told that Community Services picked up their fire truck and was going to take it in for repairs and it never came back.

I was wondering if the minister could fill in the blanks of the story of the Keno fire truck.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** As I give this story — again, all love to Keno. If we are going to give people a piece of equipment like a fire truck, they actually have to be trained to use it. That is first and foremost — okay? We can't give people equipment that they could get hurt with; that is just not possible for us. So, we did go to Keno. Like the member opposite has said, at a meeting in Keno, you can have 80 percent or 90 percent of the community out for a meeting — and just someone was off doing groceries or something like some other — that's who's not there. We said, "Look, we need volunteers. If we get volunteers, we can get you equipment." We got a great group of folks signing up and then it didn't stick. So, we followed up with them. The Fire Marshal's Office reached out — our community advisor reached out, but it didn't materialize. So, we continue to work — as of late this summer, we still hadn't received any completed registration packages for those volunteers. We need those volunteers. Again, all love to Keno, but in order for us to get them equipment for people to operate safely and be trained for, then we need those volunteers.

**Ms. White:** What kind of outreach does the Department Community Services do to make sure that those applications get submitted?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** A lot is what I'll say. We have community advisors for each of our communities. I've talked directly with our community advisor who works with — so, there are sort of two fronts that we work on — the Fire Marshal's Office and also the direct community advisor, the liaison. I know that our community advisor for Keno has been very proactive in trying to support the community in a variety of ways — not just this way; there is a suite of ways that we're working to support the community. I find it pretty proactive whenever I follow up to check in on how that work is going.

**Ms. White:** Thank you for that answer. I know that, in my conversation with the community, they said in the past that the mining company — so in this case, Alexco had been involved in some of those safety measures. A great point was made here to my right from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. He said, "Well, has Community Services approached Alexco about some of these issues?" — fire protection, waste hauling, and similar things.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The answer is yes, we have talked with Alexco. I thank them for their support. I haven't personally talked with them for a little while now, but there are ways that Alexco has in the past — I don't want to speak for them today, but I do think that they have done their best to support the community, but there are also the ongoing challenges of a small

community and some of the ongoing tensions that can exist in our smaller communities. But Alexco is a potential resource and we have spoken with them and we are happy to work with them.

We have also spoken with our Wildland Fire Management folks in the area around whether there are risks. You may recall that, not this past summer but the summer before, we had fires nearby. That is what prompted a lot of the interest from the community in trying to make sure that, if there was an interface fire, they would have equipment. That is what prompted a lot of the dialogue.

**Ms. White:** I guess this brings me to Pelly Crossing and their fire station. What is the status there of fire protection?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** It is a similar situation, though not exactly the same. With Pelly, we did get some volunteers, but we didn't get the critical mass of six. Again, we did meet with them. Recently, we met by Zoom as well to talk with them. We did send our deputy fire marshal to the community. We even talked about hosting a barbecue to try to solicit a few more volunteers. But that is a similar challenge.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

I don't think that the minister and I are on different pages when we both recognize the critical importance of having fire protection in communities. In Pelly Crossing right now, the Selkirk First Nation is doing an incredible job of building housing — right? I think there were eight units going up in the summer when I was there, and to know that the entire community is vulnerable — I asked what happens if there was a fire and they say, well, they just lose it; there's no recovering or saving the structure. I think that's too bad.

So, yesterday, Mr. Deputy Chair, I was having a conversation with the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation. I was talking about the recently announced Canada housing benefit. I wanted to talk specifically about the issue of mobile homes and mobile homes in parks because they pay pad rent. This is just quoting from the minister yesterday of Yukon Housing when she said, "... what I can say is that the rent-assist program is to provide for those clients who are on rental arrangements. I would certainly be happy to have that discussion with the minister responsible for the mobile homes."

So, here I am. I'm having a conversation with the minister who's responsible for the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. So, in a mobile home park, you pay for pad rent, which is rent. What I want to know is: Are there conversations happening right now between the Minister of Community Services and the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation to make sure that qualified people can apply to help defer the cost of their rent of their mobile homes?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yes, when this first got announced, this was one of the things that was flagged. My understanding from talking with the minister is that it is being looked at. I don't have an answer for the House today, but I do know that we are looking into it — can I say with a hopeful look? We're looking because we're hopeful that this rent will be supported through the program, but I don't have an answer today.

**Ms. White:** I hope that the minister would consider tabling a legislative return when that answer is found. I'll put out that there are hundreds of mobile homes in Whitehorse — hundreds — and sometimes people own the assets, but they are still paying their rent. Often it is a great place for a retired person because it is all on one floor. There is a whole bunch of reasons why parks are ideal, but pad rents continue to go up and the average now in the City of Whitehorse is \$500 a month. They're maybe not as affordable as people thought they were. When people say that it is an affordable place to live — its affordability has gone down since I was elected in 2011.

I want to talk a bit about allied health professionals. I am talking about the people who are critical in kind of making my life run. I am talking about massage therapists, I am talking about osteopaths, and I am talking about naturopaths. The reason why I am bringing them up is because, when there was a stop-work order for personal care, the entire allied health field was shut down, including chiropractors and physiotherapists — although they are under their own act.

Under the purview of the Department of Community Services is the *Health Professions Act*, and what I wanted to have a conversation with the minister about is — are we looking at identifying other allied health professionals? Currently, it has folks in here: it has physiotherapists, and it has registered psychiatric nurses and nurse practitioners — oh sorry, pharmacists regulations — but I believe that it can be expanded, because all of these people have professional bodies that they belong to. But when personal care — so, we were talking about hair studios and esthetics, for example — were mandated to close, all of allied health shut down. They worked very hard to show the differences between them and personal care. Is there an appetite to try to expand the designation under the *Health Professions Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** My answer is: In principle, yes. I know that, for example, we talk with various health professions that are not yet regulated under the act and wish to be or are interested. There is an identified need, but it's also true that — and we believe that the *Health Professions Act* is good in the sense that — because you can be more efficient when you put more there than if you have separate acts for individual professions; that's more complicated. I should at least acknowledge that there are challenges. We're a small jurisdiction with sometimes a handful of folks. Even in our largest ones — we don't have colleges here that other larger jurisdictions would have. As you try to provide the regulatory services, it can be challenging.

The answer is: Yes, in principle. I've spoken to several groups that are interested. Some of the groups that exist already under the *Health Professions Act* are looking for changes as well as their professions evolve over time.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I'm just going to urge that those conversations continue.

When we talk about the health of the human, there are a lot of different things. It's not just necessarily western medicine and it's not just doctors or nurses or nurse practitioners who can help us; there is a wide array of folks who have the schooling

and the education and belong to governing bodies outside of Yukon to get that support.

I'm just going to put this on the radar for the next time we're up, and I'm going to say the words "Carmacks arena".

With that, Mr. Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress.

**Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel):** It has been moved by Ms. White that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

#### **Chair's report**

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that the House do now adjourn.

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*

#### **The following legislative return was tabled November 17, 2020:**

34-3-45

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to Motion No. 297 re: including the Yukon Historical and Museums Association in tourism recovery planning — visitor exit survey results (McLean)



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 64

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, November 18, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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



**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, November 18, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Legislative Assembly to help me welcome a group of people who are truly transforming our economy and the Yukon with their hard work, dedication, and passion.

With us today is Samantha Hand, executive director of Skills Canada Yukon; Ziad Sahid, executive director of Tech Yukon; Lana Selbee, executive director of YuKonstruct Makerspace Society; Lauren Manekin Beille, manager, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Yukon University; and William Lechuga, ideation and business acceleration director.

Thank you for coming today.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of IncubateNorth

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government, the Yukon Party Official Opposition, and the Third Party, the Yukon New Democratic Party, to pay tribute to Yukon University's incubator accelerator launch. Back in 2019, a pilot incubation program ran with three Yukon start-ups: Proskida, Appendo, and Yukon Soaps Company.

Based on the success of this pilot program, Yukon University has now opened their doors through the innovation and entrepreneurship team. IncubateNorth, Canada's first regional incubator, will welcome northern entrepreneurs and innovators with a market-ready solution with a support structure to grow their business in Yukon and beyond. This program targets growth-stage entrepreneurs and innovators, especially those with a viable product and early-stage market acceptance who are looking to scale in the marketplace.

Start-ups based in Yukon that are looking for support to grow and scale up and high-potential small- and medium-sized Yukon businesses in their growth stages can benefit from a unique support approach to grow their activities and benefit Yukon's economy in their community.

IncubateNorth's applications are now open, with the first intake beginning on December 1, 2020. This program is for entrepreneurs and innovators who sit at the crossroads of growth and are looking to launch to market, expand to a new market, or become export-ready or investment-ready. This

program has incredible potential to generate new and needed jobs and is more important than ever as we move through a pandemic and support a diversified economy.

Incubator programs are an important tool in supporting entrepreneurship, and we recognize this. They encourage business development and can stimulate economic growth and diversification. The Department of Economic Development has been pleased to support this program from conception to pilot to launch, and we are very pleased to see the program come to life.

I encourage Yukon entrepreneurs to apply and I look forward to seeing the resulting successes. I would like to thank Yukon University and particularly the team at Innovation and Entrepreneurship for their efforts and hard work. Congratulations on the launch of the program.

*Applause*

### In recognition of Yukon Innovation Week and Canadian Innovation Week

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Yukon Innovation Week in celebration of all Yukon innovators, change-makers, and entrepreneurs. This year, Yukon Innovation Week runs from November 16 to 22.

Innovation has the capacity to drive positive change and improvements in the way that we do things. Our ability to create and innovate enables us to adapt to changes or obstacles and advance our community. A recent example is the curbside pickups that many of our local businesses now offer as they explore ways to adapt their businesses and to operate safely during the pandemic.

While Yukon is known for its rich history and natural beauty, it is our legacy of creativity and our promising future that I would like to acknowledge today. In the 1980s, Yukon innovator and entrepreneur Albert Charles Rock invented a device that aided his recovery while in hospital after a car accident. This device measured blood flow and muscle temperature, which were critical metrics to gauge his recovery. The device was so successful that Albert developed it further to become a line of computerized data loggers used in NASA space shuttles and Indy cars among other things. His products have had a profound impact on medical devices, aerospace, and racing and led to the formation of a multi-million-dollar company. In recent times, we have had local entrepreneurs and companies, such as Proskida, Proof Data Technology, DiscoVelo, Aurum Skincare, Appendo, Two Mile Asset Management, Grandma Treesaw's Yukon Bannock, The Yukon Soaps Company, and Filo Technologies, which are all forging ahead with product development and taking care of business.

Others, such as Joel Brennan, are hard at work behind the scenes to advance their concepts and helping to further elevate the territory's start-up reputation in the process. Mr. Speaker, Joel's SUP Stick land paddles innovation is edging closer to commercialization, and I look forward to seeing it in action.

Yukon Innovation Week helps to raise awareness of the north's innovation and entrepreneurial community. Yukon's

ecosystem, providers, and supporters, such as YuKonstruct, Yukon University's Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and TechYukon, are hosting a series of great events at NorthLight Innovation to promote wider discussions on innovation within the start-up community. These events include a range of networking and knowledge-sharing events, such as tech talks with local entrepreneurs, business advice sessions with experts, and podcasts. In addition, Yukoners will have a chance to participate in innovation through the kickoff of the 2021 Yukon Innovation Prize and the celebration of innovation awards and a weekend hackathon. Public health protocols will be in place for everyone's safety.

Mr. Speaker, just as the creators of the Internet could never have imagined the impact that their technology would have on humanity, we can never predict the next breakthrough with any certainty. I encourage all Yukon thinkers and dreamers to stay the course and see their concepts through. Your innovation can deliver jobs; it can grow our economy; it can make Yukon a better place for all and even change the world.

I want to thank the following local organizations and their teams for coordinating Yukon Innovation Week: Yukon University, Skills Canada Yukon, YuKonstruct, and TechYukon.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Canadian Innovation Week. It is amazing how far we've come in the world by applying knowledge and innovation to ideas to create new products, new ways of thinking, and new technologies.

Canadian innovation is something to be celebrated. We are fortunate to be home to some pretty brilliant minds and brilliant thinkers. Times are changing. Coding and other technology-related material has been injected into our school curriculums. Even kindergarten curriculums have evolved to include introduction to coding.

Many will remember growing up and building papier mâché volcanos in grade school. Today, kids are building robots and making apps. Innovation Week is going viral during the pandemic, as the minister said. What a brilliant way to bring people together to take part, share stories, learn new things, and celebrate innovation in Canada.

Think about all the ideas that came to life during this pandemic. This is innovation in action. Workplaces, schools, and businesses continue to be innovative in order to adapt to the ever-changing guidelines and recommendations to keep us safe, but also to keep life going.

This week, we recognize the innovative thinkers here at home who keep things going. Focus has shifted through the year from the normal to the new innovative normal. With new approaches, we see a number of positive things coming our way. Changes to fundraising approaches here at home for both the Festival of Trees and the Yukon T1D support network will see the town decked out in festive lights to see while raising money for some important causes. Change can be good and innovation can be better.

Thank you to all our bright minds and innovative thinkers. You have made things happen in a very challenging time. Keep thinking, keep innovating, and keep going.

*Applause*

**Ms. Hanson:** On behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party caucus, I'm pleased to join in paying tribute to Yukon Innovation Week. The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has created a new and challenging environment for us all. These unprecedented times make us realize that, perhaps as never before, we as a community both need and celebrate those whose ingenuity, creativity, and persistence find opportunity in uncertainty.

Innovation runs through the veins of Yukon, from indigenous to settler. Surviving and thriving in this vast land requires one to be open to challenge. That openness creates an environment where more people have been asking what I call the "question behind the question" — the "what ifs?" Or "how could we?" Or "what about?"

Mr. Speaker, perhaps you, too, were part of the many people who, a number of years ago, attended a series of TEDx talks at the Yukon Arts Centre, organized by a couple of original thinkers in their own right: Nigel Allan and Lyn Hartley. These events offered some thought-provoking speakers who challenged the audiences to re-think some of the limitations we in Yukon place on ourselves and on the expectations we have for what is possible for us as individuals and as a territory.

Shortly after, we saw YuKonstruct open down in the Marwell area and then the (co)space downtown and ultimately the NorthLight Innovation centre. It has been fascinating to observe the broad spectrum of our community that engage in the crazy ideas of makers and entrepreneurs. When the YuKonstruct Makerspace Society reflected on one of their early members — a friend, septuagenarian Sandy Peacock, they said, "If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito." And she was "... a gentle swarm of mosquitos in every tent in Whitehorse."

I'm not drawing comparisons, but Yukon innovators are making their presence known, and innovators aren't afraid of asking questions, whether they're 12 or 80. They enjoy exploring ideas, being open to the possibilities they may find.

One of the speakers at that 2013 Yukon TEDx talk was Norman Fraser, and he made some observations that have remained with me. A technology innovator from Britain, he spoke about his experience creating spaces for ideas and business opportunities to grow.

He said that asking a better question has a habit of eliciting better answers. The best questions tap into previously buried veins of human creativity, sometimes unleashing answers that were literally unthinkable beforehand. One of his more thought-provoking questions was: What if the way we see our success is the limiting factor here in Yukon?

He went on to say that mineral extraction is the big success story. He said he was told this when he came to the Yukon. He said that, without disparaging the mineral industry, what if its

success is the problem? He went on to unpack that question with a few more questions.

He said that, given the choice, would you prefer to live in a diversified economy or in a non-diversified economy, and if your economy is not very diversified, would you choose the single industry to which you are so heavily exposed to be the historic boom-and-bust mineral industry? Questions, Mr. Speaker — he was posing questions.

Another question was — and he stressed that he was not being negative, but he said: Without reducing the size of the mineral sector, what would have to happen to make it amount to more than 10 percent of the Yukon economy?

So, without disparaging or reducing the mineral sector, what does that open up? What picture does that open? That is a challenging question that can lead to positive outcomes. Great leaps forward that transform society often emerge when creatively dissatisfied people start to question success and ask if there's a larger success to be won. During Innovation Week, NorthLight offers many opportunities to engage — as Inga Petri, who is exploring Yukon's global digital presence offering at the end of the week, puts it: Having bold conversations where current limitations are cast aside.

That's innovation, Mr. Speaker, and we applaud it.  
*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 13(3) of the *Hospital Act*, I have for tabling the annual report of the Yukon Hospital Corporation for the year 2019-20.

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

- Are they 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. Gallina:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports implementing an evidence-based approach to system planning and decision-making as recommended by the comprehensive health review.

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

THAT this House wishes the Yukon minor hockey product and Lethbridge Hurricanes captain Dylan Cozens the best of luck and good health as he attends Team Canada's selection camp in the leadup to the 2021 World Junior Hockey Championship in Edmonton.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that students receiving the Yukon grant, the Yukon excellence awards, and Canada student loans receive them in a timely manner, ensuring students are able to pay their tuition and living expenses without penalty.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Representative public service strategic plan

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Yukon is committed to achieving a public service that reflects the people we serve. This past year, our government endorsed *Breaking Trail Together: An Inclusive Yukon Public Service*. This is a long-term plan for achieving a representative public service that is inclusive of Yukon First Nation people. Each Yukon First Nation final agreement includes a provision in chapter 22 that requires the Yukon government to develop and implement such a plan to attain the goals of a representative public service. Our long-term plan addresses how we increase the representation of Yukon First Nation people so that our workforce is a more accurate reflection of Yukon.

Just as important as increasing representation, the plan also addresses how we will make our workplaces more inclusive for indigenous people. This new plan was developed in close collaboration with Yukon First Nation government representatives. The plan is aligned with one of our government's key priorities — working toward reconciliation. Increasing opportunities for training and capacity development with Yukon First Nations is also a key part of this. *Breaking Trail Together* includes a 10-year strategic plan and an operational plan that will be renewed every three years.

The plan is founded on three pillars, which include: responsive and barrier-free recruitment; culturally safe and supportive work environments; and training and development. The first pillar speaks to our recruitment efforts and includes a significant action that began on October 1. We launched our first hiring preference initiative aimed at increasing the number of indigenous employees at Yukon government. While competitions remain open to all candidates, this initiative gives preference to qualified indigenous people, with a priority to Yukon First Nation applicants. This pilot project will run for the next 18 months.

We will assess data collected during this pilot to determine the effectiveness of it and to determine other possible actions to support recruitment. While this preference pilot supports our representative public service goals, we also view it as a tangible action that moves reconciliation forward.

Diverse workplaces have a number of immediate benefits, which include the increased cultural competency and agility of our public service and more local knowledge of community issues, concerns, and values.

Reconciliation is an ongoing journey and remains a priority for our government during these challenging times. It requires each of us to examine ourselves and the role of our

public service and to consider how we can move forward in a positive way. *Breaking Trail Together* is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to reconciliation and the final agreements.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I am pleased to rise in response to this ministerial statement regarding the Yukon government's plan for achieving a representative public service.

As we all know, the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and each of the individual First Nation final agreements include economic development provisions captured in chapter 22. Chapter 22 is an important aspect of the UFA and the final agreements because it speaks to the need to ensure that Yukon First Nations participate in and benefit from the Yukon economy.

The Yukon Party supports the UFA and the First Nation final agreements, and in particular, we support chapter 22 and believe that its implementation will help to grow our economy and create benefits for all Yukon citizens. We are pleased to see that this new plan was developed in collaboration with Yukon First Nations and takes steps toward meeting the commitments to chapter 22. According to the minister, this plan is based on three pillars: responsive and barrier-free recruitment; culturally safe and supportive work environments; and training and development. These pillars reflect the commitments of chapter 22.

Providing increased opportunity for First Nation citizens to receive training and development is a clear commitment of section 22.4.2 of the UFA. That section commits Yukon government and the Yukon First Nations to make apprenticeship programs more flexible and to promote greater participation by Yukon First Nation citizens in such programs. We would like the minister to expand on how this new plan achieves this commitment.

We are also supportive of measures to ensure that the Yukon government work environments are culturally supportive. Workplace initiatives that promote First Nation culture, like those led by the Public Service Commission, make the Yukon government a desirable place to work and strengthen our public service.

While we do support ensuring a responsive and barrier-free recruitment process for First Nation citizens, we do have some questions about the current pilot project that the minister has discussed. How successful has the program been to date since it was implemented on October 1? Is the hiring preference policy being implemented government-wide, or is it targeted at particular departments or particular jobs?

We have also received questions about the hiring of Outside First Nations, as opposed to just hiring First Nation Yukoners. We believe that the Yukon government should be using its hiring practices to ensure that opportunities are created for Yukon citizens to gain employment, develop skills, and advance their careers.

We are aware that the current policy is a pilot program, and we look forward to receiving the results in 18 months to see how successful it was or wasn't.

As I've said today, we support the implementation of chapter 22. We are happy to see measures aimed at increasing training and professional development, which will help to fulfill the commitments made in chapter 22.4 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the First Nation final agreements.

**Ms. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, I was hopeful, when I heard that there was to be a ministerial statement outlining how, 25 years after the coming into effect of the first four Yukon First Nation final agreements, the Government of Yukon was going to finally live up to the expectations and obligations set out in those agreements.

Chapter 22 of those agreements set out the Government of Yukon's legal obligations to implement a representative public service. These same provisions are also set out in the remaining seven Yukon First Nation final agreements. It is unfortunate that what Yukoners were offered today was a repeat infomercial on an announcement previously made on September 28 of this year.

We applaud the resilient persistence of the Yukon First Nation and CYFN representatives who, over the years, have worked with public service representatives to keep pushing that yardstick. Incremental progress is progress.

It goes without saying that the Yukon NDP believes that the First Nation final agreements not only set out legal obligations that the Yukon government is required to live up to, but we also believe that they reflect hopes and aspirations and a belief that the intent and spirit of a renewed relationship based on mutuality and respect will be acted upon.

The notion of an 18-month pilot project to increase representation of First Nation employees in the Yukon public service is, in and of itself, not a bad idea. It is equally reasonable to ask, after 25 years: Is that all there is?

The strategic plan referred to by the minister makes no mention of actual targets or measures for assessing the success of this pilot project. It does acknowledge the obstacles faced by some Yukon First Nation applicants seeking employment with Yukon government. I would ask the minister, in his response, to tell Yukoners when the "assessment of YG's staffing practices" to identify "obstacles and actions that could be taken to support hiring that is barrier free" will be complete. Equally important, the strategic plan makes reference to "establishing achievable targets and measures". When will this be done?

The minister has had several months to review the *Breaking Trail Together* strategic plan. As we head into operational and financial planning for the next fiscal year, what criteria has he asked the Yukon Public Service Commission to establish to set Yukon government-wide targets for achieving the objectives of chapter 22 as reflected in the strategic plan? What measures are to be taken — by whom — to achieve them — because, you know, Mr. Speaker, this is serious stuff.

The minister has announced publicly that, after 25 years, the Yukon government is going to take action on implementing a key provision of Yukon final agreements. As the minister responsible for the Yukon public service, he is responsible for ensuring that this commitment is lived up to, and he is accountable to all Yukoners through this Assembly to

demonstrate how he is doing so. That will be a ministerial statement worth looking forward to.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the members opposite for their general support of our initiative. As I stated, this is a very important part of our chapter 22 obligations, which has gone unfulfilled for far too long.

Multicultural work environments where employees work with and serve people from different backgrounds are today's reality. To support cross-cultural competence, the *Breaking Trail Together* plan also includes an action to introduce learning opportunities to develop these important intercultural competencies. For example, we'll be researching a potential elder-in-residence program to provide culturally appropriate supports for indigenous public servants.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from First Nations around the territory that they are very pleased with this forward movement on an issue long ignored by previous governments. I have personally heard this at many Yukon Forums since work began on this policy. So, Mr. Speaker, I have the utmost faith in our public servants within the Public Service Commission to get this done right and in a timely fashion.

Mr. Speaker, so much time has been spent discussing this. We're now actually seeing concrete action. I know the public service — the First Nations that helped write this — provided absolutely critical input into this new plan. The work has been really, really important to me. It's really, really important to the public service. I know that the Public Service Commission has worked incredibly hard on this plan. I'm a little bit dismayed by the tepid response that I got from the Member for Whitehorse Centre, but I would expect no less.

Mr. Speaker, reconciliation is, and will continue to be, a priority of our government. We are working with First Nations to overcome the harms caused by the past history of inequality and discrimination, and the current level of collaboration between the Yukon government and Yukon First Nation governments is unprecedented.

We are achieving meaningful change and tangible benefits for all Yukoners through a range of environmental, economic, and social projects that we are working on together.

Mr. Speaker, since coming into office, we have co-chaired 14 Yukon First Nations — and this is since 2017 — and these positive and productive discussions have led to tangible actions, including the development of this representative public service plan and a new joint senior executive committee to support a whole-of-government approach to collaboration.

These are things that government has never undertaken before. These are things where First Nations have not seen this level of engagement before. I am very proud of the work that the team at the Public Service Commission has done on this file. I am very comfortable with the progress that we are making as a government in this very important endeavour. I look forward to the future, Mr. Speaker, because together we will make great things happen.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

**Mr. Hassard:** It has been almost a month since the Minister of Tourism and Culture announced that the Government of Yukon has created a funding package of \$15 million to support the Yukon tourism industry through the challenges created by this pandemic. So far, only a fraction of that amount was identified for the accommodation sector. While businesses in the accommodation sector will certainly welcome this funding, other businesses in the tourism industry have asked when the rest of the \$15 million will be announced.

Can the minister tell us when the rest of the \$15-million funding package for the tourism industry will be announced?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to talk to Yukoners today about the plans that we have for tourism in Yukon. It has been an incredibly challenging time, Mr. Speaker.

As I have spoken about many times in the House, our government was quick to respond to the global pandemic. We introduced a number of programs: the event cancellation fund; sick leave for workers; the tourism cooperative marketing fund; the essential workers fund; the Yukon business relief fund; and, yes, a couple of weeks ago — or maybe more — I announced that we are planning a \$15-million investment into the relief and recovery of the tourism sector through the pandemic. We continue to work with our partners on the details of this. We are working with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics to get the evidence that's needed to ensure that we have the right programs in place.

As I have stated before, we, on this side of the House, make our decisions based on good, solid evidence and work with our partners.

**Mr. Hassard:** This government has over \$12 million set aside to help Yukon businesses in the tourism industry, but they have not yet said what they plan to do with that money.

We are well into the winter season, and businesses that rely on visitors to the Yukon really are struggling. The hospitality sector, tour operators, RV parks — those are just a few of the many tourism-based businesses that are wondering about their future. Businesses know that the government has set aside all of this money for relief, but again, it hasn't said which businesses will be eligible or even when they will find out.

So, can the minister tell us which other sectors will be eligible to access this funding?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will continue with my answer in terms of where we are at with the tourism relief and recovery dollars that we have allocated, but first I would like to just touch back on the Yukon business relief program, which was put in place very quickly after the pandemic had started. This was led by a whole-of-government approach, of course, but Economic Development did the really heavy lifting on this. As of November 4, 2020, we have had 519 applicants and \$5.6 million funded to Yukon businesses through this program. The current applicants that are receiving the majority of the funding through this business relief program are tourism businesses. That includes all of the sectors that the member opposite just mentioned — hospitality and all levels of tourism

businesses. That program still remains available to Yukon businesses. This is the envy of the country. I want to say again that we were the first jurisdiction in Canada to put in place such a program.

**Mr. Hassard:** Now, we know that the business relief fund is for fixed costs, but that is not what we are talking about. We are talking about the \$15 million that this minister has announced. She talks about getting information from the Bureau of Statistics. How about talking to some of those businesses that are hurting today? We are sure that the businesses in the tourism sector were happy to hear that the government has identified this \$15 million, but I think that they would really appreciate a bit more clarity about where that money is going to go, which businesses are going to be eligible, and which are not. But as with most things with this government, decisions and details have been significantly delayed.

So, has the government decided what they are doing with the money yet, or are they just waiting for an announcement, or are they still trying to figure out a plan of what to do with the money?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am really happy that our government has sent the clear signal to our tourism sector that we are with you through this pandemic. We have identified \$15 million in this fiscal year and into the next two for relief and recovery. We are continuing to work with our partners.

Yes, we are working with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, and that's directly with companies to assess the pulse of the businesses that are in need and to identify those that have potentially fallen through the cracks in terms of the programs that we have in place.

We will be making those final decisions based on the good evidence that we have collected. We are working with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon. We are working with the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board. We are working with all of our partners. We have weekly webinars with the tourism industry. We have weekly meetings with TIAY, and we were just on a call yesterday talking about the current border situation and other issues that are related to tourism.

So, yes, we will be making those announcements when the decisions are final and when we have the right programs in place. I will be happy to share that with Yukoners. I'm looking forward to it.

#### **Question re: Fixed election dates**

**Mr. Cathers:** In speaking about the Liberals' cynical changes to the *Elections Act*, the Minister of Community Services told the Legislature that the main purpose of the legislation was so Yukoners could plan. He said that its main purpose is to help Yukoners plan, whether that's individual Yukoners, businesses, or public servants, with a foreknowledge of when there will be an election.

In contrast, yesterday, the Premier refused to tell Yukon citizens, businesses, and public servants when the election will be. How can the Liberals, with a straight face, tell Yukoners that the legislation is about giving Yukoners certainty about

when the election will be, but then turn around and refuse to tell Yukoners when the election will be?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** This is a repeat question from yesterday. Again, we told the Legislature yesterday that we are busy with the pandemic, we're busy with the programs and services for Yukoners, we're busy with amazing programming, like what the Minister of Tourism and Culture just spoke about, and the members opposite are busy asking us when the next election is.

They wanted us to sit down in the Legislative Assembly and talk about a budget. They haven't asked a question about the budget yet — most questions are about other things.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Yesterday, there was one question, after 18 hours of general debate — you are right.

But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we're here to govern, and the members opposite are here to play politics.

**Mr. Cathers:** That's a very selective memory. The Premier knows that we have asked many questions about the budget. What we have yet to get is a straight answer.

One thing that the Premier did say yesterday is that, in his view, the current group of MLAs are elected for a five-year term. Anything less, according to him yesterday, would be unfair. He said that it would be unfair if he — and I quote: "... curtailed what everyone thought was a five-year term in the last election to a four-year term in this mandate."

If the Premier thinks that it would be unfair for anything less than a five-year term, that seems to mean that Yukoners should expect the election in November 2021. Will the Premier confirm that the next election will not be held until November 2021? It is a very simple question, Mr. Speaker — yes or no?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I have answered this question ad nauseum at this point. We are very, very busy right now working to provide programs and services during a global pandemic. We did set the fixed dates for an election on a four-year cycle for the territorial elections in order to strengthen the democratic process. Fixed election dates will support the democratic principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability.

I am glad to see that the members opposite are now interested in these changes.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, after not answering yesterday and then again today, it's not just three strikes of the Premier not answering a question; it's eight strikes.

It is now very clear that Liberal words don't match their actions. They have fallen into a clear pattern of arrogance and disregard for democracy. They promised electoral reform; instead, they broke that promise. They promised transparency; instead, they accepted over \$100,000 in secret corporate donations. They promised Yukoners the certainty of knowing when the next election would be, but they are breaking that promise, too. It is clear that Yukoners will have to wait for a change in government if they want to see action.

Will the Premier tell us when the next election will be so that Yukoners can begin planning for that change in government?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I think “arrogance” is what the member opposite said yesterday about us being a one-term government. That is a pretty arrogant statement.

What we are doing is — currently, the timing of the elections is determined by the government of the day, with a five-year mandate timeline, as set out in the *Yukon Act*. The changes that we are making, again, are what we committed to in our platform commitment, as the Member for Whitehorse Centre continuously speaks off-mic to distract.

The government will retain the ability to call an election anytime before those fixed election dates. All other Canadian jurisdictions, with the exception of Nova Scotia, have fixed election dates on a four-year cycle.

The members opposite want to talk about elections; we want to talk about the supplementary budget. The members opposite want to ask us if we are going to speculate on things moving forward; we want to move forward and make sure that we pass this budget. We want to move into an area where we get a vaccine in place as well. We will continue to work, as a government, with partnerships with other governments — whether federal, First Nation, or municipal — when it comes to how we’re planning from the relief we need through COVID into the recovery when a vaccine is announced.

The opposition continues to ask us, “When is the election?” I thought they wanted to come here and do serious business in the Legislative Assembly. Now they want us to call an election, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Question re: Yukon Liberal Party donations**

**Ms. White:** Last month, I asked the Premier if he would disclose who gave \$100,000 in anonymous contributions to the Liberal Party in 2019. The Premier refused but later told the media that he would meet with his new treasurer and would consider disclosing more information. A month has passed, so hopefully this meeting happened and the Premier can be a bit more upfront today.

Is the Premier now willing to be transparent about who gave \$100,000 in anonymous donations to the Yukon Liberals last year?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I don’t have anything to update the Legislative Assembly on. We’re not withholding any information. We were very clear with the fact that, in our campaigning, we’ve been well within the rules of the current system. Again, we have heard that the NDP is happy to collect thousands of dollars of Outside donations one year, but — the other time — they want to know exactly what’s happening here as far as some type of reform.

Again, we’ve talked about being in favour of capping donations from corporations and unions, but to answer the member opposite’s question, I don’t have anything to add right now as far as any conversations with the party.

**Ms. White:** Well, the Premier can attack the Yukon NDP all he wants, but he knows that our donors are Yukoners and that the Yukon NDP has twice as many donors as the Yukon Liberals. So, it’s just a matter of transparency, and I’m not sure why the Premier is so attached to keeping this

information from the public. Even earlier in his mandate, the Premier was more transparent.

As you know, the Liberals hold a fundraiser in a suite at Rogers Arena during a Canucks game every year. In the 2017 Elections Yukon report, the donors of this \$20,000 suite were publicly listed — well done. For 2018 and 2019, though, the information is kept secret.

So, why won’t the Premier tell Yukoners who paid for the \$20,000 suite at Rogers Arena in 2018 and 2019, just like he did in 2017?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, again, our party is following the campaign finance rules that are laid out. The member opposite makes it sound like we have the \$100,000 in the bank. This is money earned but doesn’t take into consideration money expended. For example, paying for our trips down to these fundraising events or, if they’re in Whitehorse — for example, the very successful leaders’ dinner and things like the bar services or the catering — those are the things that are taken into consideration with this \$100,000 item that the members opposite are trying to make seem like a one-donation piece, but it is not.

We are well within the current rules as they’re laid out — fantastic for the NDP to now be concentrating on local donations because that certainly was not the case in the past with national union contributions.

**Ms. White:** You know, it’s too bad, because the Premier is the only person who thinks that the Liberals receiving \$100,000 in anonymous donations is not an issue that Yukoners care about. The public has a right to know who has the ear of their government. In fact, a corporation needs to disclose publicly when they have a meeting or even just a phone conversation with the Premier, yet the same corporation can donate thousands of dollars to the Liberal Party, and that’s anonymous. Yukoners get that this doesn’t make any sense.

Another thing that makes no sense is the discrepancy between the Liberal’s financial statements and their report to Elections Yukon. We’ve obtained a copy of the 2019 Yukon Liberal Party financial statement, and it shows that the Liberal’s hockey fundraiser actually brought in \$33,000.

Will the Premier tell Yukoners who gave \$33,000 to the Liberals at their fundraiser in a suite at Rogers Arena?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Well, it wasn’t one person; that’s for sure. There were a whole bunch of different folks there, all of whom donated to the party in a way that is actually within the rules of the current fundraising rules.

The member opposite talks about transparency. One great thing that this government has done is to change the lobbyist registry, for example. The members opposite make it seem like we’re trying to hide something; we’re not. We’re working within the current rules and we’re changing legislation to make this government even more transparent.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic — Yukon highway border enforcement**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** On Monday, we discussed the government’s decision, from staffing our borders 24 hours a day, to only staffing them from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. I asked

how the government is enforcing the borders outside of those business hours. In response, the minister said — and I quote: “We have put in place measures to consider after hours — for example, video cameras and CEMA enforcement officers coming forward to do random checkstops in the evenings.”

Many Yukoners interpreted the minister’s statement that they had put in place these measures to mean that they had put these measures in place. Yesterday afternoon, the minister said that he actually didn’t mean to say that they had been put in place. Can the minister clarify: Has the government put in place measures, such as a video camera and random checkstops, at our borders for after hours?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** As I said in the Legislature during the ministerial statement, as I said yesterday in the Legislature, and as I said to the media, we are looking at these provisions. For example, when you’re going to put in place a video camera, you have to do a privacy analysis. I have checked with the department that this work has begun; yes, it has.

I have talked with them about putting in place some of our enforcement folks to do after hours. I think that the intention would be to do it randomly, to do it over a series of times. Our understanding, largely, is that it is folks from northern BC who are driving back and forth who don’t require at this point to have isolation requirements and/or transportation trucks which are supporting the Yukon. We don’t believe that there is a significant risk, but we are working to make sure that this is the case. I am happy to continue to look at this. I want to assure Yukoners that we will look, as we have for the past eight months, to protect their safety.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** You can forgive Yukoners for thinking that when the minister says that they have put in place measures that they actually put in place measures.

Another question I asked was about the cost of the new partnership with the Liard First Nation versus the cost of the old contract. Yesterday, the minister stated that the cost of the new partnership per month is \$116,000. However, under the old private sector contract, the cost per month was only \$62,000.

With the border now changing from being staffed 24 hours to only during business hours, I was curious as to why the cost to man the border has increased by nearly 90 percent.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I don’t actually forgive the member opposite, because yesterday when she rose and misquoted me out of Hansard, I corrected the record and made the information explicit, to her and to everyone, that these were measures that we were working toward, not that they were in place.

With respect to the costs, I also pointed out that the costs that I gave her were for flagging contracts. What was not included there were costs for staffing — not “manning” but “staffing” — those borders, because it was from all sorts of departments: the Department of Environment, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Department of Tourism and Culture, my own department of the Liquor Corporation. That is how they were staffed, so those costs weren’t part of a contract; they were part of the dollars that I spoke to her about, in the \$2.2 million that we had in the supplementary budget, in order to keep Yukoners safe. That is what this is about,

Mr. Speaker. I am so happy that the members opposite are now interested in border controls, which by the way, you need a state of emergency to have.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** With regard to the border checkstops at Watson Lake, how are the rules enforced? For example, do the LFN staff at the border have enforcement powers or the legal ability to detain, stop, or turn anyone away? If not, can the minister elaborate a bit more on what enforcement measures are in place at the borders?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** It is a good question, although I did answer it yesterday for the member opposite. Let me answer it for Yukoners. What we put in place at our borders is for information and to help compliance. The people who are there are to make sure that declarations are filled out, but all people who enter into the territory from a jurisdiction where we have said they need to self-isolate are required to fill out one of those declarations. I thank her for giving me the opportunity to stand and say that.

Our CEMA enforcement officers are distributed across the Yukon, including here in the territory, and when there is an issue that arises, we will dispatch those CEMA enforcement officers.

As I pointed out yesterday, 85 percent of the time, it’s actually not something that has gone wrong, but it is just information that helps Yukoners to understand what’s going on. About 13 percent of the time, we correct it quickly with information and, again, through education. Two percent of the time, those enforcement officers issue tickets or sanctions.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic impact to education system**

**Mr. Kent:** According to yukon.ca, the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education was formed in January 2016, and the committee discusses and addresses education challenges and ways to support Yukon learners. This sounds like a perfect forum to share and discuss ideas around Education’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the first and only meeting of 2020 wasn’t held until September 9.

Why did the minister not convene this panel of experts to seek advice when she decided that schools would remain closed after spring break of this year?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think we should remind ourselves that, when schools were ordered to remain closed, we were at the beginning of a world pandemic, that schools and other organizations were being closed across the country on an immediate basis. We had a little bit of a buffer here in Yukon, because students were on March break, and there was initially a decision made that they would not come back immediately and then ultimately that school would not be in session during that period of time between March and June 12 here in Whitehorse, for the most part. All those decisions were made based on the advice from the chief medical officer of health.

**Mr. Kent:** When the announcement was made about schools reopening, consultations were scheduled to begin in May of this year to start planning for the fall reopening. Again, this committee would have been perfect to offer expert advice



to the minister and her colleagues on how best to return students to school. However, the minister ignored this valuable resource, and in fact they never even met until approximately three weeks after the school year started.

Why didn't the minister seek advice from this committee for the school reopening plan?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Again, I think it's important to remind the members opposite — I know that Yukoners are well aware of the impact that COVID-19 and this world pandemic has had on their lives, but I'm not sure that the members opposite are taking it in the context that it is operating here in the territory: It is critical that we keep our students safe. We have managed, with the expertise of administrators, of teachers, and of experts in the field, to return some 5,700 students to Yukon schools across the territory on a daily basis. That is what our goal is. That is what is necessary and in the best interests of students. That is the work that the department does every day in conjunction with schools, administrators, and teachers, who I would certainly like to take the opportunity to thank here for their dedication, imagination, and concern for their students.

**Mr. Kent:** As I mentioned, the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education discusses and addresses education challenges and ways to support Yukon learners. What a great resource to have as you were preparing for and moving through the plans for this pandemic. Zoom meetings and conference calls could have been done, but as I mentioned, this committee has only met once this year, and that was on September 9. The previous meeting was in October of 2019.

Can the minister tell us when the next meeting of this committee is scheduled? What advice is she seeking from them regarding education challenges and ways to support Yukon learners?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, again, I think it's critical to remind the members of the opposition but, more importantly, to speak to Yukoners about how these decisions are being made at the Department of Education. We are relying on the expertise of administrators and educators — their professionalism — and we are relying on the advice of the chief medical officer of health. We are also in consultation with other departments of education, ministers, and deputy ministers across the country. These are situations that every jurisdiction in Canada is struggling with.

May I say that I am very proud of the work that our department has done here and, in particular, our administrators and teachers. I have had the opportunity to visit four schools this week. They are coping. They are using their imagination. They are coming up with solutions for students and all of their work is focused on what is in the best interests of students.

#### **Question re: School capacity**

**Mr. Kent:** Earlier this Sitting, we asked about portables in a number of different schools around the Yukon. The portable at Porter Creek Secondary School here in Whitehorse had mould discovered in it and has been unavailable for us. Now that the minister has moved the MAD program back to where it belongs at Wood Street Centre School, can she update us on the portable at Porter Creek? Is remediation continuing,

and if so, when will the portable be ready and what will it be used for?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I will consult with the department and get an answer for the member opposite immediately and see where we're at with this remediation.

**Mr. Kent:** Just to remind the minister: I did ask this question earlier in this Sitting, so we hoped that perhaps he would have undertaken to get that information. Since then, I noticed there's no legislative return and obviously he can't answer that question here today either.

We also asked about the portable that is used at Robert Service School in Dawson City as it was taken out of use due to mould concerns as well. There was money in this year's budget to address this situation. As I mentioned, we asked the minister to tell us how much was budgeted for this particular project and if it had been completed yet. He was unable to answer at the time, so we are curious if he can update us now on this situation.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member opposite to please repeat the question. I didn't hear it when he was talking. I'm sorry.

**Speaker:** Stop the clock for a second.

Thank you for repeating the question.

**Mr. Kent:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

At the time, we also asked about the portable that is used at Robert Service School in Dawson City as it was taken out of use due to mould concerns as well. There is money in this year's budget to address this situation. We asked the minister to tell us how much was budgeted for this particular project and if it had been completed yet; however, he was unable to answer at the time, so we're curious if he can update us now on this situation.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the member opposite repeating his question. It is sometimes difficult to hear in here and I do have a hearing impairment, so thank you very much for that.

I think that the member opposite, as he just repeated, is talking about the Robert Service School and what work we are doing there. Providing Yukon students with safe, comfortable spaces to learn remains a priority for our government. When tests identified mould in the modular classrooms at Robert Service School, they were closed immediately. Education has found space for the displaced students in the main school building. Demolition of the existing modular classrooms is planned for this winter, with new modular classrooms ready by December 2021. Our department is working with Education on space planning for the school.

**Mr. Kent:** On October 21, the Minister of Highways and Public Works stated in this Legislature — and I will quote: "My colleague, the Minister of Education, is building elementary schools across the territory." We found this interesting, as there are currently no elementary schools under construction in the Yukon. We know that the Minister of Highways and Public Works has a long history of playing fast and loose with the facts.

So, how many elementary schools will this government have opened by the time of the next election?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and I do appreciate the member opposite making use of the expression that I so aptly applied to them.

The Minister of Education — we have built the French first language school. That school was a model for execution. We have heard nothing but praise for that project, from both the French community and the contractor who actually worked on that school and who is local. We put a lot of people to work. We have a school that actually stands in great standing. It is a beautiful example of the future of education in the territory.

I know that we are now currently working on the new school in Whistle Bend. I know that we are also working with the First Nation up on the north highway to build a school in Burwash. There is lots of work going on here to actually revolutionize and provide the schools that the communities need.

In Burwash, we know that the former government just put down a layer of gravel and called it “done”. We are actually doing the work to provide education for our students, and I am very proud of my colleague, the Minister of Education, and the work that this government is doing together to actually make education better for our students.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

#### **Notice to call motion respecting committee report**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I give notice, pursuant to Standing Order 13(3), that the motion respecting Committee Reports No. 1, the motion for concurrence in the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees’ 21<sup>st</sup> report, presented to the House on October 1, 2020, shall be called as government-designated business.

**Speaker:** We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS**

#### **MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

##### **Motion No. 236, amendment to — *adjourned debate***

**Clerk:** Motion No. 236, standing in the name of the name of Mr. Adel, resuming debate on the amendment proposed by Mr. Kent; adjourned debate, the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

**Speaker:** Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, you have 15 minutes and 15 seconds remaining.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Let’s recap a little bit. First of all, thank you to the Member for Copperbelt North, who brought forward this motion back on October 14. That was a more than a month ago.

Since then, this will be our third day debating this motion. In that debate, I just want to acknowledge that the Yukon Liberal private members have chosen to bring this forward at every opportunity. Why? Because we would love to hear from everyone in this Legislature about whether they believe we are

or are not in a state of emergency. The state of emergency, of course, is due to the pandemic, and it’s pursuant to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. That’s great.

Each time that the opposition — any member of the opposition — has risen to speak, they have brought forward amendments. I’m not supportive of this amendment in particular, although there are elements of it that I will speak in support of and I will do my best to provide some of the information that’s being sought through the amendment.

Here we are, back again today for a third time to pose the question to the members of this Legislature about whether or not they support the state of emergency.

When I was speaking to the amendment on October 28, I had just begun mentioning British Columbia, because last month, British Columbia had an election — a general provincial election. Out of that election, the British Columbia New Democratic Party was awarded a majority government.

I’m not sure if they won the majority of the votes, but often, as is the case, majority governments form with a minority of the votes, but then they have a majority of the seats. That is the way our current system works.

As that government looks at it, they stood up and they said that the most important thing that they had to do was the state of emergency, was to deal with the pandemic, and was to support the health and safety of British Columbians.

What they also did — which I’m not sure many people noticed or not, but I try to watch these things — is that they redeclared their state of emergency. They didn’t go to their Legislature, they didn’t welcome other parties to come and debate it, and no one batted an eye. No one blinked, because everyone understood that there was a state of emergency. There continues to be a state of emergency. In fact, what would have happened if they had not declared a state of emergency would have been much more shocking, because, if they did not declare a state of emergency, they wouldn’t be able to do many of the things that they are doing now to keep their provincial citizens safe and well.

What are we doing under that? It’s basically three things. They come from ministerial orders that flow from the state of emergency. They are: (1) to provide isolation requirements; (2) to provide controls at our border; and (3) to provide enforcement. Just today, through Question Period, I heard from members opposite that they are interested to see more border control, more enforcement. I have heard that during general debate on the budget, and I said, during my response to that question today, that, in fact, the authority for that flows from the fact of having declared a state of emergency.

So, am I to assume that the members opposite support the state of emergency? Well, we’re back for a third day to try to ask them to tell us. This amendment that was brought forward talks about being informed. So, I will do my best to provide that information. Let me start with why this is a big deal.

Since this motion was first brought forward by the Member for Copperbelt North to today, the world has increased the number of cases by 40 percent over one month. We are eight months or so into the pandemic — the global pandemic,

because it started well before that in China, where it was first discovered.

In the last month, it has increased by 40 percent globally. In the US, in Alaska, and in many Canadian provinces, we are in a second wave. It is serious.

We went from when this motion was first brought forward by the Member for Copperbelt North with Nunavut being the sole jurisdiction in Canada that did not have a case — but between then and now — yesterday, they had 60 cases — so from zero to 60. This was between when we first brought this motion forward to ask all legislators whether they support the state of emergency — yes or no. Today I understand that it's up to 70 — zero to 70. That's more than Prince Edward Island. Just compare those populations. I am so concerned for our northern neighbours in Nunavut. I am sure everybody here — our hearts go out to them and all those who work to address this difficult virus — this challenging thing.

If I were to use a phrase from my mother-in-law, I would say that I am “gobsmacked”. I am gobsmacked that we are here for the third day to try to find out whether the members — who argued that we absolutely needed to reconvene this Legislature in order to decide about this pandemic and to provide their input — have, for a third day, not yet responded to the main motion.

The amendment, though, asks for information, so the most important thing to understand is the epidemiology. Here is the simple, simple answer: COVID has not gone away. It is increasing, and it remains a significant and serious threat to the health and safety of Yukoners. There is no question about that. That is the basic answer. We continue, I think, to provide the members opposite access to the chief medical officer of health to provide that information. We certainly make many public statements and the chief medical officer makes many public statements about that epidemiology. It is information that we try to share with all Yukoners.

The second thing that is so critical about the state of emergency — which we have because of this global pandemic, this disease — that we've called under the *Civil Emergencies Measures Act* is this very, very simple piece of information to understand: If we want border control, if we want isolation requirements, if we want enforcement, the authority for that flows out of declaring a state of emergency — plain and simple.

When I meet with municipalities and First Nations and when we ask them about whether or not they feel we're in a state of emergency — which they are shocked to hear me ask, but I explain to them that it is important that I ask their opinion, and they don't take three days of debate to give it back to me — I get it back very quickly and it is: “Of course, we're in a state of emergency.” I have yet to hear from a municipality or First Nation or the federal government that they don't believe we're in a state of emergency.

But the opposition has said that we were not bringing the Legislature back to discuss this. They've asked for the opportunity to be here in this Legislature to do this very thing and we are the ones providing it, and we asked the question yet again. The amendment is asking us to break Cabinet confidentiality because of how it's worded. It would ask us for documents that come through to Cabinet, so no, I don't support

the amendment, Mr. Speaker. What I support is getting to a vote.

I understand that the issue itself is not simple; I understand the complexity. As a matter of fact, I expect criticism from the members opposite. It is their job to criticize us. It is their job to point out to us where we are and where we could do better. I thank them for that criticism.

What they need to do though is understand that, once you get into this complex grey situation, we still have to make a decision about what to do. When you're in the role of protecting the health and safety of the Yukon public, you need to make that call. You just need to make that decision. So, what I'm looking for today — I'm not supportive of the amendment as proposed; I haven't been supportive of the earlier amendments — I just want us to get to a vote. I implore the members opposite to get there; we'll see. Do they continue to rise to take a long period of time to debate this motion? Do they continue to bring forward amendments? That's what I'm looking forward to seeing — whether they do that or are they willing to get to this motion as the member — and I thank the Member for Copperbelt North for bringing forward this very straightforward, very succinct motion. Do the members of this Legislature support that in saying that we continue to be in a state of emergency?

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise to speak to the motion as amended. I would like to thank the Member for Copperbelt —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just said, “the motion as amended.” I don't believe the motion is amended.

**Speaker:** I believe the member is speaking to the amendment. Yes.

Member for Porter Creek North.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the correction. I would like to thank the Member for Copperbelt North for bringing forward this motion. I believe it's important to our jobs as legislators to have access to the valuable information that leads government members to make the decisions they do.

When we stand in this House as opposition members with questions for the government on proposed legislation, on decisions made, on the budgeting process, or for any other reason, we do so because the information that informs those decisions is usually kept behind closed doors.

We are informed of these decisions at the same time as the public is informed. There is no transparency as to how decisions were made or what information led to the outcome, so standing here as legislators, we have questions, and as the member opposite said, that is our job. It is our job to ask questions. Government members do not seem to like it when

we ask questions or question their authority. We get veiled responses and limited reasoning, and this is not transparency.

When we reach out with questions, we do so on behalf of our constituents. We ask the questions so that, when it comes time to vote, we can have as much information at our disposal as possible so we can vote.

Yukoners have questions when it comes to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. They want to know why decisions made under CEMA are being made and what drove them. They are entitled to that information, and it should be our duty as legislators to be able to convey that information. Constituents call our office to tell us — their MLAs — about their problems and concerns, to inquire as to why the government is making decisions that are affecting them and their families, and to hopefully find solutions.

When we are asked why an order has been made under CEMA, we should be able to answer them, to provide some rationalization as to why it was implemented. Instead, we are left in a position where we have to question the government at every turn about how they came to the conclusion that says it is best for Yukoners.

To say that this government thrives on conflict is an understatement. Conflict is exactly what arises from governments who are fully informed while opposition members are left grasping at straws for bits of information to piece things together.

The Member for Watson Lake stated that the adoption of this amendment should be an incredible improvement to the original motion and would hopefully start a trend for this government, and I wholeheartedly agree. I am not only hopeful that it would start a trend for this government, but I also believe that it would help to live up to their broken promise of transparency and to their promise of openness.

The orders made by this government have created near-impossible situations for individuals, for families, for businesses, and more. We have seen unintended consequences flood our communities. These consequences resulted in isolation, postponed surgeries, crime, fatalities, and more, and we have nothing to tell our constituents. We reassure them that these orders are in their best interest. We cannot reassure them because we have no information on our side to validate those reassurances.

I recently received a call from a constituent who was unable to schedule a much-needed surgery. Surgeries have resumed since being put on hold earlier this year, and doctors want to get through their wait-list, but they are being put off for another year. People are suffering because this government created a backlog and now the effects are being felt — so much so that they are unable to clear the backlog effectively.

The *Civil Emergency Measures Act* was declared at the end of March. The government has effectively abused the act to sign order after order without sharing information or reasons with the public or other legislators. They have done so without democratic scrutiny, without accountability, and without oversight. The fact that this government would like us to agree to a motion to simply support the state of emergency without discussion is appalling.

It is not that we do not support CEMA. While we support the government's ability to provide relief measures to Yukoners, we do not support the way they have decided to go about it behind closed doors.

We have members of the public and business communities who have come together to challenge the orders made by this government. Mr. Speaker, instead of government simply extending the state of emergency again and again, they should show Yukoners why it is to their benefit that they are doing so and provide the information about what they are basing their decisions on.

This government has had a “we know best” attitude since day one. They spent years blaming the previous government rather than moving forward. They refuse to answer questions in the House — instead, bemoaning that the opposition is secretly hoping that the Liberal government will fail. We are kept in the dark, but keeping us in the dark is keeping Yukoners in the dark. Keeping information from opposition MLAs is keeping information from Yukoners.

What the government ministers who stand in Question Period every day don't seem to realize is that the majority of questions we ask in the House come directly from our constituents. They are questions that they ask and we are unable to answer. We don't have the information to inform our constituents, so we ask. We get haughty responses or no answers. We are told about the history to a problem rather than solutions they propose, and we get nowhere.

We have committees that would review so many of the orders that have been rammed through by this government — committees where members are expected to work together to provide input and make decisions. If the Premier and the government were so dead set against calling back the Legislature to sit this summer to review and oversee the pandemic response, we, at the very least, have committees consisting of members of all parties to do this work — committees providing democratic oversight in the absence of or in addition to the Legislature. Instead of taking advantage of these avenues of oversight, it is “we know best”. Everything is brought to us and the public on a need-to-know basis and it's becoming very apparent that the government thinks that we don't need to know.

I look forward to hearing from others hopefully from both sides of the House this week as to why they agree or disagree with this amendment and why they would like to continue to withhold information. It is in the best interests of all Yukoners that this amendment is adopted today.

**Mr. Istchenko:** As the minister said earlier, it is our job to bring criticism to the government and to ask questions. A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it — it is a tragedy waiting to happen.

Knowledge and information about what a government is doing and why it is doing it is the only vaccine to a failed democracy. If Yukoners are to be able to make valid judgments on government policy, then Yukoners would have the greatest access to information possible. That's why we're speaking to this amendment right now. How can any community see any

progress, or how can a democracy continue to survive, without continuing an informed and intelligent debate? How can we be continuing an informed debate without information? Those are wise words, but I must point out that the government is asking us to have a debate without providing any information, which leads one to assume that the government does not want to see progress.

I guess they also do not want to see informed debate or oversight. People are guaranteed access to information through our *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* — well, sometimes they are. But it exists. It provides, by way of statute, the default right to information. Indeed, it is for government to say why you can't have the information rather than for a citizen to say why they should. But the existence of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* does not prevent the government from proactively providing information. That is what this amendment is about, Mr. Speaker — proactively providing information to allow for informed debate and an informed decision and for ensuring that Yukoners and elected representatives can have information, which in turn allows for a democracy to continue to function.

Unfortunately, the principles of sharing information — transparency, openness, accountability — have become broken under the current Liberal government. You just have to speak to journalists who have been trying to get information out of the government for the last several months as they do their jobs of keeping government to account. They'll tell you about the frustration in getting clear answers from the government. They'll tell you about the frustration of getting anything but talking points. They'll tell you about the frustration of getting the minister to do an interview explaining the government's response or spending during a pandemic.

However, this sharing of information in a timely and accurate fashion is necessary for accurate reporting and for Yukoners being able to understand — it's important — and properly assess what the government of the day is doing.

Yet many Yukoners will tell you that information sharing has become worse under the current government. It has become more difficult to get answers from the government. Some Yukoners felt they even needed to take this Liberal government to court over their lack of information sharing during this pandemic. That's a major problem. If you ask constituents, they just want information and answers from the government. Some constituents just seek access to information about themselves and how government decisions impact their day-to-day life, and they are entitled to do that. They are entitled to know what it is the government is doing and why they are doing it.

Anyone who has listened to the Legislature over the past four weeks will know that getting any answer out of this government is like pulling teeth. It took us two weeks to get details from the Minister of Health and Social Services on department spending. We still don't have any details from the Premier on how the Safe Restart money is being spent. The Education minister is still not sharing with Yukoners — Yukon families, Yukon students or anyone — how it is that her government will get classes back to full time. That's why this amendment is so important. It makes sure that MLAs and

Yukoners can have the information that government has to inform these decisions.

I do not think it is wise for the government to continue to withhold this information from Yukoners. It's necessary for Yukon citizens if they want to contribute to debates. It's necessary for the good governance and proper oversight and scrutiny of government decision-making. I have heard from many constituents over the last several months who have questions about how things are affecting them, from busing to economic relief to restrictions on public gatherings. People just want to know what this all means for them and why the government is making certain decisions.

These are not unreasonable questions in my view, and I think that the government needs to do a better job of sharing these answers with them. They are just trying to understand why the government is doing what it is doing. That can be at the local, territorial, or federal government level. Of course, today we are focused on the territorial government.

Unfortunately, what happens when you ask the government for information is that they talk in circles with non-answers and gaslighting, all in an attempt to deny shared information and seeks to wear the askers down through this process — wear them right down.

Despite the government's attempt at avoiding scrutiny and providing non-answers, the number of questions is increasing. In fact, people are more interested in information than they have been in the past. Look at the number of people watching the Facebook live videos of weekly press conferences discussing the pandemic. People care, Mr. Speaker, and they care because they are looking for answers.

What we are seeing is that more and more Yukoners are becoming frustrated at the inability to get information or straight answers from the government, which is why my colleague brought forward this important amendment.

The idea that all Members of the Legislative Assembly should have the same information — that just makes sense — before we vote on something so that we are informed on what we're voting on — that's a fair and reasonable request.

This isn't to say that anyone is critical of the government's decisions. I've said this earlier — I bet some are, but I also bet some are in favour of a lot of the decisions that are made. But transparency and accountability are not about popularity. That shouldn't matter. What should and does matter is that the government would want to share information with the citizens and other elected representatives, which has not been the case to date.

Despite the wishes of the Liberals, Yukoners believe that our democracy and debate should be allowed to continue. I've heard from many constituents over the summer about the pandemic and the government's actions through it — the state of emergency — seeking information from me on all manner of things. I think that it's great. It is a great thing that finally, after months, we're allowed to give this topic debate in this House — and it deserves it.

It is a great opportunity to be here in this House and talk about the important issues such as democracy and accountability. Rising in this House and debating these issues

is a great honour indeed. It is for all of us. To speak to these important issues on behalf of our constituents and hundreds of other Yukoners who have reached out to us as elected representatives, it is a privilege. I respect that privilege.

Yukoners would have preferred it if we had this discussion and debate months ago, but of course, the Liberals prevented that. As you will remember, we really have not been able to speak to these issues because the Liberals did not allow for the return of the Legislature through the summer. So, I would once again — and I'll say this — thank the Member for Copperbelt North for bringing this motion — this original Motion No. 236 — and, of course, the Member for Copperbelt South for improving it so we can talk about why it is important for the government to share information. It gives all members an opportunity to weigh in on why undermining parliamentary oversight and our respected democracy is just wrong.

It also gives all members the opportunity to reflect on democratic tendencies of this Liberal government. As I said earlier in debate, I think that the original motion was a good start, but it seems that it's missing some key principles that respect democracy. That principle is the importance of sharing information for informed debate.

The amendment before us today goes a long way to providing the democratic oversight that the Liberal government refused to allow us over the past six or seven months, and it will help us to ensure that the Liberal government does not fall back on its undemocratic tendencies.

Mr. Speaker, we need to know that we have the information before us and all Yukoners whenever we discuss these topics so that we can provide the information and pass it on to our constituents. We are elected members for various ridings and communities of the Yukon. We must be able to debate and provide democratic oversight to the government's decisions. A stable and working democracy assures Yukoners that we do our due diligence and make correct decisions on behalf of everyone.

Beyond providing certainty, it is just the right thing to do. As you know, Mr. Speaker, when the pandemic began, it moved very quickly around the world. Before long, it was right here on our doorstep. In the Yukon, although we are lucky to date, we are not immune. The minister spoke about Nunavut a little while ago. We have seen a few cases here over many months and a few more in the past couple of weeks. I have heard from constituents who are nervous. I have heard from some who are skeptical. Others are cautious, optimistic, or pessimistic, depending on their nature. People come to us as their MLAs seeking answers to learn about what is happening and what the government is doing. That is how democracy functions. As elected representatives, we are supposed to have information to allow us to debate and consider government policies. Then we are able to ask informed questions about them and truly provide oversight of the government's actions. We need to be able to ask these questions on behalf of our constituents in the Legislative Assembly, which is the physical home of our territory's democracy.

To be entirely clear, this idea that there should be a provision of democratic oversight of the government is not

about opposing the government; it's not even about criticizing the government. It's not about criticizing or opposing the state of emergency. In fact, as we have said many times, we will be supporting this motion, regardless of whether or not our amendment passes, but what we are wanting to debate here in the Legislature today — and in the past — and to get on the record is the fact that it is important to provide this democratic oversight of the government. Liberals do not like to hear or listen to that, but it's a fact. It's about scrutinizing and providing oversight of government to ensure that they are representing and making the best decisions on behalf of Yukoners.

The government, with this motion and through some of the comments by its ministers over the past six months, wants to make an issue and have a political fight. It's disappointing. The Liberals want to play politics with this pandemic. This does not serve Yukoners. I worry that, if the Liberals continue down this path, they will end up hurting our territory's response to the pandemic, which eventually hurts Yukoners.

This highly partisan and undemocratic approach by the Liberal government does not serve the public health needs well, and it does not serve the economic recovery well. What serves us is a government that is open and transparent about their decisions and that allows elected representatives to provide oversight — how and why things got to where they are today. That is what gives government and their actions legitimacy, and it starts with the information sharing as outlined in today's amendment.

Information sharing — we have heard from many Yukoners who were shocked to hear that the Liberal government was not providing opposition parties information on the government's response. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? When other jurisdictions did this, and provided this oversight to elected representatives from other parties, the opposition parties supported the extension of the state of emergency. I guess the question that we must ask is: Why is the Liberal government not providing the same level of transparency? I have said this before, but I want to say that we have done some right things in our early response to the pandemic — absolutely, yes. By taking precautions early on, we kept our caseload relatively low. That is awesome.

Initially, they did act a little too slowly. They said that everything was good and that anyone asking for quicker action was paranoid. If they weren't so resistant to early action, then we might have even lower cases.

But, anyway, one major issue that has come up to me as an MLA throughout the pandemic, the state of emergency, and the subsequent extension has, of course, been our proximity to Alaska. Perhaps, in part, due to our closeness to Alaska, the Alaska Highway, the Haines Road, our friends in Haines, our friends in Northway, and our friends in Skagway — we have many of them. With the Alaska Highway connection — where we must allow Alaskans and US citizens to travel through our territory — I have often heard concerns about transmission related to highway travel. We recognize that this is a difficult balance. No one has ever denied this.

All that we are asking for is information and the ability to debate these things and ask about them in the Legislative Assembly. So, I want to be able to respond to my constituents and say, "Here is what the government is doing to keep us safe along the Alaska Highway." Yukoners have reached out, looking for information and input that went into the government's control along the Alaska Highway through the state of emergency. How much was spent enforcing travel along the Alaska Highway? How many public servants were operating as patrol or security guards along the highway? How many people were turned away from going to downtown Whitehorse? How are we reducing transmission at our gas stations and restaurants along the Alaska Highway? Why did the Liberals and the Minister of Community Services issue a list of approved businesses along the Alaska Highway that left a number of business establishments off the list?

We heard from a lot of businesses that were upset with the Minister of Community Services for picking winners and losers and leaving businesses behind. When these businesses reached out to us and reached out to me asking why the minister would unfairly harm their businesses, we wish we had the information to explain to them why we had this decision or the opportunity to provide some input.

People are looking for that information about the Mayo Road Cut-off or the Carcross Cut-off. What controls are in place at these locations to keep folks on the required travel routes? These are not tough questions, and they are definitely not trick questions, but they are questions that Yukoners have, and they expect their elected representatives to be able to ask them, which is why so many Yukoners were surprised that the Liberal government refused to allow for democratic oversight of their decisions.

Some of our communities are well-known tourism and event hubs. Many of them have been devastated by the decision to close the borders. Again, this is not a criticism of the decision to close the borders or to restrict the borders, but these types of issues are important for lawmakers to discuss before the government makes the decisions.

These communities and their tourism businesses rely wholeheartedly on visitors and the economy that it brings to fill rooms, to eat at local eateries or restaurants, buy souvenirs, or take tours. Tourism and business operators whom my colleagues and I have spoken with over the last month and continue to speak to — the tourism industry is a deeply interdependent network of operators. It's people's lives, it's jobs, and it's the future of their families that they are worried about, and they want their government to share this information.

Employers and employees both feel the impacts. If the business can't remain viable, then unfortunately we will see layoffs, and this means that Yukoners will be put in a position where they can't pay their bills, they can't pay their mortgages, they can't buy groceries, and the list goes on. That is a scary thought.

It's very frustrating, sitting here on the opposition benches, and you have families who are struggling, reaching out for information, and then the government will not even respond to

a letter or e-mail from us. These are the types of issues that democratic oversight allows us to debate — and consider all sides of an argument. Not that the ultimate decision would necessarily change, but all of the issues and concerns would have been considered.

It isn't enough for the government to just say, "Trust us." That's not how democratic oversight works. The initial implementation of the first round of emergency measures took place when everyone was scrambling to make sense in a senseless world. No one from our side has said that we should have slowed that process down by requiring legislative debate beforehand.

We know that things were moving quickly and that the government had to act quickly, but the first emergency was for 90 days. Then the government extended it for another 90 days and then, Mr. Speaker, another 90 days. So, before both of these extensions, the government had 90 days of time to allow for democratic oversight of the extensions.

They could have come back at the time between any of those periods for a couple of days of sitting in this Legislature to allow for debate, to allow for oversight — a little bit of scrutiny. But instead they chose not to; instead they shut down democracy and insisted that they didn't need any help. So, when measures are extended and things are put into place without asking all members, we get into trouble. Democratic oversight is set aside and decisions are instead made in a "we know what's best" fashion. It's not how things should work, and it's very disappointing that the Liberals used their majority power in this way. Yukoners definitely deserve to know what is happening and that they are being equally represented in this process, especially since a lot of these moves could easily have received the support or at least the understanding of why they needed to be implemented.

I'll say again that, by sharing this information on these measures, it would likely have made the government stance on decisions more palatable. The undemocratic approach that has been taken by this government has really hurt the public image as well; I firmly believe that.

This is another important point: The government's actions are now going to cost the government millions in legal fees with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* decision that is at the courts right now. That is millions of dollars. Scrutiny was sorely lacking over the last year and a half by not calling us back to the Legislative Assembly. So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the government supporting this amendment, and I also look forward to hearing from others.

I'll just leave it with this thought: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that we're here today having this discussion.

**Mr. Hassard:** I'm happy to have the opportunity to rise today to speak to this amendment.

The amendment really is about information, and of course, information is so important, but equally important is the accuracy of the information.

On Monday, we heard the Minister of Community Services, when he was asked about how borders are being patrolled after hours, responded — and just to quote Hansard:

“We have put in place measures to consider after hours — for example — video cameras and CEMA enforcement officers coming forward to do random checkstops in the evening. We will work to make sure that it is safe.”

Earlier today in Question Period, the minister incorrectly stated that he didn’t say that. In fact, he even proceeded to what I think many would refer to as “mansplain” to the Member for Porter Creek North. Again, Mr. Speaker, just to help the minister out, I will quote again from Hansard. This is what he said here in this Legislature — and I quote: “We have put in place measures to consider after hours — for example — video cameras and CEMA enforcement officers coming forward to do random checkstops in the evening. We will work to make sure that it is safe.” Mr. Speaker, you understand the importance of information. That is what this amendment is about; it’s information.

I think that the original motion brought forward by the Member for Copperbelt North was really a good start. The problem was that it just was not complete. To support the state of emergency that has been in place for hundreds of days is totally supportable, but what about democracy? How do we support our democratic principles? How do we support democratic oversight? That is an important part of this discussion as well. I am not sure — maybe the Member for Copperbelt North doesn’t think so. By omitting anything in his original motion, you really get the sense that he doesn’t think democratic oversight is important at all. This is what I would say is a second chance for the Member for Copperbelt North, but maybe it’s the fourth chance for the Member for Copperbelt North to see the error in his ways, I guess.

I guess this kind of puts the emphasis on the importance of this amendment because it really does give the members opposite an opportunity to look at where they’ve gone wrong to improve on this motion.

We agree that the motion was important, but we think equally, or more so, that the amendment is more important. It speaks to the importance of ensuring that all MLAs have the same information as government members do when debating, reviewing, and considering states of emergency and other emergency measures. It leaves you wondering if the Member for Copperbelt North and his colleagues do not agree with openness and transparency. Are they opposed to this?

The Member for Copperbelt North and his Liberal colleagues really have painted this in black and white terms. Either you agree that there is an emergency or you don’t. Unfortunately, I think that this really misses the point. There is an old saying: “Miss the point by a mile”; they may have got two miles out of this one.

We’ve said for months that we aren’t necessarily against the measures brought into place under the emergency. What we’re against is the abuse of the power and the undermining of democracy by this government. It’s about oversight. It’s about debate and having all of that information — everyone having the same information right here in front of us.

I think that this government really has become renowned for providing non-answers or talking in circles or pretending like questions weren’t even asked. I start to wonder if they don’t

trust people to have information. That’s unfortunate, because Yukoners are reasonable people. If you give people the information to explain why you did something, chances are they’ll understand your point of view, even if they don’t necessarily agree with you. Even if they disagree with the ultimate decision, they will support you if they think that you’re doing the right thing. But that’s the fundamental difference between this authoritarian and undemocratic Liberal government and the opposition parties.

The Liberals do not trust Yukoners to have access to information. By doing this, they fail to recognize the fact that the details of the actions taken by government do have a profound effect on the lives of citizens. No matter what the government’s intentions are, government is not the sole source of all knowledge within the territory. In fact, it does not fully understand the impact of all of their decisions on businesses, citizens, and others in the same way that those people who live and work outside of the public sector do on a regular basis.

The remarks made by the Liberals so far this Sitting on the issue about being very tone-deaf and even arrogantly dismissive of Yukoners whose lives are affected by this and of business owners, who are so upset by the decisions — again, this isn’t to say that the government hasn’t done the right thing in the actions that they have taken, but it’s to say that they’ve done the wrong thing by not sharing information with Yukoners.

I can only try to guess the motivations of the Liberals or the Member for Copperbelt North in refusing to share information with Yukoners, but it’s fundamentally undemocratic. This Liberal government should not be afraid to share this information.

As I have said, Yukoners are more than willing to accept information and be reasonable about it, especially if the information helps explain why things are being done. A quote that has always resonated with me speaks to this: “Truth never damages a cause that is just.” Mr. Speaker, I’m sure you are well aware that this was Gandhi, and it’s as true today as it was then. I think it’s important to reflect on as we discuss the amendment that we’re talking about here today.

It’s at the core of this amendment, making sure that everyone has all the information. I know why government might be opposed to this, of course. It has been weeks and weeks of debate in the House, and we have ministers who refuse to share information about spending. The Premier refuses to share and, in some cases, actively hides information about his government’s decisions during the pandemic.

We have seen the Premier politically interfere in the ATIPP process. As a matter of fact —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

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

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that this onslaught of insults is fun for some people here, but I heard you say the other day that personalizing debate was inappropriate in the Legislature. He has just accused the



Premier of what would be unparliamentary behaviour, and I ask that remark to be withdrawn.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** I think that the Government House Leader heard the Leader of the Official Opposition wrong. She also did not cite the standing order in making her point of order. In fact, what I heard the Leader of the Official Opposition talk about were actions of the Premier outside this House, in interfering in the ATIPP process. He did not, in fact, accuse the Premier of taking actions inside the House, contrary to that, as the minister suggested. It would seem to be that it is simply a dispute between members and that the Government House Leader just doesn't like the facts that the Leader of the Official Opposition is laying on the record.

**Speaker:** The Government House Leader, on the point of order.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I don't have any trouble with facts, Mr. Speaker. What I have trouble with is accusations of criminal behaviour in this House or outside of it.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** I don't think that the — in fact, I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition did not accuse the Premier of violating the *Criminal Code*. That is an inference made entirely by the Government House Leader herself that he said that. He clearly did not accuse the Premier of violating the *Criminal Code of Canada*.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** I will review Hansard. What I did hear about one sentence before the point of order, however, was that the Leader of the Official Opposition alleged that there was some active hiding. In my view —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Speaker:** But the Chair cared about it, so I would ask the Leader of the Official Opposition to perhaps avoid framing submissions that way going forward.

**Mr. Hassard:** I certainly will make an attempt to avoid that.

Just continuing, I think that it is interesting — going off of what we were just discussing on the point of order — the other day in Question Period, the Premier stood up and said, "I didn't destroy any evidence," and that is kind of an odd thing, I think, for anyone to say, but especially for the Premier to say in the Legislature.

One thing I can say for certain, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we certainly feel that this Liberal government is undemocratic. We have seen a letter from the former Clerk of this Assembly on electoral reform. The letter was not made public for quite a length of time and the reason was the fact that the Liberal was critical of the Liberals' undemocratic actions on electoral reform. You know, the government used Members' Services Board as a way to maybe keep that letter from seeing the light of day. I think that's just one more reason why it's so important

for the House to support this amendment with the idea that all MLAs should have access to the same information.

We certainly would like to get this amendment to a vote today. We hope the government sees the error in their ways and votes in favour of this amendment. Yes, we support democracy. We support ensuring that we're open and transparent and it shouldn't be controversial. It will be interesting to see if the Member for Copperbelt North and his colleagues vote in favour of this amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's controversial at all to ensure that all MLAs have the same information when voting on or debating issues. Right now, the lack of public process and democratic oversight of government actions and how they're making those decisions or how they've made those decisions is very problematic. In fact, the lack of sharing information is the central point of a court case against the Liberal government right now. The Liberal government is actually being taken to court right now over their abuse of democracy and rights.

They're being challenged on not respecting the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. It's certainly noteworthy. Imagine what former Prime Minister Trudeau would think of that if he found out that a Liberal government was abusing the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in this way. To be honest, Mr. Speaker, I think he would probably roll over in his grave.

Whether or not the court will agree with their application or whether other Yukoners agree with their application is a matter for the courts and respectively for Yukoners to decide. It's not my intent here to argue the merits or non-merits of the court case, but it's an important and telling sign that the Liberals will go to such lengths to keep information from Yukoners.

I can only imagine what the former editor of the *Yukon News* would have written on the topic of the Liberal government being taken to court for charter violations. I'm sure that it's probably a bit of a sensitive topic on that side of the benches right now.

As members will recall, it's not just us who have said that there are concerns over a lack of information sharing from the government. In fact, it's not just citizens and businesses who have criticized the government for lack of transparency. In fact, those who have expressed concern with the approach taken by the government include the retired Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly — of course, Dr. Floyd McCormick.

Mr. McCormick — I had the pleasure of working with him while he spent a few years of my life here, sitting at this Table, and I certainly enjoyed working with him and really appreciated his advice and support and his years of knowledge and experience on topics just like this.

So, interestingly, in his current role as a private citizen, he repeatedly expressed his views on the importance of democratic accountability — certainly a laudable cause to take up for sure. I'm sure that you too, Mr. Speaker, remember from your time working with him that he was an invaluable source of knowledge, precedence, and understanding of procedure and the importance of our democratic institutions. I'm certainly not taking anything away from the current Clerk of the Assembly.

When we heard the former Clerk say that this isn't entirely — when we heard what he said — and it wasn't any different from my own point of view, but I will quote from what he stated in the public domain on social media: “The Yukon government's response to the pandemic may be completely justified. The Legislative Assembly now gets to debate the state of emergency declaration — 201 days after it was first made. The lack of scrutiny & accountability is a problem the govt need to address.” That was 201 days a couple of weeks ago — so 201-plus.

I think it's a good time to mention that, if the government really thought it was important to get the opposition to vote on the state of emergency, they would have recalled the Legislature during the summer of one of those hundreds of times that we asked to let us come here and let us vote on these things.

What I really want to note and emphasize is that, first of all, we do agree that a public health emergency requires a government to act, and yes, of course, part of that government response does include public health orders and likely emergency orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, considering the structure of our legislation. However, this doesn't mean that we can just toss transparency and information sharing and democracy aside, as this government has done over the past number of months.

The importance of legislative accountability and oversight is increased during a time of emergency such as this, not decreased. It should also be noted that there's a difference between a pandemic occurring, such as this one did, and another emergency occurring, and there is a need for government to act quickly in a manner that eliminates the possibility of a reasonable public or democratic process in the lead-up to implementing orders in a time-sensitive emergency.

However, once that period of emergency has gone on for an extended period of time, it's important that those measures be subject to public process, including democratic debate and scrutiny. The use of emergency powers for an extended period of time without any legislative or democratic oversight is fundamentally inconsistent with the principle of accountability that is vital to a functioning democracy. It is also contrary to the nature of an emergency.

So, the Liberals have abused power for months with an unprecedented lack of oversight, transparency, or accountability. But, Mr. Speaker, I think that's why this amendment is so important. The information part is vital so that everyone has the same information moving forward and people can truly understand why the government makes the decisions that it does.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from members of the opposition. We haven't heard from many of them today. We've heard criticisms when there isn't as much — as many members speaking as possible — so hopefully, we hear from them and we get to a vote and vote in favour of this amendment.

**Mr. Cathers:** I'm pleased to finally have the opportunity to speak to this motion and this amendment here today.

I do have to begin by noting: We've seen some bizarre statements coming from the Minister of Community Services and some of the Liberal backbenchers. Earlier today, the minister actually said that he hasn't heard us say if we support the state of emergency. That's truly a bizarre statement. Unless the minister hasn't been listening to what's said in the House or reading the Blues, that statement is factually untrue, because we have been very clear about our position on this and have stated it multiple times in the House. On multiple days, we have been very clear about the fact that the Yukon Party does recognize the need to take action, including using the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. But where we do not agree with what the government wants is that we're not prepared to give them a blank cheque. I should point out that, if the Liberal government actually cared about the Official Opposition's views and the Third Party's views on the declaration of a state of emergency, they would have brought this matter to the Legislative Assembly over half a year ago instead of waiting to the point where we're now 236 days after the declaration of a state of emergency. They've shot down every amendment brought forward by other members to their motion and continue to try to play games on their original motion. It's just another example of this government that is arrogant, autocratic, unwilling to work with other parties, and unwilling to share information with other parties or Yukoners.

I should remind this House that, in fact, this Liberal government is currently being sued by Yukoners related to their actions —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Member for Porter Creek Centre, on a point of order.

**Mr. Gallina:** I believe that the Member for Lake Laberge is in contravention of Standing Order 19(f), “... refers to any matter that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination where any person may be prejudiced in such a matter by the reference.”

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to ask the member to recall his comments and apologize to this House.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** That was a pretty desperate attempt by the member. That section does refer to whether that reference would be prejudicial in nature. Of course, I simply reminded members that the government is being sued. It's no different from comments that other members have made many times in this Assembly, including about the government being sued in this very court action that we are discussing.

#### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** I think it's open for the Member for Lake Laberge to refer to the fact that there is a litigation. Obviously, the Member for Lake Laberge, based on some of the findings

from the Chair and from other prior assemblies, is fairly limited in getting into the detail or commenting on the merits or demerits of the litigation, but in my view, referencing the existence of the litigation is permissible.

**Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This amendment does relate very directly to the issue of information. The amendment proposed by my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, is related to requesting the provision of all Members of the Legislative Assembly the same information that informs the Yukon government's decisions on whether to implement or extend the state of emergency.

As per your direction, I am not going to comment in detail on the court action being filed against the government. It is very relevant to note the fact that they are being sued for their refusal to share information with the public and their undemocratic actions.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Member for Porter Creek Centre, on a point of order.

**Mr. Gallina:** I will refer to Standing Order 19(f) and the Member for Lake Laberge providing details and his assertion — or the merits — of why the government is being sued, which you just spoke to only a minute ago. I charge the member for contravening Standing Order 19(f), and I would ask him to apologize to this House and retract his statements.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** I believe that this is no different from the point of order that the Liberal backbencher brought forward that you just ruled on. I was commenting at a very high level on the nature of the fact that the government is being sued, and it seems substantively identical to the point that the member just previously brought forward.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Speaker:** I have heard enough for now. Thank you.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** There are pleadings out there, which we don't have before us, so, ultimately, I think it probably would not be — what the Member for Lake Laberge is arguably starting to do is likely just to start to go down a recitation or at least a summary of what the pleadings are, which, I guess, are in the public domain.

But I would ask the Member for Lake Laberge to keep his comments with respect to the litigation — while honouring the spirit and intent of Standing Order 19(f) — at a very, very high level.

**Mr. Cathers:** I will, of course, follow your instruction, and, in fact, that is what I was doing before the Member for — whatever riding he is from — Porter Creek Centre, I think it is. He was making assumptions about where he thought I might go next, and, in fact, I was just reminding the House of the facts that are in the public domain — facts that have been reported in newspapers, as well as on the radio — and the member is just

very sensitive to the criticism that we are levying, on behalf of Yukoners, about the actions of this government.

I would note as well — I do have to remind the very sensitive Liberal member who brought that up that the statements that we have seen by the Liberals that really ignore the facts of what the Official Opposition has repeatedly said in this Legislative Assembly could really possibly be — well, I won't say that word.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** First of all, I did not hear what the Member for Lake Laberge just said in approximately his last sentence, so I am not going to be in a position to rule, if that is — because you were back and forth. So, I did not hear what the Member for Lake Laberge just said.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Member for Porter Creek Centre, on a point of order.

**Mr. Gallina:** I am having trouble understanding what the Member for Lake Laberge — how he is referring to the amendment that is actually being debated right now. I would charge him with being in contravention of Standing Order 19(b)(i), which is speaking to matters other than the question at hand.

The amendment is an important amendment. Important dialogue is taking place, and I would ask the Member for Lake Laberge to speak to the amendment that is before this House.

**Speaker:** The Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order with respect to Standing Order 19(b)(i).

**Mr. Cathers:** I was speaking to the amendment. I was very directly talking about the topic of information as mentioned in the amendment. If the Member for Porter Creek Centre would actually allow me continue what I am saying rather than repeatedly interrupting me on points of order — which so far have all turned out to be bogus — he would understand better the connection to the amendment.

I believe that this is just a dispute between members. If the Member for Porter Creek Centre would allow me to continue, he will see very directly the relevance to the amendment.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** I'm just going to remind myself, for the benefit of this discussion — I'm going to review what the amendment actually is.

The second portion is: "(2) the provision to all Members of the Legislative Assembly of the same information that informs the Government of Yukon's decision on whether to implement and extend the current state of emergency".

I'm listening.

**Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In speaking to the amendment, what I want to talk about — this is about information, and part of information includes the ability to

debate and to hold the government accountable. I know that we've seen from the interventions today by a Liberal member that they don't like some of the criticism levied against the government, but I have to remind the member — and indeed, the entire Liberal government — that there are Yukoners right now whose lives are being affected by these ministerial orders that the government has brought in under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. There are a lot more Yukoners outside this House who are upset about the government's lack of information sharing than there are inside this House. That is the purpose of this amendment. That is directly why my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, brought it forward.

We've seen some pretty weak excuses presented by the government. The Minister of Community Services claimed that they couldn't provide this information because it would violate Cabinet confidence. Well, there are a couple of problems with the ridiculous argument. To begin with, Cabinet of the day has the ability to waive Cabinet confidence when it so chooses. Additionally, if there are, in fact, truly some details there that relate to actually sensitive matters, such as related to personnel or something else that can't be shared in a public domain, the government has an easy option open to it.

In fact, an option that we have proposed at least five times throughout this year is to make sure of an all-party committee. All-party committees, as a matter of course — if there are matters related to personnel or other sensitive matters — don't share information that they shouldn't share in a public venue.

To ask that all MLAs be provided with this information is very reasonable. We believe that, in most cases, that information should also be shared with the public, but the wording of the motion brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt South, allows for the potential that some of the information currently seen only by Cabinet might fall into the category that could be shared with MLAs on a confidential basis but could perhaps, in some specific instances, not be immediately made public afterward.

We're seeing the Liberals grasp at increasingly flimsy straws in their attempt to justify refusing to share information, refusing to accept any amendments brought forward by opposition members, refusing to agree to all-party committees — unless it's the one that they proposed that they were directly in a conflict of interest in, given the way that they structured it, and called out for such by the former Clerk of the Assembly in his current capacity as a private citizen, Dr. Floyd McCormick.

I want to move back to some of the comments that the Minister of Community Services made earlier today in talking about this matter. The minister said something on Monday and, earlier today, blamed the Member for Porter Creek North and the media for talking about what he said. As noted in the CBC article, which, for the reference of Hansard, is online, entitled “As COVID-19 cases climb across the country, Yukon MLAs question border controls...” It is dated November 17, 2020.

In that article, there is reference to the fact that my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, also questioned the border controls now in place in the Yukon. “Since Oct. 1, Yukon's non-international land borders have been staffed from

9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, when they had previously been staffed 24 hours per day.”

That is then relying on the assumption, as noted later in the article: “Travellers crossing into Yukon are required to stop and sign a declaration, and provide their self-isolation plan if arriving from somewhere other than B.C., the N.W.T. or Nunavut.”

My colleague asked “... whether reduced staffing at the borders has made them less secure” — saying, “How many travelers have entered the Yukon during these unstaffed hours?”

The minister was then quoted by CBC. It says — and I will quote from the article while not referring to the minister by his name, which the article does — so, name of the minister — “... also said the government is doing other things to ensure compliance at the border, such as installing video cameras and having enforcement officers do random checkstops in the evening.”

So, after that, then my colleague earlier today asked him a question about it. He bizarrely not only claimed not to have made those statements, but personally attacked the Member for Porter Creek North and asked her to apologize. I would remind the minister and his colleagues — if you look on page 1863 of Hansard from November 16, the minister said, when talking about video cameras —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

**Deputy Speaker (Mr. Hutton):** Member for Porter Creek Centre, on a point of order.

**Mr. Gallina:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe I just heard the Member for Lake Laberge charge that the Minister of Community Services was motivated in attacking another member. I believe that's in contravention of Standing Order 19(g), and I would ask you to have the member apologize and retract that statement.

**Deputy Speaker:** Mr. Cathers, on the point of order.

**Mr. Cathers:** On this bizarre point of order brought forward by the member, I did not impute motive. I did refer to the minister's action and I characterized his criticism of the Member for Porter Creek North as an attack, which I believe was an accurate characterization of the way that he responded to my colleague. I don't believe it's a point of order; it is just an area again — this Liberal backbencher is very sensitive to the criticism being lobbied at this Liberal government.

#### Deputy Speaker's ruling

**Deputy Speaker:** I tend to agree. This is a dispute among members, so the Member for Lake Laberge can continue.

**Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, I mentioned what the media reported. Again, that is in an article on CBC dated November 17. I was just beginning to — when I was interrupted by the fourth point of order, I think, brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

I was quoting what the minister said during the tail end of his ministerial statement or whatever the proper term is actually for the response of the minister after members have responded to a ministerial statement.

The minister himself talked about "... video cameras and CEMA enforcement officers coming forward to do random checkpoints in the evenings." The minister also said — and I quote: "We have put in place measures..." when he talked about those specific steps. I will allow that it is possible that the minister misspoke and meant to say that they were considering putting those measures in place, but that's not what he said.

Instead of correcting his comments — whether he was factually wrong at the time or whether he realized that he made a mistake later — his response was to criticize CBC reporters and my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North. His actions could really be best described as gaslighting, where he is trying to make those reporters and my colleague think that they were somehow the ones who made a mistake.

It is really fitting in keeping with the way this Liberal government has managed throughout the pandemic where — just as in reference to this amendment — there has been a lack of information sharing. We have seen today the bizarre claim that they somehow can't share information that so far only Cabinet has seen without presumably the sky falling somehow. The minister didn't specify exactly what the consequences would be of sharing it, but I will remind them that they are a government elected by the public. They are accountable to this Assembly — or they are supposed to be — and the information that they have belongs to the public and should be shared with the public unless there is a compelling reason why it actually can't be.

The pandemic is not just supposed to be a good excuse to avoid accountability, avoid sharing information, avoid answering questions, avoid answering budget questions, and refuse to have your actions under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* questioned, debated, or scrutinized by Members of the Legislative Assembly. The approach that is being taken is very unfortunate, as some of my colleagues and I have mentioned. When we talk about the requests that we have brought forward, including information sharing — that's something where it is not just us asking; we hear it repeatedly from Yukoners.

Again, when we look at the mischaracterizations by the government of what the Official Opposition has been doing — when we look through Hansard, we can very clearly see and very clearly state that we support the need to take action under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* because of the current structure of our legislation. But another area where I do have to challenge the minister for his factually incorrect statements in this Assembly is when earlier, in his attack toward my colleague, he claimed that you need a state of emergency for border control. That is not factually true.

In fact, an option that was open to government — as I have mentioned before in this Legislative Assembly — is to bring into place legislation, as some jurisdictions such as Ontario have done — bringing forward matters that are time-limited in nature and that apply to the pandemic. They could have

addressed those matters through legislation either this fall or in fact, earlier this year. If they had brought it forward, all of the content of the ministerial orders could have been fully addressed through legislation and debated in this Assembly rather than done under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. They simply chose not to take that approach but to suggest, as the minister did — in fact, he more than suggested it — he out and out stated that you had to have a state of emergency for border control. That is factually incorrect.

The minister could have instead tabled legislation related to the pandemic and, had those measures been reasonable, he could have expected that the Official Opposition would have supported those measures. We do not support the approach that the government has taken of repeated top-down decision-making — a refusal to have ministerial orders subject to public review or review by a committee of the Legislative Assembly.

Unfortunately, we see that we are up here on this Groundhog Day motion where they have brought back again Motion No. 236, continuing to spin and misrepresent what has been said by the Official Opposition when they know very well that we do recognize the need to take action. We have said very clearly, repeatedly, that we recognize that, at the start of the pandemic, there was a need to take action quickly. There was a need to move forward with ministerial orders at the time. Due to the nature of the pandemic, action had to be taken in a quick manner, but we are now 236 days after the government declared a pandemic and declared a state of emergency. The excuses are getting thinner and thinner. The spin is getting more and more ridiculous from the Liberal Party, and ultimately, Yukoners are smarter than the Liberal Party thinks they are. They will see through the excuses, secrecy, and ridiculous spin games that we see from this Liberal government and realize what the facts are.

In returning to talk about the specific content of the amendment proposed by my colleague, it's about information. It's asking that all MLAs have access to the same information that informs the government's decision on whether to implement and whether to extend a state of emergency. We don't have access to that same information.

As I noted earlier, there is no good reason why government cannot share the information Cabinet received. If there's something very specific that can only be shared confidentially with MLAs that cannot be made public, we're prepared to entertain that possibility, but instead, we see government refusing to share information, making factually incorrect statements repeatedly, gaslighting when MLAs ask them reasonable questions, and taking an approach that is arrogant, autocratic, elitist, and secretive. In light of some of the other things going on, including their infamous \$100,000 in secret donations, it is not inspiring public confidence that this Liberal government remembers who they were elected to serve when their response to MLAs, in seeking the same information the government used to make its decision, basically boils down to saying, "The truth? You can't handle the truth."

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

### Point of order

**Deputy Speaker:** Minister of Economic Development, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that there has been at least one, if not two, occasions where the term “gaslighting” has been used. I would like to cite Standing Order 19(g) about imputing false motives. I don’t think anything that has been done here on the sharing of information has been focused on any kind of psychological manipulation. I think it is sad to hear that, so I would ask that the member opposite withdraw his statement.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** I would first of all have to point out that the minister suggested that we were characterizing the sharing of information as “gaslighting”. In fact, we were characterizing the minister’s comments and refusal to share information as gaslighting. My understanding is that this term has been used in this Legislative Assembly previously without it being ruled out of order. It certainly seems to fit the situation.

### Deputy Speaker’s ruling

**Deputy Speaker:** I will take it under advisement. I believe that it has been ruled against both ways in this Legislative Assembly. I will take it under review and get back to members.

Member for Lake Laberge, you have 46 seconds left.

**Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In wrapping up my comments, I do have to point out that government doesn’t need to be afraid to share public information with the public. It would, in fact, increase public confidence that the decisions government makes are reasonable because, in the absence of information, people become increasingly suspicious of this Liberal government and its autocratic, undemocratic decisions.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There has been much said over the last number of days on this particular topic when we have had a chance to debate. Actually, at least on this side of the floor, we were looking for one of two words, really: yes or no. We are on pace right now for 60,000 words versus one of those two words.

Yukoners are very, very intelligent people. They have watched this. They know that this is gamesmanship. They know that sitting together — whether on the street talking to a constituent or citizen or whether you are at the kitchen table with a family member — it has been a very hot topic about how the Yukon should handle this emergency.

What we have heard today from members across the way — even on the legal proceedings that seem to be underway — is that they have already made a judgment call on that. All you would have to do is go back to Hansard and review the statements of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

Right away, even though there seems to be a debate that’s underway — one where it’s being positioned around democracy, another that seems to be positioned on what to do — you can see the undertones. Yukoners, absolutely, are shrewd, intelligent people who will catch up on those

statements — some of those legal proceedings that are quite significant — and that the Yukon Party seems to have already made a judgment on that. All you would have to do is go back, and we can share those words.

We have also heard this debate based on a lack of information. I may have the wrong information, but I thought what had happened is that the members of the opposition, on over 20 different occasions this summer and into the year, met with the chief medical officer of health. I believe that this happened. They may have forgotten about that, but it would be very interesting to know that, if they were having that level of engagement, there would be information being passed on.

In the work that we had to undertake around the economy, I listened to the briefings to the public that happened three times a week — just like any member of the public. I actually didn’t sit in on 20 separate briefings. The information that has been shared is the information that we have.

I interfaced with the business community. It was said here that we haven’t listened to Yukoners. When we have been challenged on our decisions around the economy, the problem with that is that the decision-making is being reflected upon us, but all you would have to do is see the statements from the business advisory group, a very comprehensive group of business leaders. We would meet; they would provide me with, essentially, a mini mandate letter, and then we followed through on those actions.

We had a very symbiotic relationship with many sectors to understand how to build policy very quickly and then turn that policy into effective and efficient programs. That’s partially why the federal Government of Canada has now adopted two of our programs and potentially a third program. I think that this speaks volumes for the capacity and the innovation of the public service in the Yukon.

Under that pressure, although there were lots of challenges from the Official Opposition on what the success looked like, we see that reflected in the data that is coming through around many aspects of our economy.

No information being passed on, yet 20 separate meetings for the opposition — no information for the public, yet press conferences three times a week where people had many opportunities.

As MLAs, I know that, on this side of the House — and I’m sure on the other side of the House or I would hope — non-stop interaction with business leaders — in my case, because of the portfolios — the mining sector, constituents — people who are concerned.

I’m perplexed, because when I look across, especially at the Official Opposition, three of the members represent rural ridings and one right on the edge — a rural riding but right on the city’s edge, really close to the city. In all of those cases, what I heard — just like going, Mr. Speaker, to your community — was a real fear from community to community around what can happen.

I think what we’re seeing is that it’s being played out in Nunavut right now. I had an opportunity this morning to be on the phone with officials from Nunavut on an FPT call, and I shared our concern and sympathy to those right now who are

dealing with such a significant infection rate in a small community. That's what I've heard from Yukoners, whether it be Haines Junction — real fear and getting some difference of opinions coming out of there — or Watson Lake — real concern around what was happening — as well as the communities of Ross River and Teslin.

It's intriguing. It's this tightrope walk where, on one side, there are business owners. Yes, we've listened to business owners. We've worked with business owners throughout this entire process. Hearing those community leaders, there seems to be a real contrast between what the community leaders were saying — whether it be First Nations, municipalities, or whatever it may be — and what the MLAs are saying from the Official Opposition who represent those areas. I don't know why, because I think that they are in tune with their communities, but there is a real divergence in perspective. I don't know if that's because of the portion of the political base that they represent and they don't feel like they want to alienate them, so they have to sort of appeal to that, yet the people who they actually represent as well in their communities and those community leaders — they don't seem to be on a consistent stand with those individuals.

That, I think, has been interesting. Once again, as we look through this, the business advisory group — we've spent the amount of time — whether it was the weekly meetings, the advice that we had — that continuation. So, I think that, when we think about the business owners, there has been so much interaction with them.

There was a bit of a quote from a former employee here in the Legislative Assembly, and the Leader of the Official Opposition talked about how it has taken us 201 days to get here — plus a couple of days — because we've had almost 60,000 words from when we started this debate until now. Of course, that many words take time, even though Yukoners just want a yes or a no. I think the leaders in the communities that the MLAs for the Official Opposition represent want to know: yes or no? They want to know: How would you handle this if you were in government? Would you take a stand on this? Would you make the tough decisions that have to be made? I don't think anybody — out of all the MLAs who are here in the Assembly — ever had taken on the thought that they wanted to be in this position, but that's part of the job. You have to make the tough calls. As a Cabinet, we've had to do that. You have to make them in a timely manner. When you do that, you have to understand that, inevitably, you have to be accountable. What that means is that you will stand by those decisions. Those decisions that you have made, you will have to live with. They will be on your shoulders for the rest of your time, whether you're in this Assembly or you're out in the private sector or whatever you do. People will look back. I think, for this side of the floor, those tough decisions — we felt they were the right decisions to make. We felt that the health and well-being of Yukoners was the priority. We felt that, in order to have a strong economy and to have all of those other elements, you need to have healthy people. We look at what has happened in other provinces where there have been certain moves made to provide maybe some more flexibility with big populations

and with a lot of different individuals moving through those geographic areas. You see it each and every day. You see leaders from across the country having to deal with the repercussions of those policy decisions.

Also, you see the health care professionals calling out in those jurisdictions — calling out to say to their leaders: "Please, can you take a look at a different matrix of decision-making?" — because they feel that this one is so detrimental to the health of the population that those individuals represent.

So, again, it wasn't a big surprise that we would walk into day three of more debate without getting to the answer. I think that we have felt on this side of the floor that the continuation of the debate is truly the answer that we are getting from the Official Opposition. That is the answer. They have answered it, but they have taken that one word and expanded it — probably by the end of the day — to 60,000 words.

I had a quick discussion with the Minister of Justice, and there were some comments made about her work — and, again, lack of opportunity here. I think that she said — the minister personally wrote to the Official Opposition four times and offered it up — to come in. "Is it information?" — that is what we heard over and over again — four times, to come into the Legislative Assembly. The commitment was made to bring all departments in to ask any of the questions that were needed.

I am trying to square up the fact that this offer is still a barrier to providing information and to answering questions. All departments — ask your questions. Here is the offer again — no. Here is the offer again — no. Here is the offer again — four times. Then what we have is 60,000 words, spinning the fact that we weren't going to provide any information. To quote the Member from Lake Laberge — Yukoners are smart people. Yukoners are smart people, and they are hearing this. For those who haven't, we can share it with them.

I think, really, that what we have come to understand is that this will probably go on all afternoon again. We hope that we can get to a point where we can vote on this.

The Official Opposition is more than welcome to bring back a motion that's not exactly the same — we know that we can't do that — but a motion that they feel, in the future, better reflects the debate they want to have. At this particular time, we're trying to get a sense of if people are supporting the state of emergency — if that question is just as relevant today as it was previously, based on the circumstances that are in front of us as a region, as the north, and as a country.

Hopefully, we will have that opportunity today. We likely won't, but hopefully we will, and Yukoners will understand how each and every one of the parties that are represented in this Legislative Assembly would handle a situation such as this. They know how we would, and we stand by that. Hopefully, we will see what our friends across the way would.

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

#### **Division**

**Deputy Speaker:** Division has been called.

*Bells*

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Disagree.

**Mr. Adel:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Disagree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

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

**Speaker:** The nays have it. I declare the amendment negated.

*Amendment to Motion No. 236 negated*

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Briefly, before we proceed — and I can provide perhaps some more fulsome reasons when I have time to review with the Clerks-at-the-Table — the term “gaslighting” has been used a few times this afternoon. My recollection is that, in the spring of this year and perhaps even in the fall of 2019, this has been dealt with. It has been found to be out of order. It is — what I have here from the *Urban Dictionary*: “A form of intimidation or psychological abuse, sometimes called Ambient Abuse where false information is presented to the victim, making them doubt their own memory, perception and quite often, their sanity.”

I don't think that this helps to advance debate in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. So, although we, of course, are loathe in the Westminster system to categorize words or to itemize words that are not permitted — because that is difficult — “gaslighting” is out. I think that we have some certainty on that word.

**Mr. Kent:** Just a point of clarification. I know that the Deputy Speaker was in the Chair when the point of order was called and ruled on with respect to that term, and I think that he mentioned that it had been ruled either way, so that is incorrect, just given your research.

**Speaker:** I don't think that it has been ruled either way, but the Clerks and I can review that and can respond, but my gut reaction is that it was ruled previously out of order. The definition provided in the *Urban Dictionary* is not particularly flattering, so I don't think that it would flatter members to be using that with any regularity or frequency.

We are back to debate on the main motion. If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Ms. White:** I apologize to my colleagues, Mr. Speaker. I had forgotten where we started initially.

I think that the one thing that no one will disagree with is that the last eight months have been hard, and there are some people who are thriving working from home, and there are people who are wilting working from home. It is affecting students differently, and it is affecting people across all spectrums differently. I don't think that there is any way to disagree with that.

When this motion — I apologize to the Member for Copperbelt North that I forgot where it came forward from initially — it just says: “THAT this House supports the current state of emergency in Yukon.” I appreciate that, but I think that there is a way that we can strengthen it so that it is clear and more precise. I don't believe that it weakens the motion at all. What it does do is that it mentions COVID-19, which I believe is pretty important since that is the whole reason why we have a civil emergency currently and why we are in this situation. I think that it is very straightforward. So, my hope is that my colleagues will support it so we can get to a vote. I disagree with a lot of what has been said today, because one could call it “mud” or whatever is being slung across both ways. I don't think that we need to do that. I think that what folks need from us right now, as people listening to leadership, is our ability to work together. I hear what my colleagues from the Yukon Party are saying, and I understand where they are coming from. I can hear what the members of the Liberal caucus are saying, and I understand that too.

What I am hoping is that, with this amendment that I am going to propose — I would like to consider this to be a leaf of peace, one that I think all members could support because it is not contentious. I have worked very hard to not make it contentious.

*Amendment proposed*

**Ms. White:** I move:

THAT Motion No. 236 be amended by inserting the phrase “under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic” after the words “in Yukon”.

**Speaker:** The Leader of the Third Party has the copies for other members, which will now be distributed.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

### Point of order

**Speaker:** Member for Copperbelt South, on a point of order.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I know that you are reviewing the amendment for orderliness. If it is deemed to be in order, I am just requesting a 10-minute recess for our caucus to take a look at the amendment — and I'm sure other members will as well.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** To comply with COVID-19 distancing measures and to allow for the members to review the proposed amendment, the House will recess for 10 minutes.

*Recess*



**Speaker:** I have had an opportunity to review the proposed amendment with the Clerks-at-the-Table and can advise that it's procedurally in order. Therefore, it has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King:

THAT Motion No. 236 be amended by inserting the phrase "under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic" after the words "in Yukon".

**Ms. White:** I thank everyone for helping me to figure out what expression it was I was looking for. I was extending an olive branch of peace. That was what I was trying to do. I believe that there is commonality here.

I believe that each side has valid points to make and that they are important and represent all across the Yukon. I'm not going to say that I listened really closely over the last number of days, but I have been listening and have done some reading and things.

The amendment that I propose will say — this is how it will read. It will say: "THAT this House supports the current state of emergency in Yukon under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic."

There are a couple of reasons why that is the way I have chosen to go. I think it's important that we talk about CEMA — the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. As we know, that's the tool that's being used right now to declare a state of emergency. We know that is the reason why we're able to have border controls and that is the reason why we have been able to make those decisions.

I appreciate the current state of emergency, but let's call it what it is: it's the COVID-19 pandemic. We hear over and over again how it's a world pandemic, it's an international pandemic, it's all these things — it's all true.

So, really, what this is just trying to do is be more clear, and I believe it does that. I don't believe it takes away from the initial motion; I believe it strengthens it. I don't think that it's helpful for me to look around or to say what I don't like about this side or that side.

I think we all have a responsibility here, and we all work for the people of the Yukon. This is just making that a little bit stronger and hoping that we can find commonality here. With that, I hope to hear some positive remarks from my colleagues. That's all I have for right now.

**Mr. Cathers:** I'm pleased to rise. I would like to thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing forward this amendment and for joining us in what has been an effort by both the Official Opposition as well as the Third Party to make positive changes to the original motion.

As you will recall previously in this Assembly in debate on this motion, we have debated three proposed amendments which have not been successful. I hope this one will break the pattern and that the government will support it. I thank the Leader of the NDP and her colleague for their support of amendments that we have proposed to the original motion.

The motion brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King clarifies the fact that the declaration of a state of

emergency in the Yukon is, under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, a very factual statement. It recognizes that it's a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm not going to seek to explain exactly what her intent was in doing that, but I will tell you why I believe that is necessary and those words are beneficial. That is, it seemed to me, that there is a pattern of government — once declaring a state of emergency this year, the Liberal government having a tendency to use the declaration of a state of emergency as a matter of convenience, not just a matter of necessity.

An example of that was in the legislation that we recently saw tabled to ban single-use plastic bags, where the government itself brings forward legislation that they tabled in this House this Sitting. Actually, in their handouts provided to members of the opposition and to media — when asked about how this might relate to the pandemic and whether there was any need to potentially suspend that because of it — the handout had indicated that it was their plan simply to use the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and a ministerial order if they felt that they had to suspend it.

That, in my view, is a clearly unnecessary and improper use of the civil emergency powers for a matter of convenience, because they could have ensured that the legislation that they tabled this Sitting, in fact, itself provided the ability, if required, to make such a delay or suspension of the ban, but they chose not to do so — straying into using, in my view, the declaration of emergency under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the powers associated with it for matters of convenience, not just matters of necessity.

In speaking to this amendment and talking about the specific wording that is referenced in here and the fact that it applies to the COVID-19 pandemic — again, the reason that I believe that this is a positive amendment proposed by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King is that it makes it clear what the purpose of the emergency declaration is. If the government, after voting against amendments that have previously been proposed — the first of which sought to see that any future extensions to the current state of emergency would have to be debated in the Legislative Assembly prior to implementation; the second amendment to this motion that they wouldn't support would have provided that the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments would review, call witnesses, and study all the ministerial orders and orders-in-council issued during the state of emergency; and the third amendment that they voted against just a few minutes ago this afternoon sought only information — that being the provision to all Members of the Legislative Assembly of the same information that informs the Yukon government's decision on whether to implement or extend the state of emergency.

So, now we see amendment proposal number 4 brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. What it would do is make it clear that the state of emergency is specific to the COVID-19 pandemic. I don't know if the government is planning to support this or to vote against it, but if they won't even support this amendment, it does make one note that their unwillingness to cooperate with members of the Official Opposition and the Third Party is reaching new heights or new

lows, whichever you prefer to characterize it as. They have shown themselves to be unwilling to share information. For example, when we were discussing information earlier in the context of debate on this motion and proposed amendments — had the government thought it necessary to specify that they had to keep certain types of information confidential because of reasons related to personnel or something else — if they brought forward a specific reasonable amendment to our proposed amendment, we would have been willing to entertain it. But they simply stood on the principle that they were going to refuse to accept any proposals from the Official Opposition. They were going to refuse again — they have refused at least five times — to work together in an all-party committee related to the pandemic and they've shot down every previous amendment that has been tabled to Motion No. 236 —

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** This doesn't come up very often, but I think the Member for Lake Laberge is out of order with respect to Standing Order 19(e). You've been reflecting upon the votes which have taken place and have been decided by the Assembly with respect to three amendments. I believe that squarely falls within Standing Order 19(e); I think it does. I mean, the House has voted on these amendments. The decision has been made. I believe it's a fairly settled parliamentary principle that the members do not then reflect upon the previous debate — the fulsome debate which has taken place.

I certainly welcome to be corrected by my Clerks-at-the-Table at some point. Like I said, this hasn't come up very often over the course of the last four years, but it just seems to me that it's pretty squarely within the ambit of that standing order — unless I'm mistaken.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would respectfully encourage the Speaker to review the matter with the Clerks and I will simply note that it's my understanding, based on my time in the House, that it has never been used to prevent members from talking about the context of previous debate on a motion. My understanding of that Standing Order 19(e) was that — unless a member is actually making specific substantive proposals, such as an amendment or a motion, to reconsider a previous vote — they can't engage in a long narrative that suggests a matter should be reconsidered once it has been addressed.

**Speaker:** I don't anticipate that the Member for Lake Laberge is going to go on much further about the previous votes. I will certainly confer with my Clerks before tomorrow on this topic. It seemed to me that was kind of squarely within the consideration of that standing order.

Like I said, it hasn't come up very often during the 34<sup>th</sup>.

**Mr. Cathers:** It hasn't come up very often at all actually during my time.

I respect that, Mr. Speaker. I would encourage you to review it with the Clerks. While respecting your indication, I would simply note that what I will try to do in respecting that is — it has been my understanding that talking about the debate that has occurred on the motion, including related to amendments, has been allowed here in the past because it can

often — a comment, for example, that one member might make on an amendment might relate very directly to the substance of a motion not amended and it becomes very difficult for anyone, including presiding officers, to parse which comment is specific to the main motion versus just an amendment.

In moving on and talking about the amendment brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, I would just note that it is the fourth in a series of proposed constructive amendments to Motion No. 236. She makes specific reference to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the pandemic, and I would note that we have repeatedly in this Assembly — despite the government's attempts to mischaracterize our comments, we do recognize there was a need to take action, including public health orders and orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* related to the pandemic. Where we will disagree is that we do believe that, rather than all matters which may emerge being dealt with through ministerial orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, when it is possible to do so, it would be better for government to propose those measures through legislation or temporary legislation that could be brought forward and debated in this Legislative Assembly, such as has been done in jurisdictions like Ontario, where members from all parties have recognized that there is a need to take action related to the pandemic, but the government has chosen, rather than simply Cabinet deliberating and debating on those rules, to allow some of them to be dealt with through legislation that was intended to be temporary during the duration of the pandemic.

I thought there was something else I wanted to mention. I just want to note, in closing, the comment that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King made in speaking to this. She talked about how this pandemic was affecting people differently. She is absolutely correct with that statement. As she noted, some people are thriving and enjoying changes that, in some cases, for some people, have provided them more time with their children, or it has been a forced reason to slow down from the pace of life, but there are also other people who are having great difficulty dealing with the impacts of the pandemic.

We know that there have been national surveys showing that there has been a rise in mental health issues for people in the pandemic with, if memory serves, a survey indicating that over half of Canadians reported that their mental health had gone downhill during the pandemic — ranging from just being less happy to actually having serious problems. In some cases, it is having a great impact on people's mental health. For some people, especially those in the private sector, it has had a dramatic impact on their finances and their future.

Being specific does matter. I welcome the amendment from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. I want to again note, as I have previously in debate, that some people are seeing a very big impact to their finances. There are people I have heard from, constituents and other Yukoners, who have seen the pandemic have a dramatic impact on their hopes for the future. In some cases, people are dealing with the loss of their dreams and their plans. There are people who have had businesses that were thriving and doing very well before the pandemic hit, who expected that 2020 would be a good year for

them. They thought it would bring prosperity to their business and their family. They thought it would be one more step along whatever their particular path and their particular dreams were for the future, and then it hit, and some of them are still trying to figure out not only how to get through but what comes next. There are business owners who were very hopeful prior to the pandemic that are currently wondering if their businesses will survive. In some cases, they are not optimistic about that prospect.

So, all of this — beyond the specific wording in a motion, beyond any of the amendments that are debated here in this Assembly — it's important for the government to remember that, as we debate this yet another day, there are Yukoners out there who care about information that's provided to them. They care about the details of ministerial orders. They care about the rules that are in place. As other members, indeed, in this case, from all parties have alluded to, there are strong opinions out within the public. There are people who would like more restrictions and people who would like less restrictions. There are people who are worried about the borders being open to BC and people who would like to see borders open to Alberta and other jurisdictions. Ultimately, what we have stood for in this debate — what we've stood for during this Sitting — indeed, throughout the pandemic and we will continue to stand for — are the principles that, whenever possible, information should be shared with the public so that people know why government is making the decisions. They are fully informed about the facts and can make their own conclusions.

We have stood for and will continue to stand for the principles of democratic debate regarding not just the declaration of a state of emergency, but in fact the rules imposed under it that are affecting people's lives. I believe strongly that people have a right to be consulted on the rules that are affecting their lives — that they have a right to their input being considered and they have a right to expect that their democratically elected representatives from all parties will give due consideration to that input and will make decisions based in part on what they hear from the people of the Yukon.

We recognize that public health information is important, but as I have said previously and as a number of my colleagues in the Official Opposition Yukon Party have acknowledged, government does not simply know everything that is affecting Yukoners' lives. No one person in government knows everything about the effects of this pandemic on Yukoners. No person, no department, no party has all of the solutions or all of the answers. Indeed, what this pandemic should provide — and I would again encourage the government to recognize the importance of listening to people, of providing the opportunity for input on the rules that are affecting their lives, considering what's affecting them, hearing their input and then using that as part of the information that helps government decide how to proceed throughout the remainder of this pandemic.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up my comments. I thank all of my colleagues who proposed amendments for doing so, including the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for proposing this one. I hope that the government will see fit to support this amendment to this motion.

**Mr. Gallina:** Thanks for the opportunity to speak to the amendment brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, the Leader of the Third Party. I just want to say thank you for the heads-up. It is appreciated. The member reached out to the Liberal caucus and shared the amendment and gave us a heads-up. I think that our caucus has seen the olive branch that has come across. Yes, we will acknowledge that an olive branch was extended, and we're thankful for that.

Mr. Speaker, the motion before us and the amendment that is being proposed — the motion before us is intentionally succinct. It is deliberately simple and asks a simple question. It asks the question of the members of this House if they are supportive of the current state of emergency or not.

By adding the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* to this, it fundamentally changes the question that is before us. The question is: Are we supportive of the current state of emergency? We are, Mr. Speaker, and we have heard from opposition members that they are as well and that they want to vote on this. But I would note, as other members in the Assembly have stated today, that Yukoners are smart. Yukoners are very smart and Yukoners know that we have spent three sitting days — 60,000 words — of opposition members bringing forward amendment after amendment and explaining why they are not comfortable getting to a vote. What that tells me, Mr. Speaker, is that there is that —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Leader of the Third Party, on the point of order.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, right now, it appears to me that this is in contravention of Standing Order 19(b)(i), which is the question under discussion. It is a very direct amendment that I proposed and it doesn't have to do with the 60,000 words — it's just about 15 words maximum.

**Speaker:** Member for Porter Creek Centre, on the point of order.

**Mr. Gallina:** Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking to the motion. I'm explaining why we're not supportive of this motion.

#### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** We're on the amendment right now. Just for everyone's benefit, it's to insert the phrase "under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic". So, yes, your comments should eventually or fairly quickly get back to that subject matter.

**Mr. Gallina:** Mr. Speaker, we have not had many speakers in debate. We have listened to the amendments that have been brought forward. We have listened to all of the amendments from the Official Opposition. We've listened to the amendments brought forward by the Leader of the Third Party. I will reiterate that the motion before us is intentionally succinct. We would like to get to a vote. We're prepared to show Yukoners that we have taken a position. I think Yukoners are expecting us, as elected officials, to be leaders to address

this pandemic as we have been doing and state where we are on the state of emergency.

We do appreciate the heads-up that the member from the Third Party gave to us. We will not be supporting this amendment.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Disagree.

**Mr. Adel:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Disagree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are six yea, 10 nay.

**Speaker:** The nays have it. I declare the amendment defeated.

*Amendment to Motion No. 236 negatived*

**Speaker:** We will return to the debate on the main motion.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I just have a few more things to say on the main motion — a few points I would like to get across. I do want to thank the Member for Copperbelt North for bringing the motion forward. I know the Liberals have been a little uncomfortable through this debate. Their very actions show that they don't want to be here to hear about how undemocratic they have been, but these are important conversations to have, and these are important issues.

I do appreciate all comments from members regarding this debate, although the Liberals really haven't had that much participation in it, likely because, like I said, they're a little embarrassed of their record on this issue — but oh, well.

So, what I want to do is weigh in on some additional considerations — the most important considerations about this motion. The thing that has occurred to me most throughout this pandemic has been the government's undemocratic use of ministerial orders under CEMA.

The government declared a state of emergency in March 2020 with no debate — not even basic information sharing. They made this declaration without any consultation with Yukoners and without any debate or input from any other legislators. While we can agree that many of the actions — and you've heard this — taken were necessary in effect, the problem is that these actions should have been under scrutiny by the Legislative Assembly.

I do have to say that it's really disappointing that the Member for Copperbelt North seems to be opposed to democratic oversight. They should have been subject to a vote, Mr. Speaker.

As others have pointed out, in its current form, the CEMA is designed to respond traditionally to short-term emergencies like fires and floods. It was never meant to grant the government all types of powers that have been exercised by the Liberals and certainly not for this length of time and definitely not without democratic oversight. It's really too bad that the Liberals abused power and shut down this democratic oversight.

After they declared the state of emergency in March 2020 — and in particular, the Minister of Community Services — he began to start issuing a range of ministerial orders with powers afforded to him through CEMA. It's important that these ministerial orders were extremely wide-ranging. They included matters such as the way Yukoners are taxed. They included granting the government the ability to unilaterally alter contracts with third parties.

During this time, the Yukon government also doubled Yukon's debt cap — no debate, no information sharing. They gave themselves the ability to borrow hundreds of millions of dollars during the pandemic. They hid this from the public, by the way, and they did this after directly telling the Legislature many times over the years that they would not do it. I think they fibbed about that.

We do know that the Yukon government has drastically increased spending, and it has indeed sunk the territory into a massive debt. We wonder how much the debt-cap space is going to be used.

I want to be clear that we're not necessarily opposed to any government spending to address this pandemic. We understand that money is required to address this issue. This is about scrutiny and oversight.

The Liberals seem to interpret scrutiny as a bad thing, as if people are mad at them. Just to be clear, it's just democracy in action. It happens everywhere. The Liberals don't like to talk about these things. In fact, we've seen them complain that people would dare to ask them the question. That's an issue for another day.

Bringing these things in without debate or discussions is not the right thing to do. Seriously, you can be 100-percent right, but it doesn't matter if you don't respect democracy. Millions of Canadians, Mr. Speaker, have fought wars so that we can have the right to sit here in this House and debate. We should be proud of that and not take it for granted. That's why we're so concerned that the Liberals refuse to let this debate happen.

But I guess the Liberals are just a day late and a dollar short on democracy. This issue should be debated. We need to be able to ask questions about their implementation — perhaps not in an urgent fashion if they need to be implemented immediately — but definitely if they are going to be extended for long periods of time. It's essential that this be allowed to happen — not months and months down the road and not with: "Oh, just trust us."

By the way, it's very difficult to trust the Liberal Party that frequently shares incorrect information with Yukoners. It's difficult to trust the Liberal Party that hides \$100,000 in donations. So, no, we're not just going to trust you and ask no questions.

I was elected, as was every other member in here, to ask questions, so I'm not going to play along with the Liberal game of abusing democracy.

The government had 90 days between each extension of the state of emergency to allow for the Legislature and debate the vote on these issues. I think that they should have allowed for a debate. We've been saying that. I don't think that it's a bad thing. It allows us to consider all of the issues — and guess what? If the government shares the information and works collaboratively with everyone, they might find that they just get agreement.

It's not a bad thing. It's called "democracy in action". I think it speaks to the importance of the debate that we have had here, because I really worry that, by shutting down the Legislature and not allowing our democracy to work, the government may have overstepped its legal and constituent — their obligations — sorry.

I have a lot of businesses, restaurants, and tourism operators in the riding of Kluane that are suffering due to government decisions. I think everyone recognizes — and I know my business community and the people in the riding of Kluane really recognize — the importance of taking action to protect against this pandemic, but they want to know that their democracy is working and that their elected representatives can scrutinize these decisions and provide input on their behalf.

The Minister of Tourism and Culture won't even tell us what the government is doing for tourism recovery. She announced one thing, and we're waiting and the business community is waiting. Again, that's very disappointing as well. I think it is a little bit out of touch with the industry, which is extremely concerned and worried about their future.

Anyway, I'll move on to one last thing. Earlier this year, the Government of Northwest Territories announced that it was rolling back its border restrictions to more closely align with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Now, the NWT's previous border restrictions were similar to Yukon's restrictions. On May 27, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association wrote to the Yukon Liberal government with concerns that their border restrictions were in violation of section 6 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Those measures were, of course, implemented without any legislative oversight or scrutiny. The Yukon Party then called on the government to release its legal advice, indicating that

these actions were consistent with the Charter, and they refused to share the information.

I'm sure you're a little bit shocked to hear that, Mr. Speaker, but disappointingly, it is true. Ultimately, the whole issue raised serious concerns about whether the Yukon government violated the rights of Yukoners. Since then, there has been a court challenge by a number of Yukon businesses of the Yukon government's actions. I'll leave it to others to comment on that further, but the important thing to stress is that the actions of government deserve scrutiny at the best of times, but they deserve scrutiny even more if there is a belief that those actions may have violated the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. In addition to these contentious actions, the government ultimately made over two dozen ministerial orders under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*.

We believe, on this side, that each of those orders deserved scrutiny. They could all have been very well justified, but why not allow for scrutiny and debate, even after the fact, unless, of course, maybe you just don't like democracy?

So, just for the Member for Porter Creek Centre, sometimes it does take time and multiple amendments to get a point across of how undemocratic the Liberal government is being. With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll close my remarks, and I am happy to support this motion.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard on debate on Motion No. 236?

**Mr. Adel:** I truly appreciate all the time and effort that has gone into this, but I remain resolute to the motion as it stands. It's simple. We don't need to change it. It's out there for everybody to see.

With all the comments going back and forth about lack of transparency and the subversion of democracy, it would seem a bit rich to me, but that is just my opinion. This motion, and the CEMA motions, allow three main things to keep Yukoners safe: border control, self-isolation rules, and the ability to enforce it.

Now, I spend a lot of time out talking to constituents and people on the street, and the majority of people whom I talk to say that they would rather be safe. They don't mind what we're doing. As far as they are concerned, you don't fight a fire by committee. So, this motion has a simple question, and it is time for us to stand up, as members of this House — do we put the health and safety of Yukoners first, or not? Yes or no?

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

#### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

#### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yeas, nil nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.  
*Motion No. 236 agreed to*

### Motion No. 237

**Clerk:** Motion No. 237, standing in the name of Mr. Gallina.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Porter Creek Centre:

THAT this House supports meeting or exceeding the targets laid out in *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*, including the greenhouse gas emissions and renewable energy targets.

**Mr. Gallina:** I'm happy that we are speaking to this motion today. I wanted to start by saying that private members' motions are important opportunities for backbenchers and private members and for opposition members to bring forward those issues that are important to constituents, to MLAs, to the community, and to Yukoners.

This is definitely an issue and a strategy that has been brought forward that is significant and has impact on all Yukoners for multiple generations. I know that many MLAs here in the Assembly believe that the climate is changing, and it's changing at a rapid pace and is affecting the north in ways that have never been seen before — and it is being affected differently by those jurisdictions down south.

Today, I am going to speak about *Our Clean Future* and the strategy that this Liberal government has put together, has delivered to Yukoners. I'm going to touch on the report on climate change that the Auditor General delivered to Yukoners and to this Assembly in 2017, which set out very clear actions that needed to be taken by the Yukon government to address climate change here in the territory.

I believe that the *Our Clean Future* strategy — in identifying the reduction of emissions, ensuring reliable energy, adapting to the impacts of climate change, and building a green economy — is a strategy that Yukoners stand behind and that addresses a lot of the gaps that were brought forward by the Office of the Auditor General.

I would also like to set the stage for colleagues — other MLAs — to provide their input into this strategy. I think that

it's important for opposition members to bring criticism forward. It is important for debate to happen to bring ideas forward that can be discussed, can be assessed, and can be considered. I genuinely feel that in this Assembly. This is what we get to do. We bring those issues forward that are important to us. We debate them, we make decisions on them, and we show Yukoners where we stand.

I believe that Yukoners are proud, passionate, and caring people. They value highly our natural resources, our untouched landscapes, and our unparalleled access to wilderness, which is quite unique — quite unique indeed, throughout the globe. Many Yukoners can point to examples of climate change that they have personally witnessed. There are numerous examples that are documented here in the territory, and I think that all of us, as individuals and Yukoners, who have spent time here and time on the land would agree that the climate is changing, and it is having significant impacts on our wildlife, on our environment, on our people, and on our ways of life. Even if those ways of life aren't by traditional means, I believe that we are all impacted.

Some make reference to the mildness of our winters, with the fall season extending further into November every year. This past summer was one of the wettest summers on record in Yukon, yet in BC, they continue to break records for forest fires. We have seen significant wildfires here in the territory lately — in past years. I know that the Minister of Community Services is working to be able to be prepared for large wildfire outbreaks that might occur, because we are seeing how the Earth is changing. We are seeing these changes here in the territory — significantly.

It is hard to ignore the experiences that we have witnessed. The *Our Clean Future* strategy addresses four key points in moving Yukon forward — four key points in moving Yukon forward to a clean future that multiple generations will benefit from. This plan outlines a reduction in gas emissions.

It sets a path forward for ensuring reliable, affordable, and renewable energy. It states plans and ideas with measurable outcomes to adapt to climate change. As this Liberal government has spoken to many times, it's a balance between ensuring that the necessary measures are in place to protect the environment, but also to build a green economy that Yukoners can thrive in — that they can have their livelihood be here in the territory supporting climate action.

I know, to a degree, where the Official Opposition stands in addressing, accepting, and recognizing climate change. I see this in the strategies that were brought forward by the previous government and how the previous government addressed climate change — that's what I'm going from — from the documents that were prepared and the priority that the previous government placed on climate change in the territory.

In 2017, the Office of the Auditor General prepared a performance audit. The performance audit had the Office of the Auditor General assess all provinces and territories in Canada and speak to climate change in those jurisdictions. The primary source of that information, as it was compiled from 2016 to 2017 — the information primarily used in Yukon's contribution — was meetings with departments and a 2006 strategy that the

Auditor General used to assess how Yukon was planning to address climate change.

In quoting from the report delivered by the Auditor General to this Assembly — and I'll quote: "According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a leading cause of climate change is the emission into the atmosphere of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, from fossil fuel combustion and industrial processes. Yukon is a small emitter of greenhouse gases, but like other places in the North, it is disproportionately affected by climate change."

Mr. Speaker, I would say that "disproportionately affected" is a polite way of saying that Yukon's climate is changing at three times the speed of the rest of Canada. "Disproportionately affected" is one way that we're actually able to see climate change before our eyes at a much more rapid pace than in other jurisdictions throughout Canada and throughout the world.

Temperatures in northern Canada have increased by 2.3 degrees since 1948. Rain and snowfall have increased by approximately six percent. This is significant, Mr. Speaker. These are significant margins and are increases that we take seriously, and they have significant impacts on Yukoners.

*Our Clean Future* has identified a number of impacts that Yukon has experienced so far and will continue to experience due to our rapid rise in temperature. Those experiences include permafrost thaw, which is damaging buildings, roads, shifting landscapes, and negatively impacting ecosystems. We're seeing that throughout the territory. There's debate regularly in this House about the Ross River School and the mitigation efforts that are underway to keep Yukoners, students, teachers, and faculty members safe in that changing environment.

Changing weather and conditions on the land are reducing access to country foods, deepening food security concerns, and impacting health and cultural identities.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to that previously. Climate change in the Yukon is impacting people's ways of life, especially those who rely on traditional methods for sustainability and security.

There are more frequent extreme weather events that can destroy habitats and homes and cause flooding. That's identified in the *Our Clean Future* strategy. There is glacier melt, which is affecting river flow patterns, water temperatures, and aquatic health. Mr. Speaker, we've seen ice caves collapse in Kluane. We've seen rivers stop flowing. These are significant changes.

From the Auditor General's report, I'll continue to quote: "This audit focused on whether selected Government of Yukon departments had worked to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change, taking into account present and future generations. The departments selected for the audit were the Department of Environment; the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources; the Department of Highways and Public Works; and the Department of Community Services."

When we examine the greenhouse gas emissions based on industry, it makes sense why these departments were selected. Transportation, which includes both roads and aviation, is responsible for 61 percent of Yukon's greenhouse gas

emissions. Heating and electrical generation account for 24 percent. Mining accounts for 10 percent of the total greenhouse gas emissions in our territory annually. Collectively, that is 95 percent.

The Auditor General's report continues with — and I quote: "This audit is important because Yukon is experiencing significant climatic changes, which can affect its land, wildlife, and people. These changes can be damaging to infrastructure, ecosystems, and traditional ways of life.

"In 2016, many legislative audit offices across Canada decided to look at the issue of climate change and developed similar audit approaches and questions to examine climate change action within their governments. As part of this initiative, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada decided to do federal and territorial climate change audits ... We concluded that the Department of Environment, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, and the Department of Community Services had not worked sufficiently to adapt to the impacts of climate change. We also concluded that the Department of Environment, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Department of Highways and Public Works, and the Department of Community Services had not worked sufficiently to reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

Mr. Speaker, this government took those recommendations and those points very seriously and formed the basis of the strategy that is before us today.

The Auditor General's report continues — and I quote: "Overall, we found that the Government of Yukon created a strategy, an action plan, and two progress reports to respond to climate change. In developing these items, the government took good first steps toward providing leadership and direction for responding to climate change. However, the commitments in the government's action plan and progress reports were weak and not prioritized. In addition, deficiencies in the Climate Change Secretariat's reporting made it difficult to assess progress on the government's climate change actions.

"These findings matter because the government's development of a strategy and action plan are key to establishing priorities, roles and responsibilities, and actions for its response to climate change. Furthermore, by reporting clearly and consistently on the progress it makes in meeting its climate change commitments, the government helps keep the public informed and strengthens its accountability."

*Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy* is a strategy that puts Yukoners first. It recognizes the challenges and costs associated if we do not modernize our approach in managing our changing environment and climate change.

The Auditor General's office made a number of recommendations. I'm going to take a few minutes to speak to those recommendations and speak to how this government responded to those recommendations and built those specific recommendations into the strategy that we have here today for Yukoners.

The Auditor General's report put forward a number of recommendations including — and I quote: "The Climate Change Secretariat, working with departments and other

stakeholders, should prepare a comprehensive, territory-wide risk assessment to help prioritize commitments to manage the impacts of climate change.”

This government consulted with industry professionals, leaders across our territory, communities, First Nations, elders, and Yukoners alike. The engagement and preparation of this strategy, and what was fed into the pages before us today, was a significant undertaking — a significant undertaking by many of my colleagues — and it’s reflected in the support for this document and support for the strategy, for the ability for people to understand the strategy and where Yukoners are going and how this government plans to work with stakeholders to address climate change in the territory.

This strategy accounts for the challenges that many of our remote communities will face. It identifies the necessary actions required to ensure that every part of the territory is involved in our steps forward toward a greener future — in every part of the territory, that all stakeholders are considered.

By bringing this motion here today, this includes all of us in the Assembly today. This includes all of us having our say in what this document means to us as individuals, to us as MLAs, and to us as a party. This is our opportunity. This is another opportunity for us to have this conversation.

The *Our Clean Future* strategy presented by this government identifies the intended levels of reduction for greenhouse gas emissions because we do believe in setting targets. Setting targets is not easy, but we’re committed to setting targets. We’re committed to helping Yukoners understand what our goals are and how we plan to achieve reaching those goals — what that means to us. What does it mean to have to reach those goals?

Mr. Speaker, a 30-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is bold. I would agree that it’s very bold. I would also agree that it is necessary. I also believe that Yukoners feel that it is a bold target and that it is also a necessary target. I believe that Yukoners stand behind reaching that target in reduction to greenhouse gases. I feel like this strategy outlines how reductions will happen and sets the stage for stakeholders, for advocates, and for community members to support reaching those targets as well.

The Auditor General’s report continues — and I quote: “Overall, we found that although the Department of Environment, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, and the Department of Community Services had begun to lay the groundwork for adapting to climate change by gathering information, they took limited concrete action. In our opinion, the benefits of gathering information are fully realized only when the information is used to take action in a timely manner.

“These findings matter because to respond effectively to climate change, the government must take concrete and timely action, given the severity of climate change impacts and the speed with which they are expected to occur.”

Mr. Speaker, the points that the Auditor General makes — in collaboration between departments and finding matters and addressing them in a timely manner, taking concrete action — refer to reports that were released and a strategy that was prepared in 2006. That strategy, at the time, was one of the last

climate strategies to be presented and prepared by a province or territory in Canada.

I know that Yukoners want more than what was previously prepared in addressing climate change in the territory. Yukoners have asked for more action to address climate change. They have asked for clear vision. They’ve asked for an opportunity to feed into what those plans and strategies look like.

Mr. Speaker, they want the ability to support a green economy that will both address and take climate action and provide a livelihood. We’re starting to see the fruits of the engagement that this community and Yukoners throughout the territory are taking. The time for action is long, long overdue.

As I mentioned, over a decade ago, in 2006, the former Yukon Party government was responsible for releasing a climate strategy, and that was one of the last jurisdictions in Canada to do so. Subsequent to the release of their strategy, a report was issued by the same government that removed greenhouse gas emission targets and allocated no costs and proposed no budget for addressing this crisis.

**Speaker:** Order, please.

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

*Debate on Motion No. 237 accordingly adjourned*

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*

**The following sessional paper was tabled November 18, 2020:**

34-3-56

*Yukon Hospitals Year in Review 2019-20 (Frost)*





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 65

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, November 19, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
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Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Thursday, November 19, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**In recognition of National Child Day**

**Speaker:** Before the Chair provides comments on National Child Day, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce and greet the Child and Youth Advocate Office staff, who, I am advised, are listening today via radio in order to comply with their own office's COVID-19 distancing measures. We have Annette King, the Child and Youth Advocate, Bengie Clethero, Lynda Silverfox, Rachel Veinott-McKeough, Julia Milnes, and Christopher Tse.

National Child Day is tomorrow, November 20. On November 20, 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UNCRC, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Canada ratified the UNCRC two years later, in December 1991. The convention is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history.

National Child Day recognizes this historic commitment to the world's children. All governments carry the responsibility and are obligated to uphold children's rights. There are 42 rights outlined in the convention that focus on non-discrimination, survival and development, consideration of the best interests of the child, and participation of children in the decisions that affect them. Every child has a right to be protected from harm, be provided with the provisions to develop to their full potential, and be given the opportunity to be active participants in their lives.

This day provides an opportunity to celebrate the power of youth's voices and the actions of those who work to promote the realization of children's rights.

In 2009, the Yukon government passed the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*. Since that time, the advocate has addressed over 1,000 advocacy issues for over 600 children and youth to ensure that their rights under the UNCRC are fully upheld. These children and youth learn that they have rights through the advocate's office and that their view is important and matters. They are encouraged to have a say, show empowerment, and engage in the process.

This year, the advocate's office launched new online training on children's rights and the role of their office that is available to all Yukon government departments as well as to the public.

On October 1, 2020, the Senate of Canada introduced Bill S-210, *An Act to establish the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Youth in Canada*, to legislate a national voice that ensures the rights and interests of children and youth.

The Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office has brought to my attention one particular Yukon youth who has exemplified youth participation at a local level. Max Zimmermann is a 16-year-old student from F.H. Collins who is

passionate about social justice and journalism. In addition to his studies and his part-time job, Max has taken action by participating in the following: a project installing receptacles at Yukon lakes for discarded fishing lines, volunteering as a basketball coach, being an active member of the F.H. Collins social justice club, and working with the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office hosting the video series entitled *Global Action Local Voices*, which focuses on the voices of local youth, highlighting a different article from the UNCRC every episode.

Max's work demonstrates the impact youth can have on the promotion of children's rights. Today we urge all Yukoners to look at how to enhance the implementation of children's rights in policy and practice and to create space for children and youth to share their views as part of decision-making processes.

When children and youth are heard, they feel empowered, and that can have a positive and lasting impact for generations to come.

*Applause*

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

**DAILY ROUTINE**

**Speaker:** Introduction of visitors.  
 Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of Transgender Awareness Week and Transgender Day of Remembrance**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I'm honoured to rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government in tribute to Transgender Awareness Week and Transgender Day of Remembrance.

November 20 marks a day to honour, remember, and mourn trans and gender-diverse individuals who we have lost to anti-trans violence. Transgender Day of Remembrance was started in 1999 by transgender advocate Gwendolyn Ann Smith as a vigil to honour the memory of Rita Hester, a transgender woman who was murdered in her Boston apartment — in her own home, Mr. Speaker — for simply being herself. The violence and discrimination that trans folks face is pervasive in our culture and has sadly become too normalized.

Research states that LGBTQ2S+ people experience violence at a much higher rate than cisgender or heterosexual people. Furthermore, compared to heterosexual or cisgender populations, those who are transgender have been found to be more likely to report poor mental health.

All of this violence is well known, deeply felt, and too often a personally experienced reality for transgender people in our lives. This is something that our trans children, coworkers, and neighbours deal with regularly. Dru Levasseur, director of transgender rights projects, states — and I quote: "Transgender people are often the most visible and therefore most marginalized part of our LGBT community, particularly those individuals who face multiple oppressions of class and race ... These individuals are on the front lines, fighting for everyone's

rights — gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight — to be free from harmful gender stereotypes and to define one's own personal sense of self and expression of that self."

Trans rights are human rights, Mr. Speaker. Trans folks still live in a world where they experience violence and anti-trans aggressions in their daily lives.

Previously when I did tributes, I talked about numbers. I looked at a website last night, and there was a report called *Not just a number*, encouraging folks not to refer to trans folks who have died because of violence in numbers, so I am not talking about numbers today. What I did do is read through the pages and pages of people who have died in the last year — just since the last time we did this tribute. It is staggering. What stood out the most to me when I read those profiles is the age — 20s, early 30s. It was really devastating to read that and to think about all of the families and folks who have been left behind.

There is much to celebrate within the trans community. Their resiliency, bravery, and strength are also something to note, Mr. Speaker. We all need to make sure that the only consistent time that we talk about trans Yukoners is not to reflect it in violence. Trans Yukoners are citizens just like each and every one of us. They are our neighbours, students, educators, and Yukoners. Organizations such as Queer Yukon, All Genders Yukon, and Trans Resource Yukon do so much to fight discrimination and build up a healthy Yukon community for everyone.

This upcoming month, Queer Yukon and All Genders Yukon will be hosting an online community conversation about the upcoming Yukon pride centre. They are looking for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners to share their voice for the collective vision of the centre.

I'm excited to see a physical space in which LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners can have a safe place to gather, connect, and find supports. I urge all Yukoners to take the time today to educate yourself on gender identity, gender expression, transphobia, and many barriers that trans people are still faced with. Utilize this knowledge to support your friends, your family, and to become an ally in our community.

I'm optimistic for the future, a future in which trans folks are free to be able to dress, speak, and behave how they want and to be free of judgment, harassment, and violence.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November 20 as the Transgender Day of Remembrance, a national day of mourning that recognizes, honours, and memorializes two-spirit and trans people who have lost their lives in anti-trans violence.

This important day takes place annually on the day following the Transgender Awareness Week. During the week leading up to the Transgender Day of Remembrance, organizations, transgender individuals, and allies share stories and work to educate the public on the many issues of discrimination, violence, and prejudice faced by the transgender community and quite often by other members of the LGBTQ2S+ community.

In 1998, a woman was killed in Boston, Massachusetts two days before her 35<sup>th</sup> birthday. She was an African American,

and she was transgender. She was also a loving daughter, sister, aunt, and friend. Her name was Rita Hester. Her death sparked this legacy of remembrance for transgender individuals lost to transphobic violence.

Chastity Bowick, executive director of the Transgender Emergency Fund of Massachusetts, is an advocate for transgender women in Boston, and she said that what happened to Rita Hester could happen to any of them. She said — and I quote: "We want her to be looking down at us smiling, we want her legacy to move on and to mean something, we don't want her death to go in vain." Rita Hester's legacy continues to provide hope for transgender individuals around the world.

With education, there is hope that there will be an end to the discrimination, harassment, and bullying and to the violence. We do have policies in place to ensure that bullying, violence, and harassment, not only against the LGBTQ community, but in any manner, against any person, is not tolerated in our schools. Our kids deserve to go to school in a safe, secure, respectful environment.

So, thank you — I want say a big thank you and put a shout-out to the staff and students of Porter Creek Secondary School not only for the creation of the school's Rainbow Room — a safe place for all students — but for spreading awareness throughout the entire school and throughout the community. I would like to thank those groups and organizations here in the Yukon that take on the role of advocate, educator, and support network. Queer Yukon as well as gender and sexuality alliances in the Yukon continue to make giant leaps for the LGBTQ2S+ community.

I also want to thank them for everything that they do. Please stay humble and kind.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to mark tomorrow as the Transgender Day of Remembrance. We remember those beautiful humans across the globe and here in Canada who are known to have lost their lives due to violence based on fear, hate, and ignorance — transphobia.

We honour the lives that have been stolen, and we fight to keep their spirit and memory alive. We celebrate trans men and trans women. We celebrate those who are gender non-conforming and those who are bi-gender and those who are agender.

We celebrate the knowledge that you are of different ethnicities and racial backgrounds, that you exist in all shapes and sizes, that your gender presentations vary, your identities are fluid, your expressions are individual, and that your stories and experiences are uniquely your own but that you are all beautiful.

We celebrate your phenomenal strength and resiliency. We believe that your beauty and your truth deserve to be visible and shared with the world. There continues to be an amazing surge in the visibility of our trans and gender non-conforming community members, and this is overwhelmingly because of the courage of countless transgender men and women and their allies who have worked and continue to work to raise awareness, speak out, and live authentically as who they are.

Whenever any trans or gender non-conforming community member claims visibility, our communities are stronger for it. Whenever any trans or gender non-conforming community member or their allies speaks up in the face of prejudice, that act of courage helps to change our world for the better.

So, it's our job as allies to listen, to educate those around us, and to stand beside, behind, or in front of our transgender friends as they need us.

We thank those in our very own community who continue to push and advocate for what is right and just, because we all know that trans rights are human rights. We will stand with you as allies, knowing that you matter and that the world is a better and richer place with you in it.

So, there's a poem or a prayer by B. Herbert, a trans person of colour, written for Transgender Remembrance Day that really resonated with me when I first saw it. So, I'm going to leave you with this thought:

On this November 20<sup>th</sup>,

Be tender, with those who are mourning.

Be attentive, to those who feel unsafe.

Be encouraging, to those who are revealing their truth.

Be prepared, to be led into the possibilities for tomorrow by those who tomorrow wasn't built for.

*Applause*

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House recognizes that, with the appointment of Madam Justice Karen Wenckebach, Yukon now has its first all-female Supreme Court bench.

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

THAT the Yukon chief medical officer of health appear as a witness in Committee of the Whole prior to December 18, 2020.

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

THAT this House supports, using identified savings from current health programs, investing additional resources to move from a focus on acute medical care to a primary-care based population health model with upstream investments in prevention to improve outcomes and ensure the long-term sustainability of health and social service systems.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that the national COVID-19 exposure notification

application is registered in Yukon and made available to Yukon citizens who wish to download it.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Eliza Building

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Drin hozo. Good afternoon. We all know that affordable housing is an issue for many Yukoners. This is always on our minds — on a daily basis, in fact. We are pleased to see the uptake of the municipal matching rental construction program — an incentive to develop affordable market rental units in Whitehorse and in our rural Yukon communities. The municipal matching rental construction grant has supported several new projects in Dawson City since 2017. The Klondike Development Organization has built two eightplexes in the community, providing homes for more than a dozen people in Dawson City.

Today, I am proud to highlight another community project in Dawson City — the Eliza Building. This 14-unit building was built last year and has been officially opened for tenants. Built by the Chief Isaac Group of Companies, this project is a great partnership to find solutions to affordable housing. It was built through the community partnership of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Trust, the Klondike Development Organization, the City of Dawson, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and the Yukon Housing Corporation.

The building is named after Eliza Isaac, the wife of Chief Isaac. Eliza was born around 1875, and she raised her family in Moosehide. At the opening of the Eliza Building, her descendants noted that it was always important for Eliza that everyone had a warm place for themselves to call home. The building includes a mix of bachelor, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom apartments, as well as one commercial space. Nine of the 13 residential units will be maintained as affordable housing.

The Eliza Building was designed and constructed by Yukon firms and is managed by the Chief Isaac Group of Companies. The Yukon Housing Corporation supported this project through the affordable housing rental construction grant as well as a municipal matching rental construction grant. These programs support the ongoing efforts to achieve the goals of the housing action plan for Yukon with our partners across the territory, including increasing the availability of affordable market rental housing.

In addition to federal, territorial, and municipal government support, working side by side with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and the Chief Isaac Group of Companies was crucial to building local solutions and increasing affordable housing in Dawson City.

I am pleased to rise today to honour the Eliza Building. The building is now providing homes to 13 individuals and families in Dawson City. I believe that we can all agree that this was important to Eliza Isaac. As it was important to her then, it's

important to us today. This government will continue to work in partnership to create warm places for Yukoners to call home. Mahsi' cho.

**Mr. Hassard:** Thank you for the opportunity to rise today to speak to this ministerial statement about a building that opened 11 months ago.

We congratulate the Chief Isaac Group of Companies for building this and, of course, all of the partners who played a role in this great project. Housing is an important issue, so the measures to help alleviate demands for housing and to ensure that people have a warm place to stay are supported by the Yukon Party.

This is a good project and one that we support. We are happy that it opened successfully 11 months ago but, Mr. Speaker, in the last 24 hours, there have been significant developments with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic as it relates to public health and the government's response here in Yukon. These developments are having and will have major impacts on Yukoners. Our offices — and I'm sure the government's offices as well — have received dozens of phone calls, texts, and e-mails in the past 16 hours asking questions about what this means and seeking clarity.

When the government notified us this morning that the Minister of Health and Social Services would be making a ministerial statement, we hoped that this was going to be an update on the government's response to the pandemic, actions that are being taken at our airports and borders to protect public health, measures being implemented at the hospital to minimize disruptions to surgeries and medical travel — things like that.

Again, I am thankful for the minister updating us on this important housing project that was completed, as I said, 11 months ago. We are supportive of the project but had hoped for an update from the Minister of Health and Social Services on the government's pandemic response.

**Ms. White:** I consider myself an optimist, Mr. Speaker — a cheerleader. Encouraging and celebrating the successes of others comes naturally to me. As we are often reminded by ministers in responses to questions in this House, whenever we turn on the news or look anywhere outside of ourselves, the world as we knew it is different. We are indeed living in unprecedented times, and there indeed is a world pandemic.

It is easy to cheer for the work done by the Chief Isaac Group of Companies, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government, and the community of Dawson City as they tackle the issues of affordable housing in their community. I am sure that the folks who moved into the Eliza Building nearly a year ago are equally proud of the work done by their community. There was a lot to celebrate, and celebrate we did in December 2019. But what about the folks in Dawson City who today are still dealing with housing insecurity and affordability issues, or those in any other Yukon community facing similar issues? What about the hundreds of people who are desperate to access housing that they can afford and continue to sit on government wait-lists? What part of today's ministerial statement is meant to bring hope to all of these people?

Today wasn't about announcing a new project that will be built or a housing complex that will be opening its doors in the near future to the relief of those waiting for the safety of a home. When people are living with the stress and the weight of something that they have never experienced before, coupled with housing insecurity, they need to know that their government is taking concrete steps right now to support them.

They don't want to hear about projects that the government has supported in the past and that have opened and are already fully occupied. They want to know when the new Jeckell Street complex will open. They want to know when — after, in some cases, having spent years on a government wait-list — they will be offered a place to live.

Today, I'm finding it impossible to be optimistic about a statement that echoes a press release published on the government's website on January 28 of this year, just 10 days shy of 10 months ago. Folks living with housing insecurity are looking for hope and light in the darkness, but sadly, they won't find it with today's ministerial statement — but maybe they will be lucky and will be able to find it with the minister's closing response.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the accomplishments and the success of many projects across Yukon. The member opposite has just now raised a question with respect to COVID-19. I would advise the individual, Yukoners, and the Official Opposition to please refer to yukon.ca. The most up-to-date information is on that site. The Premier and the chief medical officer of health did a press conference this morning with very current and active information, as it comes available. I would bring us back to the purpose of the ministerial statement.

The project, like the Dawson City Eliza Building, is an excellent example of how Yukon communities as a whole can come together to develop appropriate and affordable rental housing solutions for Yukoners. Our government continues to engage in this collaborative effort to address housing needs and increase the availability of affordable housing in communities across the Yukon.

We are proud to support an increase in affordable housing options in Yukon communities through the Yukon Housing Corporation's programs. Earlier this week, we launched the fourth intake of the housing initiative program. Applications for this annual fund are now open. Over the past three years, the housing initiative fund has contributed to over 350 new affordable homes.

The Member for Takhini-Kopper King said, in her most recent comments — “hope” for Yukoners. That's our objective, to give Yukoners perspective and to let Yukoners know that we have brought over 600 units across the territory by initiatives like this, in partnership with First Nations, in partnership with our corporations, and using the resources that are available to us.

I would go on to provide a little more clarity with respect to the launch of the Canada Housing benefit. We've provided further incentives there. This household benefit program is geared to helping low- to moderate-income Yukoners in rental

housing who cannot afford rent or a home that meets their needs.

Depending on their household income and the size of family, applicants can receive \$200, \$400, \$600, or \$800 per month. This can make a significant difference in a person's life. We know that Yukon's housing needs are multi-faceted, and we are working on a wide range of initiatives to support Yukoners to access affordable places to call home. This includes supporting the building of rental housing units, providing rent supplements, and increasing the availability of lots across the territory.

I know that my colleagues have more to say about new lots coming soon. Our government continues to work with our community and government partners to achieve the goals of the housing action plan for Yukoners, the national housing strategy, and the Safe at Home plan, which is also following the recommendations of the *Putting People First* report and the plan to support Yukoners to have homes that meet their needs and that they can afford.

As I stated earlier, it is always paramount, and it always has been, for Yukon communities to have the resources that they have sorely been lacking by the previous government, and we intend to provide the supports and ensure that communities are well-supported as they look at their shortages in housing. We will continue to put the resources out through our initiatives like this project.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: COVID-19 pandemic self-isolation requirements

**Mr. Istchenko:** The closure of Yukon borders has impacted travel plans for many Yukon residents, Mr. Speaker.

Our offices have received dozens of calls, text messages, and e-mails in the past 16 hours from Yukoners who are currently in British Columbia and are affected by cancelled flights and delayed returns for up to a week. This could mean two or three additional weeks away from work, which, of course, was not planned for when they left. This will have impacts on wages, workplaces, and, of course, families.

So, are there any alternatives available for those individuals who are stuck in BC right now, or are there any relief measures that the government is considering for them?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thanks for the opportunity to rise. It's true that we — even here in the House yesterday, the members opposite were asking for more border controls. We have been working to increase those resources.

We did state, based on questions here and on hearing feedback from Yukoners across the territory, that we were looking at the relationship with our border controls with BC, Nunavut, and NWT.

Yesterday, we got advice from the chief medical officer of health. He gave us very clear advice. He suggested that we rescind the bubble. We heard from British Columbia — the Premier spoke with Premier Horgan, who said that they as well were closing down travel within BC. We took the decision to

end the travel bubble, and we will work to support all Yukoners as they return home.

They are all welcome home. What they must now do, if they arrive after 5:00 p.m. tomorrow, is to self-isolate for two weeks to keep all of Yukon safe.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I was hoping to get a little bit more information on those supports that the minister spoke about.

So, with the holiday season a month away, many Yukon students have tickets booked to come home from jurisdictions across the country, including British Columbia. Many Yukoners have also made plans to have friends, family, and loved ones who live in British Columbia visit for Christmas. This is another issue that we have received dozens of calls, e-mails, and texts about this morning.

What will the requirements be for students and family who are returning for Christmas?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The members opposite and all Yukoners may have heard Dr. Hanley talking about this. We've been in conversation for some time about how to help inform Yukoners — if they wish to return home, how to do so safely. Those Yukoners can return home. As I just mentioned, they are able to do so.

But for now, in order to keep all Yukoners safe, what we require is that, if they return home after 5:00 p.m. tomorrow, they will self-isolate for two weeks. If, of course, the family household wishes to self-isolate together, that is totally fine, but then the household must self-isolate as a unit. We are working to get messaging out to Yukoners.

This happened, as I said, yesterday evening. We took the decision at the end of the legislative session here. I understand that the Premier reached out to the parties opposite. I, and other colleagues, reached out to municipalities and First Nations and talked to those councils to explain the situation. I can say, based on the several calls that I had, that all of our communities support this decision. We will work together as a territory to make sure that, as students come home, they do so safely.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. We on this side do understand the requirements, but there have been plans made by many Yukoners to have students, friends, or family who are coming home to visit for the holidays. So, we are just wondering if the government is maybe looking at some other options. Will the government look at maybe rapid testing or more testing to alleviate the length of quarantine time for those individuals?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thank you to the member opposite for the opportunity to speak today.

As the member opposite knows, we don't make these decisions lightly. We take a lot of things into consideration. I want to make a shout-out to Dr. Hanley and all the chief medical officers of health right across the nation for working tirelessly to track the virus, to give us the most up-to-date information about the different spread in different regions — to which we make our policy decisions.

I appreciate the question from the member opposite when it comes to rapid testing. This is something that we are very interested in. The technology has come a long way. We were talking with Dr. Hanley as well. This is something that we are

spending a lot of information and time on. I don't have anything new to update the member opposite on. However, this is an extremely important part of the full gamut of responses that jurisdictions can do to not only trace the virus, but also ultimately to protect our citizens in Canada — in the Yukon as well — as effectively as possible while at the same time having as limited restrictions as we possibly can.

It is something that this government is taking very seriously. We have been in on the conversations through health but also through the Council of the Federation calls and the calls with the Prime Minister as well — whether it is on the app, as we heard in a motion today, or on rapid testing.

But here is the good news in Yukon: Our ability to trace has been impeccable, and I want to give a shout-out to the medical community for their ability to keep us very safe through the tracing abilities.

### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic — Yukon highway border enforcement**

**Mr. Hassard:** So, on September 30, the government announced that they were switching our borders from being staffed 24 hours a day to only being staffed from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. So, given the rising cases throughout the rest of Canada and the closure of the BC bubble, will the government reverse this decision and return to staffing the border 24 hours a day?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** As we stated several times here, the work at the border is, at all times, to keep Yukoners safe. Again, thank you to the Liard First Nation for taking over the lead on that work. I talked with the chief this morning. We are sending additional resources down. I would like to thank the Minister of Environment for releasing some of her conservation officers. So, we will work in conjunction.

I'm not able to say today exactly the number of hours, because I think we will increase resources and monitor the situation. What I want to say to Yukoners is that we feel confident that the border is safe, and we will do our best to make sure that it continues to be so. I spoke last night with Minister Farnworth of British Columbia, and he indicated to me that the real concentration of cases is from south of the Fraser River. It's not so much the vehicle traffic; it's more those who are flying from the Lower Mainland, which is where BC had identified its concerns.

We will do our best. That's exactly why we changed the rules for tomorrow. It's to keep Yukoners safe. I thank the member for the question.

**Mr. Hassard:** On Monday, when we asked the minister what measures are in place to ensure compliance with public health rules for people entering the territory outside of business hours, in response, the minister incorrectly stated — and I quote: “We have put in place measures to consider after hours — for example, video cameras and CEMA enforcement officers coming forward to do random checkstops in the evenings.”

As a result of the minister's statement, several media outlets reported that the government had put in place measures such as video cameras and random checkstops. Now it turns out

that this is not the case. When will the minister return to 24-hour staffing at these borders?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** It seems unfortunate that we're hanging up on a word. I will say again now, for the fourth time in this Legislature — when I heard one media outlet get that wrong, I reached out to that media outlet to help to make sure that we got it right.

We are working to keep that border safe and are considering those other actions to add more hours. I just stood up moments ago and said that we are putting more officers down there — peace officers, CEMA enforcement folks — to extend those hours. We will keep a look on it.

I want to say to Yukoners that this is not where the big risk is, because it's usually transport trucks that are coming through in the night, and they are critical. We have a CEMA enforcement regime. I would like to thank them for the work that they have been doing.

Out of the 1,000 or so concerns and complaints that we have received, about 85 percent of them turn out to just be — we are helping those people with their concerns to understand that there really is nothing that's going wrong. Fifteen percent of the time or so, there is something that's going wrong. We correct almost all of those immediately through education, but two percent of the time, we've handed out tickets and will continue to keep Yukoners safe.

**Mr. Hassard:** I will just remind the minister that this is his exact quote from Hansard, so he can deny saying it all he wants, but that is what he said. It is actually part of an official record here in the Legislature.

As I pointed out, because the minister said it, media outlets reported that the government had put in place these measures. As a direct result of what the minister stated in this House, incorrect information about how the government is responding to the pandemic was widely shared with Yukoners. This minister is in charge of keeping our borders safe, and I encourage him to ensure that he shares accurate information going forward.

As we discussed, the government reduced the time our borders were staffed from 24 hours a day to business hours. This honour-system based approach no longer seems appropriate considering we just ended the BC bubble, with cases surging outside of the territory. Again, when will the minister return to borders that are staffed 24 hours a day?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, what I said was that we are considering it. That is what I said previously and is correct. The member is correct — that is what I said here in this Legislature. I will do my best to help the media. I will also say that, just moments ago, I said that we have moved beyond that consideration to action. What I said was that we are sending additional officers down. I spoke this morning with the Chief of the Liard First Nation to indicate to him that we were sending those staff down and he said, “Thank you.”

We are working with the Liard First Nation. We will continue to work to make sure that Yukon borders are safe. I would like to thank all those people from the Liard First Nation from our own staff — from Environment, from Energy, Mines and Resources, and from Tourism and Culture — who have



worked to keep Yukoners safe. Thank you to them. We will continue to do that.

**Question re: COVID-19 pandemic self-isolation requirements**

**Ms. White:** Outside construction companies often bring in workers for projects in Yukon. These construction sites can be a blend of local subcontractors and out-of-territory workers. The use of Outside workers raises questions, but even more so now during a pandemic. Yukon workers and contractors have raised concerns about recent changes that allow workers from outside of the territory to work on sites while still self-isolating. Local workers are concerned about potential exposure to COVID-19 on their work sites.

What is required from companies supervising construction projects to ensure safety for all workers on a job site?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What's being referred to here is what is called "alternative self-isolation plans".

They've been available since we hit phase 3 and possibly even before — I'll have to check. What happens is a general contractor will submit a plan where they say they believe that someone coming in can work separately from other workers in such a way as to allow work activity to take place while self-isolating. That plan is given to the chief medical officer of health's office to review. It then comes to my office to review. It's considered and then we issue either an approval or a denial based on that application. We work at all times to make sure that those job sites are safe.

We seek to follow up to make sure that the work is carried out according to that plan. That's the process that's in place which I've spoken about here in the Legislature previously.

**Ms. White:** We've heard from local contractors working on a Whitehorse project that workers from Manitoba are being flown in next week to work on a project without having to self-isolate for 14 days. Manitoba has the highest rate of active cases in the country. The company overseeing the project is a company from outside the territory. Yukon contractors and workers are not feeling safe. In fact, the company obtained permission to have out-of-territory workers and Yukon workers on-site at the same time. It's only after local contractors refused this arrangement that schedules were modified to separate Yukon and out-of-territory workers on-site.

Can the minister explain why he would allow a company to bring in workers from Manitoba with the highest COVID rate per capita in the country to fly into Whitehorse to work on a construction project during a global pandemic without needing to self-isolate for 14 days prior to going to the job site?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There is no person who comes from Manitoba unless they are driving a truck to bring in food — a critical service provider that does not have to self-isolate. They do — all have to self-isolate. Workers who come to work on jobs — workers or people who come to visit family — whether they're from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Québec — they all are required to self-isolate.

What is approved from time to time — we've had 400 applications from what I recall at my last look; not all of them have been approved — they can apply for an alternative self-

isolation, indicating that they self-isolate, but they can do so on the job site if they prove and can carry that out in such a way as to keep it safe and separate. That is what was applied for. I'm happy to talk about that, but what I really want to establish here — it's so important — everybody is self-isolating.

**Ms. White:** It's important to understand the difference between critical workers and essential workers here. Critical workers, like health care workers, don't have to self-isolate. Essential workers — which is what we're talking about here when we talk about construction workers — have to self-isolate for 14 days when they come into Yukon unless of course their employer gets an exemption from the minister.

So, here we have an Alberta company that is bringing in carpenters from Manitoba, instead of hiring Yukon workers, and then putting Yukon citizens at risk.

Can the minister explain why he permitted the alternative self-isolation plan when Manitoba is experiencing the highest rate of active cases in the country?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, what I will do is stand up and say that I have not approved any exemption. There is no exemption. There are alternative self-isolations, meaning that all those people will self-isolate.

Somehow, I'm just not making myself clear, and I'm sorry for that. I am trying to say explicitly to all Yukoners and to the members opposite, all those folks from Manitoba — all those essential workers are self-isolating. Whether that is someone who comes up to visit a dying loved one and asks for the ability to see them outside of self-isolation — we work with the chief medical officer of health to find a way to allow that to happen, as long as it can be done safely and that self-isolation happens.

If there are jobs where people are wanting to continue those jobs — and I'm not going to pick on Manitoba versus Alberta. What I'm going to say is, if they came from outside of our bubble, they are required to put in an application and to show a plan to ensure that they can self-isolate safely.

I know that we alert the Workers' Compensation Board to make sure that, when they check on those job sites, they're doing so safely.

**Question re: COVID-19 pandemic self-isolation requirements**

**Ms. White:** These workers will be isolating on an active construction site where local contractors will still be working. Yukon contractors and their employees are understandably concerned that they're expected to work alongside workers from outside the Yukon who have not gone through the 14 days of self-isolation away from the job site.

We're all concerned about the skyrocketing numbers of citizens testing positive outside of Yukon, and those numbers only add to the stress for Yukoners having to work alongside co-workers who are working while self-isolating at the same time.

Who is monitoring work sites where the minister has approved exemptions, and how often do site visits happen to make sure that employers comply with COVID safety plans?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will have to check of the frequency of visits to job sites. I don't know that off the top of my head, but I will find that out.

I am going to give another example of where this happened. It was painting lines on a track. We brought in a specialist from New Brunswick to make sure that track could be up to the international standards. That was a government job, so we looked at it and we said, "Could that be done safely? Could the lines be painted safely while self-isolating?" The answer was yes.

By the way, I recused myself from that application. I believe that I asked my colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, to consider that application because that is my responsibility. So, that answer came back as yes and it was done safely, and we checked to make sure that it could be done safely.

All right — if there is a subcontractor — I have talked to a few, and I have given my number. I have given them the [covid19enforcement@gov.yk.ca](mailto:covid19enforcement@gov.yk.ca) and also the 1-800 number — 1-877-374-0425. Please, let one of us know and we will go and check to make sure that things are being done safely, because safety is our biggest priority during this pandemic.

**Ms. White:** Yukon contractors have made and continue to make extensive efforts to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some Outside contractors, on the other hand, don't seem to understand that COVID in the territories poses an even greater risk. The minister has allowed for alternative self-isolation plans on work sites, but what happens outside of work hours?

Is there any enforcement in place to ensure that people who are permitted to fly in and work under an alternative self-isolation plan are actually self-isolating while not on the work site?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, all of these guidelines have been developed by the chief medical officer of health's office to try to help everybody in the territory — those who are working on job sites, whether they are from one place or another — to make sure that they are safe. Here is the truth of it, Mr. Speaker: No matter what is happening — whether it is on a job site or whether you are at home — if you are self-isolating and you are breaking the rules — if someone knows about that, please let us know. We will do our best to go and enforce those rules, and we will sanction people if they are breaking them.

What I want to say is that, from our experience to date so far, most Yukoners and those coming here to work or visit in the Yukon have by and large lived by the rules, and I want to say, "Thank you." The work that they have been doing has allowed us to continue safely. Again, there are no exemptions. There are ultimate self-isolations. We look at them to ensure that they are done safely.

**Ms. White:** It is the minister who is the one who makes these decisions. I suggest that he should be willing to explain them and stop ducking behind the chief medical officer of health.

The application form for a company that wants to apply for an alternative self-isolation plan doesn't even mention off-site COVID safety measures. There is no mention whether or not

the employer has an obligation to inform their workers of COVID safety measures once they leave the work site. How are these Outside workers supposed to get this information? Is their employer supposed to tell them, or are they expected to find out on their own?

Can the minister tell Yukoners whose responsibility it is to inform fly-in workers of their COVID safety obligations and responsibilities once they leave the work site?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** It is my responsibility for these alternative self-isolation exemptions. I take full responsibility.

I do ask the chief medical officer of health to give me a health opinion about whether the plans are safe or not. We do that each and every time. If the project belongs to a municipal government, we check with that municipal government. If it belongs to a First Nation government, we check with that First Nation government.

In each of these instances, when that person flies into the territory, they sign a declaration. That declaration lists their obligations about how they should self-isolate for 14 days. When they fill out the plan, the plan has how they will work over and above that, so there are already rules in place for off-site, and we, in our letter back to them, add several pages of alternative self-isolation rules.

I will table in the Legislature next week for everyone an example of what that looks like, both the declaration and examples of alternative self-isolation. Again, it is my job to review these and sign these off, and we will continue to keep the Yukon safe.

#### Question re: COVID-19 testing

**Mr. Kent:** With the recent increase in COVID-19 cases around the country, many jurisdictions are exploring ways to increase testing frequency and capacity. Our understanding is that, in the Yukon, testing is only available to people exhibiting symptoms. Can the Minister of Health and Social Services confirm that this is the case and inform Yukoners around the current testing parameters in the territory?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** What I can say to the member opposite and can advise Yukoners is that, when we have a situation in our community, we work through the chief medical officer of health and the health advisory committee that has been established to identify protocols on testing.

Each situation, as it presents itself, is managed through that unit. With respect to testing and rapid testing, we have mobilized. I can safely say that, in situations that arise — Watson Lake, for example — we mobilize our rapid response team, bring them to the community, and ensure that tests are done as quickly as we can and are turned around.

From the time that a test was given in Watson Lake to the turnaround — 30 hours. Thirty hours is how quickly we can get these things done now.

I want to just advise Yukoners that the chief medical officer of health has gone out on a regular basis. We have our community health centres that will test individuals who display symptoms and are symptomatic. We ask you please to present yourself, and we will provide the supports. There are also other avenues, and I would be happy to respond to a second question.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for that response. In late September, the Yukon government announced that it was working with BC to offer either a mouth rinse or gargle test for children aged four to 19. Our understanding is that this test has been available for children in British Columbia since September 18.

Can the minister update us on whether or not this testing is available for Yukon children and, if not, when we might expect it?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With regard to testing for children, I don't have that in front of me, but I will endeavour to get that back to the member opposite. I will work with the office of the chief medical officer and the team to look at whether that's available or not in the Yukon, and I will certainly be happy to respond.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for that, and I'll look forward to hopefully getting that information as soon as possible, as I know that the standard test is intrusive enough for adults and, I think, that much more uncomfortable for children.

On November 10, the Government of Canada announced that it was purchasing 7.6 million rapid point-of-care COVID tests. According to that announcement, the Public Health Agency of Canada will deploy these tests to the provinces and territories and will provide support to help ramp up COVID-19 testing.

Now, I believe earlier on in Question Period today, the Premier mentioned that they didn't have anything new to update us on with respect to rapid testing, but then the minister earlier on in this series of questions said that there was a rapid-testing response deployed to Watson Lake.

My curiosity is: How many rapid tests did Yukon receive? When will they be available, and what will the policy be for Yukoners to access them?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** In referring to the — I believe it's called the GeneXpert kit that is provided through the hospitals. That is how the rapid tests were done. Whether that's made available throughout the communities — it isn't. I want to just acknowledge that we have three of those in the Yukon in our hospitals, and we use them when we need to. In Watson Lake, we use this particular kit.

With respect to rapid testing throughout the Yukon, that certainly will be done under the direction of the chief medical officer of health. The information that was provided two weeks ago through Dr. Hanley and the recommendation around the mention of the testing methods for children — I will work with that office and get the information back to the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

**Speaker:** Sadly, the time for Question Period has now elapsed — although I'm sure the Member for Kluane had an excellent question.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### MOTIONS RESPECTING COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 1

**Clerk:** Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 1, standing in the name of Mr. Adel.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees:

THAT the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees' 21<sup>st</sup> report, presented to the House on October 1, 2020, be concurred in; and

THAT the amendments to Standing Order 45(3.2)(a) recommended by the committee, adding to the list of entities for which the committee reviews nominations and recommends appointments, the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, be adopted.

**Mr. Adel:** As chair of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, it is my pleasure to move a motion for concurrence in the committee's 21<sup>st</sup> report. The purpose of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees is to review nominations and make recommendations on appointments to certain boards and committees.

The committee's orders of reference in Standing Order 45(3.2) identify nine major boards and committees and also include that the committee may review other appointments proposed by the Executive Council that are referred to it by the Executive Council.

The Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators is not one of the nine entities currently listed under Standing Order 45(3.2)(a). Appointments to the Panel of Adjudicators have, however, been referred to the committee by Cabinet on several occasions since 2013.

On June 24, 2020, the committee met by video conference and agreed to recommend to the House that the Standing Orders be amended to include the review of nominations to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators in the committee's mandate. This change will provide clarity and avoid the need for a referral from the Executive Council each time there is a new appointment to be made to this particular panel.

The change being recommended does not change the process by which appointments are actually made. Pursuant to section 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, the members of the panel of adjudicators are appointed by the Legislative Assembly.

I would like to thank all members of the appointments committee for their work, and I hope the House will agree to this motion so that the Standing Orders may be amended.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the chair of this particular standing committee for bringing this forward today. As he mentioned, our members — the Member for Watson Lake and the Member for Porter Creek North — are the two Official Opposition

members on this committee, and we do agree with formally adding this particular board to that Standing Order 45(3.2).

However, when it comes to the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, we had also made some additional recommendations in that forum. The Member for Lake Laberge and I are the opposition members on that committee. We had recommended that the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the Yukon College Board of Governors, and the Yukon Housing Corporation also be added to that list.

I know that it has been some time since we've had a SCREP meeting. We had a two-year plan, I believe, on the table the last time to get some of the work done, but unfortunately, it has been some time since that committee has met. It would be great to have the chair, the Member for Porter Creek Centre — and I know the Member for Copperbelt North is also a member of SCREP — a crossover member of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Boards and Committees. It would be great to get SCREP together to consider additional boards to be added to this standing order, as well as some of the other work that we had contemplated in that two-year work plan.

With that said, we will be supporting this motion here today.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the member opposite for his explanation of the need and the rationale for making this amendment to the Standing Orders with respect to the panel of adjudicators for the Human Rights Commission. In making this recommendation, it does reflect that, despite the fact that members may come to a meeting with different points of view, but eventually consensus can be reached. I think the chair will recall that, in fact, there were divergent points of view during the course of that discussion. The reality was that, at the end of the day, we agreed that it made no sense to have this potential for delay — or it appeared to be at the discretion of the Minister of Justice or whatever had occurred over the intervening years and the regularity with which the need to have members of this particular body appointed.

I also concur with the previous speaker. The member has raised some really valid points about the need to make sure that our committees do work and do meet because it's through the work of this little committee that the small change, but a big change in the sense of a process for this Legislative Assembly, is achieved. We will, of course, support it.

*Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 1 agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair (Mr. Hutton):** Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

### Motion re appearance of witnesses

#### Committee of the Whole Motion No. 5

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Chair, I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 19, 2020, Brian Gillen, chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees, and Jason Bilsky, chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Streicker:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 19, 2020, Brian Gillen, chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees, and Jason Bilsky, chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Chair, I will just be very brief.

I think that everyone will know that this is the annual appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and we are pleased to present these witnesses as part of our government business to answer questions from the Members of the Legislative Assembly here this afternoon.

*Committee of the Whole Motion No. 5 agreed to*

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

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel):** Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

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

**Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel):** The Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

#### Department of Community Services — *continued*

**Ms. White:** I think what we'll do is just start with a cliffhanger. There's no sense in piling stuff in behind that. I was just asking about the status or where we're at with the Carmacks arena. It was an issue when I was here before, between 2011 and 2016. It's still something that the community wants and needs, and we have a shell of a building.

Could the minister please fill me in on the Carmacks arena?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I'll just try to give a general update and then maybe there will be some follow-up questions, and I'll try to get a little bit more detail.

The rink is the number one priority of the community. Even though it's a municipal piece of infrastructure, I've heard clearly from the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, as well, that they believe it's a critical piece of infrastructure for the community. By the way, I would just, for a moment, like to give a shout-out to Mayor Lee Bodie, who last night went above and beyond the call, just in terms of attending our municipal call. He was very quick, as well, to work to get his store put in place so that we would not have panic buying. He was doing that, and there was a suggestion from Chief Bill that we talk to the other stores, and I just thought, "Well done, Mayor Bodie". I just wanted to acknowledge that.

It's definitely an important project. The project has been delayed. The builder wasn't meeting performance targets or getting things done, and so we have been working right now to get the project back on track. I can say that we have funding for the project and we're exploring all possible options to address that lack of progress and to get it back on track.

As of today, I don't have a timeline. I have gone to the community, and I have been given a tour of the project. I have met several times with the municipality to talk to them about the situation.

As a priority this fall, what I know I directed the team to do, and what I understand has been done, is to make sure that the investment in the building to date is secure so that there is no effect — for example, by weather — by not having something in place. But I don't have a timeline yet about how we get back on track.

I will just stop there. I'm sure that there will be more questions, and then I'll try to fill in a little bit more.

**Ms. White:** Is there a plan for trying to replace the contractors who walked away from the project? I would imagine that it's just not going to sit idle for an undefined amount of time. Even if it's a distant plan, what does that look like?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think the answer would be: There are plans — plural.

Basically, if we are talking about the contractors, Scott Design Build, we expect them to fulfill their contractual obligations. That would include resuming work on the project, so we're in touch with the bonding company to make a decision on liability under the bond and exercise the remedies available under the bond to address those defaults or those deficiencies.

I have talked with the department about various potential options, but at all times, we work first and foremost with that contract.

I also have directed that the project should make sure that we are not — as I said earlier — jeopardizing the existing work. To that end, I understand that they have been focusing on exterior cladding and covering any building openings and doorways with tarps to make sure that it was going to be protected from weather.

We have retained Kobayashi and Zedda Architects for inspections and oversight on the project throughout. They are our consultant, providing oversight on our behalf. I understand that they have been on-site a couple of times a week over the fall months, providing an assessment for us to support our plans. Some of it depends, of course, on Scott Design Build — the general contractor — and if they choose to get back on track or do not.

**Ms. White:** Pandemic aside, it would appear that they are never going to get back on track as far as timing goes. I am sure that the government is looking at what that would mean.

Is that site entirely fenced in? It might not be active right now, but it's still an active job site. Is it fenced?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The answer to the question is yes. There is a fence around there. At least when I was on-site, I saw a fence. When I asked to get a tour of the site, someone had to come and unlock the gate and then take me in and around the site.

I will say that, of course, COVID is here. We did reach out to Scott Design Build. We did let them know about the alternative self-isolation applications and that they could apply. We did explain that they would have to make sure that, if they were to apply for that, it would have to be done in a way that self-isolation could be done safely. Because the site wasn't that active, as the Member for Takhini-Kopper King is pointing out, it seemed to me that would be pretty easy to achieve.

She is able to say it so very eloquently about what the situation is. I am not able to say it so eloquently, and I will work at all times to have the company fulfill their contract with us. That's our expectation. We will work through the bonding company to help to make sure that does happen. That's the avenue to try to get this thing back on track.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that. I live in Takhini North, and there are two active construction sites in my neighbourhood right now — on a fairly large scale. There were issues with them not being fenced initially, because, as you can imagine, the multi-storey sand pile in a neighbourhood full of children is an incredibly enticing thing. There were times when I really thought it would be very cool to be on top of that sand hill myself, but I didn't go because I didn't want to be a bad example. There are reasons why we fence projects.

So, earlier in Question Period, just to be very honest, I didn't have this information when we were here last time. I didn't hold on to it to spring on the minister during Question Period here today. That could have been something I did, but I didn't. This was recent — in the last 24 hours.

Alternative isolation plan — that's what I would like to talk about now. When the minister just referenced the Scott Design Build being able to make an application for an alternative isolation plan in a place like Carmacks when they are the only contractors on-site makes a lot of sense because we're not mixing people.

The concerns that I was raising in Question Period have to do with a very real, live job site that is happening now. Manitoba — just to be clear, I don't dislike Manitoba. My partner is from Manitoba; his family and his friends are in

Manitoba. We have talked about Manitoba far more often than I had ever talked about Manitoba before COVID hit.

So, initially, when that construction company mentioned to the local contractors that they had filed an alternative isolation plan with Yukon government, the locals asked to see it, because they were like: "We would like to know what is being proposed." They weren't able to see that plan, and so they initially thought that the company was bringing carpenters from Alberta. It wasn't until yesterday that they learned that they were coming from Manitoba, which is of concern.

I want to know if the minister, or the minister's department, prior to approving alternative isolation plans, consults with the people who will be affected by them. For example, on this active job site, there are Yukon subcontractors who are there, there are Yukon employees who are there, and there are Yukon workers there. Does the minister's department reach out to have a conversation about what this might look like with the locals who are involved?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I want to say to the member opposite that they were great questions in Question Period today. I have been getting calls as well from the subcontractors.

Also in these conversations, I have put the question back to my department to find out whether I am allowed to share the plan with this Legislature or the other subcontractors. I don't know the answer to that question, but I have posed that question. In fact, I have told those subcontractors that, if I am allowed to share it, I will.

Here is the part that is concerning me. The general should be sharing it. I understand that the general may not be doing so, and I will work to run that to ground, but the general should be sharing it, because how can the general have a safe job site — and I understand the complications of job sites. I have worked on some of them myself as an engineer.

Like the member opposite — as a kid, I loved job sites. I would seek them out because they were fun places to play. So, yes, they can be places where there is lots of activity and lots of things going on.

When the general applies to us with an alternative self-isolation plan, they say, "This is how we propose to do this safely." As I stated earlier, I ask the chief medical officer of health to give me an opinion on the health aspect of that. Based on that opinion, then I take a decision. I do not reach out to the subcontractors to talk to all of them on the job, but I will direct the general that they should do so. In fact, in future letters, we're now going to start writing it in explicitly that they must do so.

I just don't understand how the general would not want to share it with his subcontractors, because how do you keep a job site safe except that you communicate, with all of the trades that are in and around it, who is doing what?

Anyway, I agree with the concern that is being raised, and I will focus it. I don't believe that it is specific to Manitoba, nor do I believe that it is specific to alternative self-isolations in general, but I do believe that, in this case, the general has a responsibility to make sure that the job site is safe. We have a responsibility to make sure that the job site is safe — "we" being the territorial government, not "we" meaning necessarily

Community Services — but CEMA enforcement and WCB have an obligation to make sure that job site is safe. I have flagged it to Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and we will work to try to make sure that job site is safe.

**Ms. White:** Who wouldn't agree that the general contractor should be speaking to the other people on-site? The concern that was highlighted time and time again was that the local contracting companies were not told until probably two weeks after an application had been made to government. The information that has been shared now within the job site about the alternative self-isolation plan and general information — for example, all persons are required to wear a face mask, and you should practise appropriate physical distancing — and again, it's for anywhere essentially outside or people.

The concern is that, if we were talking about self-isolating — we know that yesterday there was an announcement and this morning there was an announcement made that, as of 5:00 p.m. tomorrow, Yukoners or anyone returning or entering the Yukon will be required to self-isolate for 14 days.

That means — if we're talking about me, as an example — that if I was self-isolating — in theory, in this Chamber, we have decided that this is a six-foot difference for me and my colleagues. If I had an armband and a face mask on right now, would it be acceptable that I was here in the workplace?

I guess I'll just start with that. If I had just returned from Vancouver and I applied for my alternative isolation plan, and it was decided that I would be a distance away and I self-identified as having returned, would that be acceptable?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** It's an interesting hypothetical question. I'll run through how it would be treated so that we all understand. Because part of how it would be treated — I would ask the chief medical officer of health office. They have a doctor assigned to this type of work. They would provide that medical opinion to me — that professional opinion, which I don't have at my beck and call — but here are things that get talked about.

The application would go in, then it would be reviewed by the chief medical officer of health. They would make a recommendation — yes or no, or a qualified yes with a bunch of extra, additional criteria — and then that would come to my office.

When something has come to me previously which has to do with me, I have passed it off to someone else, but in this instance, who do I have? Because there's no one except us as colleagues, so I would have to figure that out.

So, the question isn't just whether where you are right now — whether the member opposite right now is six feet apart. That's a good start, but it's how do you get past that person next to your colleague? How do you come in and out? What are you doing around hygiene in between those times? Likely, the answer is no for this situation, but I can't — it's a hypothetical.

That's the type of understanding that we try to work through. That is not just where the person sits and how far they are away, but is there the ability to keep things separate to allow that isolation to take place?

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the minister joining me on this look through an imaginary situation.

One of the contrasts here is that I am static. I sit and I stand from the exact same spot. Now we are in a space that, to be honest, is probably quite comparable to one of the floors of the building that is being worked on. If my colleague to the right was a carpenter and doing something, my colleague to the left was doing a window installation, and I was running wire, we would all be moving around. Getting in and out of the site is one thing. I appreciate that, but my point is that, until there was the most recent discussion with the local contractors and the general contractor, the Yukon government had approved those on an alternative self-isolation plan to be on an active construction job site at the same time as Yukon workers, so that is my concern.

Can the minister explain to me how government is able to look at that and say, “Yes, that’s okay to go ahead”?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I gave another example earlier today about a construction site where we felt it was okay. I am not speaking for others here, but I would hazard a guess that others would also say, “Yes, of course, that is safe”. That was the one where the job site was the construction of the F.H. Collins track and field, and it was for those line painters. There is lots of space outside, and we all felt that everyone would be able to stay far enough away, but it’s possible that they couldn’t. It is a judgment call that has to be put out there.

When people apply for these, what they are doing is that they are describing to us how they will work to ensure that there is separation. There can be, for example, a crew that is isolating as a bubble. That crew can be working, as we did on the F.H. Collins track and field — we had at least one person from New Brunswick and, actually, one person from England. As the minister responsible for infrastructure, when I heard that this was coming forward — I was not the minister who was considering that application because I recused myself — but as the minister responsible for infrastructure — they said, “Well, we need to get this person who is accredited.” I said, “Great. Who’s that?” They said, “They’re from England.” I said, “You’re not going to get someone from England, right now, to come to Canada to paint lines on the ground. That’s not going to happen.” Then they said, “Actually, they’re already in New Brunswick.” I said, “Okay. Maybe now that can happen.” That crew came and bubbled.

When someone else applies, what they will give to us is a plan that says, “Here’s how this individual or this crew is going to stay separate from others on the work site.” They say, “Here’s how we will create that separation.” We look at it, and if, for example, they say, “Well, you know, they have to be close to each other” — that’s generally when we say, “Sorry. That’s not acceptable.” Again, it goes through a couple of layers. It goes through the health perspective and that’s given as advice, and then it comes to me.

In this case, that plan said, “Here’s how we’re going to keep people separate.” We took the general contractor to say, “Listen, here’s what we’re authorizing you. If you live up to this plan, this is okay.”

Now, we are having Workers’ Compensation go and check the job site to make sure that the site is safe, generally and specifically, against what this plan said. We will have our

CEMA officers go by and check that they are living up to what they agreed to under the plan and under all of those guidelines. For example, the member opposite earlier in Question Period asked about off-hours — how they are doing the rest of their self-isolation. We will work to see how that is safe.

Now, I will not say today that it can’t be done safely. What I will say is that it must be done safely. They provided us with a plan that said, “Here’s how we will do it safely.” We said okay and will now check to see that it is being adhered to.

I agree with the member opposite that, in order for a job site — a complicated, complex, busy job site — to be safe, that information needs to be exchanged across all those who are going to be on the job site. At present, I will just work to make sure that the general contractor is being diligent to do so.

I will work in the future to ensure that it is a stipulation and a requirement. I will also work to find out from my own team whether I am able to disclose that information. Again, as I have said, I have asked for that consideration. I don’t have an answer here yet today.

**Ms. White:** I think that the issue, as I understand it, is different than that. Maybe this is it. For example, can the minister and his department insist that, once an application is filed, it is shared with others on the job site — those who share the job site — at the very beginning of the process?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We can. We did not, and I will take responsibility that it was my assumption that it would be. I will follow up with it. So, I did issue a letter. In my recollection, I did not add a clause in there that said: “This must be shared with...” We have, since hitting the situation, agreed that, on a go-forward basis — and just to note, I haven’t had another application of this type or anything similar — we will write in that it must be shared, but we did not.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that. I think that sometimes you can’t anticipate every situation. We make the assumptions that people are going to do something that makes sense to us, and when they don’t, we realize that we need to actually put in rules so that it is followed and makes sense to all involved. So, I appreciate that, and it is part of learning the process. I would never think that we would be without questions. I appreciate that, on a go-forward basis, that will be included. That will be helpful for future projects and applications, and I appreciate that very much.

In that same vein, is there a willingness from the minister and the department to have — for example, a larger contractor is making this application to bring in Outside employees, but when there are local people who are — for example, lots of people whom I spoke to haven’t left the territory since the end of February. They have not left the territory since the end of February because they are aware and are trying to make decisions based on the people around them. They have stayed here; they didn’t go to Vancouver for a week. They have stayed here because they were trying to make the right decision.

So, when you have people who are responsible for other workers below them — you have the subcontractors, and you have the supervisors who are on-site who are in charge of their employees. They take care of each other. That’s important to know — that they work together.



So, on a go-forward basis, is there a willingness from the minister and the department to make sure that those who will be affected by these alternative isolation plans will have the ability to put in feedback and their thoughts on the application?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** In talking to some of the subcontractors, I've heard this comment. My basic answer is: I don't think so.

But let me try to give a bit of a broader explanation. First of all, the assumption I was talking about earlier about a general contractor being responsible to ensure the health and safety — that's actually the law. The general contractor is the primary employer and therefore is responsible for the safety of the workers on that job site. That's their job. I will work hard to ensure that this is upheld. We are making this change. I said so, and I said that we had not put this in. We will work to facilitate that.

But if, with every application we got, we then had to figure out all of the subcontractors and then figure out when they're there or when they're not there or when this one might be coming in — no, no. I think that's the job of the general contractor, so I want to keep that. I agree with the member opposite that we need to ensure that this is going to be done safely, and the place where that rests is the general contractor.

In the conversations that I had with the subcontractors, we talked about this — whether or not I could check in with them — have them almost as a sign-off on something. I said to them that I didn't think that would be likely, and the reason was because our relationship is with the general that's on the job.

We also already had enough situations, looking at them over time, to say: You know what? We also don't want to have — for example, what if a subcontractor applied to us — and then how could we ensure that the flow was going up the other way? We felt we couldn't, and so we started to say, "No, it has to be the general who applies to us" — because we want to ensure that the site is safe and that the site is coordinated. That's why I think our focus has come to the general, but we believe that they have the responsibility to work with all those subtrades to ensure that safety.

If they are going to change something on the site — for example, if the way that the site had originally been set up or the job had originally been set up — and the agreement with the subcontractor and how that subcontract had been struck — and if the general is changing something — for example, "You now have to work from these hours to these hours because I have another crew coming in, and I need to keep you separate" — that, for me, is like a change order, and that should allow for the subcontractor to say, "No, actually, we don't want to do that" or "It's going to cost this to do that" — or something. But that's how I think that negotiation should happen.

So, we will work to facilitate that to happen, but I don't believe that we should be the place where it does happen. I think the appropriate and effective place is with the general contractor.

**Ms. White:** Understanding that we just talked about the fact that this is the first time this issue has come up in the way that it has — I appreciate that. I'm not talking about things before, but I am talking about things from this point forward.

What this has highlighted for us is that there is a real concern within the Yukon contracting community, within the Yukon tradespeople community. I don't think that I need to point it out in this House, but I will: A person who lives in Yukon pays their income tax in Yukon. A person who lives outside of Yukon pays income tax in their home jurisdiction. So, people who are here are invested in the community in a different way. I'm not saying that people from Outside are willing to thumb their nose at the rules and put people at risk. That's not what I'm saying. But knowing that this has come up as an issue now — and every job site isn't the same, but there is a certain point when they get over a certain size that there are going to be a lot of similarities. I'm not talking about the construction of a house; I'm not talking about small scale. I'm talking multi-million-dollar projects right now.

Is there a willingness from the minister and the department to, for example, reach out to the Yukon Contractors Association to try to figure out how to proceed so that, with the next projects or the next applications, we don't run into the same problem?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** My answer is yes, and again, let me flesh it out a little bit.

I think the thing that we are trying to focus on is safety on that job. I am not really considering where people are paying their income taxes. I am considering how that job can be done safely. That is true whether it's all Yukoners; that is true if it's a few people from BC, Alberta, or Manitoba working on a site. Wherever they are from, I want all the workers to be safe on that site. Honestly, that has been our primary focus around most of this pandemic.

Would I be willing to talk to the Yukon Contractors Association? Absolutely — because I would love to get their perspectives. I would love to think that through. I am happy to take that feedback. I think that the Minister of Economic Development did have a bit of a conversation with the Yukon Contractors Association. I have, on many occasions, had conversations with them as well. I have to be fair that I have not had this conversation with them. This issue arose for me over the past — let's say — week or so. I have been working, as I have indicated here today, to improve our processes to make sure that we reinforce keeping that job site safe where someone has applied for an alternative self-isolation. I am happy to talk to the Yukon Contractors Association to get their perspectives.

**Ms. White:** I did appreciate the positive language that the minister used. He just said that he would be willing, but I want to know if he will reach out to the Yukon Contractors Association or to other people in the building trades as a general call-out about whether they have concerns in the building trades about this — to say, you know, "Here's how we're going to have the conversation..." — about anyone who might be affected on a job site by an alternative self-isolation plan.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I appreciate the member wanting to be very specific on this. I understand that. I will call the Yukon Contractors Association within the week to talk about this situation as an example and, in general, alternative self-isolation plans and how they may affect subcontractors and



what the thoughts are of the Contractors Association. I will do that.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that answer.

Recently, I've had friends who have been in British Columbia for different medical things that have been happening, but the very interesting thing is that parents, for example, have been able to go into a hospital, but the reason they got the go-ahead to go into the hospital is because they had a rapid test.

If we talk about people having to leave the territory, for example, for medical travel — I'm not talking about vacations; I'm not talking about people who are choosing to go; I'm talking about people who need to go — so, if you have to go for medical travel or in support of someone — we could even use it, as an example, if a contractor is bringing in Outside employees and having a requirement of, for example, a three- to four-day isolation and then a rapid test, it could cut down the two-week self-isolation period.

Have the minister and government looked at any alternative solution for those who don't have a choice to leave or enter, but it's a requirement?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm going to give as much of an answer as I can. I'm just going to let you know that the lead on this sort of stuff is the chief medical officer of health, and really, it's through my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, where this file lands more squarely.

Have we been considering it? Yes. For example, even nationally, there are times that other jurisdictions will start looking at rapid testing. We share that information across to see how it goes. For example, Alberta was doing a trial on a rapid test, a time period, and a second rapid test to see if that could cut down on self-isolation times.

The thing about some of that is that it was sort of considering more travel. Right now, travel will naturally hit a downswing. But as the member opposite is noting, this is about an emergency or an urgency — so, someone is required to travel because of a medical reason.

I know, for example, that we have some interesting things. Our EMS folks, our ambulance folks, have this device in the ambulance that allows for rapid cleaning of the ambulance. It is pretty cool — I forget the exact time, but it is several minutes and then that ambulance is clean again. So, that is one of those protocols which helps the system overall.

I will just let my colleagues know for interest in this topic, but it is not my main file. I will leave it there.

**Ms. White:** I am just going to point out that, to the best of my knowledge, the last time that the opposition MLAs had a briefing with the chief medical officer of health was August 31. A lot has changed since August 31, and the information that opposition MLAs get is received through the briefings that are done for the general public. We are not able to ask questions. We are not able to get a better understanding. So, when people come to us with questions, we don't have the answers, and all we can say is, "Well, let me try to find it for you on yukon.ca" or I will send a note to someone to try to get that. If we want to talk about us all being at the same level of understanding with the same information — the last briefing that opposition MLAs

got from the chief medical officer of health was August 31. I stand to be corrected, but I can't find it in my schedule at all for September and October. Well, it definitely didn't happen in October. I can't find it, again, in September, so I feel moderately comfortable that was the last day.

I have, for example, a friend who lives in Skagway. She was around a family member at the end when she was leaving, and unfortunately, the entire family got COVID — just about all of them. My friend talked about how she was in self-isolation within her house — her family was in other parts of her house, so they were very separate — and she wasn't able to be out of the isolation plan that she had been put in until she had two negative tests. I feel like we have seen in other jurisdictions that there is the possibility for a different way to do it — a rapid testing. I would just like to put that out there. It would be great to be able to have further conversations about that.

I can see, at the Clerk's Table, Mr. Deputy Chair — seeing the time, I move that you report progress in time for witnesses.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by Ms. White that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

**Deputy Chair:** Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 5 adopted earlier today, Committee of the Whole will receive witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation. In order to allow the witnesses to take their places in the Chamber, Committee will recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

*Recess*

**Deputy Chair:** Order, please. Committee of the Whole will come to order.

### Appearance of witnesses

**Deputy Chair:** Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 5 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witnesses. I would also ask the witnesses to refer their answers through the Chair when they are responding to members of the Committee.

*Witnesses introduced*

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I am pleased that the Yukon Hospital Corporation is appearing at witnesses before the Legislative Assembly today. Joining us today is Jason Bilsky, the CEO of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Welcome. And Brian Gillen is the chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees. Welcome as well. I would like to thank them both for joining us today.

Since taking office, our government has been proud to work collaboratively with the Hospital Corporation to deliver services to Yukoners. We have accomplished much over the last four years. We have reduced pressures on hospital beds through the home first program. We have expanded ultrasound services to Yukon community hospitals. We have reduced

ophthalmology wait times from 37 months to nine months. The Hospital Corporation has appeared consistently over the last three years. As I understand it, that hasn't been the case historically, so I'm very happy that they have been able to make it here every year. We have brought permanent orthopaedic surgeons to the Yukon, reducing the number of patients waiting for orthopaedic consults by 85 percent. We are investing in IHealth to modernize our health systems and increase access to care through technology.

When completing IHealth, we will include patient portals to allow Yukoners to securely access their own health records online.

Our government will continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that it has what it needs to provide a high standard of care to Yukoners. Under this government, between 2015 and 2021, the O&M provided to the Hospital Corporation has increased by almost 29 percent.

Throughout the pandemic, we provided the Hospital Corporation with an additional \$6,012,424 in funding to support its role in managing the COVID-19 pandemic here in Yukon. Although we have been fortunate that the majority of the COVID cases in Yukon have not required hospitalization, we still must be prepared. I want to thank the Hospital Corporation for its readiness and preparedness to respond to any situation, and also for focusing their efforts from that of acute care to collaborative care models across the Yukon.

I am very excited that you are here today. I look forward to your presentation and, of course, the questions.

**Deputy Chair:** Would the witnesses like to make opening remarks?

**Mr. Gillen:** Mr. Deputy Chair, I wish to thank you, the Hon. Minister Frost, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and all Yukoners for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Yukon's hospitals today. My name is Brian Gillen. I am honoured to be the chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. With me is Jason Bilsky, the CEO of the corporation.

The *Hospital Act* states that the Yukon Hospital Corporation is independent from government. Our hospitals function pursuant to the *Hospital Act* and are overseen by a board of trustees comprised of representatives from communities across the territory, including Yukon First Nations, our medical staff, the public service, and the public at large. Our role is to support and oversee Yukon hospitals and its skilled and diverse team of more than 650 employees, including 350 direct care and clinical staff, as well as about 265 support staff. Additionally, we have a top-notch medical staff of 76 resident physicians and a number of passionate volunteers.

Our team works around the clock to provide the very best acute hospital care in accordance with the recognized standards while delivering critical health services, such as imaging and lab tests. We can't ensure that Yukoners are well cared for in hospital, at home, or elsewhere in the community without the essential collaboration of our partners — government, physicians, First Nations, and community agencies. The *Putting People First* report refers to the need for collaboration

in health care, and we share Minister Frost's enthusiasm for collaboration with our partners.

Last year, the Yukon Hospital Corporation continued to meet Yukon's growing needs with a number of constraints as more Yukoners rely on hospital services, whether it's emergency care, lab, cancer care, or imaging tests. This requires our entire team to be flexible, to adjust, and to re-evaluate to address these growing pressures, ensuring that there are no gaps in their care.

In general, visits and volumes continue to grow for the emergency department, blood work, lab tests, x-ray and imaging, and cancer care. For example, the number of visits to Whitehorse General Hospital Emergency increased by nine percent last year alone.

While the number of admitted patients continues to increase, a significant decrease in the length of stay in hospitals is reflected. This means that we are able to provide care that you need and to safely transition you back home or to a more appropriate level of care.

As we started the year, COVID-19 became a reality for all of us and has added another layer of complexity and pressure on our operations. A number of precautions remain in place to ensure the safety of patients and employees. With the pandemic, our hospitals had to build new policies, protocols, and communication channels to keep everyone safe. Focus has been on ensuring the security and continuity of our supplies, including the storage and distribution of PPE for Yukon as a whole, preparing for the potential surges, and maintaining alignment and integration with health system partners, including the chief medical officer of health — all of this while in a constant state of change as the situation has evolved.

Our team now works in an environment with numerous precautions in place, ensuring Yukoners continue to access care without prolonged delays. Like most Canadian health providers, challenges exist with recruiting skilled people to maintain and sustain safe hospital care, especially in several specialized or technical positions — for example, operating room nurses. While we have had success in adding and recruiting staff, ensuring that our hospitals have the right staffing in place requires ongoing effort each and every day.

Finally, I will highlight some key priority areas for our hospital now and in the months ahead. Supporting the acute mental health needs of Yukoners continues to be a challenge, especially when the patient's needs exceed our capacity and require a higher level of psychiatric or forensic care. Recognizing the limitations of our current secure medical unit in terms of space, programming, and resources, advanced work continues to build an enhanced environment at Whitehorse General Hospital in the shell space above the emergency department. Planning, costing, and initial designs are all complete, and the project is now ready to move forward with the funding now allocated by the Government of Yukon. It remains a challenge to ensure that the health system is in constant alignment to meet patients' needs.

Significant progress has also been made on the IHealth project, advancing a fully integrated health system.

**Deputy Chair's statement**

**Deputy Chair:** Order. Sorry, Mr. Gillen, but pursuant to the Chair's statement from the 2019 Fall Sitting, five minutes was the time allotted, and you have gone over that.

**Mr. Gillen:** I have two sentences left.

**Deputy Chair:** Then you give me the two sentences quickly. I'm sure the House won't mind.

**Mr. Gillen:** Wait times to see an ophthalmologist for assessment and surgeries were reduced by working with the Government of Yukon. We're now focusing on requiring a long-term plan to keep this momentum, and it will take a collaborative effort.

The orthopaedic program was expanded by welcoming and securing resources to support a second resident orthopaedic surgeon, increasing the number of surgeries and treatments completed in Yukon. We continue to work with Health and Social Services to investigate how to further expand services in a sustainable way.

With that, Mr. Deputy Chair, we would welcome your questions.

**Deputy Chair:** Thank you very much for your opening remarks.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Gillen and Mr. Bilsky for appearing here today. Thank you for the work you do on behalf of Yukoners, and please pass on my thanks to the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees, the management team, employees, and medical staff for the work that all of you do to provide high-quality hospital care and services to Yukoners when we need it.

Our health care system depends on the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Since we're in a pandemic, I will start with questions about that.

As mentioned in the hospital's 2019-20 year in review, at the beginning of the pandemic, non-urgent services were scaled back for a period of time, including cancellation of elective surgeries and procedures. I know that action followed pandemic preparedness plans, so I'm not questioning it. But I would appreciate it if the witnesses could explain what impacts that had and tell us what is happening now to catch up following that.

**Mr. Bilsky:** I thank you for the question. First off, I would like to say that our goal as the Yukon Hospital Corporation is to maintain services as much as possible at the highest degree possible so that people have access to care when it's needed throughout the period of the pandemic and obviously ongoing. Our job is to do that in the safest way possible and not disrupt service — again, access for people in terms of access to care on an equitable basis in a safe way.

The pandemic has had quite a significant impact, as you can imagine, in all respects to our hospital system and to the health care system overall and I'm sure to the territory overall.

I will speak to mostly the clinical aspects of the impacts, but if there are questions about other aspects, I can do that as well.

As I said, YHC is committed to continuing to ensure that all people have access to acute care and ambulatory services

when it is needed and in the fastest way possible. To be able to provide safe care, we need to ensure that we have a safe and stable team environment first.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have significant impact, and it has caused us to re-think each and every thing that we do. This means: changes in operational protocol procedures; dealing with the fear of the unknown; individual impacts; work and family; individuals with underlying mental health challenges have been shown to be disproportionately impacted; more rigorous application of staff illness procedures; more rigorous application of school and daycare illness procedures; and staff who live in Yukon, away from their family and support systems, who make decisions to leave the Yukon to be closer to supports. These are all things that we struggle with and have been challenged with.

Ensuring that supports are available to our employees during the difficult time is one of our top priorities. This means policies and procedures, education supports for new protocols, communication channels, augmentation of resources, and a focus on ensuring that staff are safe and secure, including things like N95 testing and ensuring adequate supply and appropriate use of PPE. To meet this challenge, we have added 20.5 FTE temporary positions to support COVID response, supported by Yukon government — and I think earlier mentioned by the minister as far as the funding support that has been allowed to us.

What this has allowed us to do is provide administrative supports for changes to walk-in services — because pretty much all of our services have turned into by-appointment-only services — screeners, cleaning supports, nursing and triage support, management of PPE supply, policy support and development, and the list goes on.

The impacts essentially to inpatient and acute ED services have been augmented to manage risk, but we essentially continue to operate 100 percent of our services in the ED and acute inpatient areas throughout the period of the pandemic. As I said, these services have been augmented, but there was no slowdown or stop of those services.

Having said that, our outpatient services — we had to temporarily suspend those from mid-March to early June. As a result, a backlog in non-urgent outpatient procedures and tests has been created. Outpatient services include surgical, medical imaging, medical laboratory, medical rehabilitation, medical daycare, and visiting specialists. With the exception of medical imaging, all services have essentially cleared any backlog created by the pandemic suspension.

As an example, at that point in time, we had to suspend elective surgeries. This caused a deferral of 51 elective surgeries at that time. Since that time, we've been able to clear that backlog, and we expect that there will not be any surgeries that haven't been booked deferred at this point in time or going into the future — subject to changes in our risk environment going forward.

The one challenge for us has been in medical imaging wait times. This is as of October 31. Essentially, our services have been able to deal with all urgent medical imaging services; however, non-urgent medical imaging work wait times have

suffered. We do have plans in place, and those plans should be able to be in effect within the next two to three months to clear any backlog in medical imaging wait times.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the information.

My second question is about surge capacity. I realize that one of the key reasons that the hospitals needed to clear the deck, so to speak, at the start of the pandemic was to reduce the risk of our hospitals being overwhelmed while steps were taken to put in place the necessary surge capacity. Can the witnesses please tell me what steps have been taken to ensure that Yukon hospitals have the necessary surge capacity to respond to a potential surge in cases of COVID-19 as well as to respond if an outbreak affected our health care professionals? I would also appreciate it if the witnesses could indicate if they're comfortable with the level of surge capacity that we have now and also about the risks to the adequacy of that surge capacity and what else may be needed.

**Mr. Bilsky:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'll start off by saying that Yukon hospitals have been very actively engaged in planning and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and have coordinated efforts with the chief medical officer of health and the Government of Yukon. This has been right from the very beginning.

We have a number of key areas that we focused on as far as managing risk and being able to handle any surge or implications from the pandemic. This includes, right from the beginning: governance and decision-making; clinical care service; patient care pathways; occupancy and nursing initiatives; personal protective equipment; communication; staffing and employee services; funding and financial consideration; and also partner engagement in joint planning.

We'll continue to work closely with the chief medical officer of health in order to plan for and respond appropriately when anything new arises and new evidence is available.

But certainly this has had an impact. That impact, for us, has been changing daily as far as our planning and our response. Our surge capacity and escalation plans go into great detail. It includes things such as patient pathways that are COVID-19 risk versus non-COVID-19 risk. It allows us to scale up and scale down certain inpatient areas and ICU areas, including the use of ventilators — understanding our oxygen capacity for ventilators. It also allows us to plan for surge when it comes to staffing and how we would recruit. We have planned and created surge plans in case of staff outbreaks. We have been planning for and having what I would call “simulation exercises” with our staff in case we do have some sort of infection within the hospital, whether that includes staff or patients themselves. I would like to go on, but the list is pretty extensive as far as the planning goes.

I think the last part of your question was: Are we comfortable with that? I'll ask our board chair to also answer that question, because he looks at it from a governance perspective.

From an operational perspective, I don't think that you can ever be prepared enough for a situation like this. We're certainly doing the best we can. Curveballs come at us all the time, and we never know, but I'm very fortunate to work with

the partners that we do have and to work with the team that we do have. It has been all hands on deck, and I feel very confident with the team that we have that we do the best we can to handle anything that comes at us.

**Mr. Gillen:** The ability of the corporation and the three hospitals to deal with the surge — and we never know when a surge will come and we never know how big it will be, but we have had patients in hospital who we were uncertain about — if they were positive or not — so they were in isolation — and then they find out they are not positive, they come out of isolation, et cetera.

Our staff are constantly looking at the needs around people in isolation and how we deal with them. We also had plans in place in — as I call it, the “first wave” — March and April. We had plans for a temporary ICU that we could set up really quickly. So, right now, we have four beds in our ICU. We could expand that to eight or 10 beds — relatively straightforward and simple.

Our board is very comfortable and very supportive of our administration, the planning they've done, and the things that have been put in place to deal with a surge. I think we have had a total of two patients in hospital who have tested positive, but it has been one and then a second. We haven't had a situation where we've had groups of individuals who have tested positive and showed up at our doors. Hopefully, we never get to that, but we are very well prepared to deal with it, if and when it ever comes.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate Mr. Bilsky answering with the fact that you can't ever be prepared enough. I do appreciate the frankness of that answer.

Recognizing the importance of surge capacity, this is an issue that we'll be flagging and keeping an eye on as this progresses. I certainly hope that, as the situation changes, if and when additional resources are required, the government will be quick to assist the hospital with this.

My next question relates to the financial impact of the pandemic. The Hospital Corporation budget for this year was finalized before COVID-19 was declared a worldwide pandemic, meaning that the government's budget, including hospital funding, was tabled before the pandemic was declared. The budget in the spring, as a result, doesn't include provisions for pandemic response and management.

Could the witnesses please talk a bit about some of the risks and potential challenges that they're concerned about during this fiscal year and that might result in hospitals needing to request more resources?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Just a quick clarification from the member — is the question specific to COVID?

**Mr. Cathers:** Including but not limited to COVID, especially recognizing that COVID is top of mind — but generally, if the witnesses could talk about the risks and potential challenges during this fiscal year that might result in them needing to ask for more resources.

**Mr. Bilsky:** Let me lead off by saying that we continually assess and work with government to live within the fiscal constraints, and we will continue to provide quality care. This continuous work — we work on a number of fronts and in

discussions with government, ideally taking a collaborative, system-wide approach to health delivery. This includes how we and our health system partners can better be aligned and integrate and serve the health needs of Yukon. This means identifying and addressing priorities and providing safe and excellent care to Yukoners as those priorities sometimes arise, recognizing that our hospitals must live within these constraints while still meeting significant growth pressures.

I think that's where the challenge comes in — trying to meet the growth pressures on an ongoing basis. As the minister has already stated, we've done our best to project and identify the COVID-related impacts for the year, which amount to, in our estimation, just slightly over \$6 million to year-end. We have a line that this funding is coming to our organization.

That funding goes toward supporting a number of areas in the hospital that are required to be supported, so that goes everywhere from screening when you enter the building to support for having to pre-book or book by appointment only — managing that. It comes to security, it comes to additional nursing support for triage for different risk pathways of COVID, and it comes down to policy and planning work that's involved. Those are all things that we've had to apply it to. Also, there are supplies, such as PPE, that have been required. That is essentially the support that we have had so far to try to manage COVID.

Again, not knowing what it will look like in the future, we will have to continue to work with government if those pressures continue to increase. Aside from that, it is our job and our goal to continue to provide health care and access to health care throughout the pandemic. Not only are we taking care of — let's say — COVID-related issues, but the bigger issue is continually providing health care that is non-COVID related and doing it in a safe way. That is where it can become difficult as the complexity and volume continues to increase.

As I said, we continue to work with our government partners to try to manage all of those priorities. Each and every year, we do create what I would call a balanced budget based on what we see as our allocation each and every year going forward. We are provided with core funding plus potentially new funding for any identified new priorities or new services that are expected to be provided. That is in addition to the base of service that we already provide.

As I said, we are continually working with government to identify these priorities and resource appropriately, but unfortunately, sometimes the timing of these efforts and decisions can be challenging — meaning that, as we move forward, the priorities are identified, and we need to move forward and deliver the services. The challenging part comes in with the timing and sometimes the decision in creating that alignment to ensure that we have a system view.

I think that where we find it difficult — for example, in this past year, almost every ambulatory and inpatient service increased by greater than, say, three percent. Some of them are up to possibly 10 percent. That is something that we will have to work with government on to ensure that our core funding — our base funding — keeps pace with what we see as far as increases.

Why do we see those increases? Changes in models of care, increase in volume, increasing complexity — essentially, it's just a higher use of our system.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate the answer and the information. I recognize the challenge of predicting going forward, but as much information as you're able to provide is certainly much appreciated.

In looking at the hospital's audited consolidated statement of operations in Public Accounts — I'm on page 294 of the Public Accounts document and just into the hospital's own financial statements — I see that under "Expenses", for compensation and benefits comparing 2019 to 2020, there has been an increase of over \$3 million between those fiscal years.

Can the witnesses please talk a bit about how much of the Hospital Corporation's core costs are related to agreements with the collective bargaining units? How much of the cost increases are related to those agreements? If it's possible, could you provide the total dollars as well as the percentage of the core budget that makes up and explain what the annual increases in costs related to those agreements have been like over the past five years?

**Mr. Bilsky:** I'll make sure that I try to cover off all elements of that question. It's a detailed question with quite a few pieces to it.

I'll start by saying that, of our total expenditure envelope, which is \$96.5 million, approximately 60 percent are employee expenses. Now, if you break that down further, between 90 and 95 percent of those expenses are held under a collective agreement, meaning union employees. So, 95 percent of our total employee expenditure is governed by a collective agreement.

That's two unions, so, basically half and half — 50 percent for one union and 50 percent for the other. Those two collective agreements are not synchronous, meaning they expire at two different points in time. Actually, one collective agreement has already expired, and we're in conciliation with that particular union as of today. We're in conciliation.

I would say that, if you look at the last year, the increase under that collective agreement is approximately 1.75 percent. To explain the rest of the increase — so, the majority will be that. I mean, if you were to do the math, you would see that this makes up the majority. Just natural escalation under a collective agreement and other merit increases will make up the majority of that. In addition to that, in the past year, we have added in several areas front-line staff — maternity nursing, lab areas, medical imaging, and environmental services. Again, that is all to deal with the pressures that I was speaking about earlier.

Just to put things in context, when we talk about adding one particular front-line staff on a 24/7 basis, that equates to almost five FTEs. So, in dollar terms, that could equate to somewhere between — depending on the pay scale and where they sit — \$500,000 and \$700,000 per — what people think is adding one person, but really you are adding five people to cover those 24/7, weekends, and also sick call-in and education time. It is needed, but it is more than what meets the eye initially.

**Mr. Cathers:** Are you able to tell us how much those costs have grown over the last five years?

**Mr. Bilsky:** I don't have that particular information at my fingertips to know exactly how much it has grown in the last five years, but it is something that we can definitely undertake.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would appreciate receiving that.

Moving on to my next question, I know that some of the areas where the hospital has experienced significant forced growth and cost pressures in recent years include increased volume in medical imaging and the lab and increased costs of chemotherapy drugs and the number of patients needing chemotherapy. Can the witnesses please update us on those areas?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Just a point of clarification, just to narrow it down, I am just asking the member what "update" means or what they would like as far as an update. Could he also mention the areas that he was talking about again? I couldn't quite get those.

**Mr. Cathers:** I was talking about medical imaging and the lab. I know that, both in the report to the Hospital Corporation and last fall when the witnesses appeared here, two of the areas where they were identifying significant cost pressures were growth in the volume at medical imaging and the lab, as well as in the area of chemotherapy.

I understood it to be due to the increased cost of chemotherapy drugs as well as an increase to the number of patients needing chemotherapy. I would appreciate it if they could explain, in comparison to what they told us last year, how those areas have been doing since that time in terms of any growth, et cetera.

**Mr. Bilsky:** I'll see if I can break the question down a little bit and provide a useful answer. I'll start with chemotherapy if that's okay.

Chemotherapy itself — when we talk about visits to chemotherapy year over year, since last year to this year, chemotherapy has increased by 5.7 percent in the year ending March 2020. Costs have basically stabilized from that year to this year, although we're expecting a higher number this year.

If we talk about what has happened as far as support for funding for that, we did request from government, at that time, to increase funding specifically for chemotherapy, and we did receive funding specifically for chemotherapy at that time to increase the base level for chemotherapy.

It continues to grow, though. It continues to grow in terms of complexity, and it continues to grow in terms of the number of visits that we're seeing. Again, it goes back to earlier diagnosis, better prognosis — which is a good thing — and longer course of treatment and more expensive course of treatment — and that will continue. So, we'll have to continue to work with government to manage that.

Specifically about the lab and medical imaging, the lab itself has increased. The number of total of visits to the lab has increased by 8.8 percent, and also the number of tests per visit has increased substantially. This does create pressure and challenges, and then, in addition to that, we can add COVID-19 pressures, which means that we're doing our best to try to space

and keep people safe — booked appointments in lab, screening up front, and measures such as that — so it has all complicated the efforts that go into managing the lab.

Medical imaging itself — while the number of total discrete visits to medical imaging has not increased year over year, some areas have increased. The complexity of medical imaging has increased substantially — longer and more complex treatments or diagnostics are being provided there, such as contrast imaging, and that's expected to continue as models of care continue to increase the use of diagnostics.

One specific area that has ballooned significantly is MRI. MRI, year over year, for us has increased 6.4 percent. While the MRI began about five years ago with, I think, approximately 1,600 scans per year, we're now sitting at over 2,400 scans per year, which is significant. The good news is that this is 2,400 visits that people haven't had to go south to take two or three days out of their lives to accomplish. The challenge is that we're at a point where we're exceeding the capacity of the human resources that we have and we have to look at augmenting that.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate that as well. I noted in the hospital's report on 2019-20 — acknowledging the milestone of MRIs in terms of the number of scans that have been provided — I believe it indicated that the 10,000<sup>th</sup> MRI scan had been provided in the Yukon as of mid-2019. I appreciate that information about the growth in that.

When the witnesses appeared last year, they mentioned that there was consideration being given to the possibility of adding a second shift for MRI to accommodate the backlog. Could they please update us on whether that's currently being considered and what the status of that might be?

**Mr. Bilsky:** As I said, Yukon's MRI program began operating in 2015. I never comment about the MRI without thanking Yukon Hospital Foundation and the Yukon government for its support in moving that forward. That's just a tagline that I always add about the MRI itself.

As we all know, the MRI program in the Yukon has increased access to a higher standard of care and avoids a significant amount of travel. We complete a review of the MRI program on an annual basis and utilize statistics every year to ensure that the use of that program is appropriate and that we're benchmarking with utilization across Canada to ensure that the usage is appropriate.

At this point in time, we are currently not meeting non-urgent wait times, but we are meeting urgent wait times, partially due to COVID. We have not added — I'll call it a second shift. However, what we have done is that we have augmented significantly the one MRI tech that we have with temporary resources and continue to do so.

That does mean running the MRI longer into the days and evenings so that we can accommodate more than what we were accomplishing before. As I said, we are at a point now where we are looking at more permanent augmentation to that program.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Bilsky indicated that we are meeting the urgent standard but not meeting the non-urgent standard for MRI wait times. Could you please explain what the typical non-

urgent wait time is for MRI right now in Yukon and how that compares to the standard that you would like to be achieving?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Again, this is partially due to impacts of COVID, but right now, what we would refer to as non-urgent — our standard is to have those done within 90 days. Right now, as of October — so just a slight lag in the statistics — it is a 180-day wait for an MRI. To put that in context, we are not meeting our standards, but if you put that in the context of publicly funded MRIs anywhere else in Canada, it is probably on par with what you would expect.

As I said, we are looking to augment resources to improve that wait time. Also, I will say that there is a significant amount of triaging that goes on within the program to ensure that those who require an MRI on an urgent basis are receiving an MRI on an urgent basis.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would like to ask a bit about cost pressures, recognizing, of course, that between the budget at the start of a year and what actually happens in a year, there are always significant changes in an operation like the hospital. In the last fiscal year, could the witnesses please tell us what the major cost pressures were that changed things between the original budget and what ended up being the actual spending totals at the year-end?

**Mr. Bilsky:** I think I have already mentioned that I would attribute the majority of the pressures that we saw to two areas: volume pressures, as well as complexity of the services that we provide. Volume pressures, as I have already mentioned, are: medical imaging and the lab. These would be two significant areas of volume pressures. I think I have already cited the increases in percentages that we saw.

Complexity would be complexity in the standards of care that we're providing now — the complexity of the care. As an example, we have an increased number of specialities resident in the territory. An example of that would be resident pediatrician, resident orthopaedics — those specialities increase the level of care that we're able to provide, and by virtue of that, it requires more resources to be applied to provide that level and standard of care.

As I have already mentioned, if you look at what we had planned for at the beginning of the year toward what we had actually applied resources to at the end of the year, we had added significant resources in maternity, significant resources in the lab, significant resources in medical imaging, and in environmental services and housekeeping. Then, on top of that, as I said, for medical imaging and the lab, each one of the diagnostic procedures has a variable cost attached to it.

As an example, whenever an x-ray is taken, that medical image is read by an external contractor, or an external contract of a specialized radiologist, and each one of those specific X-rays has a cost attached to it. So, you can imagine that, if it goes up eight percent, it's purely an increase in variable cost to all of those medical imaging reads.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate that. As well, could you talk about, in the last fiscal year — I'm curious about the cost to the hospital of the carbon tax. Also, recognizing that there was an increase in electricity cost, could the witnesses please explain what the cost impact of that was on the hospital?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Sorry, Mr. Deputy Chair, I don't have that information available at this point in time. We can undertake to provide it.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would appreciate it if they could provide that later, understanding that it's not at the fingertips of the CEO. Additionally, if it's possible at that time — if we could get a more detailed breakdown on what the major cost pressures and changes were in the last fiscal year within the budget, that would be appreciated.

Moving on to the current fiscal year, can the witnesses please tell us about cost pressures to date? Not as much related to the pandemic as to general areas, what areas are seeing higher volumes and higher costs than anticipated so far in the fiscal year?

**Mr. Bilsky:** If you look at where we are — fiscal year to date, financially — essentially, the biggest pressures that we're seeing are related to COVID. There are two components to that. One would be the added resources to manage the pandemic, but the other aspect of that is loss of funds or revenues due to out-of-territory and out-of-country patients receiving care in our hospitals, which turns into some sort of reciprocal billing to out-of-territory and out-of-country. I know the member didn't ask about COVID, but that is by far the overwhelming pressures that we're seeing this year.

Non-COVID-related pressures are the ones that I've already spoken about. Those continue to run and put pressure on our organization in terms of just volume and complexity that we're seeing across the board. Without getting into specifics, it comes down to — we are seeing more and more use of our services as we commented earlier. If you look at the ED department year over year, there was a nine-percent increase in discrete visits to the ED department. It's just that more and more services are being used within our hospital systems.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate that. Just circling back slightly, related to a question I asked before — comparing the actual spending as shown in the Public Accounts for 2019 versus 2020, for compensation and benefits, there was a growth between that 2019 and 2020 from \$46 million and change to \$49 million and change. It was a growth in excess of \$3 million. Can the witnesses please tell us how much that line item is anticipated to grow in the current fiscal year compared to the \$49-million total that we see for the last fiscal year?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Mr. Deputy Chair, I'm sorry. I don't have the exact figures on how much it's expected to grow, but I can tell you that it will grow more than what was cited there for the previous year, purely due to resources that have been added because of COVID. As I said, we've seen cost pressures in excess of \$3 million on expenses this year due to COVID-related resources. The vast majority of that is people. We're going to see a similar escalation to what was seen previously plus the COVID. All will be categorized as human resources.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate that information.

Can the witnesses please talk about the size of the hospital's core budget in each of the last five years and the rate of growth of that budget?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Without going through them year by year — again, trying to create a balanced budget. Our core budget has

grown from 2016 of approximately \$78 million to today, which is, you know, approximately \$92 million, and I think that is cited in our year in review report.

With regard to how that has grown over the past five years, we have seen an annual increase in our core funding of two percent per year on average, on annual, but that does not include extra funding for new programs and new services. So, it wouldn't be appropriate to escalate the numbers that I gave you from five years ago to today, at two percent, to get there, but core programming and services have increased by two percent per year. On top of that, I would suggest that, over those five years, there has been 14 percent related to new programming. That is a number of different things, but the larger things are increases in the First Nation health program, MRI-related programming — that program began within the past five years — ED expansion, orthopaedics, and colorectal screening. Those are probably the major contributors to what the additional funding is.

**Mr. Cathers:** Could you explain, just for clarity since there are other funding amounts built into the total, for the current fiscal year out of the total allotment that you have: What amount would you describe as being the hospital's core budget versus that which is due to non-core matters?

**Mr. Bilsky:** I think that it has previously been stated in the House here that, over the past year, there has been an 8.6-percent, I think, increase year over year. To break that down, that's a 2.5-percent increase for the current year core funding. That is a 2.5-percent increase for the previous year's core funding or base funding. That was a timing difference where it wasn't approved until into the new year. It also includes 3.4 percent of new programming, which was essentially mostly orthopaedics-related — a new program — and then, lastly, there was a small amount less than 0.5 percent for other related one-time funding and supporting our pension solvency payment issue that we need to continue to maintain for federal legal reasons.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the answer.

Looking at the hospital's year in review report for 2019-20, in looking at page 14, we see that revenue was \$3.9 million lower than expenses. On the next page, on page 15, we note the lines, "Operating expenses (excluding Pension adjustment)" and "Surplus of revenues over expenses before Pension". The last line shows a year in a negative position of \$3.9 million.

Can the witnesses please explain that for the House?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Yes, just to recap, the year in review highlights several numbers. One is operating revenues of \$92.6 million and operating expenses of \$96.5 million, requiring an operating deficit before pension of \$3.9 million.

The deficit before pension is significantly higher than previous years due to a change in the treatment of pension solvency funding provided by the Yukon government. To explain that, \$2.8 million of the \$3.9 million — the reason why it shows as a deficit now is because the funding that we received from government to satisfy the pension solvency legal obligation that we have is no longer categorized as a revenue. It is categorized as a payable. However, we do still receive the money. On the flipside, the expense still exists there from a

pension perspective, so when it's paid as a pension solvency amount, it's still shown as an expense.

In previous years, there would have been an offsetting revenue to expense. That accounts for \$2.8 million of the \$3.9 million. The remainder of the amount, \$1.1 million of that deficit — as I have already mentioned, and to be very specific, we have added seven people in the front line in the areas that I have already mentioned — maternity, lab, medical imaging, and environmental services — and then, on top of that, we have seen the volume increases in the services that we provide, primarily in medical imaging and laboratory services.

**Mr. Cathers:** I notice that, in looking at the Public Accounts, the corporation received a little over \$3 million from the Government of Yukon related to the calendar year 2019 pension payments in the form of a loan. Can the witnesses please confirm if that total amount is still \$3,063,000 and also indicate what the interest owing on that to the Yukon government is and the term of that loan?

**Mr. Bilsky:** I don't have the specifics of the term of that loan. To be absolutely correct, I would have to check our records. I don't believe there is an actual term to that loan. This is satisfying pension solvency requirements that we have.

Currently, the pension plan that we have is the only one of two pension plans, I think, in Canada within the sector that we're in that requires pension solvency payments, due to the fact that, if you look at our pension plan on a solvency basis only, we're in a deficit. Having said that, we're in a very, very significant going-concern surplus. The government has decided that, instead of funding those outright, they will loan us the money but still flow those funds on a cash basis so that we can make those solvency payments as required by law. I don't believe — but I could be corrected on this — that there is any interest on those payments and I don't believe there are any specific repayment terms, but I would have to check on that to be sure.

**Mr. Cathers:** If the witness is able to get back with that information, it would be appreciated, including what the lifespan of that loan is, whether there is any interest on it and what that might be, as well as what the annual payments are related to it.

Moving on to another area related to wait times, we are pleased to see that the increases to the ophthalmology program have shown an increased ability to do cataract procedures. I've noted the number in the annual report that talked about the number that were done.

Can the witnesses please tell us the current number of people on the list who are waiting for a cataract procedure and what the wait time for non-urgent procedures currently is?

**Mr. Bilsky:** I think, as both the minister alluded to and also the chair has spoken to, in 2018, YHC and Health and Social Services developed a two-year plan to improve access to the cataract service, and we're nearing the end of that plan. I would like to say that this plan has been successful thus far in increasing the number of patients who have been assessed and treated for cataracts. These increases also reduce the wait time for cataracts.



Just to put it into perspective, in 2018, there were over 350 people on the wait-list for cataract assessment, and wait times for referral to surgery was almost 40 months. That's from initial referral to assessment and right through to surgery.

By the end of 2019, the wait time for referral to surgery was down to 12 months, which is a significant improvement. Current wait times — and this can vary, because there is triaging involved — are approximately 12 months to date. I don't have the exact number of people who are on the wait-list today. However, I can tell you that we're working fairly aggressively with government right now through the access to specialty care committee, which is a tripartite committee and includes YHC, Yukon government, and YMA, and we're collaborating to try to create a long-term strategy to try to maintain the improvement in wait times that we've created. It is required because, 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.

**Mr. Cathers:** I recently received a call from a constituent who needs a spirometry test. I understand that, in the past, the test was available at WGH and then through a private company, but is now no longer available in the Yukon. Has the Hospital Corporation given any consideration to providing this test again? If so, what would be needed to allow the hospital to provide spirometry tests again?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Thank you for the question. Just to explain spirometry for a moment, currently, spirometry is a service that's managed by YG. It's a common office test used to assess how well your lungs work, basically — measuring how much air you inhale, how much you exhale, how quickly you can exhale — and it's used to diagnose chronic conditions such as asthma, COPD, and other conditions affecting breathing. The resources required — typically, it's some equipment, but also, more importantly, it's completed by respiratory technicians and other health care professionals trained and certified to perform the test.

Just to give a bit of history of where spirometry was and to elaborate on the question, prior to 2016, yes, WGH did provide a very limited number of spirometry testing at that time, and it was performed in our outpatient laboratory area.

It was not very commonly ordered at that point in time, and we had the capacity to meet the needs at that time. It wasn't part of our core services, nor was it part of the core training that we had for medical lab assistants, so generally it wasn't part of our core competency.

In 2016 with the initiation of chronic condition support management developed by Health and Social Services, spirometry became more chronic condition management, and referrals to spirometry testing, because of this chronic condition management, increased significantly. As the member has mentioned, at that point in time, because it far exceeded our capacity to be able to provide that, government entered into a contract with an external party to provide spirometry.

Just to put it in perspective, it turned into a very limited number of tests — approximately 1,500 to 2,000 spirometry tests per year — to manage the chronic conditions.

Our involvement today — we continue to support — or had continued to support — the contract through handling of results and distribution of those results, but we had lost any of our competency to be able to provide spirometry testing. Again, we've had very little competency to begin with and, over the period of four years, we entirely lost that competency.

My understanding is that, as of July 2020, the contract expired with government and the external contractor. I don't have the details as to why that is the case. Having said that, I know that the Department of Health and Social Services is looking for a solution right now. YHC is more than willing to collaborate and plan any type of solution that's required.

I believe that it will take primarily training and qualified respiratory technicians to be able to provide that service.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the information.

I understand that cardiac wait times are high right now. Can the witnesses please tell me about the current wait times for cardiac procedures?

**Mr. Bilsky:** I want to back up just a little bit on how access to specialty services like cardiology is provided and put cardiology in context of that.

Obviously, YHC is part of a broader health system that supports access to specialist services. When we talk about something like cardiology or any specialist, it can be provided in essentially four different ways. One way is to have resident specialists here in the territory who live here, work here, provide the specialty. We're blessed to have OB/GYNs here; we're blessed to have orthopaedic surgeons, general surgeons, a psychiatrist, and pediatricians. Those are some of the specialists that we do have here.

In addition to that, we host what's called a "visiting specialist clinic" and those are physicians not resident here, but they visit here. Our job is to basically provide space and support to these physicians so that people don't have to travel and can access them here.

Other ways that access to specialty services is created is through virtual technology and also medical travel and medevac, which essentially means people travelling out to access specialists.

So, when I speak about the cardiology wait-list, I can only speak about the wait-list here for visiting specialists. I can't speak to anything that is related to medical travel for cardiologists. That is handled through Insured Health. I also know that there is a significant amount of triaging that goes on so that, if people have urgent needs, those are met in the best way possible.

What I can tell you about cardiology, though, from our perspective — and again, this is from the perspective of visiting specialists — our current wait time to see a visiting cardiologist is approximately five months. Right now, there are approximately 74 people on that wait-list.

**Mr. Cathers:** Can you compare that wait time to the benchmark for that — and with the standards that you would like to be achieving, I should say? Also, recognizing the explanation that Mr. Bilsky provided about wait times that are not handled by the hospital or are really within your area of knowledge, can the witnesses tell us a bit about what

procedures the Yukon currently has wait times for that are longer than the standard of what would be considered medically appropriate? So, basically, where are we struggling to meet the standard?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Just to add to my comments earlier about how we try to manage access to specialist services in an equitable way, we strive for system collaboration through what is called the “access to specialty care committee”. Again, this is a tripartite committee that is made up of physicians through YMA, the Department of Health and Social Services, as well as YHC. We meet regularly to identify priorities of special services that are required in the territory and recommend actions for addressing any type of specialty care.

As I mentioned before, WGH is physically home to the majority of specialty services for Yukoners, but having said that, this physical location is constrained. It is enjoyed by Yukoners because it provides easy access and a convenient place for patients to access in Whitehorse. We’re committed to continue to work with the health system on improving access but, as I said, it’s physically constrained as far as the number of visiting specialists that we can host there.

We host approximately 13 specialties, and that’s only a fraction of the number of specialties and subspecialties available in the medical field. Because we’re physically constrained, wait times for accessing specialties, basically for most specialties, 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.

**Mr. Cathers:** I know that some of the hospital’s equipment and technology is aging and I hear that some is beyond its expected lifecycle. Some of it, I understand, may even date as far back as the 1990s in terms of the age of some equipment. Can the witnesses please talk a bit about the current capital maintenance program? Specifically, what significant areas would be a priority for replacement of equipment within the next few years?

**Mr. Bilsky:** I think I’ll start by explaining a bit about our capital planning process that we have. Then hopefully I can address in a general way some of the areas that require or continue to require attention.

The capital planning process that we use is what I would call at the ground level — at a committee level — where we continuously identify the parties that we have. We categorize the capital into at least three categories. One would be maintenance capital — those are the things that we need just to keep the lights on, to keep things going, and maintain the services the way they are. Then there are two other categories, called “growth” and “strategic”. Growth and strategic are meeting extraordinary demands that we have. That could be volume pressures or potentially new services that have been added. Strategic are really those larger items that we work with to improve services — take step functions and services — usually are going to be major builds or brand-new services that we’ll take on in a large way.

From that perspective, the first category is the maintenance capital. That would be the one where most replacement of equipment occurs. As I said, that’s where we’re trying to keep lights on and maintain the services that we have. The other two categories generally happen because we have provided some type of business case to government and/or work with government and/or have been requested by government to provide a new service. Those hopefully come with specific recognition and funding. I don’t think that’s the type of capital that the member is asking about.

When it comes to maintenance capital, it’s incumbent upon us, throughout all of our departments, all of the committees that we have, to continuously identify all of those priority items and keep those in a format that we know what’s up for renewal, what’s going to break, what we are having problems with, and making sure that they are being identified and planned for.

Ideally, we’re not taking pieces of equipment until they actually fail. We would like to replace that equipment on a planned approach, but oftentimes things do fail, maybe because they’re at end of life, possibly because they’re before end of life — it’s really hard to tell.

We do have a fiscal constraint that we have to live within, which means that we budget a certain amount for capital every year. Any amount of capital that we take — if we want to exceed the budget we have, it’s basically coming out of operating funds somehow and in some way to allow for capital.

What we do is make sure that we’re addressing those priority items, reviewing that regularly, right to the executive level on a quarterly basis, and applying those funds judiciously to where they need to be applied. Behind all that is a planning process that allows us to make sure, as we do plan for replacement of equipment, that we’re doing it in the most prudent fashion possible. We’re planning for it. When we implement it, there are no unintended consequences to implementing that piece of equipment or replacing it — we achieve the outcomes that we want and, to be blunt, that we get the best possible price we can and that it meets all of our user needs.

Some of the areas that I know are coming up in the future — one that we have been working on right now with government is the replacement of our ultrasound equipment which has reached end of life. It had originated many years ago. The CT scan will be one of those other ones that we need to pay attention to. One that we’re working on right now, through a much larger, system-wide project, which is called IHealth, is the replacement of our hospital information system — a multi-million dollar project, one that we’re very thankful to move forward on and one that I think will have a huge benefit to all Yukoners system-wide — so that’s another one that we think is due for replacement.

On top of that, I think we have some very large upgrades that are necessary. We have spoken about the secure medical unit and we will have a need for probably more inpatient beds in the not-too-distant future, so there is a plan to move forward on both those elements to try to satisfy that.

People think of medical equipment. Behind the scenes, there is so much more to operating a hospital system than I

think people realize. There is boiler maintenance to be maintained and there are so many systems that are critical that people don't realize, such as high-pressure steam, low-pressure steam, heat, IT infrastructure, oxygen systems, and medical gas systems — all these things are necessary and all need to be maintained. I will stop there and see if I have answered most of the question, but that is what comes to mind.

**Mr. Cathers:** I understand that new medical standards, as well as keeping pace with new technology and practice, is a major source of cost pressures to every hospital in the country. Can the witnesses please talk about that as well as its current and anticipated impact on the Hospital Corporation? I will just leave it there and then ask another question as I move toward handing the floor over to the Third Party — if you could just provide that information, please.

**Mr. Bilsky:** I think that the best way to answer that question is, as I've said, if there is something substantial that we are truly unable to absorb, that is something that we work with government to try to make sure that we are addressing those priorities on a continuous basis. As I have said, a most recent example would be the replacement of four ultrasound units, which is between approximately \$750,000 to \$1 million. It is something that we just can't absorb in current year funding.

When it goes back to all of the other smaller items — items that are, let's say, \$500,000 or less on an annual basis — we do our best to plan for those in advance and understand which items can be maintained, which ones continue to meet standards, and which ones do not. We keep a list of priority items so that we can manage that capital accordingly. The challenge obviously comes in when there is something truly unforeseen and we have to replace that sterilizer that is \$100,000 on the spot because it's broken. Those are some of the challenges that we see.

Going forward, all I can say is that we continue to manage that. Yes, we would like more funding, as we always would just to deal with all those continuously replaced items. We will continue to work with government to make sure that we can do that, because otherwise, it truly infringes upon the current operating costs that we have.

**Mr. Cathers:** I am just going to ask one last question, in the interest of following through with our agreement with the Third Party to allow them to ask questions. I do appreciate the answers that have been provided to date. I am going to finish by asking about the secure medical unit. I want to ask, first of all, about the current situation — understanding that there have been some pressures there recently. In the current year or the past year, has the hospital looked at increased staffing within the SMU, recognizing that they are working on the replacement of it? If so, have they been given any additional resources by the government for doing that?

Secondly, with the new SMU project itself. Last fall, when they appeared in the Legislature, the hospital witnesses told us that the project had been submitted to government formally several months previously. Could they please tell us now about the status of the new SMU project and what approvals or actions they need from the government to be able to proceed to the next stage?

**Mr. Bilsky:** I will try to answer the resourcing question first and then move on to the planning for the new SMU. Specific to resources that we have added — in the past year, we have added nursing resources to the SMU, essentially again adding one full-time body to make sure that there are always two people on shift within the SMU at any given point in time. In addition to that, we have recently augmented security within the SMU to ensure that, when there are high-risk patients identified by staff, identified with certain criteria, identified by a psychiatrist, that there is posted security within the unit during that period of time. Both of these are elements that we're attempting to absorb within our current budget and current envelope.

To go back to the SMU, in particular, and the planning — just to refresh your memory, I always try to make sure that I put the SMU in the context of what it is and possibly what it isn't and then plan forward from there.

At WGH, we have what is called an "SMU". It is a five-bed plus two seclusion room area, and it is called the "secure medical unit". Its purpose is to provide a safe environment for acute mental health patients while being assessed so that they can be stabilized and provided basic interventions.

What it is not is a long-term psychiatric inpatient program. Any patients requiring specialized assessments or long-term treatment are transferred to appropriate specialized facilities down south and/or they're stabilized and transferred to care within the community.

Staffing currently consists of registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, social workers, licensed practical nurses, and we closely work with our First Nations Health Programs, as well.

The way that physician support occurs within a secure medical unit is that admissions in the secure medical unit happen under the authority of a most responsible physician — GP. Psychiatrists provide consult services to the most responsible physician. That's the way that occurs.

As far as planning and what has occurred, I want to comment a little bit first on the deficiencies that maybe exist within the current facilities — and these are recognized deficiencies. They're not something that has suddenly popped up on us. These deficiencies have existed for some period of time and it's why we've undertaken a significant amount of needs assessment and planning to go forward.

Right now, the existing SMU is essentially a converted inpatient medical ward. It was never designed to fill the functions expected of it and it does result in some very real safety and quality care concerns. Just to list a few of these — there is an inability to zone patients. That means it's not possible to keep aggressive and violent patients safe and separate from other vulnerable patients. There are no common areas for daily living. There are no areas to support clinical therapy. There are limited areas to support staff in a safe area. Unfortunately, it results in some patients spending long periods of time in isolation. Our planning going forward in conjunction with government has been to identify and rectify the situation.

As I said, the planning for this really started as far back as 2012. This started with what we call a "master facility plan" for

the entire facility. It's not cast in stone, but what it was meant to do is give us a view of what it might look like going into the future so that, as we did go into the future and as we did expand or we did build, we were making sure that we did it in a thoughtful way and essentially meeting the needs of Yukoners.

Then this carried on through the planning and expansion in 2014. I'm sure that everybody is aware that it was envisioned with a shelled space above the new emergency building — that it was most prudent to build that shelled space. That was earmarked, at that point in time, for a new SMU.

The reason why is because, obviously, all of the deficiencies that we mentioned, but also the vacated SMU space would create room for more inpatient beds — again, another evolution. As our population grows, we'll eventually need more inpatient beds.

We continue to conduct work. As I mentioned, we constructed the new ED, and then we continued to conduct work from 2016-17 on a needs assessment functional plan for a new SMU and provided that information to the department at that point in time. After that, we worked in collaboration — and we did further detailed assessment and planning — with system partners, — including Health and Social Services, Justice, and Corrections — and created the actual business proposal. That was in 2017-18.

After that — and just maybe to summarize, if I could, a long story that's getting longer — we thought that we had gotten to a place where this was now a fairly good business case, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Services, and received approval from our board of trustees in April 2019. In September 2019, I believe this was presented to the minister at that point in time, although I'm not privy to exactly when and how that was presented to the minister. It's proposed as a 12-bed unit where eight beds are available initially and four can be developed into the future.

The real improvements that we're looking at here are, again, the opposite of what I said the deficiencies were, so that's essentially that we have the ability to reduce the risk to patients by having zones where we can hold violent, aggressive patients versus safe zones for staff and physicians. Essentially, there would be at least three distinct zones: secure, adolescent, and others. Space for security staff, recognition and respect for First Nation needs and culture within the space and through programming, spaces for activities, spaces where we can provide treatment and therapy, common spaces for dining and potentially recreation, and consult rooms.

My understanding at the current time is that the government has considered this. They did provide initial upfront money for planning in 2019-20, and then they have allocated this in future years — their five-year capital plan. My understanding — and I think that this has been mentioned here — is: in 2021-22, approximately \$1 million to \$2 million; 2022-23, approximately \$10 million to \$15 million; and in 2023-24, \$3 million to \$4 million.

I appreciate all the planning that has gone on, and I appreciate the allocation and the identification as a priority. Strictly speaking, though, as a hospital system, and wanting to provide the best care that we possible can, anything that we can

do to try to accelerate that would be obviously appreciated, but also understanding that there are fiscal constraints. We are continuing to work with government to see how that can happen. The challenge will continue to be that there will be patients who will exceed the level of care that we can provide within that facility. I wish it was different, but it is not. Until we address the physical space and, at the same time, deal with system-wide programming, unfortunately, we won't be able to meet that level of care. Unfortunately — and I don't want to see this happen — there may be future adverse events until we actually address the space.

**Ms. White:** I am just going to jump right into it and will start with the secure medical unit, because that is where we are, but mark my words, we're moving all over because I have a very short amount of time.

We're aware of other incidents that have happened in the secure medical unit. Has a WCB assessment of this unit been done in the past — when it was nurses who had been injured or assaulted?

**Mr. Bilsky:** I am looking at probably recent knowledge. To my knowledge — not specifically in the SMU, but I could be wrong — we did have another incident outside the SMU that WCB assessed where one of our staff members had been assaulted.

The current incident that I think is being referred to here is where a psychiatrist was assaulted is — I mean, we are working hand in hand with WCB to make sure. First and foremost, even before we work with occupational health and safety and WCB, our own internal occupational health and safety incident reporting system makes it a priority that we identify the incident, understand the incident, learn from it, and then make improvements. We work very closely with WCB to move all of those actions forward because it is paramount to us that we provide safe care for patients, as well as provide a safe environment for our employees.

**Ms. White:** I am happy to hear that the assessment is happening across the board there.

Recognizing that the Whitehorse Correctional Centre still has the designation as a hospital, how many patients have been transferred to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre?

**Mr. Bilsky:** That's an excellent question, and it continues to be a struggle for us on two fronts. One is with the care of patients under the care of the YRB. Other ones are patients who are actually Whitehorse Correctional Centre patients. To my knowledge, none have been transferred to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. My understanding is that there are deficiencies in the *Mental Health Act* to be able to allow that to happen in conjunction with physicians. I guess, to answer the direction question — none that I know of.

Our challenge really comes down to, as I mentioned, the deficiencies that we have. Then, when we are ordered to hold a patient who is known to be violent, we end up with issues where they exceed the level of care that we have. Unfortunately, when it comes to forensic-type psychiatry, those things usually happen with extremely short notice. The challenge becomes how we prepare ourselves in all respects to make sure that we

can safely care for that patient, for both the patient's sake and for the staff's sake.

We have gone to great lengths to try to collaborate with the justice system — inserted ourselves into any process that we possibly can so that we are identifying any of these clients who are going through the system. We have actually toured both Territorial Court and Supreme Court judges through the facility that we have so that they are fully aware of what the facility looks like, what it is appropriate for, and what it's not appropriate for. As I said, we do the best job we can to influence how that happens within the bounds that we have.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the answer. To say that there are deficiencies is, I believe, an understatement, but I do appreciate that.

One of the things that was mentioned was that, when required, there is security within the secure medical unit. Is there specialized training for those security officers?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Thank you for the question. Up until this point, there has not necessarily been specialized training. The safety training that we do is broken into two areas: one I would call "non-violence intervention training"; the other one is "code white training", which is actually when there's a violent incident and there is a response.

At this point in time, our organization has undertaken — and has done this over the past several months — planning and then implementation to overhaul all of the safety training that we do. This will include security guards. Having said that, though, it will take a specialty in security that we don't currently have when it comes to maintaining that secure medical unit.

**Ms. White:** I agree. It takes very specialized training to deal in those high-stress situations. I hope that this training is possible.

Last year, when we were here, there was talk about moving to a new staffing model. I would like to talk about staff and what that looks like. To start off, what I would really like clarity on — and I don't need it to be in depth, but I would like an idea of the scope of practice. For example, what is a licensed practical nurse able to do? What is a registered nurse able to do? What is a health care assistant able to do?

**Mr. Bilsky:** At YHC, we strive to ensure that the right person is providing the right care. Our care models predominantly use RNs but also use LPNs, as you mentioned, as well as health care aides, as the member has also mentioned. We have recently added to our inpatient care model at WGH. This is essentially to meet national benchmarks for nurse and patient ratios, as well as scope and skill mix for patient ratios.

As was mentioned, in 2020, we undertook a project to restructure our nursing workforce. This project included a review of all nursing models, skill mix, which professionals provide care — RN versus LPN versus HCA — and nurse-to-patient ratios. A number of changes were made to our model of care, and nursing resources were added to a number of departments, including medical and surgical, SMU, and the OR. To actually talk about what they're capable of doing, I personally could not do it justice because of the number of specialized areas. An RN is not an RN is not an RN — I mean,

there are just so many different specialities in what they're able to do.

What I can tell you about the mix that we have is that it's there to ensure that, in the most prudent way we possibly can, we have the appropriate people and they're working to their full scope of what their professional practice is, basically at the right time and in the right setting.

**Mr. Gillen:** Last summer, my daughter spent 10 weeks in ICU in Misericordia Community Hospital in Edmonton. There we saw how the RNs work, how the LPNs work, how the health care aides work, and what they do. The way they work there — and I see it being a very similar process here — is the RNs each were devoted to one patient, so they looked after the all the medical needs, following doctors' orders, doing all the tests, and all that stuff for the patient. The LPNs looked after the bathing, feeding, helping to move people around, helping to transfer them, and some medication. The health care aides also worked in terms of moving people around, feeding, bathing, and getting supplies. It was really clear that the RNs were doing their scope of practice that they're trained for and skilled in and that they were not doing the lower — for want of a better word — jobs that other folks were doing. Watching that model at work, I thought that was then an interesting way to do things. Then we come back here and we started into a redevelopment of our nursing and how they're organized. We see the same positions coming up and the same sort of approach to using those individuals.

**Mr. Bilsky:** One other important element of this restructure is — and it just reminded me as our chair was speaking — it's also to address recruitment and retention. The addition of LPNs and HCAs is not only trying to make sure that we're meeting best practices that you see across Canada in nursing ratios and in skill mix, but it's also to improve our ability to recruit and retain locally here.

Yukon University has programs that train HCAs and LPNs. They are drawing from communities in-territory to try to provide that. Our intent, through health human resources, in collaboration with Yukon government Health and Social Services, is to really try to bolster that ability to recruit and retain. It has the added benefit of that strategic element and also the diversity, because we also know that, as we recruit and retain from our communities, we start to create that diversity that is in the communities.

**Ms. White:** When there was the move to the new staffing model, was it based on a certain capacity of the hospital — so 50-percent capacity, 60-percent capacity, 80-percent capacity, 90-percent capacity, or 100-percent capacity? When the staffing model was looked at, was there a capacity at the hospital that was viewed as ideal?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Thanks for the question, Mr. Deputy Chair. The nursing structure model is always going to be based on the acuity of the patients that we see and basically the volumes of the patients that we see. We try to create the model that is as flexible as possible to meet the demands. Ideally, we would like to maintain an occupancy level — and this is a general occupancy level within our hospital system — of approximately 75 percent. That is not to say that we are always

at 75 percent, but it allows us to maintain some surge capacity. We do fluctuate from day to day on what that occupancy is.

Thankfully, in these past two years, we have been able to reduce the number of ALCs in the hospital and reduce the average level of occupancy in our hospital. Prior to two years ago, probably 50 percent of our days we would be over 100-percent occupancy. Today, between 10 and 15 percent of our days, we will actually spike into about 100-percent occupancy. Average level of occupancy today is around 85 percent or maybe in the low 80s. Previously, it was in the neighbourhood of 95 to 100 percent. That is an important fact to note, because it's something that we have aggressively worked on with the Department of Health and Social Services to make sure that patient flow has been efficient and effective in getting people to the right place at the right time.

With regard to nursing in particular, I think that, with the structure of nursing that we have, it's really dependent on the acuity that we're seeing. We try to create the most flexible workforce that we possible can to address whatever is happening in hospital.

That flexible workforce includes permanent staff, temporary staff, casual pools, float pools, even agency nurses. By creating that flexible work environment, we're able to flex up and flex down, depending on the acuity that we're seeing within different departments in our hospital. It is always going to be a challenge to recruit and maintain and make sure that we have every line filled, but I'm proud to say that our vacancy rate is actually lower than what you would see across Canada, and our turnover rate is probably within reason, from that perspective. Our people do an excellent job of making sure, the best that we can, that shifts don't go unfilled and that safe care is provided when needed.

As I said, when we talk about staffing ratios, I know there have often been comments about things such as one nurse to nine patients or something like that — not to my knowledge, and it really depends on acuity. There can be situations where the staffing ratio is 1:1. As the acuity goes up, the staffing ratio of nurse to patient also goes up as well. There are situations where it's 1:2 and potentially, to the least acute patients, which can be 1:5, possibly 1:6.

**Ms. White:** One of the concerns is that I can hear the witnesses and what they're saying, that it's good and that it's going well, but when I speak to nurses, that's not what I hear. So, how is the Hospital Corporation having those real meaningful conversations with nurses about what's working and what's not?

For example, I've been told that, prior, the average was one nurse to four to five patients, and now it's down to one nurse to six patients. I've been told that the new model — although, for example, there is now a new nursing physician in surgical while medical is down, because there are health care aides now instead.

What I hear when I talk to nurses in the community is that they aren't feeling good about the current staffing model. So, how does the Hospital Corporation have those conversations? If the feedback isn't good from the people doing the work, how will they make those changes?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Just to again address the patient ratios — I think it's a very general statement to say it's 1:5; as I already mentioned, it really depends on acuity. Nurse-to-patient ratios are always going to be higher where there's higher acuity, right to a 1:1 nurse-to-patient ratio.

I think that when there is a statement that the nursing ratio is 1:5 — I think that is misleading from the perspective of that being a very general statement. We tailor the nursing support to the acuity of the patients that we have.

Second of all, to address the other part — by no means am I saying that there aren't challenges within the hospital. In terms of recruitment and retention, we are always going to be constantly looking for people, especially in the hard-to-recruit areas, some of the specialty areas. It will always be a situation of ensuring that people are feeling supported and feeling secure in the care that they are providing.

There are spots in the hospital that we need to address. How we understand what those are is through ensuring that we engage all of our staff — not just nursing, but all of our staff — in what they see that are issues, what concerns them, and then continuously addressing those concerns. Those concerns could be anything from education to workload to safety concerns to communication. As you know, in any organization, there is a number of things that are continuously worked on, but our goal is to make sure that people feel supported, that they feel safe, and that they are providing safe care. We will continue to endeavour to do that.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the answer. I am just going to relay that — not being in the hospital and not being directly involved — folks aren't happy. If the witnesses feel otherwise, then maybe that is part of the problem. I am just going to leave it there. I think that there is an opportunity to have hard conversations with the staff at the hospital, especially the nursing staff and others, to take a look at some of the issues that get brought back up to someone like me, for example, but I am going to leave that behind right now.

How many positions have been created in the last two years within the Hospital Corporation that are not represented by a union?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Just to put it into perspective, I think the question is they are not represented by the union — correct? As of today, we have 58 non-union employees and 636 union employees. I don't have the exact number of the change, so I'm going to have to estimate. I would suggest that there have been between five and seven non-union employees added and I would suggest that there have probably been between 50 and 70 union employees added. That's excluding COVID-related.

**Ms. White:** I thank the witness for that answer. Maybe with time and distance we could look into what that number is and if I could get a list of those positions as well.

Those five to seven — are they considered management by the Hospital Corporation?

**Mr. Bilsky:** To answer the question, they're either considered management or confidential excluded employees.

**Ms. White:** Has the corporation notified the Yukon Employees' Union, as is their obligation, prior to creating those positions?

**Mr. Bilsky:** I don't think they've been notified, although I believe that we've done everything we can to comply with the certification order that's out there.

**Ms. White:** I bring that up as there is an obligation when new positions are created.

*Putting People First* is a pretty wide-spread document and it's pretty groundbreaking. You have been putting forward motions about how we look at that. Within that, it's talking about changing the Hospital Corporation and putting it under the branch of "Wellness Yukon". Where do the witnesses stand on that recommendation within the report that has been accepted by government?

**Mr. Gillen:** I will be blunt: I hate the term "Yukon wellness". Yukon is one of the very few jurisdictions — in fact, maybe the only jurisdiction in Canada — that doesn't have a health authority model. Moving to "Yukon wellness" — for want of a better term — model would create that hospital authority.

Hospital authorities exist all over the country. I believe Yukon wellness is planned not just to be a health authority but a social program authority, which is interesting. Other jurisdictions just have a health authority looking after health matters and the government looks after the social matters, as in the case of, I believe, it's PEI.

We were involved in the *Putting People First* review and the report. We had a lot of input into it. We had a lot of discussions with the commissioners. The overarching response from the review, from my perspective, was the need for a restructuring and a realigning of health care services and how doctors are managed, how communities are looked after, how the hospital looks after — there are all different models out there, and some are mentioned in the report. I think there are some very good recommendations; there are some recommendations that, from my perspective, require a lot more work to try to bring them home.

We look forward to working with the Government of Yukon on issues and matters that relate to the hospital, as we move forward.

**Mr. Bilsky:** Just to add to that — and I don't have a lot to add, and I agree with what our chair is saying. As he said, the Yukon Hospital Corporation contributed data and information input into the report as best we could, and many of the recommendations reflect the data input that we had. One of those was improved system integration, improved patient centredness, enhanced community involvement, and advancement of reconciliation with First Nation people.

In particular, the comment about "Wellness Yukon" — that is a comment about the actual solution, for which the outcome is about system integration, and that's where the virtue of any solution is going to be in this territory. That's about breaking down the silos and looking at a seamless system with system integration that allows —

Several of the initiatives that we have underway are looking forward to that. An example would be IHealth, where we're looking at one health information system across the territory and one health record for patients, and that hopefully

creates a more seamless journey for patients. Again, it's advancing one of the recommendations in the report.

I think the question was about how we feel about that report — strong proponents of system integration, absolutely. How we get there is going to take, I'm sure, a lot of effort and a lot of analysis and cost-benefit work to see how we actually achieve that outcome of system integration.

**Ms. White:** I thank the witnesses. It is a reinvention, so it will be exciting however we do it.

What is the Hospital Corporation's policy when it comes to action taking place outside the workplace that could affect someone's ability to provide health care to the public? For example, if an employee or a doctor has faced criminal charges in the past, what are the Hospital Corporation's policies to protect the public as well as other employees?

**Mr. Bilsky:** We have several policies. There is the code of ethics and code of conduct that govern the actions of employees.

Our main concern is always going to be a respectful workplace — respectful both for patients and respectful for our employees — and creating that safe environment. If we become aware of anything through different reporting mechanisms, we take steps to investigate, whether that is inside or outside of the workplace. Primarily, obviously, we are concerned about anything that happens outside of the workplace that may affect inside the workplace. It is not our place to try to govern exactly what happens outside of the workplace unless it affects what is happening to us inside the workplace. Definitely — obviously — anything that does happen within the workplace — again, there are codes of conduct and policies regarding ethics and processes to identify, processes to investigate, and processes to mitigate and correct whatever those actions might be, right from individuals up to system-level corrections that may be warranted.

**Ms. White:** I will send an e-mail and ask if I can perhaps see those policies, as I don't know if they are publicly available.

What happens to a physician who works at the hospital and is facing a complaint with the Yukon Medical Council? Are there limitations imposed on the practice they are able to do while the complaint is being reviewed?

**Mr. Bilsky:** We have a very extensive privileging system within the hospital that essentially says that doctors have to be qualified, credible, and experienced and follow the codes of conduct and policies that we have in place within our hospital. If that is the question that the member is asking, for any physician who is in breach of that, there is an established process to investigate and ensure that their actions, or potential actions going forward, don't infringe on the respectful and safe workplace that we are trying to maintain and that the quality of care is not diminished.

**Ms. White:** This goes back to how some of the Hospital Corporation dealt with COVID. We know that patient and visitor screeners were hired by the Yukon Hospital Corporation this spring, so could the witnesses explain what the hiring process was to fill these roles — specifically at the Whitehorse hospital — and how these positions were advertised?

**Mr. Bilsky:** Initially, because we didn't know what this would actually entail and we didn't know how long it was going to occur, we looked at hiring temporary individuals. Initially, we had a very, very difficult time trying to find people who would fulfill these roles as screeners. I don't know exactly why they were very difficult to fill, but we were in a very significant crunch. We needed them immediately, and we needed to bring them on board, train them, and get them in place.

Initially, a typical recruitment advertisement — both internal and external — to try to recruit. In the end, to be honest with you, it came down to a combination of advertisements, people applying, word of mouth — however we could to retain people to fulfill these recruited positions — a lot of students — but it was necessary that we had these on the spot. Initially, these were not union positions. We didn't know how long we were going to have them and we needed them very quickly.

Eventually, this has evolved now, so I am going to say approximately six to eight months after initiating the screeners, these positions were folded into the union. We have had to work with the union to make sure that reparations were made for anything that potentially could have been offside of the contract. Going forward, now the positions are governed under the collective agreement. From that point forward, it now becomes working under the collective agreement for any type of seniority posting — any process that we need to follow from a union perspective.

**Ms. White:** I thank the witness for the answer.

Just to go back, when the witness talked about how there was a code of conduct and such that employees needed to follow — if an employee at the Hospital Corporation who has faced accusations that were proven in court of violent behaviour in their personal life — and the witness used the language of “credible”, and they would be credible within their field — would someone who had faced those charges, had they been proven in court, still be viewed as a credible professional within the Hospital Corporation?

**Mr. Bilsky:** That is a complicated question. I believe that the member is speaking about the implications of that with a physician.

There are two sides to that, obviously. There is the Yukon Medical Council and their ability to be licensed. Then there is their ability to work within our hospital system. As I said before, we have a process of privileging physicians. There are criteria that need to be met when it comes to privileging physicians, including holding a licence. Anything that impacts their licence will impact their ability to be privileged. If it comes down to it, and something that has happened outside the hospital bounds has impacted their licence, it will be considered in the privileging process.

Having said that, having a criminal record doesn't necessarily stop somebody from working, potentially. It's our job to make sure that we put management mitigation practices in place to, as I said before, ensure the safety of patients, the safety of employees, and a respectful workplace. If that is diminished in any way, we have a process with our medical advisory committee, right up to our board, to attempt to address that.

**Ms. White:** I thank the witness for that answer. I think I'll just follow up with an e-mail. That would probably be the best way to do that. I appreciate that I have not made it easy at the end, so with that, I will thank the witnesses for appearing. Mr. Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress.

**Deputy Chair:** Are there any further questions for the witnesses?

**Mr. Cathers:** Recognizing the hour and that we're almost out of time, since there appears to be a couple moments before we hit the 5:30 p.m. bell, I would just like to thank the witnesses as well as everyone supporting them for appearing here today and for their efforts in providing us answers and information.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to thank the witnesses for your presence today. I certainly appreciate all the work that you're doing for Yukoners. I know that these have been trying times over the last few months. The hospital is doing really great work. I just want to continue the collaboration and look forward to future initiatives. I know there is a lot on the agenda, and I appreciate your patience and also your commitment working with this government in ensuring that Yukoners are well taken care of now and certainly into the future as we continue on this journey through this pandemic.

Thank you so much for being here today.

**Deputy Chair:** Thank you. The witnesses are now excused.

*Witnesses excused*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Silver that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

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

Also, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 5, witnesses appeared before Committee of the Whole to discuss matters related to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

*The House adjourned at 5:32 p.m.*





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 66

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Monday, November 23, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

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

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<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

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

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#### New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Monday, November 23, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming Kate Mechan, acting executive director of Safe at Home Society; Mona Luxion, access coordinator at Safe at Home; Kristina Craig, executive director at Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition; Bill Bruton, chair of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Elders Council; Dianne Nolan; Larry Smarch; and Kerry Nolan. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

The members are here today for the Safe at Home tribute.  
*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Can I also ask the Members of the Legislative Assembly to welcome two individuals who are here today for the tribute for the geoscience conference that has been underway over the last couple of days. With us today is the executive director for the Yukon Chamber of Mines, Samson Hartland, as well as Ed Peart — an extra round for Ed, who has just been re-elected as the president of the Yukon Chamber of Mines.

*Applause*

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

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Yukon Geoscience Forum

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 48<sup>th</sup> annual Yukon Geoscience Forum, which kicked off today.

The Geoscience Forum provides an opportunity for geologists, miners, and governments to get together and connect with others involved in the mineral industry. The forum also brings together industry, youth, First Nations, and potential investors from around the globe. Every year, the forum gets bigger and better. This year will be special, with the limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Yukon Chamber of Mines developed an innovative and interactive virtual conference for 2020 to support their membership and advance the interests of all involved in Yukon's mining industry. Much credit is owed for organizing the forum in a manner that enables attendees to participate online while protecting the health and safety of our community.

A modified Geoscience Forum will go ahead this year despite many hurdles faced by the mineral sector due to the pandemic.

I want to acknowledge the many contributions that the mining industry makes to Yukon, from the service industry to educational and work opportunities. We know that the mineral resource sector in Yukon contributes to our strong economy.

During past geoscience forums, the investment forum and presentations on reconciliation, leveraging partnerships, and our regulatory regime have provided an opportunity for attendees to exchange knowledge around best practices.

Attendees could also learn more detail about investment opportunities and develop relationships with others in the industry. This year, the knowledge sharing during digital meetings will be equally beneficial in moving the industry forward.

During the forum, Yukon government geologists will deliver talks and display virtual posters detailing their research. This includes showcasing Yukon's latest geological discoveries. Mining and exploration companies frequently attribute their investment decisions and exploration success to the information provided by government geologists.

In past years, the Yukon Geological Survey invited youth and students to participate in the trade show and take part in many hands-on activities related to mining and geology. This year, the Yukon Geological Survey connected with many youth through outdoor programming and field trips to achieve the same results.

The Yukon Geological Survey also hosts the popular placer forum during the Geoscience Forum. In past years at the placer forum, our experts gave presentations about technologies and processes that contribute to each miner's success and help them to mine efficiently. Yesterday, the Geological Survey hosted this event virtually.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Yukon Chamber of Mines and valued key sponsors for the 2020 Geoscience Forum. Supporting and contributing to the Geoscience Forum is just one way in which we demonstrate support for the mineral sector.

*Applause*

**Mr. Hassard:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Yukon Geoscience Forum, which, as the minister said, begins today and runs through Wednesday, November 25.

The Yukon Chamber of Mines started in 1943 with a dozen founding members and has grown to hundreds in this, its 77<sup>th</sup> year of operation. I would like to congratulate returning president Ed Peart, who is with us today, and the newly elected board of directors from last week's virtual AGM.

Each year, the Geoscience Forum is widely anticipated by industry, organizations, businesses, and individuals from across the territory and beyond. Of course, while the Geoscience Forum usually offers a packed conference and events in addition to the busy trade show, it will be very different this year, moving to an innovative virtual conference offering

interactive sessions, keynote speakers, updates, presentations, courses, and meetings.

This year's innovative conference will have its benefits, allowing increased access to delegates, allowing participation from around the world, and offering a packed agenda to a broader audience. This year, the forum will be 100-percent green, with no paper to recycle and zero waste. I would like to thank the organizers of this year's event as you are doing a magnificent job in bringing everyone together despite being miles apart.

The mining industry in Yukon deserves a thank you for being an economic beacon in a year when our other cornerstone industry, tourism, was devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I'm sure it was anything but business as usual for the industry as they dealt with health protocols, travel restrictions, and self-isolation requirements. We look forward to hearing from companies and prospectors during this year's conference on their experience of how things are shaping up for next year.

We also look forward to future Geoscience Forums where we can once again gather together and share stories in person.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** So, the Yukon NDP caucus wishes to add our voices to the chorus of thanks to the organizers of the 48<sup>th</sup> annual geoscience conference. I think that, if anything, it just shows the innovation of both the organizers and the attendees as we change how things look this year. We wish them well — lots of learning, lots of getting together virtually — and we thank them for this work.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of the Safe at Home Society and National Housing Day**

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I rise to pay tribute to the Safe at Home Society and community and government champions that have come together to develop, guide, and implement our community response to homelessness.

Yesterday was National Housing Day — a day that has its roots in 1998 when the Big City Mayors' Caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities passed a motion that homelessness and housing insecurity was a national disaster. In 2017, Canada launched its first national housing strategy. This overarching plan, along with the Reaching Home strategy to address homelessness across Canada, aligns the efforts of all levels of government to support the goals of every Canadian having a home that meets their needs and that they can afford.

In Yukon, we are very proud of the motivated individuals, community groups, and four governments that have created the Safe at Home plan and that continue to champion its implementation. It is an honour to note that the Safe at Home plan was adopted by the local Reaching Home community entity, previously under the guidance of the Council of Yukon First Nations and, as of this year, now administered by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition.

Launched in 2017, this is not a plan for one government, organization, or individuals to implement alone. Instead, the plan outlines coordinated action rooted in community values,

personal experiences, expert advice, and the best available research. The plan highlights what needs to happen to prevent and end homelessness for the Yukon.

The action plan recognizes the myriad of challenges that can lead to homelessness, highlights the gaps that create them, and identifies actions that meet the urgent needs of community members struggling with homelessness.

On November 6, 2020, Safe at Home became an incorporated society. As a society backed by four government partners, they will coordinate the implementation of the Safe at Home plan. On August 24, 2020, the Safe at Home Society released a progress report that illustrates the progress that our community has made in ending and preventing homelessness. We have, with the community advisory board, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the Anti-Poverty Coalition, completed two point-in-time counts — one in 2017 and one in 2018. These snapshots helped us begin to understand who in our community is experiencing homelessness. We have worked to provide additional supports for youth and families, and we are planning for discharge from hospitals, corrections, mental health, and addiction treatment services.

Yukon organizations, including the Government of Yukon, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and Blood Ties Four Directions, offer eviction prevention courses and awareness. The LWEH program — Landlords Working to End Homelessness — continues to thrive and support tenants. Housing navigators continue to help individuals navigate leases and applications for housing and to resolve conflicts.

We have increased housing supplies through Yukon Housing Corporation's programs and City of Whitehorse, Teslin, Carmacks, Dawson, and Watson Lake development incentives. We have also increased the supply of supportive housing through Blood Ties Four Directions through the Steve Cardiff Tiny House Community. Max's Place, which was completed in 2019, offers services to the FASD community. The Government of Yukon offers supportive housing and the Housing First residence. There are many others — in fact, too many to list. Finally, the Voices Influencing Change program helps to highlight voices of those who have lived and are still living with homelessness. This group helps to inform the priority of the Safe at Home plan.

These actions, overseen by the Safe at Home Society and the implementation committee of government partners, show progress toward the goal of the Safe at Home plan. There is much left to be done. We continue to work toward three goals of the Safe at Home plan: prevent homelessness; increase the supply of safe, stable, and affordable housing; and ensure access to housing and programs and services within the system.

Homelessness is a complex problem that requires vision, commitment, and innovation to help solve.

Mahsi' cho for all the work that the committee does for the homeless community.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November 22 as National Housing Day. In 1998, homelessness was recognized in Canada as a national disaster, and Canada was the only G8 country that did not have a national housing strategy. Two years later, the first National Housing Day was declared, calling for action on homelessness in Canada.

Housing issues in the Yukon have been and remain at the forefront of many discussions. For many years, we have seen housing prices soar, and there appears to be no end to the affordable housing crisis. Demands rise; costs rise; homelessness rises. Each level of government — municipal, First Nation, territorial, and federal — must continue to play roles in defeating this problem. In Whitehorse, as each of these groups works to further their Safe at Home policy or their whole community response, we should continue to see progress in the quest to prevent homelessness in the city and in Yukon.

There appears to be no single solution, but we see many organizations and individuals doing their part — Habitat for Humanity and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, just to name a few. Our population is growing, and the crunch to supply decent, affordable homes is overwhelming. Regardless of whether one is able to buy or rent their home, many find that most of their income is used to pay the huge cost of having a roof over their heads not to mention the increasing cost of operating a home.

If COVID-19 has taught us anything — if you do have a home, no matter how big or small — it is how to appreciate your safe space and where you can isolate if needed; it is a safe place.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP in recognition of National Housing Day and our belief that housing is a right of all. This year, National Housing Day is more important than ever as the pandemic has both intensified the toll on people experiencing homelessness and further exposed the gaps in Canada's housing system.

Now, more than ever before, housing saves lives. COVID-19 has greatly exposed the risk people experiencing homelessness face in a pandemic, but this current crisis has shown that we can move quickly if we're housing-focused in our efforts to shelter people. In this time of uncertainty, what we do know is that we can't return to normal. Normal was 235,000 people across the country experiencing homelessness and at risk of losing their lives for no other reason than a lack of housing. The old normal was unacceptable. We believe that we have the opportunity to reinvent a new normal where everyone has a home that meets their needs.

National Housing Day is an opportunity to redouble our efforts and recommit to ending homelessness once and for all. We thank all of the housing champions in Yukon who continue to work day in and day out to support folks in their quest for a home.

*Applause*

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports connecting every Yukoner to a primary care provider who provides care as part of an integrated health team.

**Speaker:** Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Yukon Energy Corporation general rate application

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Energy Corporation has submitted a general rate application, or GRA, to the Yukon Utilities Board requesting a rate increase of 11.5 percent in 2021, which is equivalent to an increase of 3.8 percent per year between 2019 and 2021.

Between 2019 and 2021, Yukon Energy expects to invest over \$55 million to support Yukon's growing demand for electricity and the application is needed to recover the cost of these investments. The investments include the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line replacement project and initiatives that increase the amount of energy that the company can generate, such as the generator upgrades at the Whitehorse hydro facility.

Yukon Energy is proposing to time the increases to minimize the impact on the bills residents and businesses are currently paying by requesting a two-phase increase.

The first, which would come into effect on July 1, 2021, would coincide with the anticipated reduction in the fuel rider, and the second, scheduled for December 1, 2021, would coincide with the anticipated reduction in another rider.

I will note that electricity rates are not changing at this time. All changes must first be reviewed and approved by the Yukon Utilities Board. In the past, extended periods of time between GRAs has led to a loss of potential revenue for the utilities. Yukon Energy's last two GRAs were in 2012-13 and 2017-18. The longer periods between GRAs has had two effects: the process tends to be longer and more complex as there is more material to review, and the resulting increases are larger and there are more costs to account for. As an example, the last increase was 11.3 percent because of the length of proceedings and actual increase for 2020.

We understand that no one likes a rate increase. That said, we need to invest responsibly in the generation and distribution resources that supply us with the energy that we need.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement here today. You will remember that it was the Official Opposition who

revealed that the Liberal government would be seeking a rate application when we asked the minister about this on November 10. At the time, we asked the minister how much of an increase they were seeking. Unfortunately, he was unable to provide the answer at that time, but we are happy that, two weeks later, he has confirmed for us that they are seeking to increase energy bills by 11.5 percent.

Another question that we asked the minister two weeks ago was about the decision of the Yukon Energy Corporation to delay their rate application from 2019. The minister avoided the question at the time, but I am hopeful that, two weeks later, he will be able to answer it. The question that we were wondering was: Who asked the Yukon Energy Corporation to delay the application from last fall, and was it anyone from within government?

Also, with the planned application from 2019 being delayed to this year, has the Yukon Energy Corporation lost out on any money as a result? For example, we see that the corporation had a significant loss reported in its annual report, and we have seen the amount on their line of credit increase in the last year. So, if the minister could expand a bit on the impacts of the delayed rate application, that would be helpful.

Going through the rate application in detail will obviously take a lot of time as it is 441 pages long, but a few things jumped out on our initial read that the minister glossed over in his statement. For example, it appears that, of the rate increase, approximately 35 percent — or \$3.8 million — is associated with the Liberal decision to rent 17 diesel generators.

As we have discussed in this House before, the Liberal decision to rely on renting diesels from an Alberta company means that we are shipping money south and Yukoners receive no assets at the end of the day.

So now, not only are we not owning any assets for our millions and millions of dollars that the Liberals are spending on diesels, but we are getting increased electricity bills as a result.

The rate application also projects that the total amount of diesel generation will increase by over 400 percent in just three years under the Liberals. Another part that was not mentioned by the minister is that another \$3.3 million of this rate application is associated with physical upgrades to locations in Whitehorse and Faro to house all of his rented diesel generators.

So, that would appear that approximately \$7.1 million of the increase will be directly associated with the Liberal plan to rent diesels for the next decade and we know that they plan on spending more, so we are likely to see future increases as well. The rate application mentions that the work on the Faro diesel project is expected to be in service by mid-November, so the final question that I have is: Can the minister confirm that the diesels in Faro are now in service, as of course we are in mid-November, and if this project was required to be referred to YESAB for an environmental assessment?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the minister's responses.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak to today's ministerial statement, I have a few thoughts to share.

First, I do question the timing of the government for this announcement. It feels like, on month 8 of a pandemic, while so many are still struggling and restrictions are being strengthened across the country, the last thing Yukoners needed to hear today was an increase to their utility rates. But I will come back to this later.

If we have learned anything in this last year, it's that more than ever, folks just want to understand. They want to have information shared with them in a timely manner. I appreciate that, after last week's question asking if the Yukon Energy Corporation was heading back to the Yukon Utilities Board with a general rate application, this information is now being shared with the public. People want to know what's coming and what it means to them.

I appreciate that Yukon Energy is proposing to time the increases to minimize the impact to folks, but for many, this is possibly the worst time to consider a hike in their energy costs. It would have been helpful to know last year when Yukoners saw their electrical costs jump drastically that it wouldn't last forever. Today, we're told that by July 2021, we can anticipate the first reduction in the fuel rider and then the second reduction in the fuel rider in December 2021.

We're also being told that, with those two anticipated reductions, we'll see the rate increase of 11.5 percent spread out to minimize the shock. But unless the Yukon government or YEC lets people know what's happening and why, it will still be a surprise. If we're to learn anything from the past, it's that waiting for long periods of time between rate applications isn't good for anyone.

So, let's change the timing of these hearings. Let's make them more regular so that, when we get an increase, it isn't a shocking amount. No matter what, it is critical that the cost of essential utilities does not go up during a pandemic. Many people have lost their jobs or have much reduced hours. There needs to be a plan in place for these folks who just can't take another hit, even if that hit comes in July.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It is, I guess, a very interesting take from the Yukon Party on this one. Let's compare the last rate application, which the Leader of the NDP just referred to — the last rate application that covered costs from when the Yukon Party was in office compared to this one. So, with the submission that has gone in, residential customers in this particular submission will see a 70-cent-per-month increase under our plan. Under the Yukon Party plan, rates went up to \$20 per month. Let's look at commercial rates for customers. Under this plan, there will be a \$2-per-month reduction. Under the Yukon Party plan, commercial customers saw their rates increase \$36 per month.

A question on many Yukoners' minds, as was touched on by the Yukon Party, is: Didn't we just go through this process and have a large rate increase? Yes, we did. In the lead-up to the last election, the previous Yukon Party government refused to have a rate hearing, even though they had to run up the credit card during their time in office. When we arrived on the job in

2016, we had to move to pay off the credit card balance that Yukoners had inherited. The result was a large increase in bills. If the previous government had held regular hearings instead of politicizing these decisions, we would have seen lower costs.

Mr. Speaker, if supported by the Yukon Utilities Board, the net effect on Yukon electrical bills under our plan will be an increase of 70 cents per month for the average residential customer and a decrease of \$2 per month for the average commercial customer. Again, under the Yukon Party, it was an increase of \$20 per month for residential customers and \$36 per month for commercial customers. With the support of the Yukon Utilities Board, Yukon Energy Corporation's proposed 2021 rate increase will have nearly zero impact on Yukoners' electricity bills. The rate application is a way for Yukon Energy Corporation to make the investments that it needs to replace aging assets and to meet growing demands for electricity while providing bill stability for Yukoners.

Electricity rates are not changing at this time. Yukon Energy Corporation's application must first be reviewed and approved by the Yukon Utilities Board before any rate increase happens. Even with the proposed rate increase, electricity rates in Yukon remain the lowest in the north.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Yukon Hospital Corporation funding

**Mr. Cathers:** Last week, Yukon Hospital Corporation witnesses appeared in the Legislative Assembly. One issue that came up was the chronic underfunding of the Hospital Corporation by this Liberal government. According to page 14 of their 2019-20 annual report, last year they had \$96.5 million in expenses but only received \$92.6 million in revenue. That means that, because of underfunding by the Liberal government, the corporation had almost a \$4-million shortfall.

Can the minister tell us why the Liberals underfunded the hospital last year?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** What I can confirm for the member opposite and for Yukoners is that we have increased the Hospital Corporation's budget by 29 percent, as noted by the guests to the gallery last week. We are working with them on their initiatives and their projects to address the core needs of the Hospital Corporation as they arise.

We have increased significantly additional supports at the hospital, and that includes the specialized supports — the orthopaedic surgeons and the pediatricians. Our government has a mandate that the Hospital Corporation provides collaborative care approaches, and we are working with them to do just that.

The overarching priority set by the board of trustees is to provide safe and excellent hospital care for all Yukoners, and our objective is to ensure that every Yukoner is well-supported and that the needs are met for all Yukoners to ensure that they are safe and healthy in their homes where they reside in their Yukon communities.

**Mr. Cathers:** The minister would have you believe that everything is fine, but you need only look at the hospital's own

report. It is right there on page 14 — a \$4-million shortfall last year.

When the witnesses appeared, the secure medical unit was also discussed. To quote the CEO, the current setup "... does result in some very real safety and quality care concerns. Just to list a few of these — there is an inability to zone patients. That means it's not possible to keep aggressive and violent patients safe and separate from other vulnerable patients." Then he went on to say: "There are limited areas to support staff in a safe area. Unfortunately, it results in some patients spending long periods of time in isolation."

It is for these reasons that the secure medical unit is needed and it is for these reasons that it was irresponsible for the Liberals to delay this important project. On March 17 last year, the Liberals promised that there was \$1 million in the budget for the secure medical unit. Why did they delay this project and put patients and staff in the hospital at risk as a result?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I'm happy to speak about the supports that we're providing for the Hospital Corporation. As noted, the 2021 budget for the Hospital Corporation was \$81.3 million. Historically, when we took office, that was significantly less — an increase of 29 percent. Part of that was to look at a coordinated approach with the Hospital Corporation, and that was to look at all of the core needs of the Hospital Corporation, including the orthopaedic units and bringing in the pediatricians to the hospital, looking at the support for the re-enablement units to ensure that Yukoners are supported as they transition out of the surgical units.

We are also working with the Hospital Corporation on their secure medical unit, and we have been for quite some time. The support to the Hospital Corporation around the secure medical unit is to ensure that they have resources available. We're intending to do just that by providing the necessary financial resources and supports that they require to proceed with their vision and their plan.

**Mr. Cathers:** The minister can't get past the fact that the hospital's own report shows last year that they were short \$4 million. Let's walk through the timeline of delays of the SMU project by the Liberals.

Last week, the Hospital Corporation confirmed that the SMU business proposal was created by working with Health and Social Services and Justice in 2017-18. On March 7 of last year, the Premier said, in his budget speech: "This year's Budget also provides \$1 million for a larger secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital..."

The Hospital Corporation confirmed last week that their board approved the SMU business case in April 2019 and that it was presented to the minister in September 2019. However, we heard nothing about any of this until there was an incident at the unit in October, and the minister then confirmed that she delayed funding for the facility until next year.

Will the minister agree today to finally provide the hospital with the funding required to address this important health and safety issue and complete the new secure medical unit project?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to just acknowledge that never once have we said, on this side of the House, that we would not support the secure medical unit. We have agreed and

we have committed to work with the Hospital Corporation and certainly have fully funded the Yukon Hospital Corporation last year, and they were not short of funding.

Now, we have looked at the secure medical unit, and the objective there is provide them with the resources and to put that in the capital budget for the secure unit. We are working with them on space improvements, and we will continue to do that in good faith to ensure that Yukoners have the supports and services that they need in collaboration with the Hospital Corporation.

I have to say that I am very pleased with the relationship with the Hospital Corporation over the last four years. We have worked in good faith to address the needs of Yukoners — more moving away from an acute care model to a collaborative care model. We will continue to do that and support our partners through the Hospital Corporation.

**Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding**

**Mr. Istchenko:** With the closure of the BC bubble, clarity on the tourism recovery package is even more important as these businesses will lose out on business — business that they've been counting on.

When will the Minister of Tourism and Culture announce the rest of the tourism money?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question.

I have stated many times over the last several weeks that we're continuing to work with our partners to ensure that we have the right programs in place. I want to remind the member opposite that we do have a number of programs that are currently in effect now and will be for some time to come. I will just remind the member of some of those programs. We introduced sick leave. We introduced the tourism cooperative marketing fund, relief for essential workers, and most important for businesses — particularly in the tourism industry — is the Yukon business relief fund. I went over some of those numbers last week, but I'm happy to do it again for Yukoners.

As of November 4, we had 519 applications with \$5.67 million provided to Yukon businesses. The majority of the current businesses receiving this fund are tourism businesses. We have a good uptake as well on the accommodation fund, and we are continuing to work with that sector. I'm happy to have other questions.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, if you heard my first question, but I asked: When will the Minister of Tourism and Culture announce the rest of the tourism money?

Last week, the Minister of Tourism and Culture stated that they could not announce the rest of the tourism money because they needed to talk to the Bureau of Statistics first in order to make decisions based on evidence, Mr. Speaker.

So, can the minister explain why she was able to announce the accommodation sector relief without talking to the Bureau of Statistics first? Was that not a decision based on evidence, Mr. Speaker?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** The member opposite may recall that, when we announced the accommodation sector fund, I talked specifically about having done that pre-work with the

hotel industry to ensure that we had the evidence to go ahead with that decision. Again, folks on this side of the House make decisions based on good, solid evidence. That is what we did. We worked with our partners. We are satisfied that it is meeting the needs of the accommodation sector now.

There are still hotel businesses that are accessing the Yukon business relief fund because they have not maxed out their allowable allocation under that program. Those that have are accessing the accommodation fund. We knew that this was a pressure point; the members opposite said it time and time again. They asked, and we were well on our way to making that decision. That is why we announced it first.

Again, I will remind the member opposite that we have announced \$15 million that will go toward the tourism sector — some in relief, some in recovery. We are still making those final decisions, Mr. Speaker, on the immediate relief that will be needed.

**Mr. Istchenko:** While the member opposite was reminding me of that \$15 million, as I pointed out to the minister, she is saying that she cannot announce the rest of the tourism funding because she needs to collect evidence first.

Can the minister explain how she arrived at \$15 million as the total amount of money for the tourism relief package since she has not even collected the evidence about what is required for tourism relief yet?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, I will just remind the member opposite of conversations that we've had over the last several weeks around the relief that is needed. We knew from working directly with our partners in the accommodation sector that we had a pressure point and that there was a stop-gap that needed to be filled right away. We identified those funds, and I am really happy that we have gotten past general debate in our supplementary budget because there is a portion of funds that we will be debating when we get to the tourism section of our budget. There is direct relief in that budget for businesses that are within the tourism sector.

We'll continue working with our partners. That's what we committed to do. We have worked with the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board. We have worked with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon. We will continue to do that.

Our work with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics has been successful. We have narrowed matters down, and we know where the gaps are, Mr. Speaker. When that decision is finalized, we will be happy to announce that to Yukoners.

**Question re: COVID-19 pandemic self-isolation requirements**

**Ms. White:** Last week, we raised questions about the government allowing an Outside contractor to bring in out-of-territory workers and have them self-isolate while working alongside Yukoners on a construction site. Since then, we've been inundated with information and questions from local workers at Yukon mine sites. They too are feeling unsafe working and living alongside so many fly-in workers who have not completed the 14-day self-isolation requirement before coming to the camps.



Initially, these fly-in workers self-isolated in a local hotel for 14 days before going to the mining camps. Right now, fly-in workers from outside Yukon are allowed to self-isolate while still working at mine sites — a situation that has left local workers feeling unsafe and without recourse. Yukon workers are required to follow more stringent rules than Outside workers.

Will the government be reviewing the provisions for fly-in workers, given the increases in COVID cases across the country?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, the answer to the question is that, yes, we are always reviewing the alternative self-isolation plans. I will say that the work that is done with mining camps — as far as I know, there is only one that has had an application that has gone through to date. That one had a lot of work review back and forth by the chief medical officer of health's office.

Again, I don't approve these unless I've had a positive review from the chief medical officer of health. Then we still take a look at it to see whether there is safety. In the case where the one was approved, we asked that the mine be in contact with both the First Nation and the municipality to make sure that they were comfortable.

If there are concerns, I'm happy to continue to look at those. I think that it is changing because we recognize that the risk has changed across the country. We know that Yukoners are concerned right now. What I can say is that we have been doing this with plans that look toward the safety of Yukoners and our Yukon communities. I think that this has been achieved, but we will continue to review them as we go forward.

**Ms. White:** Today, the chief medical officer of health updated the COVID-19 information and informed Yukoners that there were six more cases as of today, bringing the total to 38. There are 170 tests from the weekend pending, with a two- to three-day wait time. This week, more fly-in workers will be arriving in Yukon to work their shifts. They will be working alongside Yukoners while self-isolating at the same time.

Does this government think that this is a good time to bring fly-in workers into the Yukon and allow them to work and live alongside Yukoners while they're still self-isolating?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What's different this week is that, if those workers are arriving from British Columbia, if they're arriving from the Northwest Territories, or if they're arriving from Nunavut, they will self-isolate. What was not happening last week was that those workers were not self-isolating. We listened to our chief medical officer of health. He made a recommendation to us. We took the decision to end the travel bubble.

By the way, I heard this morning that the Atlantic provinces did the same thing this morning. I think that is the right choice. We have all of those workers self-isolating. We will work to make sure that Yukoners are safe to the best of our ability. I think that all of these plans are there to ensure that we keep Yukoners and Yukon communities safe.

**Ms. White:** Yukon government is allowing workers from out of territory to come here and self-isolate while still working on a site with local workers, but Yukoners don't have

the same kind of flexibility. Many Yukon families won't be able to see their loved ones over Christmas without self-isolation, and those of us who have to travel for emergencies or to say goodbye to a loved one also have to respect self-isolation requirements. It's hard, but we know it's essential for the public health of Yukoners. Even Yukon workers returning from outside Yukon have to self-isolate when they come back home, but somehow we're allowing fly-in workers to self-isolate while continuing to work alongside Yukoners at local work sites.

What does the minister say to Yukoners who feel that this double standard is not fair to them?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** All who travel into the territory are self-isolating. Can I just say, Mr. Speaker — I've had more applications from individuals for alternative self-isolation than I have had from businesses. There have been some really heartbreaking applications, like a mom who is coming to help her daughter with a complicated pregnancy. The mom asked to be able to stay with the daughter, and we said yes because that family, as a unit, could self-isolate in a bubble.

I've had other applications where people have come forward and said that they wanted to spread their husband's ashes back where they had their cabin. We said yes, again, because they could stay separate.

We will look at applications from workers when they demonstrate to us and to the chief medical officer of health that they can stay separate, because we will work at all times to make sure that workers, Yukoners, and communities are safe, and everybody will be self-isolating when they come.

**Speaker:** Order, please. The Clerks can stop the time and the Leader of the Third Party can sit for a moment, please.

The Leader of the Third Party will have your full time for your questions.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** The Chair has noticed recently that some members, in particular during Question Period but also during some of the other processes and debates in the Assembly, have not acknowledged the Chair by saying "Mr. Speaker" or "Mr. Chair" after being recognized in the customary way by the Chair. If this was an isolated incident, the Chair would not likely bring this up; however, this appears to have become more commonplace for some members. Over the last week, it wasn't just the Leader of the Third Party.

As all members are aware, remarks made in the Chamber are to be directed to the Chair. This includes acknowledging the Chair when the Chair recognizes a member. Decorum in the Chamber is at the heart of maintaining civility in our debate. The Chair addresses members by their titles when they are recognized. This is a two-way street and must be maintained in order to facilitate a productive and respectful debate.

The third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at page 610 describes it this way: "Any Member participating in debate, whether during a sitting of the House or a Committee of the Whole, must address the Chair, not the House, a particular Minister or Member, the galleries, the television audience, or any other entity. Since one of the basic

principles of procedure in the House is that the proceedings be conducted in a respectful manner, Members are less apt to engage in heated exchanges and personal attacks when their comments are directed to the Chair rather than to another Member. If a Member directs remarks toward another Member and not the Speaker, the Member will be called to order and may be asked to rephrase the remarks.”

I also note that, while you are addressing the Chair, as much as you are addressing the individual whose privilege it is to be currently occupying this position, you are, more importantly, addressing the Chair as its position within this House. This is the embodiment of centuries-old traditions that have evolved to ensure that our Assembly functions smoothly and efficiently as the seat of our democracy.

On this topic, I would acknowledge and commend all members that this has not been an issue of any note in the previous four years and over 200 days of sitting in the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly until recently.

In addition, I would just note that I do recognize that there is an issue with our television and the television angles. We will certainly make best efforts to address that going forward. It is even a bit more challenging now in that we have created seating and spacing to comply with COVID-19 physical distancing measures. In any event, as I said, in my observation, this has not been an issue for the vast majority of the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. I do anticipate that all members will return to the manner in which they were speaking through the Chair previously.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

#### **Question re: Fortymile caribou herd**

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Yukon government announced opening a harvest on the Fortymile caribou herd for Yukon residents. This harvest will remain open until March 31 or until 300 caribou are harvested.

Mr. Speaker, does this government have the support of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation in making the decision to open the Fortymile caribou herd for the harvest of up to 300 animals?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, yes, we do.

**Ms. White:** This is the third time that the government has opened up a harvest of the Fortymile caribou herd, Mr. Speaker. In July, the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in government asked that a harvest management plan be in place before any more hunting permits for the Fortymile caribou herd were permitted.

Has this government finished the harvest management plan for this caribou herd and has the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in signed off on it?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, after 25 years of a recovery effort, working very closely with the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation and, of course, the Dawson Renewable Resources Council and our Fish and Wildlife Management Board here that covers the whole of Yukon and the State of Alaska, we are very pleased to announce to Yukoners that we have successfully signed off on the harvest management agreement. The Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation successfully passed that through their legislative assembly in the summer

with unanimous consent. From there, it went on to the leadership — as is their government process and structure — to endorse the plan.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, when will the government make this plan public?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** As I understand it, the plan has now been endorsed and we are looking at getting the plan out as soon as possible. I believe it’s in fact in the works and it might very well have gone out today. It’s imminent and it will get out now that it has full endorsement.

#### **Question re: Semi-automatic AR-10 rifles purchase**

**Mr. Hassard:** Earlier this year, the federal Liberal government enacted a sweeping ban on a list of what it called “military-style assault rifles”. Now, the Prime Minister of Canada said that these types of guns have no place in Canada.

Recently, the Department of Environment purchased 20 semi-automatic AR-10 rifles. This exact make and model of gun is on the list of banned guns that the federal Liberal government brought in. This is not the type of purchase that would be made without ministerial approval.

Can the minister tell us the rationale for the purchase of these guns?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, I’m not able to respond to the question at the moment. I will endeavour to get back to the member opposite. I certainly need to consult with the department.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, I would certainly hope that the minister, if she’s in charge of signing off on this type of contract, would have the information for those of us here in the Legislature today.

But let me quote the Prime Minister of Canada: “These weapons were designed for one purpose and one purpose only: to kill the largest number of people in the shortest amount of time.” He said, “There is no use and no place for such weapons in Canada.”

Yet, while the Liberals in Ottawa are taking these guns away from Canadians, the Liberals in the Yukon are purchasing them for employees at the Department of Environment. The hypocrisy is not lost on Yukoners. The Liberal government here says the guns are needed for human-wildlife conflict. Yet our Liberal Member of Parliament said these guns are “... created by the military to kill as many people as possible in the shortest time possible...”

Mr. Speaker, who does the minister think Yukoners should believe?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest certainly not the Yukon Party and their fearmongering. The objective certainly is not to kill people. We have skilled, qualified individuals within the Department of Environment who are responsible specifically for ensuring that we prevent human-wildlife conflict and that we also look at ensuring that the officers, who are peace officers within their jobs, are doing the jobs that are required to ensure that the tools they have at their disposal are there to protect the rights of course of the laws they prescribe to enforce.

I also want to say that the Government of Yukon will continue to monitor if there are further legislative changes. We will certainly look at keeping our communities safe — working and doing so with fair and law-abiding processes with our officers as they enforce the rules that apply to wildlife in the Yukon.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, you have the Prime Minister and Yukon's Liberal Member of Parliament saying that these types of guns have no use in Canada and they're only meant for killing people.

On the other hand, you have the Yukon Liberal government purchasing 20 of these AR rifles saying that they're necessary to deal with human-wildlife conflict. Many Yukoners could easily find themselves in exactly the same scenario of human-wildlife conflict that the government is justifying as the reason that these guns are necessary for employees at the Department of Environment.

Mr. Speaker, will the Yukon Liberal government write to the Prime Minister and tell him that their gun ban does not make sense and ask them to abandon their plans to forcibly confiscate rifles from law-abiding Yukon hunters and trappers?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** We will follow the rules as they are prescribed for us. We will take efforts on this side of the House to enforce the laws as they apply to us here in Yukon. The *Criminal Code* and the *Firearms Act* are under the purview of the Government of Canada.

The Government of Yukon will continue to monitor changes to the federal firearms regulated legislation and regulations with an interest in keeping communities safe while also being fair to law-abiding firearm owners and firearm-related businesses.

Our government remains committed to ensuring that all Yukoners feel safe throughout our territory by considering a common-sense approach to gun safety. I would like to reiterate that the officers who work for the Department of Environment are peace officers who have been skillfully trained to manage their tools.

I would like to acknowledge them for their great work and support to this government during the pandemic and for all the efforts where they have certainly contributed to Yukoners' safety.

#### **Question re: Cannabis retail store**

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to an issue that we addressed earlier this Sitting.

Currently, Yukoners can go to the Cannabis Yukon website, browse available products, select a product they would like, pay for it online, and have it shipped to them. This is an online store run by the Liberal government. Private retailers, however, are unable to offer this service. The Liberals' cannabis legislation forbids private retailers from selling cannabis online.

Why is it okay for the government to run an online store to sell cannabis, but not for the private sector retailers?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, you will recall that, a couple of years ago, we brought in the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act* and regulations. That was about introducing

cannabis as a newly legalized substance. We did so with an abundance of safety — we said at that time — for online sales, because there were some concerns that we heard from the public about whether those sales could be monitored and kept safe from seed to sale, as well as at an in-person store. Out of an abundance of caution, we said that the online store, to begin with, would be run by us as a government. I will have to check the numbers, but online sales are less than one percent of sales overall.

We have heard from our great local private retailers, who, by the way, have displaced us as government retail. They are doing a wonderful job. They have told us that they would like to do online retail. We will work with them to try to get that in place. We are also working on a pandemic right now, so I would ask for their patience as we work to get there.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, earlier this summer, the minister issued an order that allowed private retailers to sell cannabis online. This made sense for several reasons: For one, it allowed the staff of stores to limit interaction with the public, which meant that customers could make purchases while also respecting COVID measures aimed at keeping both customers and staff safe. It also gave private retailers access to sales channels that the Liberals' legislation had previously denied them, and it allowed them to sell their product online.

The minister took away this economic lifeline for these local businesses, but he continued to allow the government-run store to sell cannabis online. Will the minister use policy or regulation to reinstate this important sales channel for these cannabis retailers?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, since the pandemic started, by my count, we brought in 19 ministerial orders — 19 orders that I signed. I believe that we have repealed six of them, including this one. I heard so much from the members opposite about how we were overstepping, misusing power during the pandemic.

But twice now, the one question I've had from the members opposite is asking me to put back in place a ministerial order. Well, I tell you what, Mr. Speaker: We will look at it, and if it helps the health and safety of Yukoners, we'll happily consider it under this state of emergency.

By the way, thank you as well to all the members opposite for agreeing that we are in a state of emergency. We will — if it helps the safety of Yukoners, we'll do it, but we'll only use ministerial orders if it's out of an abundance of caution to keep Yukoners safe and well.

**Mr. Hassard:** If the minister would have been listening, he would have understood that I wasn't asking for him to reinstate a ministerial order. I was asking him to do it through legislation or other processes. If the minister had brought this ministerial order forward to a committee of the Legislature earlier, like we had been advocating that he do with all ministerial orders under CEMA, we would have had the opportunity to bring this matter forward then. We could have made this point on behalf of the businesses that have brought this forward to us, and hopefully the minister would have taken this issue into consideration. Unfortunately, this minister and

this government prefer to operate unilaterally, without any oversight or scrutiny.

When will the minister allow private businesses to have the same opportunities for sales as the government does?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, the minister answered the question in the first response, saying that he will work on it. However, the members opposite want us to play politics with the CEMA orders. All jurisdictions right across Canada, thank goodness, are following the same processes. Chief medical officers of health in every jurisdiction are working around the clock to analyze the various situations regionally and coordinating efforts, providing accurate and timely recommendations that are saving lives.

Premiers and the federal government are also working around the clock to quickly implement policy necessary to keep Canadians safe. It took the opposition over a month to actually even admit that we are in a state of emergency. While Yukon's health and safety are at risk, this government will continue to show the swift and even-keeled leadership that all Yukoners demand of us.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### Bill No. 14: *Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)* — Third Reading

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 14, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. Frost.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Environment that Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, I sincerely appreciate the comments. I certainly want to look at a lot of the efforts that have been put forward — great messages that we have heard — over the course of the last year and a bit. The House has discussed and covered the materials in detail during the debate on October 26. I would take a few minutes now to highlight the bill and its context.

Single-use products, such as plastic and paper bags, are harmful to the environment to produce and costly to deal with once they become waste. The best solution for this problem is to reduce the amount of single-use products we use, like water bottles and Styrofoam cups, et cetera. As I mentioned at second reading and discussed during Committee of the Whole, we are amending the *Environment Act* to strengthen the territory's waste-reduction efforts by moving to ban single-use bags and other single-use products and packages in the future. This is in the next phase of the government's ongoing work to reduce waste.

Specifically, these *Environment Act* amendments will enable the establishment of regulations to guide the manufacturing, supply, and distribution of single-use products and packaging and support our efforts to reduce waste now and into the future. Creating the legal mechanism to ban single-use bags and other single-use products and packaging will also help Yukon align with our national and international efforts to reduce waste — particularly plastic waste — in our environment and landfills. Stakeholders and the public will have a 60-day opportunity after Christmas to shape the future regulations banning single-use bags. The department will send key stakeholders, such as our big retailers and relevant associations, an engagement package to provide input on the content and timing of the regulations.

At the same time, a wide engagement will be launched for all stakeholders and the public to participate in, including the options to complete an online survey, given the COVID options that we have now, and through our virtual approaches.

As health and safety during this pandemic is top of mind for all of us, if another public emergency were declared in the future where the use of banned single-use products was deemed necessary or safer for the public, an exemption from complying with single-use product regulations would be established under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* or the *Public Health and Safety Act*.

These pieces of legislation deal specifically with when and how an emergency is declared and then delegate powers to the chief medical officer of health and the Minister of Community Services to deal with an emergency.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank all members. I'm very pleased to hear that we are moving forward. I thank all those who contributed their many hours — the public servants' many hours — to get us to this point.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise today to speak to Bill No. 14, *Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)*, at third reading.

In my second reading speech, I discussed much of the content and background of this bill, so I won't spend much time on that.

Having now debated this bill at Committee of the Whole, I would like to use this opportunity — as we've learned, this bill is largely enabling legislation, and the true force of the changes will come into effect with the passage of subsequent regulations.

As such, the main concerns that I have will need to be dealt with in the development of the regulations. In short, I have three concerns. Those are: the definition and how products will be identified; the second one is timing; and the third is consultation.

First, let me begin with my first issue of the definition. The bill's "Explanatory Note" says that the target of this legislation — and I quote — is "single-use products and packages".

In her second reading speech, the minister said that this legislation will allow for the regulation of certain types of single-use products and packaging, including the ability to ban them. Then in Committee, we learned that the minister intends

to target single-use plastic bags first and then she is planning for regulations to come into effect in 2021.

However, we also learned that this regulation was going to include paper bags as well. In debate so far, I pointed out that the federal government is also taking action on banning some single-use plastics. To our understanding, the definition that they will be using will include single-use plastic bags but will not include paper bags. When I asked in Committee if the definition that the Yukon government will use will be consistent with the federal definition, the minister did not provide a clear answer.

So, it seems that we are on track for competing bans, both coming next year. The ban at the federal level will be different from the territorial ban; however, there will be significant overlap.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight for the minister as a concern that I really hope that her department is able to work with the federal government to ensure that local businesses don't have to deal with competing bans and different sets of rules for different levels of government in the same policy space. Furthermore, I want to express some concern about what the next steps of the regulatory development are. Again, in this respect, I hope that the minister is able to come up with a clear definition that will work for the business community. I will speak more about that consultation in a few minutes. For now, I would like to reiterate the point that the definition used by the government needs to be clear and concise enough that local governments, citizens, and the entire community can understand it.

The next point that I would like to make relates to timing. As we all wrestle with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become obvious that many of our behaviours have changed. We are now encouraged to spend less time in common spaces like stores. We are encouraged to use single-use products rather than multiple-use items that need to be touched by different people. We are certainly eating out a lot more, which means an increase in takeout containers and bags.

This has also been particularly hard on small businesses. In particular, those businesses in the food services, hospitality, or tourism industries have been especially hard hit. We do wonder if this is the right time — speaking of timing — to be introducing a new set of regulations on the small business community. I think that we can all agree that the goals of this legislation are well-intentioned, but I can't help but wonder if this is the wrong time to be taking this action. I would encourage the minister to thoughtfully consider this when she decides to bring the regulations forward.

Finally, I want to bring forward some concerns about the lack of consultation. We have reached out to several different businesses that deal with single-use bags. Some that we have spoken to are on the distribution side and some are in the food services industry, but we have yet to find a business that can say that they feel they were properly consulted about this issue. In many cases, the businesses were learning about this legislation when we asked them about it. This obviously conflicts with what the minister has told us so far. Going

forward, the minister will need to do a better job of engaging with the local businesses that are affected by this legislation.

I hope that the minister's ambitious timeline doesn't cause her to do a rush job on consultation. The imposition of a ban on single-use plastic and paper bags will have a real impact on a lot of local businesses. Before she charges ahead, the minister really needs to listen to those businesses. Many of them aren't against what the minister is proposing, but they want to see it done the right way.

I should also note that the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce has written to the government expressing their interest in seeing more consultation on this proposal, Mr. Speaker. We would encourage the minister to take the chamber up on the offer of a facilitated meeting.

I also hope that the minister approaches these issues with some flexibility. I would encourage her to consider exploring the possibility of sector-specific carve-outs. In particular, the quick-service food sector seems like a logical sector to consider this for. It seems clear to us that the needs and the interests of different sectors vary considerably, and they do. It would be reasonable for the minister to try to recognize that as she moves forward with regulatory development.

In closing, we will vote in favour of this bill. At this point, it is strictly enabling legislation. But we are doing so in the hope — and I say this in the hope — that the minister can address the concerns that I have raised today when she moves forward with this regulation.

I would like to thank the department officials who worked on this legislation. I would also like to thank the numerous local businesses that have provided input as we have considered this bill. I hope that the local businesses get to provide a bunch more input when the regulations come forward.

**Ms. White:** In speaking in favour of Bill No. 14, it will probably not surprise anyone that occasionally the Yukon Party and I disagree on different issues. I think that, when we are looking at trying to change our habits and our patterns and doing it for the betterment of the world, sometimes those decisions are hard, but they still need to be made.

I think it's really important — the language that was chosen in this legislation, and that's of single-use products and packages. I appreciate that our local drafters and the champions behind this legislation didn't fall into the trap that we've seen in other jurisdictions and other governments. I want to give full credit to the officials for recognizing the pitfalls of banning single-use plastic bags, but allowing for single-use paper bags, by catching that and changing the language to "single-use products and packages". They've done us a favour into the future, and we look forward to voting on this.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, I would like to thank all Members of the Legislature who have risen and spoken that they are in favour of the legislation. It is enabling legislation, and it's enabling in a broad sense, as the Leader of the Third Party just acknowledged.

The whole idea is that we have single-use packaging or single-use products — over time, we should move away from

single use. We need to reduce how much we're creating in terms of waste. It is better, wherever we can, to reduce, and if we can't reduce, to reuse, and if we can't reuse, to recycle.

In terms of the definition of the products, of course we will work with the federal government. Of course, we are in conversation with the private sector. We want to come up with a very clear definition, and we will take into account what the federal government is saying, but we also have given — I hope — a strong indication that, when it comes to bags, we are looking not only at single-use plastic bags but also at single-use paper bags. What I heard the minister say was that likely we would start with single-use plastic bags and then move on, but with both of those, I think that the timing is critical. I acknowledge that right now, as we are in the pandemic, we have to account for the changes in behaviours.

I think that Yukoners want to reduce the amount of waste and also want to be safe, so we will work — again, with the private sector and in conversation with them and the public — on what timing makes sense. Again, I support what the Member for Kluane is suggesting — that there should be that dialogue in place.

With respect to consultation, I will just sort of go over again how this all happened. Originally, the Department of Community Services and the Department of Environment took a look at this, looked at the Northwest Territories, and thought to bring in a charge — I think that it was 25 cents a bag — as a way to disincentivize single-use bags, both plastic and paper, and then to use those dollars to help reinvest in dealing with solid waste across the territory. When we went and talked with businesses, Mr. Speaker, what did they say to us? They said, "Hey, we don't want another thing to administer." They said to us, "Could you instead please bring in a ban?" We have a letter from chambers that stated this quite explicitly. I personally met with them. I think that the Minister of Environment spoke with them. We had quite a few conversations. So, it was based on that engagement with the private sector that led us to say, "You know what, we let's go deeper, then. Let's not do a charge on the bag. Let's not burden the businesses with another thing to administer. Let's get to a ban."

But when we looked at a ban, we understood right away that it would require an amendment to the act. So, that was the diligence that the Department of Environment undertook.

I just want to say that this act and how it is shaped here today was directly influenced by that engagement with the private sector. I agree with the Member for Kluane that it is imperative that we do that as we go forward — not here with the act itself, which is just the enabling piece, but as we move into developing regulations — that needs to be done while engaging with the private sector.

I just want to stand up and say that I know that the Community Services branch that deals with solid waste and community operations — I know that they are working in conjunction with the Department of Environment. I know that they are working with and are in conversation with the recyclers, the waste haulers, and the private sector. They are going to wait until we get through the legislation itself before

they start working on the regulations, but that work is planned, from the get-go, to be in conversation with the private sector.

Again, thank you to all members in the Legislature for their comments and I look forward to the vote on third reading.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to thank my colleagues on all sides of the House for their words on Bill No. 14, *Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)*.

I would like to also give a big shout-out and a mahsi' cho to the staff at the departments of Environment and Community Services for their hard work and vital role in assessing, regulating, and helping manage the impacts we have on the air, water, and land around us. As my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, highlighted, we will continue to collaborate with the other provinces and, of course, the federal government on solutions like the Canada-wide Action Plan on Zero Plastic Waste, working very closely in terms of their efforts. The amendments will strengthen the Yukon Territory's waste-reduction efforts and help Yukoners align with municipal, national, and international efforts to reduce waste in our environment and landfills.

With that, I would like to speak to the consultation and engagement that we have had so far. I would say that we have done significant engagement across the Yukon. Just a week ago, the department spoke with the Chamber of Commerce and they were very pleased with our plans for the next phase of consultation with the business community.

So, we look forward to the input and we also want to look at the stakeholder groups and public engagement in the development of the regulations. We would do that regardless. We are open to all feedback. We look forward to that step in the process.

**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. Frost:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McClean:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yeas, nil nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.  
*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 14 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 14 has passed this House.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair (Mr. Hutton):** I will now call the House to order.

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

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

**Chair:** Order, please.

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

Is there any general debate?

#### Department of Highways and Public Works

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the supplementary budget this afternoon with my colleagues across the way. We have a couple of departmental officials here — Mr. Richard Gorczyca and my deputy, Paul McConnell — here to help this afternoon.

Before I begin my opening remarks, I would really like to take a moment to thank the Official Opposition for finally acknowledging that we're in a state of emergency. I took us six weeks and three debates to finally get that acknowledgement from the Official Opposition, but I think we can certainly see how important it is to have unanimity in this House on the importance of a state of emergency and how important it is for us to manage our borders and our people safely. I really think that it's tremendous that we finally got unanimity on that point.

With that, I'm pleased to speak about the supplementary budget for the Department of Highways and Public Works. This request highlights our commitment toward ensuring safe and efficient transportation across all our road systems, supporting local industries, building sustainable infrastructure, and enabling our aviation community to continue the ongoing delivery of essential services and medevac systems.

The global pandemic is having an unprecedented effect on Yukoners. Over the last nine months, we've seen measures enacted to protect our health and safety. Our department will continue to enhance safety and minimize service disruptions to ensure that our economy and communities' health and well-being are properly supported. It is absolutely of the utmost importance that our citizens are safe and that is the primary focus of this government from the outset. This is evident in the number — so making sure that we do that is absolutely job 1.

Now, Mr. Chair, despite this once-in-a-hundred-years event, we have achieved a lot, and I look forward to questions on this supplementary spend in the afternoon.

I have a little summary. Highways and Public Works is expecting an increase of \$11.4 million to 2020-21 operation and maintenance estimates. The request in O&M funding amounts to an increase of about 7.9 percent. That's a lot, but I do want to note that, when associated changes and recoveries are factored in, the net increase to the department will actually be just \$1.4 million.

This \$11-million figure that we've been talking about in additional spending is primarily due to COVID-19 support for aviation. More than \$10 million in supports are coming to that sector. This includes the essential air service program, which will facilitate the distribution of funding to air services involved in the transportation of goods, services, and medevac support. We know that the funding was — and will continue to be — critical in ensuring that air services remain operational and resilient throughout the pandemic.

We will also see an increase of \$410,000 in cleaning costs due to COVID-19 precautions, especially in our schools and public buildings. Other expenses totalling \$1 million are related to a number of emergency washout repairs in places like the Campbell Highway and Dempster Highway — you know, Mr. Chair, that we have had an exceptionally wet summer and an exceptionally snowy first half of the winter season — and an increase in operating needs related to certifying our Mayo aerodrome as the fifth airport in the territory. We are proud of this investment, as it created space to further support our growing mining industry and we will keep our communities connected.

As far as the capital expenditures go, Mr. Chair — when we look at it, our capital funding expenditures for this year are projected to spend \$22 million less than our main estimate, meaning a capital budget decrease of 13 percent. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has delayed permitting, resulting in a deferral of the majority of the work that we had planned on the Dempster fibre line this year. We actually have started the brush-clearing — so that work is starting on the fibre line as we speak, but the line itself — the actual fibre optic line — is expected to begin next year. So, we are deferring \$19.5 million

and the corresponding \$18.9 million in recoveries from Canada until next year.

Additionally, \$2.5 million will be transferred to the Department of Health and Social Services for the IHealth information project.

So, throughout the remainder of this pandemic, we will continue to focus our efforts on supporting local businesses, keeping Yukon's transportation network safe and resilient, and ensuring that every citizen receives the services they need — again, with a focus on the safety of our citizens, which is absolutely paramount in everything we do.

I will leave it there, Mr. Chair. I welcome questions from the members opposite.

**Mr. Hassard:** I, too, would like to thank Mr. McConnell and Mr. Gorkczyka for being here today and helping out the minister as we work our way through Highways and Public Works debate.

I think that, just to start, I would like to comment on — since the minister brought up the fact of the motion on the state of emergency — I would like to thank him and his government for voting against all of our amendments — amendments that would have seen things like legislative oversight and sharing of information — you know, those types of things. It is interesting that he brought it up, but I would certainly like to have the opportunity to thank them for voting against openness and transparency.

In terms of the Highways and Public Works debate, Mr. Chair, I think that the first place I would like to go is with regard to Bids and Tenders. I know that we had a little bit of a discussion on this. The minister did a ministerial statement on it, but maybe we could dig a little deeper and make sure that we have some information on record about Bids and Tenders. I guess the first question would be: Why was Bids and Tenders chosen? We know that the Government of Canada uses MERX and the City of Whitehorse uses Bonfire, so why Bids and Tenders?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I want to thank the member opposite for his question, although I will remind the member opposite that this isn't specifically part of the supplementary discussion we are having this afternoon. In the spirit of transparency and openness and actually answering the member's questions, I will certainly do that. Basically, the question was: Why Bids and Tenders? I will say that we are making it faster and easier for Yukon businesses to work with the Yukon government.

In late August, we replaced the tender management system with a new, more —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

**Chair:** Mr. Hassard, on a point of order.

**Mr. Hassard:** Have we not already passed the supplementary budget in this Legislature, Mr. Chair?

#### Chair's ruling

**Chair:** We have passed it.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** So, the question was: Why Bids and Tenders? I want to say that we're making it faster and easier for Yukon businesses to work with the Yukon government. In August, we replaced the tender management system with a new, more efficient online platform called Bids and Tenders, which the member opposite was referring to. This modern system allows for online bid submissions at the request of the business community which was recently made more important by the onset of COVID-19.

It also enhances bid compliance by flagging most errors. The platform is easy to use with absolutely no fees. Businesses can sign up for tender notifications tailored to those services they offer.

The new system has two other features that will be rolled out in phases. The first is a tender analytics function that will enable us to be a smarter buyer, providing more detailed information for us to analyze spending through competitive tenders and make more informed choices. The second feature is a vendor performance review module that will store vendor performance review scores and ultimately help us reward good vendor performance and encourage poor performers to improve.

Mr. Chair, we could have gone with any number of bid programs that are available throughout the country, and we went through a competitive process. This program — Bids and Tenders — was the one that provided the most bang for our buck, Mr. Chair. We actually have a lot of features that are available through this platform that weren't available through other platforms and that is why we decided to go with this platform.

**Mr. Hassard:** I certainly hope that the minister realizes that this is general debate. We only had nine days in the Spring Sitting. I certainly hope that he's not going to use this as an opportunity to try to shirk his duties as the minister, Mr. Chair.

The minister said quite a few things about Bids and Tenders there, but I guess the question that we've heard — and it's kind of a common complaint — is that the city and the Yukon government don't better align with procurement or with their rules or the way that they do procurement.

I'm curious as to why the Government of Yukon wouldn't have chosen, say, Bonfire, for example, to be more in line with the process that the City of Whitehorse uses.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I believe I answered that question. We went out to a public process. This was a program that really did the trick for us. It ticked the most boxes. It had the most features that we can use. Specifically, there were a few there — the analytics feature and the fact that we have performance reviews. Those are very important to us, Mr. Chair, so we chose that program.

I'm happy to answer the member opposite's questions before us this afternoon on the *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* for Highways and Public Works, but generally speaking, this is Supplementary No. 1 and we have about \$30 million on it, as I outlined in my notes. I'm happy to answer questions on those items. I'll wait for the first question on those items that are in the budget.



**Mr. Hassard:** So, I guess the next question for the minister in regard to tendering would be: Who controls the old site and all of the data stored on it? Is that a third party, or is that Yukon government? How long will that data be left online and available for the public? While we're at it, are there any costs associated with maintaining that old website?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Again, I think I made this point before. If the member opposite didn't get the information, I'm certainly willing to provide it this afternoon.

Through the open-tendering process, the eSolutionsGroup ranked highest in our evaluation proposals. The contract is for three years with an option to renew. The contract cost is \$142,000.

Businesses can still access the old tender management system for research purposes, including reviewing old tendered documents, previous pricing, and bid lists. We own the data. The old tender management system will be available for businesses to do research for the next three to four years as the cost to host this platform is minimal. It is probably less than \$10,000.

There it is. The information is still available, as is our want. We want to make sure that we're open and transparent. We have that information still available, and I've just given the cost for the new system.

**Mr. Hassard:** One notable feature of the new site is that bidders can submit their bids online, but it seems that this would make it easier for Outside companies to bid on Yukon jobs. I am just curious about how the minister feels about the opportunity for Outside businesses to now have greater opportunities to bid on local work here in Yukon.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Chair, we live in a digital world. We can't roll back the clock. This is a service that many people in the territory were asking for. We welcome people to bid on our contracts to make sure that we get the best price and grow our economy. In the past, we had local companies representing others. They would get the bid documents and still be able to submit it. There really is no change except that it is a lot easier now for people to submit bids online from any one of our communities. We actually have a system now where, if they fill in the bid documents incorrectly, it will flag that error and will prevent people submitting bid documents that would be excluded. Now they don't have that issue.

This is a service that is available in virtually every other jurisdiction in the country. We are catching up to them and offering a great service to our business community, making it easier for them — less red tape — to work in the territory.

**Mr. Hassard:** Another ongoing issue that we have heard about from the business community is the decision that this government made to cease the practice of releasing bid prices once bids are open. Currently, bidders wait anywhere from a few days to a few weeks — in some cases, it is even more than a month — to see bid prices. Only successful bidders are notified when the prices are open. That leaves businesses checking back, day to day, to see whether or not they have won a bid. I am curious why the government decided to cease the practice of releasing bid prices when bids are actually opened.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The Government of Yukon posts construction tender bid prices as quickly as possible once a tender is closed. Between April 1, 2019, and September 17, 2020, our government issued 97 requests for bid tenders for construction. Of those, 48 percent were posted in one or two days. An additional 28 percent were posted in three to four days, meaning that 76 percent were posted within four days. Only 13 projects took five or more days to post — equalling 13 percent — and 11 of those were cancelled, accounting for 11 percent of the total projects. In these cases, the prices were not posted. When the prices are not posted, Mr. Chair, that allows the companies that actually had put all that time and effort — sometimes tens of thousands of dollars or hundreds of thousands of dollars preparing bids. Once the bid prices were posted, they would lose all that work. Now they are able to retain that work and can bid again, a lot more easily than they did in the past, and that is why we are doing it.

**Mr. Hassard:** I have a question regarding two brushing contracts on the Robert Campbell Highway. I am wondering if the minister could provide us with any updates on where that work is at in terms of completion, and maybe he could explain to this Legislature the reasoning as to why those two particular tenders put out this fall were direct-award contracts rather than done through the traditional procurement fashion.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** If the member opposite has more information about the companies that were direct-awarded that he knows about, I would be happy to take that information, look into it, and endeavour to get a response for the member opposite. I don't have any information at the moment. We're looking into it.

But I am happy to talk about brushing this afternoon — although I will note that it's not part of the \$30 million in the Supplementary No. 1 that we're doing this afternoon in this second appropriation.

But — in the interest of openness, transparency, and good government — I will answer the question from the member opposite about brushing. I will say that we changed the way that we do brushing in the territory, Mr. Chair, for the better. Our government takes the safety of its travelling public very, very seriously. Unlike before, where it was reactive — where somebody would phone up and say "Was there any brushing done?" and they dispatched a contractor to do whatever it is — we're doing the entire 5,000 kilometres of the Yukon highway system over the next six years — I think we're down to five years now — and doing brushing and safety improvements across the entire gamut of our highway system.

Mr. Gorczyca here has actually worked very hard on this project. I can say that it has been a tremendous amount of work that the department has done on this in a very short period of time to upgrade and actually make sure that our highways have a standard now that they didn't have before. We are working on making sure that the highways are safe. You can see the fruits of our labours all over the territory. You can see that the highways are well-brushed; they're safer. You can see cars and animals much easier than you could in the past. I'm happy to say that, over the coming years, we will see the entire 5,000 kilometres of the Yukon highway system brushed to a standard

and then maintained over time, which will actually bring down the operation and maintenance costs of the work.

We're doing this with a mixture of — we haven't put any of the Yukon's smaller contractors out, Mr. Chair. We have actually kept the budget for those small contractors and we have the larger contracts let to make sure that bigger swaths of highway are maintained.

We're doing more, Mr. Chair, in the interest of having a much safer roadway system that's proactive rather than reactive, and at the end of our work, we will have a system that is easier to maintain and we expect that the costs of maintaining our highways will go down quite substantially after the that.

**Mr. Hassard:** I too appreciate the work that Mr. Gorczyca has done in regard to brush and weed control in Yukon. We certainly look forward to seeing all of those ditches cleaned up. That's great.

The two contracts that I was referring to in my previous question were direct-award contracts to First Kaska on the Campbell Highway in the Tuchtua area.

Since we are on brushing, I have another question for the minister. I have travelled the Yukon — put quite a few miles on my truck this summer travelling around — and it's quite interesting to see the brushing contracts from job to job and area to area. It appears that some contractors are — not forced, but the government ensures that they do all of the work, yet other sections are not being done nearly as well. I am curious as to how the government's standards work in deciding when one contractor has done sufficient work to complete their contract while, with other contractors, it appears that the work is not very sufficient at all.

We talked about this in the Legislature before. I used the example of what was done out by Marsh Lake and then north of Whitehorse, up through north of the Lake Laberge area. The minister, at the time, assured me that the contractor was doing it in a two-phased approach — phase 1, where they came through and cut the brush; and the second phase was where they came through and cleaned it up. I guess he didn't give the contractor the memo about phase 2, because it never did get cleaned up. My understanding is that the contractor was paid in full for the contract.

The question is: What guidelines are Highways and Public Works following with regard to ensuring that the brushing is done to actually meet the specifications in the tender?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the extra information that the member opposite provided, which just basically confirmed our suspicions. The two brush-clearing contracts he was mentioning — with the Tuchtua, there were actually three. There are two going to the Liard First Nation under the Gateway project agreement; the other was to the Ross River Dena Council. That again was part of the project agreement we have under the Gateway project. That is where that work is coming from.

As for the member opposite — I haven't heard a lot of complaints about the brushing work this year, so if the member opposite certainly sees work that doesn't meet his high standards, I encourage him to please write me a note and I will certainly look into it. I know the specifications of the brushing

program have been adjusted to address safety concerns raised about the stem height left after the brushing is completed. We actually have that worked into our contracts now, so there shouldn't be any problems going forward. If he sees something, please let me know and we will address it.

Also — to tie the two questions together with Bids and Tenders — there will be an evaluation process. So, if contractors are not meeting the terms of their contracts, that will actually get logged in this new system we have. So, in the future, it will encourage good behaviour and it will encourage contractors who are not really doing what they're supposed to be doing to pull up their socks a bit.

**Mr. Hassard:** Since the minister has spoken of the Yukon Resource Gateway funding, I'm wondering if we could get an update on the money that was announced last year at PDAC, I believe it was, in regard to the work that would be done in between Faro and Ross River with Gateway funding.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm happy to talk about the Gateway project. This has been a very rewarding contract, though it has been slow-going. The project that we inherited on Gateway was so convoluted. For new roads across the territory, it had very little flexibility.

We have worked — my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, and I — and others as well — have worked very, very hard to develop some flexibility and to actually make this project much more responsive to the needs of the territory, its businesses, its resource companies, the First Nations, and the communities. The results are starting to bear fruit.

The Government of Yukon has signed four project agreements with affected First Nations on the Yukon Resource Gateway project. This represents a breakthrough for all the time and effort we have put into improving First Nation relations through our work with all First Nations in the territory.

The approved project agreements have an estimated total capital construction cost of \$164.7 million. They include the first phase of the Nahanni Range Road component with Liard First Nation with an estimated construction value of \$17 million. We have the North Canol Road and the Robert Campbell Highway with the Ross River Dena Council, with an estimated construction value of \$71 million. We have the Carmacks bypass with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, with an estimated construction value of \$26.7 million. Work is proceeding with that this year. Most recently, the Robert Campbell Highway, kilometre 114 to kilometre 171, with the Liard First Nation, with an estimated construction value of \$50 million — amazing. This is a section between Ross River and Watson Lake.

The Government of Yukon has worked hard in the last year to increase the flexibility of the Gateway funding program, as I have said, with the Government of Canada 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.

It has been a very, very rewarding experience to be changing the scope of this project and the way that it works, but ultimately, Mr. Chair, it is going to see real value in our

communities, from Ross River to Dawson City and points in between.

**Mr. Hassard:** I am just wondering — the convoluted process that the minister spoke of — was that not approved by Prime Minister Trudeau?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Chair, I could talk about this all afternoon. The Gateway project that we inherited was tied to the Casino project and all sorts of other projects. They are very important, but they are still in their infancy. What we have done is that we have managed to get the flexibility from Ottawa — working with our federal partners, including the Prime Minister's Office and others — to make sure that this money is actually working for Yukoners, Yukon communities, and Yukon resource companies. What we have managed to achieve are project agreements with Liard First Nation and Ross River Dena Council. Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and others are in the process right now, and those agreements — that hard work, those hard negotiations — are bringing tangible benefits to communities from Ross River to Watson Lake to Carmacks to points in between. We are going to make sure that these agreements serve the best interests of those First Nations, of those communities, the Yukon government, and the resource companies that depend on them.

**Mr. Hassard:** Prime Minister Trudeau signed off on this project in 2017. Then, at some time in 2019, the Liberals changed it. I guess I am curious as to why it was good in 2017 but not so good in 2019.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** This year, we started laying BST from Ross River to the Robert Campbell Highway to serve the constituents of Ross River — constituents of my good friend across the way there.

Next year, work is going to begin on improving the road between Ross River and Faro. This is a job that has been neglected for many, many, many years. Mr. Chair, this government, working with the Ross River Dena Council, the Liard First Nation, and Carmacks, has actually managed to get deals in place that will improve the roads for the citizens of Carmacks, Ross River, and Watson Lake. We will bring real, tangible benefits to the members of Carmacks, Ross River, and Watson Lake and to the First Nations in those regions. The roads will be improved, the jobs and work will flow to those communities, and we will have tangible benefits from the work that we are doing on these roads throughout the territory. The resource companies will actually have better access to their claims and their resource sites.

**Mr. Hassard:** The minister said that BST has been laid from Ross River to the Campbell Highway. Can he inform the House how many kilometres of BST have been laid — currently?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will take this time to correct the record. As of this moment, no BST has been laid on that road. That was my error. I beg the indulgence of the House for that. We have, actually, prepared the road. It's ready to have the BST laid. It's about 10 kilometres. That work will happen next year, probably in the spring.

While the road is ready for the BST to be laid, it has not yet been laid. That was my error.

As of now, all of the work has been done to prepare the road for that final phase. We hope to get to it early next year.

**Mr. Hassard:** Just for the minister's information, the road is actually not ready for BST. They haven't even put any crush on it yet. Just so he can update his briefing note, they have probably two months of work there before the BST will start.

But, anyway, in regard to the Gateway funding, I'm curious which companies were consulted before the announcements of reprofiling the Gateway money. Also, if the minister could let us know how much money is being put in from the private sector as well, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm going to leave questions about the negotiations and the consultation with the companies for my colleague in Energy, Mines and Resources who actually handled those negotiations.

For the current projects, Mr. Chair, there is very little public money in a lot of these projects right now. They're a deal between the federal government, Ottawa, and us. There will be a lot of public money going into those projects at this stage.

**Mr. Hassard:** It seemed like it was a bit of touchy question when the Deputy Premier got involved there. I'm just curious as to what was going on there.

I guess another question in regard to the Gateway money — the minister talked about the \$50-million worth of work on the Campbell Highway. I was just curious if the minister — why would the government have made that announcement just days before a First Nation election? I'm curious if anyone in the minister's department flagged concerns beforehand that this could be perceived as interfering in an election.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The member opposite knows that there's — I'm not going to comment on that. I'll await the next question he has.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, I'm just curious as to if the minister is unwilling or unable to provide an answer as to whether someone in the department flagged concerns about this being perceived as interfering in an ongoing election.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'll await questions on the budget matters before us. As I said, we have \$20 million in capital money to discuss; we have \$10 million in O&M money to discuss. I haven't received a single question on either one of those issues this afternoon. We've spent dozens of hours discussing the whims and whimsies of the opposition. We're happy to do it, but there is a lot of budget material ahead of us and discussing advice between the civil service and ministers is not what I'm going to do on the floor of the Legislature, thank you very much. I would never do it, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Hassard:** This is taxpayers' money that we're talking about, so to me, that would be a budget item. But, I guess, let the record show that the minister is refusing to say why they would make an announcement during an election. It's interesting — because it's a move that later led to the government being accused of election interference. It's certainly interesting that the minister doesn't feel that this is a question worth answering.

Maybe this question will be a little less uncomfortable for the minister. Maybe he'll be happy to talk about something different.

The question is regarding the tenders for the \$1-million exemptions. I'm just curious as to where we're at with the 10 \$1-million exemptions that are allowed under the free trade agreement.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** First, I am going to address the remarks of the member opposite about letting the record show — let the record show that I am not going to discuss advice to ministers on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. That is really what the record will show. I want that point made.

I am happy to talk about the \$1-million exemptions that our government is using to help boost regional economic development across the territory. This is a tool that has been available to the territory for a very long period of time, but we are actually the ones that implemented it. For the 2020-21 fiscal year, we have awarded five projects for our regional economic trade exemptions worth \$2.8 million. Five additional projects will be tendered by the end of the fiscal year.

As I mentioned, Yukon was the first jurisdiction in Canada to use the 10 \$1-million exemptions under our trade policy. We started that in 2017-18 and we were the only jurisdiction to use them all each year. The exceptions came into effect in September 2017. Since January 2018, qualified Yukon businesses have been able to compete for and secure 35 such government contracts worth \$17.6 million to date.

When COVID-19 hit, Mr. Chair, we acted quickly to identify projects that could be tendered and awarded earlier in the year to support Yukon's business community. As the Chair will know, we have one of the best economies in the country at the moment. It has certainly been devastated by COVID, but we are certainly weathering it better than a lot of jurisdictions in the country. That is largely because of the discipline that the citizens of the territory have shown in the face of this global pandemic, as well as the quick and strategic economic stimulus that we have been able to inject into the economy.

This year's projects include tenders for vegetation control, building maintenance, and engineering consulting. Three of the projects take place along highways in northern and southern Yukon. One project is in Carcross and the rest are located in Whitehorse.

The Procurement Business Committee asked for a detailed impact analysis of selected projects, so we added reporting requirements to the tender documents. Starting in the 2019-20 fiscal year, suppliers are now required to report, at the close of a project, the total dollar value expended on Yukon labour and materials to quantify the direct impact that these projects have on Yukoners. This is a great demonstration of the change in culture we have in Highways and Public Works. We actually implement projects quickly and then assess how we're doing and look at how we can improve on them in real time year over year.

To date, the projects that have submitted their reporting have used 100 percent Yukon labour and Yukon materials, where possible. Over the past three years, manufacturing, construction, and consulting projects have been selected for communities across Yukon, including Carcross, Watson Lake, Ross River, Carmacks, Teslin, and Whitehorse.

**Mr. Hassard:** I apologize if the minister answered this question, but there was a lot of stuff there and it got a little bit scattered, maybe — but I understand that he said that there have been five tenders let, totalling \$2.8 million, and there are five to go — if I'm not mistaken.

So, I am wondering if we could get some information on what those individual tenders were, how much each one was, and what he anticipates the next five exemptions to be used for before the end of the year.

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

**Mr. Hassard:** I am wondering if the minister could let us know when the Procurement Advisory Panel last met.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It was within the last month.

**Mr. Hassard:** Are the minutes from those meetings made public? If they are, where could we find a copy of those, Mr. Chair?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The meeting happened on October 22. The minutes are not public, but they are shared with the members.

**Mr. Hassard:** Why would those minutes not be made public, Mr. Chair?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** In the interest of time, Mr. Chair, I will endeavour to get the member opposite an answer to why those minutes are not made public.

**Mr. Hassard:** In the minister's opening remarks, he talked about the Dempster Highway project — or the Dempster fibre project, sorry. I'm curious as to if he could provide a little insight as to which permits caused all of the delays or what the permitting issues might be and why there are continued delays. We know that the minister stood here in the House on November 17 — I think it was — not that long ago — and he said that he was happy to talk about the successful project.

I'm curious: What is the "successful" part of this project so far? Because he said that they're starting to do some brushing. I guess, for a project that's so far behind, I'm curious as to why the minister would call it a "successful" project?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am very, very happy to talk about the redundant fibre line on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon because there is so much to talk about. The history of this project is long and broad. I know the members opposite went to the High Country Inn — I believe it was the High Country Inn — and made an announcement that it was all done and then — or, you know, they went out in public. In any case, we can discuss — over casual conversation sometime in the future — where that discussion was made, but they came out and said the project was done and ready to go. It was \$35 million of Yukoners' money. We expected that.

Redundant fibre didn't exist — there was nothing there — \$35 million was the cost, but we know that it was way more expensive than that — way more expensive. But you know what? The deal that we negotiated for the project — which is now approaching the neighbourhood of \$80 million — \$79 million I think is the number. We haven't varied from that \$79 million. We are getting a \$79-million project — a Canadian project — and the Yukon government is putting in about \$4 million of that. That is a much better deal than the

vapourware that we had heard about from the members opposite, when they announced their fibre line so many years ago.

Since that time, we have done the hard negotiations to make sure that the project is a success. We have spoken to First Nations, communities, and companies. We have gone through the Mackenzie Valley Land Water Board. That is work that hasn't been done before — certainly not often — and we managed to get through that regulatory process. We went to YESAB. The member opposite was asking which ones asked for more time. YESAB actually asked for a little bit more time because of COVID, and we granted it to them. We now have a decision document that we're waiting to finalize and that work is coming quickly.

We have done an awful lot of work on this file. Now, the fast-and-loose crowd on the other side — they just made announcements. They just did stuff. They announced things as happening — we came in — “Oh, there is nothing there.” The Salvation Army building and the Whistle Bend extended care facility — all these things that just — nobody hired for Whistle Bend. This fibre project was really just in somebody's imagination, but no actual tangible work had been done, but it was announced. We had \$300-million capital budgets announced, and then they would deliver on \$140 million and declare success, because they oversell and underdeliver.

We could talk about this project ad infinitum. I will say, Mr. Chair, that this project's budget is \$79 million and we have not changed that number. The previous conservative Yukon Party government suggested that it would cost much less, and that was a gross underestimate that did not reflect the true cost. When we are talking about delays, Mr. Chair, we should talk about delays that the current Yukon Party leader spent considering which route he would take on this project. He never made up his mind. He is dangerously indecisive, that fellow — and in fact, it wasn't until the interim leader took over his files that any decision was actually made, so I congratulate the member — the current Leader of the Official Opposition — for actually taking the file from the current leader of the party and actually doing something.

Again, this work has involved important negotiations with the First Nation in whose traditional territory this project crosses. I suppose that we could have followed the lead of the Yukon Party and simply ignored these First Nations and plowed ahead with a project, but that's simply not how this government operates.

We value respectful working relationships with First Nations and communities. We stand committed to working with them on all projects — this one included. We were not willing to sacrifice that integrity to move this forward quickly, fast-and-loose-like. Now, the members opposite have a difference of opinion on that. I'm happy to discuss it further this afternoon.

**Mr. Hassard:** That was quite a performance by the minister. I'm not sure if maybe he needs to take a break now after all that, but I would like to thank him for confirming that, under his mismanagement, this project has now increased by 130 percent.

It's also interesting to hear him complain that the previous government did stuff, because the number one complaint that we hear about his government — this current Liberal government — is that they not only don't do stuff, they actually can't get anything done. I guess, Mr. Chair, it's a case of — we'll have to agree to disagree.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Mr. Hassard:** Yes, it's a dispute among members, Mr. Chair.

I'm curious if the minister could inform the Legislature on what the cost is for YDC and what we call the “YuKconstruct building”, Mr. Chair?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I think that question is probably best suited to my colleague, the Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources, Economic Development, and the Yukon Development Corporation.

**Mr. Hassard:** It's my understanding that Highways and Public Works was the department that would be in charge of leases and rental agreements for the Government of Yukon.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'll endeavour to get the member opposite an answer on the cost of the lease to YDC.

**Mr. Hassard:** When the minister is doing that, could he also — or maybe he already knows the answer to this question: Was that a publicly tendered lease?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'll endeavour to get that information to the member opposite, as I said.

**Mr. Hassard:** I certainly look forward to that information.

I have a couple of questions around the Mayo airport. I'm just wondering if we could get a bit of an update from the minister on the airport in the Chair's hometown and if we could maybe find out what caused the \$300,000 increase to O&M.

I know that, at one point, the minister talked about \$5 million being spent on the Mayo airport. The five-year capital concept talks about \$1 million to \$2 million this year — so if we could just get an update on how much money was spent and what was done on the Mayo airport this year, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Again, I want to stress that this is something that we got done. We got Mayo certified as the territory's fifth airport. That's something that we've accomplished. I'm very happy that we were able to do it. It's certainly better serving that community — your community, Mr. Chair — and the resource industry in that area and tourism — the whole bunch.

Those are tangible benefits that have flown to the people of Mayo and the people of the territory.

Now, as part of that certification, our government has made a number of important investments at the Mayo airport, including runway reconstruction and improved maintenance equipment. As a result, on November 1, the Mayo aerodrome became the Mayo airport — as I said, the fifth in the territory. Following certification by Transport Canada, Air North provided scheduled service to and from Mayo until the pandemic reduced the demand for air travel in the spring of 2020. As of the fall of 2020, Air North provides charter service to and from Mayo, as I am sure you are aware.

We will continue with infrastructure upgrades at the Mayo airport, such as runway lighting that began in early October. The upgrade will eventually allow night use of the Mayo airport for all users. COVID-19 has delayed the design and tendering process. As a result, the work is now scheduled for completion in the summer of 2021. I understand that some of the underground electrical work has been finished. We are just waiting for the lights to finalize that job.

The lighting upgrade project is a \$2.7-million investment in the Mayo airport, which will allow for scheduled and non-scheduled aircraft operations at night. We also invested \$1.8 million in the airport to rehabilitate the runway and to purchase some maintenance equipment. The \$300,000 that we are asking for in this budget item today is really for operation and maintenance personnel to actually maintain this newly certified airport in Mayo.

**Mr. Hassard:** The minister talked about how busy the Mayo airport is and how it is now the Mayo airport and not an aerodrome anymore. With all of the increased activity, I am curious why, in the five-year capital concept, the building expansion for the Mayo airport has been pushed off to 2023-24 and 2024-25.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** This government entered into a short-term lease with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to actually provide space at the Mayo aerodrome that allowed us to do the required work to put a proper new facility in place. I'm very glad to see the members opposite using the five-year capital plan as it was intended.

Transparency, Mr. Chair — we have a document now that the opposition can look at and that all contractors can use. They're using it. I'm glad to see that. Whenever anybody uses one of these refinements — these improvements that we've made in the service and transparency of this government to help democracy and to help procurement and they're using — it just warms my heart, Mr. Chair, that they're actually using the tools that we put before the public to be open and transparent — and to actually use it. I had hoped that contractors would use it to plan their construction projects in the future, but I'm happy to see the opposition using that tool — the five-year capital plan — in the way it was intended.

I look forward to future questions of the Leader of the Official Opposition on this matter.

**Chair:** Would members like 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 Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

**Mr. Hassard:** Just before the break, the minister had a fairly long-winded spiel about the five-year capital concept, how great it was, how it provided so much more certainty for contractors, and how everyone could use it, get accurate

information, and be kept up to date. Let's ask a question in regard to that.

Back in 2018 — we look at the five-year capital concept, and there is Christ the King Elementary School. So maybe we could get an update about where the government is with Christ the King Elementary School.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The five-year capital plan is right here in front of me. I know that the members opposite find planning difficult, and I won't criticize them for that; that is who they are. The fast-and-loose crew — they didn't like planning. They didn't like to do it; they didn't foster it; they didn't promote it; they didn't reward it. But we do things differently, and they don't understand that, I don't understand them, and I am not going to criticize them for it. We will just accept it for what it is.

We have a five-year capital plan, and that five-year capital plan is sitting here — for members opposite, it is page 6 of the five-year capital plan. It goes into schools, and I encourage the members opposite, when we get to Education, to ask their questions. I'm sure that they can do it.

But I can look at the five-year capital plan here for schools, and we can see that the Whistle Bend school is there. Kluane school is there this year — \$500,000 to \$1 million planning for that. The French first language secondary school is there — \$10- to \$15 million. The French first language school is finished. We have students in it. Talking to the community, the people who built the school said that it was one of the best projects that they have ever worked on. The French community is very happy with the school that we have gotten built. It is an absolutely beautiful facility and will certainly set a benchmark for schools into the future.

We have stuff here on Whitehorse school replacements. It's in the budget; we have that. Elementary school expansions are in there as well. Modular classrooms and portables are in there for \$2 million to \$3 million this year. We have money in there for Yukon University transitions, school facilities, and parking lots.

So, Mr. Chair, we have a five-year capital plan that you can use. The members opposite are using it. I encourage them to continue to do so. I know that contractors are using it. I know that the public is using it. It's a great tool. It's something that we didn't have before. It's another part of how this government is open and transparent in making plans.

Now, those plans — as the members opposite know, things happen. Global pandemics happen, washouts happen, and things happen that we have to adjust to. The plan is flexible enough to allow the changes as the society and conditions change in the territory. That's what planning is all about. It's not only putting it down, but actually being flexible enough to know when it has to be altered because of circumstances sometimes beyond our control. That's what we're doing.

We have a plan. We have a plan that is relatively detailed. It lays out our initiatives over the next five years. As I said earlier in my answer just before the break, I'm very happy to see the members opposite using this piece of transparency so effectively.

**Mr. Hassard:** I am trying to use it effectively — but effectively making a point to the minister that it's a great concept, but if you don't have proper information in it, it's not worth the paper it's written on.

He was working pretty feverishly over there trying to find what I was talking about — the Christ the King Elementary School. I said, at the beginning of my question, that it was in the 2018 five-year capital concept, and then it has gone in the 2019. This year, the Christ the King Elementary School doesn't exist anymore. That's just an example of why — yes, it's a great concept, but you can't brag about something and tell everyone how great it is if the information in it isn't worth the paper that it's written on.

The Holy Family School is also in that 2018 five-year capital concept, but it doesn't exist anymore after that year. Maybe the minister could provide us with an update on what's happening with Holy Family elementary school?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Chair, this discussion this afternoon has moved beyond the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, in which we have \$10 million in O&M changes and \$20 million in capital changes that we touched on briefly. I was happy to touch on the \$20 million in capital. I was glad to see the members opposite actually asking a question to do with the supplementary estimates before us this afternoon. Of course, I am happy to handle questions on an array of topics, as we have seen this afternoon from the members opposite. They are an inquisitive bunch and I am happy to answer their questions.

We have dealt now this afternoon with an existential question. I think that we are getting well beyond the bounds of the debate, but I will entertain the member opposite. He said that Christ the King Elementary School does not exist. Well, I know the teachers and students in that school that say that they are in school today. It does exist, Mr. Chair. Plans change. We know this.

There is a five-year capital plan here that we have tabled again and updated this year. If the member opposite has questions for the Education department, I know that — should we get through this discussion this afternoon — we will have other departments going forward. He can certainly ask Education some of the questions about what they are doing with their facilities or what their plans are for the future of the schools and education into the future. I know that my colleague, the Minister of Education, would be happy to have that discussion on the floor of the Legislative Assembly during Committee of the Whole.

I will leave it there, Mr. Chair. I know that, while the plan does not address Holy Family or Christ the King — there has obviously been a shift there — I will ask the member opposite to bring these questions up with the Minister of Education. I do encourage him, though, to continue using the five-year capital plan, as thousands of Yukoners are doing today.

**Mr. Hassard:** The minister is the one who started telling us about this plan — how great it was, how everyone is using it, and how he's so happy to use it. Yet, when you ask him a question regarding it, he seems to get a little bit flustered and he doesn't want to talk about these things anymore. He talks about how he knows teachers at Christ the King Elementary.

What we are talking about is the fact that — then, I guess the most interesting thing he said near the end was “Well, plans change.”

So, you know, it really makes you wonder how the minister thinks, when he can brag about these issues, bring them forward, and then the next year they have disappeared out of the plan. It is rather concerning. It is concerning for Yukoners. It is concerning for contractors. They look at something like this and say, “Holy, look — in a couple of more years, they are building a school here. We can plan on that.” Maybe somebody wants to move into that neighbourhood and they say, “Great, there is going to be a new elementary school there. I think I will spend that extra \$50,000 and buy that house so that I can be near that school.” So, for the minister just to stand here in the Legislature and talk about how great it is — and to make jokes almost about knowing teachers and he is so happy to see that we are finally looking at this — Mr. Chair, I am trying to prove a point — trying to show a point to the minister that this is an important document. As I said, it's a great concept, but you need to put accurate information in it; otherwise, there is no point in having it.

In the 2018 capital concept, the Macaulay Lodge demolition is slated for this year. So, are there any updates on whether the Macaulay Lodge will be demolished?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will say, Mr. Chair, that the member opposite — I thank him for acknowledging that the five-year capital plan is a good document. I did hear that and I thank him for his words this afternoon on the floor of the Legislature.

He did bring up Macaulay Lodge, and I think that we have fielded this question in Question Period, but I am happy to answer it again this afternoon, although it is straying outside of the supplementary budget, which deals with \$11 million, roughly, of O&M, of which, roughly \$10 million is going to the aviation industry — and then a capital reduction of about \$20 million because we have now pushed the majority of the fibre line to next year.

So, that is really what is before the House this afternoon, but I am happy to talk about Macaulay Lodge and repeat the answer that I gave in Question Period not long ago, which is that Highways and Public Works completed a building condition assessment — a feasible study report on Macaulay Lodge — in May 2020. The report considered renovating and repurposing Macaulay Lodge as housing or office/mixed-use space. The report indicates that repurposing Macaulay Lodge to housing or office/mixed-use space is not financially viable.

Highways and Public Works is leading the future use planning for the building site based on the results of this report in collaboration with other government departments. That is really what is happening. After the assessment was done in May, we realized that repurposing Macaulay Lodge for use in other ways is currently not financially viable, and we are working with other government departments to determine the future of that building.

**Mr. Hassard:** Just to set the record clear, Mr. Chair, I said that the five-year capital concept was a great concept. I didn't say that it was a great plan.

It is interesting — the minister has said that they decided in May that the Macaulay Lodge wouldn't be suitable for various different projects.

I'm curious why he went through the process of determining that when, in the 2018 capital concept, it said that Macaulay Lodge was going to be demolished. If they made the decision back before the 2018 budget came out, why did they go back to looking at other options?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The question from the member opposite was why did we initially — he goes back to 2018. He really does love the 2018 capital plan. There was a 2018 capital plan, a 2019 capital plan, and now we're on the 2020-21 capital plan. But he likes the 2018 plan. That's fine. He'll refer to it. That's fine. I encourage him now to dust off the 2020-21 plan, and he'll soon have another one when we release our 2021-22 plan, and he can have a look at that one. I'm just glad he likes it. Whatever he calls it, he likes it. His mistake is in calling it a concept; it is a plan. We'll agree that he sees some utility in it, and I think that's great.

As far as Macaulay Lodge goes, back in 2018, a number of years ago, the idea was to demolish it. We had a lot of interest from government departments saying, "We like to recycle and we'll take a look at it." So, we actually did a more thorough analysis of the building and determined again that — in following all of those ideas to try to salvage this building and after doing a real analysis and doing the hard analysis of the building — we decided that it was not fit for renovation.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, before the break, we were talking about the Mayo airport as well and the minister talked about a lease that the government had entered into with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. Would the minister be able to provide the Legislature with the dollar amount and how long that lease is with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'll endeavour to get an answer for the member opposite.

**Mr. Hassard:** I look forward to receiving that information.

A question regarding a highway project from this year. The two highway reconstruction projects on the north Klondike Highway up in the Gravel Lake area — I understand that those projects were not completed this year. I'm just wondering if we could get an update from the minister on when the anticipated completion date is on those two particular projects.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The member opposite is asking about the north Klondike Highway. That's the \$157-million job that is going to create 800 jobs over the construction period on the north Klondike Highway and improve stretches of road that are boggy and just aren't in very good condition.

We are very happy that this project began this year during COVID and roughly 13.5 kilometres of roadwork was done this summer. It has been largely completed; it just has not been chipped. That work will be done next year.

**Mr. Hassard:** Is the minister saying that everything is completed on those two particular projects except for chipsealing?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am getting from the department — the officials have been on this file for many months now — that

the crush has to be regraded in preparation for the BST. There are a little bit of embankment slopes and ditching that need to be finished. Beyond that, we are pretty much finished.

**Mr. Hassard:** Does the minister have any timelines on when that work will be completed?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As the member opposite knows, this is one portion of 13 kilometres of a job that will be almost — well, there is an awful lot more work to be done. I can get the specific number. There are almost 99 kilometres of road to be done. We have done about 13. That work is scheduled to be done next year.

I will update the House at a time more appropriate when we have the procurement done and everything else. As the member opposite knows, we are in the middle of a global pandemic. I don't want to make any firm commitments a year out, but we are scheduled to get the job done next year.

I have no doubt that the contractor and the Department of Highways and Public Works will make sure that the work gets done as quickly as possible because I know that it is an important project for travellers along the north Klondike Highway. Our goal is to get that job done as soon as possible, once the snow is cleared. Now, we don't know what is happening with rain — or all these different things. When that work can be done, we will get it done.

**Mr. Hassard:** I am not sure if the minister understood the question. He started talking about 99 kilometres of something, so I guess I will maybe just clarify the question and give him another opportunity. I was talking about those two particular projects — Gravel Lake and Stoneboat swamp, the ones we had been talking about, the ones that he said were nearing completion. I was curious as to what the expected completion date was or the timeline on the completion of those two particular projects.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Again, I will vigorously deny the assertions of the member opposite. I am not confused or anything else. I was actually making sure that the member opposite knew that this was one portion of a very long and very large project — one of the largest single capital projects in the Yukon's history — \$157 million going into this road that has been long ignored. We managed to secure the financial resources from Ottawa to do this work. We are investing a little bit into it ourselves, and we are actually going to make the road from here to Dawson — almost 100 kilometres, 98.9 kilometres, of this road will be improved for the benefit of travellers to the Klondike. That is a great thing. I just wanted to make sure that the member opposite wasn't going to misunderstand that the whole project would be done next year. No, we have 13 kilometres that we started this year, and that work will be done next year, early in the season. The member opposite can't predict the weather, and neither can I. We will get it done as soon as humanly possible.

**Mr. Hassard:** It is interesting that the minister seems to think that I find he is confused. I don't know why he would get that idea.

Another question in regard to those two particular projects — because they were funded through the Gateway funding or from the federal government, will the non-completion of those



two projects have any effect on funding flowing from the federal government for this construction season coming?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have to be laser precise for the member opposite on this. This has nothing to do with Gateway. I know that the member opposite is a little bit confused about this. It is not Gateway at all. It is the north Klondike Highway funding. Gateway is an entirely different animal. This is a totally different project. It is a project unto itself. It is a \$157-million project that we negotiated with Ottawa. It is to improve the north Klondike Highway. The work this year, under the very, very challenging weather conditions this year — the contractor, I know, worked so very hard to make sure that the job was done. It wasn't an easy job. It wasn't an easy area to work in. I know that the project worked very, very hard — I know that the officials here with the Department of Highways and Public Works worked very hard on that project this last season.

As I said in my previous answer this afternoon, the job is almost 100-percent complete. There is a little slope work, a little bit of ditch work to do and some regrading to do with the crush, and then we're going to lay down the BST. There is no problem with Ottawa and the funding that has been provided us, and we're very confident and very happy to say that this job — on the initial 13 kilometres of this much larger project — will be done as soon as humanly possible next year.

**Mr. Hassard:** I will begin by apologizing. I didn't mean to say "Gateway". That was certainly my error.

I think it's interesting that we hear from residents in the Dawson area as well — and they certainly are looking for an answer as to when the government expects to complete this project. I would certainly hope that the minister would have had somewhat of an idea on when the contractor had anticipated to get this project done, whether there's a month's work or two months' work. I would hope that the minister would have had an idea on that.

Mr. Chair, I just want to confirm that the minister, at the end of his last response, said that funding for projects for this coming construction year will not be affected by the non-completion of the two projects that we're talking about.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** My departmental officials have assured me that they are confident that there will be no impact.

**Mr. Hassard:** I am happy to hear that.

This summer, Highways and Public Works had a drilling program. They had a small drill working along the Alaska Highway — I know that it worked for a while in the Teslin area. I am just wondering if the minister could provide us with some information as to what that drill was doing. What was the government looking for with that drilling program?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We are a bit perplexed by the question. If the member opposite has any other information, I would be happy to look into it further and endeavour to get him an answer.

**Mr. Hassard:** I will follow up with a letter for the minister on that.

With regard to government-owned equipment — in the past year or two, the government has gone into the business of renting out the equipment that is used at grader stations

throughout the Yukon to private individuals. I am wondering if the minister could give us a bit of information as to why the government chose to take this route of starting to compete with private rental companies here in the Yukon.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** In *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, we have roughly \$10 million — a little bit more than \$10 million in O&M spending to discuss this afternoon. We have \$20 million — a little bit more than \$20 million in capital spending to discuss this afternoon. I haven't received a lot of questions on the actual meat of the supplementary estimates, but in the interest of transparency and good government, I am happy to answer the questions of the member opposite on the floor this afternoon.

This is one that I have run to ground with my colleagues here from the department and they don't believe that we are renting out our equipment to anybody. We are not making any money off of our equipment. If the member opposite has other information that he can provide to us, we will certainly investigate it, but that is not our understanding.

**Mr. Hassard:** It certainly has become a practice of the Yukon government to do just that. Maybe if the minister could provide us with some direction as to what information we should pass on to our constituents when they have concerns about this. Maybe he could tell us who the person is they should be contacting to find out why this would be happening, if the minister is unaware of it.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** If the member opposite can provide us with dates, times, the type of equipment, who rented it — any of that information — I would be happy to look into it for the member opposite. It was pretty simple information. He obviously has it. I don't have it. My officials don't have it. If he can provide that information to me, I would be happy to look into it.

**Mr. Hassard:** I think it was a pretty reasonable, straightforward, and simple request. The minister said that it wasn't happening to his understanding. I'm explaining that it is, and my question was very simple: When constituents come across this issue, who should they contact? Should they have to contact me and then I can write a letter to the minister and then they can go through that process? Is there something that would be a little more streamlined, Mr. Chair?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm trying to solve a discrepancy in information. I've asked for the member opposite to provide some details so we can run to ground to find out where he's getting his information from. If he has constituents who want to contact the department, please have them call my deputy. That's usually the best way to get questions answered. We'd be happy to answer the questions through the Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works, if they have questions pertaining to the department.

They can, of course, reach out to me, but I would have to go through the deputy in most cases, in any case. The most direct route is to go through the deputy minister, and if they don't get any satisfaction through that route, they can certainly come to me or to the opposition. But the first point of contact for the Department of Highways and Public Works should be

the staff of the department. In most cases, probably the deputy is the best way to route your queries.

**Mr. Hassard:** I am happy to hear that it is the deputy's responsibility to deal with those. I will most certainly be passing that information on.

I have a question regarding the overhead signs that are going up at the Carcross Cut-off as well as north of town toward the Mayo Road turnoff. We know that it was roughly \$2.5 million to purchase and install those signs. My question is: When are those two sections of highway slated for a rebuild and widening, such as the ones that have been done over the last couple of years — the section through the Carcross Cut-off to in front of the airport and out to the Mayo turnoff? When are those two sections in between slated for reconstruction?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can say to the members opposite that any improvements to the Alaska Highway widening project are certainly outside the scope of work in the immediate future. It is not captured in our five-year capital plan, so it is beyond five years.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, I guess the next question in regard to those signs is: When that road widening happens — not in the next five years — will those signs need to be moved, and are they going to be assembled in such a way that they will be able to be moved?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We are going to continue to expand our intelligent transportation system program to serve Yukoners' 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. This program includes the use of digital message boards, which 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 more accurate, reliable road-condition information to plan any trip.

Those signs are being constructed next to the road. The member opposite, I am sure, has seen them on his way into Whitehorse. We are building them there because that is the best place for them. As I have told the member opposite, there are no plans to widen the road in the vicinity of those new highway signs anytime in the immediate future. There is no need to even — I think that the member is getting a little bit ahead of himself. We haven't even got the signs in yet and he is talking about road expansions. There are no plans for road expansions in that area.

The signs are going to be a huge improvement to the information provision for the travelling public, which is really one of the mantras of this government — to provide more information, like five-year capital plans, to be open and transparent, and to provide more information to the people we serve on a daily basis.

**Mr. Hassard:** Would the minister be able to provide us with some timelines as to when those signs will be operational?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will endeavour to get a specific answer for the member opposite. I can tell the member opposite that the hardware has arrived in the territory. We were waiting

on that, and that has arrived. Now we're waiting for programmers, and we have to schedule the contractor to actually install the equipment. As soon as we get that schedule with the contractor and get somebody to program the signs — which, in the middle of a global pandemic, is proving to be a little more difficult, even from BC — then we will have those signs installed. I will endeavour to get the member opposite a better estimate for when those signs will be up. Soon, I would say — but I will endeavour to get a more specific answer for the member opposite.

**Mr. Hassard:** Maybe when you find that person to do those signs, you can speak to the Minister of Community Services, and he might be able to provide you with an exemption on how they can come here to work in these times of COVID — and even self-isolate at work.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Chair:** Mr. Mostyn, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I just — actually, I'll let it go, Mr. Chair. Just let it go.

**Chair:** No point of order.

**Mr. Hassard:** I'm wondering if the minister would be able to provide us with an update on the portables at the Robert Service School in Dawson City.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Before I begin the answer on the Robert Service School portable issue, I want to be very, very clear for the member opposite because it is absolutely essential that we get the right information to Yukoners.

The member opposite — I'm sure he just made a mistake. I am sure it was just an innocent mistake. There are no exemptions. We have said that. My colleague, the Minister of Community Services, has said that. There are no exemptions to self-isolation. If you come from BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, or any place outside of the country, there is no exemption to the self-isolation requirements. You are required to self-isolate in the territory when you arrive. I want that to be absolutely clear, and I don't want it to fall into some sort of interpretation because of a mistake made by the member opposite. There are no exemptions. I want to be clear about that.

The member opposite asked about the Robert Service School. We have to provide students with safe, comfortable spaces to learn. The safety of our populace — be it with COVID or with schools and mould — is the utmost responsibility of this government. We take it very seriously. When tests identified mould in the modular classrooms at Robert Service School in July 2019, they were closed immediately. Education found space for the displaced students in the main school building in time for the first day of classes. Demolition of the existing modular classrooms is planned for this winter, and new modular classrooms will be ready by December 2021. That is the answer. That is the answer that I gave during Question Period as well, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Hassard:** Would the minister also be able to give us an update on the portables at the Porter Creek school, Mr. Chair?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have mould as well — as the member opposite has noted — in the Porter Creek Secondary

School portables. Again, the health and safety of our students and staff is very, very important to us. It's a primary concern.

Highways and Public Works maintains and assesses all Yukon government buildings on a regular basis, which includes logging and following up on any issue identified.

In preparation for the school year this year, we inspected a portable previously used for storage at Porter Creek Secondary School to see if it could accommodate students and found no cause for concern. On August 10, water was discovered in a portable, which necessitated a repair. During the repair, mould was discovered and spore testing took place. Initial mould remediation was completed. Follow-up testing showed that mould levels are still present in the portable. We are looking at the long-term plans for this portable space with the Department of Education. A full renovation or demolition are two of the current options being reviewed. As a precaution, we tested two additional portables on the same site to ensure that there was no mould present. These tests came back clear with no mould identified in either portable.

Mr. Chair, I am more than happy to answer these questions from the member opposite. I will say again that this afternoon we are talking about *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*. In those supplementary estimates, we have a total of about \$30 million roughly — a little bit more than that — for discussion this afternoon, \$10 million in O&M spending — most of which is for the aviation sector — and \$20 million which is a capital reduction in spending for the Department of Highways and Public Works — largely because the redundant fibre line work is starting next year, so that work has been delayed by one year. The majority — the laying of the fibre — has been delayed until next year.

That's what we are talking about this afternoon, Mr. Chair. I haven't received many questions on either of those subjects — certainly none on aviation supports. I have answered a question on the redundant fibre line. I appreciate the question on the matter that is before the House this afternoon.

I will continue to answer questions on all manner of other things — to be transparent and open — and to make sure that this democratic institution functions as it should, as we agreed to come back on August 1.

**Mr. Hassard:** It is interesting, you know. The minister has talked about the “safety of our students; the safety of our students” — and yet, when we ask a simple question about the safety of our students and when they will be able to get back into that portable, the minister is annoyed and doesn't like talking about this anymore. So, I guess I will ask again: When is the expected timeline for students to be able to get back into that portable at Porter Creek Secondary School?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Just for the record, I am not annoyed at all. I am not annoyed in the slightest. I am happy to talk about the good work that we are doing on behalf of education, whether it is the Porter Creek Secondary School or the Robert Service School. I am happy to talk about all manner of good work that we are doing. I am very comfortable with the work that Highways and Public Works is doing, serving our colleagues in other departments and the people of the territory, and I could talk about that all afternoon.

What I am perplexed about is that the members opposite have strayed far and wide beyond the matter before us this afternoon, which is *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, but I just wanted to make the point that, while we are way off the topic of conversation this afternoon, my department officials and I are more than happy — although it really isn't something that we prepared for — to talk about any manner of things relating to Highways and Public Works this afternoon. So, I am neither annoyed nor upset — happy to answer the member opposite's question.

We agreed, when we broke in March, to come back on October 1. We have met that obligation. I am happy — during the midst of the global pandemic — to have this House functioning as it is and doing the good work that we always planned to do back in March when we agreed unanimously to come back on October 1. So, here we are, discussing the matters before the House. Today it is *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*. We have \$30 million on the ledger, and we are discussing all manner of things from schools to everything else. I am happy to do that.

As far as Porter Creek Secondary School's portables go — the portable in question, Mr. Chair, was used for storage. It never had students in it. It was a storage portable that we were looking at trying to put students into. We had planned on doing it. When we found a problem, we made alternate arrangements for the students and staff because we want them to be safe. They are currently not using that portable, of course, because it's not safe. We're continuing to do studies on the portable to make sure that we've cleaned it up to proper safety standards. If we don't, we'll have to either demolish it and replace it or whatever.

But right now, the students to whom the member opposite was referring are accommodated and are being taught in a healthy, safe, clean, dry environment — and I'm happy about that, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Hassard:** Just a little reminder to the minister — it wouldn't be the first time that this government has put students in storage rooms. It's interesting that — maybe we'll just move on from that school.

Let's take a little trip up to Ross River, Mr. Chair. Maybe the minister could give us an update on the Ross River School. There was \$4 million to \$5 million scheduled to be spent on that school this year. I'm curious as to if we could find out how much money was actually spent there and what was done in terms of work.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm happy to discuss the Ross River School this afternoon. Again, Mr. Chair, as with COVID and with school safety, that's where it lands right off the bat; it's always about safety. I want to assure the members opposite that the Ross River School remains safe for occupancy for students and staff.

A multi-disciplinary team, including an architect, a structural engineer, a geo-technical engineer, a surveyor, and a biologist — just in case the member opposite wants to bring bats up again, we'll be happy to talk about that — continues to inspect the school quarterly. The bats are no longer there.

The latest building condition inspection report completed in September 2020 confirmed that the school remains safe for occupancy. As I said, that is the primary goal right now — to make sure that the school remains safe.

Work will continue on the existing school to keep it safe and to help prevent structural movement and bats. We anticipate spending \$1.5 million this year, including designing the ThermoSafe cooling system, designing the mechanical room project, continuing with more tie-down installation in the roof and further bracing, et cetera.

\$1.5 million is being spent on that school this year, but that work is to make sure it's safe and that it remains safe for staff and students who occupy it.

**Mr. Kent:** I just wanted to circle back to the Gateway project for a second. I know my colleague asked the minister and I'm not sure if he provided an answer or not. How much private sector funding is going into this revised Gateway project that has been submitted to the federal government? I know the previous one had a significant private sector component. Is there a private sector component for this new one and how much is it?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** For the member opposite, I will say that Gateway is not a project in and of itself. Gateway is a program through which many different projects are being funded. We currently have the first phase on the Nahanni Range Road, which is \$17 million. The North Canol Road and the Robert Campbell Highway project is a \$71-million project. The Carmacks bypass with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation has an estimated construction value of \$26.7 million. The Robert Campbell Highway with the Liard First Nation has an estimated construction value of \$50 million. Those four projects are separate projects at the moment. They have agreements with the affected First Nations under the Yukon Resource Gateway program. At the moment, there is no private capital in any of those projects. They are all on public roads. The industry contribution is \$108 million. That number has not changed. Industry will still be expected to contribute \$108 million. That hasn't changed.

**Mr. Kent:** Can the minister tell us what individual projects within the larger Gateway envelope that \$108 million from industry is going to be funding? I think that he mentioned four, and none of them have an industry or private sector component. I am curious — with the mention of \$108 million, which aspects of the new funding envelope that was submitted and approved by the federal Liberals will require private sector investment?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I said in my previous answer to the Leader of the Official Opposition this afternoon, we are talking about the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for 2020-21. In the supplementary estimates for 2020-21, there are a few items that amount to roughly \$30 million — it is a little bit more than that — in the Highways and Public Works budget. As I said before, a little bit more than — about \$11 million has to do with the O&M side. Most of that is taken up in Aviation funding. I'm happy to talk about that this afternoon.

The other bit in the capital budget is the \$20-million reduction — plus or minus — mostly having to do with the

redundant fibre project which is starting in earnest laying fibre next year. Right now, we've let contracts for the preliminary work to lead to the major work that's happening next year. I'm happy to answer questions on those questions — or any others that they have come up with.

The member opposite has asked about the specific negotiations to do with Gateway. The negotiation component of the Gateway program lies with my colleague in Energy, Mines and Resources. As I said to the Leader of the Official Opposition today, please ask him for any answers to do with the negotiation process with the affected companies, First Nations, and that type of thing. Highways and Public Works is executing on the Gateway project. We are working with Energy, Mines and Resources, but they are the lead on the negotiations and they would be better positioned to answer the very specific questions the member opposite is asking this afternoon.

Gateway is an important project for us. It is going to lead to great gains for the First Nations of the Ross River Dena Council, the Liard First Nation, the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, eventually the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and other First Nations as they make their submissions and want to come forward to actually take part in this program which is hundreds of millions of dollars and will improve and provide access to resource properties across the territory.

Right now, we're very happy that we've reached four program agreements, with an estimated total capital construction cost of \$164.7 million. That work is going to be going into the Nahanni Range Road — \$17 million there to provide access after reaching a project agreement with the Ross River Dena Council and the Liard First Nation down in the southeast. North Canol Road and Robert Campbell Highway with the Ross River Dena Council — an estimated construction value of \$71 million down there — \$71 million going into that region. It will be a huge step forward and it will improve safety and resource development in that area. I'm very happy that my colleague, the Minister for Energy, Mines and Resources, was able to strike an arrangement down there for that money.

It will make sure that the road on the Robert Campbell Highway is much, much more safe for residents and traffic running along that road.

The Carmacks bypass — with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation — we talked about that. That project has progressed and is just getting started this year, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to say that it will be a couple-of-year project. That's another \$26.7 million going into the community of Carmacks and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation — again, a huge boon to that community. It will make the road safer and get some of the heavy industry traffic out of the community. It will allow it to bypass the town entirely. I know that they have been asking for it for a long time. We're happy that we have managed to make these arrangements to make that road safer for people down in that part of the country.

We also have the Robert Campbell Highway with the Liard First Nation — an estimated construction value of \$50 million. Again, that will improve the section between Ross River and Watson Lake — another important stretch of road on the Robert

Campbell Highway that will need improvement. It will be good for tourism, it will be good for resource companies, and it will be good for travellers going to and from Watson Lake and Ross River.

With that, Mr. Chair, I have enjoyed the conversation that we had this afternoon with the members opposite. With that, I move that you report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** May the House have a report from the Chair of Committee of the Whole?

#### **Chair's report**

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.*

#### **Written notice was given of the following motions November 23, 2020:**

Motion No. 345

Re: eliminating annual federal excise tax increase on beer, wine, and spirits (Istchenko)

Motion No. 346

Re: extending the wage top-up program for essential workers (White)





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 67

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Tuesday, November 24, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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



**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Tuesday, November 24, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I would like the Assembly to help me welcome individuals who are here today for a tribute that we will touch on in a second. The president of Alexco Resources, Mr. Brad Thrall, is here with us, as well as Amanda Leslie, who works with the Yukon Producers' Group. She was also organizing an event this week that was fitting for such an accomplishment that we are going to talk about. Due to what is happening with COVID-19, it has been delayed for now.

Also, here with us today are Mr. Ed Peart, who we spoke about earlier this week and who is now in his second term as president of Yukon Chamber of Mines, and esteemed and celebrated geologist Mr. Maurice Colpron, from the Yukon Geological Survey.

Please help me in welcoming them here today.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of National Addictions Awareness Week

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I rise in the House today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to acknowledge this week as National Addictions Awareness Week.

Every day, approximately 11 Canadians die from apparent opioid-related incidents. As Yukoners, many of us know someone who has been affected by substance abuse — whether it be a family member, a friend, a neighbour, or a local community member.

National Addictions Awareness Week helps us raise awareness of reducing the stigma of substance use and supporting those suffering from it to seek help. This year, the theme is “Change Begins with Me,” putting the focus on the efforts and actions of individuals. It is about making a choice to play a part in reducing the stigma surrounding substance use and people who use substances and committing to change.

I cannot say it enough: It is people who use drugs occasionally who are at higher risk of overdosing. The conversations around addiction need to change. How can we do that? By learning more about substance use disorders, it can help you assist others to improve your encounters with people

with this condition. I believe in learning at a young age that addiction is a complex medical condition. It can change perceptions for a lifetime. I encourage all Yukoners to take the time to have that important talk with youth in your life. Each of us has a part to play; taking the initiative, you will be an ambassador for change.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents additional challenges for us, but even more for people living with substance use disorders. Small gestures can make a big difference. I encourage Yukoners to check in on people in our communities during these uncertain times. A society that supports harm reduction strategies embodies compassion. Small actions, such as offering some of the necessities of life, can help people who use substances to keep themselves safe.

This government is working year-round with our community partners, including First Nation governments, municipalities, and a variety of NGOs, to ensure ease of access and reduce barriers to the provisions of harm reduction training and supplies in the community.

For National Addictions Awareness Week, Watson Lake has increased their outreach hours for the week. Haines Junction, Carmacks, and Carcross are offering workshops on addictions awareness and harm reduction, and there are other initiatives happening this week across the Yukon.

This week, I ask that Yukoners listen to the stories of those who have been impacted by addictions and mental disorders and learn how they can be helped and how we can help in reducing the stigma associated with mental illnesses and those associated with addictions.

I would like to acknowledge individuals who are working with Yukoners struggling with addictions to help them in their journey to recovery. We need to show compassion and understanding and offer our support.

In closing, I invite Yukoners and my colleagues to take part in changing the conversation by participating in the National Addictions Awareness Week events. You will find all of the information on Health and Social Services' Facebook page.

Mahsi' cho, Mr. Speaker.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November 22 to 28 as National Addictions Awareness Week in Canada. The theme this year is “Change Begins with Me”. The focus is on the efforts and actions of individuals to help reduce the stigma surrounding substance abuse.

Addictions can affect anyone, whatever your social status, your age, your gender, your ethnicity, or your profession. We are all too well aware of the harmful effects of addictions. The ripple effect goes on to other individuals and families and, in turn, to our communities. The recent spike in deaths across Canada due to overdoses is a clear message to everyone that the problem is growing. Top those stats with the stress with the spread of COVID-19, and we are, in fact, in crisis.

Most of us know someone facing an addiction. Sometimes we know that there is a problem, or we don't know that there is a problem but only suspect that there is one. Sometimes the one

facing addiction does not even realize it themselves or they are in denial.

We most commonly think that addiction is the use of legal or illegal drugs of substance, such as alcohol, opioids, cannabis, or methamphetamines. However, it could also be food, shopping, gambling, and so many other compulsive habits. It is so important to keep an eye on loved ones who may be affected in some way by an addiction. Keep communication lines open, ask questions, offer suggestions and care. It could be your mother, uncle, brother, daughter, best friend, or neighbour. Should it be so close, we usually reassess our ways of thinking about the problem.

Acknowledgment of an issue and timely support is a key step to recovery. There is help to be found in the Yukon. If an individual is ready, we offer detox and treatment programs to help face addictions head on. There are alcohol, drug, and mental health workers and counsellors.

We live in a time when we have access to so much information and support, so encourage others to reach out. Let's end the stigma around those with addictive habits. It is a difficult societal issue, but we must continue to support people through the health care, social, and educational systems as best we can.

We would like to thank the staff, volunteers, and organizations who worked to help and support those living with addictions. The work you do continues to make a difference to our communities and those who call them home. It takes special people to be part of the solution.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the NDP caucus in recognition of National Addictions Awareness Week. As we've heard, this year's theme, "Change Begins with Me", focuses on what we as individuals can do to support people who are experiencing addiction.

As a result of the pandemic, with the increases of stress, fear, and uncertainty, more people than ever are turning to substances to cope. We know that shaming, blaming, and stigmatizing people who use substances doesn't help. It actually harms. Practising lateral kindness and meeting folks where they're at within the context of substance use is really important. Choosing our words, being mindful of how we think or act toward people who use substances is essential. Being kind can literally change and save lives.

Right now, especially within the context of something we've never had to face before, being supportive of those who are experiencing addiction is more important than ever before. Over half of Canadians suffering from substance use disorders say that stigma is a major barrier to their well-being. It's important to note that substance use disorders aren't a choice; they are a health condition. We can choose to take steps to ending stigma by eliminating biased words and ideas from our day-to-day life. It's about putting the person first, not the addiction.

I've talked a lot about biases in this House. Every human being has biases. It's part of what being human is. These biases will show up in different ways for each of us. When confronting

our own biases about addiction and substance use disorders, we need to take a step back and remember the human before us.

What someone once suggested was to imagine a child in front of me who had done their very best. Then ask myself what problems they must have encountered as they grew up and be dealing with today to be suffering so much. So, once I started doing that, it struck me that this person must be leading a life that they never imagined. So, with this new understanding, we're able to ask ourselves: Is there something that we can do to help?

At the very least, we can offer our respect for their humanity and use person-first language so that they are more than the disorder that we see. The words we use help shape other people's experiences, so let's create the reality we want by choosing words related to substance use that are compassionate and respect an individual's human dignity.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Alexco Resource Corporation's geological mapping project**

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Alexco Resource Corporation and their new geological map for the mineral district in Yukon.

Alexco owns the majority of the most prospective part of the Keno Hill silver district. Alexco acquired the Keno Hill district in 2005 and with it came extensive archives from United Keno Hill Mines Ltd.

During the past 10 years, Alexco retained the services of Peter Read to produce a new detailed geological map of the area. Peter visited every outcrop over the entire property, compiled previous maps and examined logs for more than 10,000 drill holes. He captured both the historic logs of United Keno Hill Mines and more recent drilling by Alexco. This dedication resulted in a map that is undoubtedly the most detailed geological map in Yukon. I believe, from speaking with the CEO and chairman of Alexco, I think Mr. Read has spent almost 55 years of time in that area and learning about that area.

Mr. Speaker, this map marks a major milestone. It represents the most comprehensive update to understanding the geology of the Keno Hill district since the Geological Survey of Canada's 1965 report. The Yukon Geological Survey indicated its willingness to help publish this updated information after the visiting the Keno Hill district and discussing Alexco's new detailed work. Maurice Colpron, the Yukon Geological Survey's head of bedrock geology, worked collaboratively with Peter Read and Al McOnie during the past year to prepare this open file map.

This map is exceptionally detailed with the most accurate representation of quartz veins and fault geometry ever shown for the district. The open file releases include a 1:25,000 scale map of the district and a detailed 1:5,000 scale map and a cross-section of the Birmingham deposit.

The creators of this map are also developing a report that will detail the geology and present an understanding of how silver-bearing veins formed in the Keno Hill district.

Information on this map will help refine the Yukon Geological Survey's compilation of Yukon bedrock geology. It also provides a much-improved geological context for the mineral occurrence in the survey's MINFILE database.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very detailed and technical project. This exceptional work is a significant contribution to better understand our geology. This in turn informs where Yukon's mineral industry can direct their resources and contribute to the economic well-being of the territory. As we honour geoscience this week during the annual forum, it is important to highlight all the work behind locating the minerals that are part of our everyday lives.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank those involved in this exceptional mapping project.

*Applause*

**Mr. Kent:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Alexco Resource Corp. and the company's comprehensive and dedicated work with the Yukon Geological Survey to publish an updated geological map of the historic Keno Hill silver district — work and a commitment to the territory that draws on the past to the benefit of Yukon geology in central Yukon today and for decades to come.

This important body of work builds on previous Yukon Geological Survey publications of the district and incorporates an extensive compilation of historical mining records, past and present exploration map sheets, and drill program results. My colleagues and I greatly appreciate the efforts of Alexco, which has owned the majority of the Keno Hill silver district since 2005, and the significant contribution this new map makes to the Yukon and to all of Canada.

I would like to acknowledge the Alexco chairman and CEO Clynt Nauman, President Brad Thrall, who is here with us in the gallery today, VP of Exploration Al McOnie, District Exploration Manager Seymore Isles, and Geotex President Peter Read — who was also Mr. Nauman's professor at New Zealand's University of Otago — and, of course, the entire team at the Yukon Geological Survey, past and present, for their vision and commitment to making this achievement a reality.

This updated map is based on a 1:5,000 scale and reveals several significant outcomes concerning the geology of the district, outcomes that benefit Canada's geological community. As we know, the Keno Hill silver district has contributed significantly to the territory's economy and its culture since the early 1900s. Elsa, built in 1935, was a vibrant Yukon community of 600 residents at its peak in the 1960s.

In a 2006 paper authored by Bob Cathro, entitled "*Great Mining Camps of Canada 1. The History and Geology of the Keno Hill Silver Camp, Yukon Territory*", he offers a great history of mining in the area. In it, he writes — and I will quote: "The Keno Hill Camp was one of The Great Mining Camps of Canada; it was not only Canada's second largest primary silver producer and one of the richest... — silver-lead-zinc — "... vein deposits ever mined in the world, it was also one of the mainstays of the Yukon economy from the 1920s, after the

rapid decline of the Klondike Goldfields, until the early 1960s. At its peak in the 1950s and early 1960s, it supported about 15% of the territorial population. It also produced more wealth than the Klondike, one of the richest placer gold districts in the world. Following a small amount of hand mining between 1913 and 1917, larger scale production was almost continuous from 1919 to 1989, except during the war from 1942 to 1945. Two companies produced most of the ore, Treadwell Yukon Corporation. Ltd. From 1925 to 1941, and United Keno Hill Mines Ltd. Between 1947 and 1989."

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Cathro also offers a glimpse into the old transportation methods of getting ore out of the district. I will quote again from his paper: "Soon after the 1898 Klondike Gold Rush, there were over 200 boats of all sizes on the Yukon River system; in fact, it had more riverboats than any North American river except the Mississippi... Each boat burned about 8,000 cords per season. Slightly smaller sternwheelers were used on the 270 km voyage that connected Mayo to the Yukon River. The river distance from Mayo to Whitehorse is about 860 km. Without this established river transportation system, development of the Keno Hill Camp would have been delayed for decades."

Many Yukon families still here today and contributing to our social and economic fabric worked in the mines in Elsa and Keno. In addition to Mr. Cathro's paper, other books — like *Gold and Galena* by the Mayo Historical Society or the *Mad Miners Muckup* video that profiles life in Elsa back in the day through the eyes of Elsa-born-and-raised and long-time Whitehorse teacher Peter Grundmanis — are all worth checking out.

My colleagues and I are extremely pleased that Alexco was granted its water use licence this past summer in order to renew high-grade silver production once again in the district. As Alexco moves toward production from both historic and newly discovered deposits, we also appreciate the company's reclamation work to mitigate historical environmental legacies, some dating back well over a century.

We commend Alexco's commitment to the responsible and sustainable development of the Keno Hill silver district and the company's work with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, within whose traditional territory the district is located.

Alexco is a testament to how responsible mineral exploration and development can be conducted to the benefit of Yukon residents, businesses, governments, and communities today and well into the future.

We look forward to watching the teams progress as they resume production in the coming months to reclaim their place as Canada's only primary silver producer.

Thank you to everyone involved and congratulations.

*Applause*

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

**Mr. Hutton:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports creating a holistic expanded primary care system built on relationships between providers and their clients.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Kwanlin Dün First Nation community hub

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, we have all seen how the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre in downtown Whitehorse has changed the fabric of our community. Since being built, this centre has provided space for countless cultural events and meetings, both for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the community at large. It has been an important site for reconciliation and for the wider community to learn about Kwanlin Dün culture.

Now the Kwanlin Dün First Nation is building a community hub in the McIntyre subdivision. The new community hub will provide a space for programs and services directly for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation community. I'm very proud that our government is providing \$6.45 million toward this \$29-million project which is currently under construction and is expected to be completed by the middle of next year. The building's superstructure is complete, and the insulation, cladding, and roofing are well underway. I want to thank everyone involved for their hard work on this project.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, the community hub will provide a place for Kwanlin Dün First Nation citizens to gather in the McIntyre subdivision, where many citizens live. Like the cultural centre, this new hub will be an inclusive space for community meetings, gatherings, and ceremonies in the spirit of reconciliation. It will also provide necessary space for cultural education activities and language classes which will enhance the vitalization of Kwanlin Dün First Nation culture.

The new building will also have archival storage and facilities for preserving the Kwanlin Dün First Nation's cultural materials, artifacts, and artwork. The Kwanlin Dün First Nation citizens have been engaged in the design of this exciting new project and have shared what they would like to see in their community hub.

As a result of their input, the new hub will reflect the land, culture, and people of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. While the building will be located in the McIntyre subdivision, the nation's enduring ties with the Yukon River are reflected in the building's design. The building has been architecturally designed to look like a leaping salmon, and the indoor flooring will look like flowing water. The dry riverbed will be a prominent feature in the outdoor landscaping. In addition, there will be 14 basalt columns around the firepit in the centre courtyard area to represent the 14 First Nations in Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, community projects such as this are an important part of our government's commitment to build healthy, thriving communities. The Government of Canada, the

Government of Yukon, and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation have all made important contributions to this new facility. Thanks to the partnership, I am confident that this new community hub for Kwanlin Dün First Nation citizens will enhance our community in the spirit of reconciliation.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I would like to thank the minister for the update on this project, which was announced in July 2019. This is an important project for the reasons that the minister identified, such as providing a new, inclusive space for community meetings and gatherings.

Congratulations to the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and all of their citizens for their advocacy on this project. I truly look forward to seeing it when it is open and complete. It sounds like some wonderful architectural and cultural significance will be featured.

The only question that I have for the minister is that, when the project was announced last year, it was originally forecast to be completed by June 30, 2021. Is the minister able to tell us if that is still the target date?

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you once again for the opportunity to speak to this important community project, and congratulations to Kwanlin Dün.

**Ms. Hanson:** The Yukon NDP joins in congratulating the Kwanlin Dün First Nation as they work toward finalizing the building of their community hub in the McIntyre subdivision. The tripartite funding arrangement involving Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the federal and Yukon governments is a good example of intergovernmental cooperation.

However, we do question the use of a ministerial statement by the minister responsible for Tourism and Culture and the Women's Directorate to co-opt a First Nation story for what is essentially a Liberal government pre-campaign re-announcement by a Liberal MLA for a riding represented by that MLA. If the Liberal government and this minister had sincerely wanted to celebrate the initiative by the Kwanlin Dün First Nation government to create the community hub, one would reasonably expect that they would suggest to all members that a legislative tribute would be a good idea. Tributes, Mr. Speaker, offer an opportunity for a non-partisan celebration of achievements by individuals, community groups, or other orders of government. Instead, the MLA for Mountainview, using the cover of ministerial title, uses this time to announce a funding contribution. In any other jurisdiction, this would be a member's statement open to Liberal backbenchers as well as opposition members to make brief statements about important events in their riding, but that's not the Liberal way. The key for the Yukon Liberal government is control of the message. To that end, so far in this Fall Sitting, the Liberal government members' appropriation of this time has amounted to about six hours of this Assembly's daily one-hour televised time to do just that.

That being said, just as the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre re-established an important reclaiming of the traditional presence of the Tagish Kwan as the original people who live

and occupy the lands alongside the headwaters of the Yukon River, the Kwanlin Dün community hub has the potential to create, by design, a link to the area called “Kwanlin”, which means “running water through a canyon” in Southern Tutchone. The 21<sup>st</sup> century Kwanlin Dün First Nation, comprised as it is of peoples of Southern Tutchone, Tagish, and Tlingit descent, is creating a tangible representation of their evolution as a people and as a government. They are to be congratulated, and we look forward to the opening of their community hub.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you very much for the comments and for the recognition of this very important project. It’s important to all Yukoners. I hear the criticism from the Third Party around using this time to talk about this important project. I think that folks on the other side of the House were given equal opportunity to speak to the importance of it, and I think that’s an important aspect of a ministerial statement.

I’m inspired by Kwanlin Dün citizens. They reclaimed their community. They looked at their infrastructure and issues in truthfulness. No matter how immense the task and how hard the path, they had a vision and undertook something very important by conducting — and I want to reflect on some of the work that led up to the revitalization and the significant work that Kwanlin Dün has undertaken. They embarked on crime prevention through environmental design analysis where community safety and well-being became central to how they went forward as a community. Slowly, the number of infrastructure improvements in McIntyre increased, and the sense of pride flourished. The vision was always to feel the community spirit — its vibrancy. It is like watching a dream unfold and come to life.

The Government of Yukon’s priorities are clear — for Yukoners to live happier, healthier lives and for them to live in a sustainable environment. I invite everyone to go for a stroll or a drive through the McIntyre subdivision if you haven’t done that. It is incredible to see how the community has, as I have said, flourished, and it is exciting. The changes over the years and the feel of the community are beyond what can be said with words. It has to be seen — the renovations of the Nakwataku Potlatch House, the new community playground, and the addition of a multipurpose building.

The work toward reconciliation with First Nations is underway all across the territory. Our Liberal government has made reconciliation a priority, as well as helping the communities to be happier and healthier, and this is exactly what those infrastructure projects help to support.

I want to thank the Minister of Community Services and all of the government officials for the hard work that they have done. The Infrastructure Development branch is working on more than \$76 million — investing in Canada-approved projects — in partnership with First Nations. Some of them include: a new community centre in Old Crow, an early childhood development centre in Pelly Crossing, a youth centre for Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in youth, and many, many more.

I do think that it is every member of this Legislative Assembly’s responsibility to work toward reconciliation and to support thriving, happy communities. I am happy to stand today to speak from my perspective around this project. I am really proud of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation for all of their achievements and of all of our First Nations that are undertaking important work throughout our entire territory.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: COVID-19 testing

**Mr. Hassard:** So, last Thursday, we asked the Minister of Health and Social Services to update us on the government’s response to the pandemic. The minister avoided giving the Legislature or Yukoners any new updates on what the government was doing to respond to COVID-19.

Then on Sunday, the government started drive-through COVID testing; however, they started it without announcing it publicly until the next day. This meant that, for an entire day, people were not aware that this option was available to them.

So, why did the government not announce the drive-through COVID testing in advance so that Yukoners who may need to get tested were aware that this was available to them?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I certainly am pleased to speak to Yukoners about the efforts that are being put forward through the Health Emergency Operations Centre in cooperation with our chief medical officer of health.

In regard to the direction that we are taking, the collaboration across the government is to ensure a coordinated public health response with COVID-19. The centre plays a pivotal role in ensuring that public health guidance and support is there.

The efforts with the drive-through assessment centre were done on a trial basis, given that we are in the midst of an influenza season as well. As the member opposite may very well be aware, we are on the rise with COVID. The assessment centre certainly needed to put enough effort into supporting Yukoners to ensure that they remain healthy and safe. This site is there on a trial basis. It’s there to provide essential support.

Mr. Speaker, on the opening, we had 32 tests in one day, which is an indication that Yukoners are fully aware. We have alternative options as well that I can speak to in the next question.

**Mr. Hassard:** The minister obviously didn’t hear the question, because I was asking why they didn’t announce it in advance. Instead, she chose to talk about collaborating with government — well, how about collaborating with Yukoners, Mr. Speaker?

You know, as we discussed, the government held off on announcing the drive-through COVID testing option that was available to them for an entire day. This means that Yukoners were not aware of this option. When they did announce it, they stated that it would only be open for six days.

Can the minister tell us why drive-through testing is only for six days?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Given the recent exposure and the increased pressures on COVID testing through the assessment centre — and, of course, with the case numbers, the COVID response unit, in cooperation with the chief medical officer of health, decided to put in place a testing facility on an interim basis to alleviate some of the pressures. I am sure that the member opposite could appreciate that this government, along with the staff, are working above and beyond to address the needs of Yukoners under this current crisis that we are in. We started up the drive-through very quickly to ensure that we enhanced our testing capacity and that every Yukoner who needs to be tested has the opportunity at this centre or at one of our health centres. We have made every possible effort, given the current numbers that we have.

I want to thank the staff for their diligence in coming together very quickly to establish a site that is there to address the current pressures. The soft launch is really to alleviate the pressures. That will be assessed in one week's time with the staff who are the experts in the field.

**Mr. Hassard:** It still would have been nice for the government to actually tell Yukoners what they are doing.

The current testing threshold for the government does not include asymptomatic individuals. Has the government considered working with any private medical service providers to assist in expanding testing capacity in the territory as well as allow for asymptomatic people to get tested?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The interim site that is established right now is there to alleviate some of the pressures for the city of Whitehorse. I would like to remind the member opposite that we have facilities in every one of our communities. If there are individuals in Yukon communities who have symptoms, the recommendations, as clearly laid out by our chief medical officer of health, indicate that individuals should self-monitor. Given the current climate, the testing can be done at the health centres, and we have this opportunity in the city to provide the services.

If there is ever an opportunity to work with the private sector, I am sure that the recommendations will come from the experts through the Health Emergency Operations Centre under the guidance of the chief medical officer of health. I want to assure the member opposite and all Yukoners that we are doing everything possible to keep Yukoners safe.

### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic public health measures announcements**

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, this morning at 9:30 a.m., the government held a press conference to announce a mandatory mask policy that would start on December 1. Within minutes, and while the Premier was still making the announcement, the Yukon Liberals tweeted a graphic announcing the measures, which included their party logo that they had clearly produced in advance. This means that the Liberals held off on announcing the mandatory mask policy before they told Yukoners so that they could create partisan graphics with their party logo to promote their political party.

So, instead of announcing the decision to Yukoners when it was made, why did the Liberals hold off on making the

announcement so their party could be briefed to make partisan graphics?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Ridiculous, Mr. Speaker — absolutely ridiculous — the insinuation from the members opposite. If the members opposite cared to listen to the public updates that Dr. Hanley and I have been giving for weeks now, it has been coming; masks have been coming. We have talked about how other governments have been doing this work. Dr. Hanley has talked about the public acceptance of masks, and that is the work that we have done.

To be quite honest with the member opposite: This is the first that I have heard of our party's activities on social media when it comes to masks. I didn't know until right now. So, I can assure Yukoners that, on this side of the House, we keep politics out of our decisions when we want to keep Yukoners safe, and we will follow the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health. I can't believe that the members opposite would make anybody think that we would delay any type of announcement when it came to the safety of Yukoners for political wrangling. That might be something that they would do; it is not something that we would even consider.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, clearly, we have struck a nerve with the Premier as he is quite agitated with this line of questioning. He appears to be very uncomfortable with it.

It's a risky precedent to set for the Liberal Party to begin partisan branding, which includes their logo on public health measures. This is especially so when it is clear that Liberal Party officials had advance notice before the announcement was made to the public in order to allow them to create partisan images with their party logo. We have seen them hold off on and slowly trickle out tourism funding so they can maximize these announcements, and now they did it with the new mandatory mask policy. The result is that information is not being shared with Yukoners immediately.

Can the Premier answer this question: When was the decision made for a mandatory mask policy, and why were the Liberal Party's graphic designers notified before the public?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely not the case. Again, we make decisions based on recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. Dr. Hanley and I have been discussing masks and policies of masks for a while now. The recommendations came in, and very quickly after the recommendations, we had a public conference for everybody to know that, as of December 1, masks in public spaces will be mandatory.

I will take this opportunity to answer questions that Yukoners need the real answers to, which are: What type of businesses? What are public spaces? Hopefully, folks who were listening in this morning to the press conference — we have said that more information will be available. We wanted to give businesses time, from now until December 1, to know that this policy is coming. We spoke about how public acceptability for masks has changed quite drastically over the last weeks and months in Yukon, and we want to give Yukoners enough time to understand what the new rules are. That information will be available on yukon.ca. Again, for the most up-to-date, relevant, non-misleading information on COVID-19, please — for

Yukoners — go to yukon.ca to get the most up-to-date information that they need to keep themselves, their families, and their communities safe.

**Mr. Kent:** Again, this line of questioning clearly makes the Premier uncomfortable. No one is disputing the need to communicate public health measures to the public, but holding off on public health announcements so that you can throw the Liberal Party logo on them sends the wrong message to Yukoners.

We even saw the Liberal Party announce this morning's government press conference before any official communication from government channels. Public health measures should not be looked at through the lens of partisan or political communications.

Will the government — will this Premier — agree that, going forward, they will de-politicize and stop using partisan branding for the announcement of public health measures?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** What I can tell Yukoners is that we will continue, on this side of the House, to use science and communication with our colleagues right across this nation when it comes to COVID-19 and when it comes to keeping Yukoners safe. We will continue to not use politics when it comes to COVID. We will continue to make sure that the safety and welfare of Yukoners is at the heart of every decision that we make.

Now, the opposition can waste people's time by making insinuating comments like they are doing today. Again, that is what we have come to know and understand from the Yukon Party, but over here on the government side of this Legislative Assembly, we would never do what they are insinuating.

Again, it's the first that I have heard of any of the social media that is coming out from the Yukon Liberal Party. My job and my concentration over the last few months, weeks, and days has been the safety of Yukoners, and we will absolutely continue to make sure that we follow the recommendations of public health. We will make sure that we get the information out as soon as possible. Whether it is mobile clinics and getting that out as quickly as we possibly can to mobilize that or whether it is making sure that Yukoners are aware of new policies coming down the pipe, we want to make sure that we get that information out as quickly as possible, and we will continue to do that for the safety of Yukoners.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic essential workers program**

**Ms. White:** This pandemic continues to be hard on many people. Front-line workers — whether they keep shelves stocked, clean public spaces, or deliver the goods that we need — have always been essential, but it has never been more obvious than now.

For four months, the government paid up to \$4 per hour to those who earned less than \$20 per hour. The program has expired, and these workers are back to earning less than a living wage. While the pandemic is still very real, and while these jobs of these workers are still just as essential as they were this past spring, they no longer have the same support from this

government. They are still essential, and we're still in a pandemic.

Can the Premier tell Yukoners why essential front-line workers deserved a living wage at the start of the pandemic but not now?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Essential workers, of course, have provided the services that we need every day through the pandemic. I want to take a moment to thank them. We've had a lot of opportunity to speak with them. I know that one of the key things that we undertook this summer was to make sure that we reached out to union leaders across the Yukon. We had multiple meetings that were organized where some of the leads of those organizations that are based in Vancouver but that represent the members here came to the table to help us understand what they were going through and to help us understand where we could work — even with ownership groups — to improve those working conditions. I think that was really important to work with organized labour. I always felt that sitting down and collaborating is key.

We do agree that this essential workers program has been effective. I think that looking to extend this is something that we've been working on — doing the work to figure out how to tweak it to make sure it continues. I think there will be more on this topic — but again, agreement with the Leader of the Third Party. I'm glad that there's a validation from the Third Party that this has been an effective program, and certainly this is something that we are keen to lean into and to continue to respect those individuals who are doing the hard work on behalf of Yukoners.

**Ms. White:** The essential front-line workers whom we depend on deserve a living wage before, during, and after a pandemic; it's that simple.

Now we find ourselves in an absurd situation where these workers are doing the same work that they did three months ago but are earning up to \$600 less every month. A problem with the wage top-up program was that only employers could apply on behalf of employees. Some workers had to pressure their employers for months before they completed the paperwork. Others were not so lucky and never received the top-up because their employer didn't apply to the program. How is this fair to them? These workers deserve support, whether or not their bosses wanted to fill out government paperwork.

Will the minister make sure that workers whose employers did not apply for the wage subsidy can still access the help that they deserve but that they have missed out on?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I would hope that I can work with the Leader of the Third Party to identify anybody who was missed by this program and who should have had access to it. That would give us an opportunity for the Department of Economic Development to work directly with that employer to educate them on the opportunities. I know that this summer, being in the Yukon, stopping at businesses, especially in remote areas — whether it be between here and Dawson or up on the Dempster — there were businesses that weren't aware of our program — so really taking the opportunity to go and speak with those business owners and let

them know the suite of tools that were available to them again, in this case, that would be advantageous to their staff.

Again, I make a commitment to work with the Leader of the Third Party and identify if there has been anybody missed. As we lean into continuing to do this good work — just making sure that we have a good sense of what this program should look like as we continue to support those workers.

Just quickly, by the numbers across the board — retail trade was about 49 percent of the employers that we have supported; accommodation and food services was about 39 percent; and then health and social assistance was about five percent. In those numbers, you were looking at just under \$1 million that went to the retail trade with this program. In accommodation and food services, about \$650,000 was laid out to support these workers.

**Ms. White:** Full credit to the members of the minister's department, because we know that the department had tried to assist employers in applying to the wage top-up for front-line workers, but we also know that some employers had not done it and their employees were penalized because of it. There must be a way for employees to access the program whether or not their bosses choose to apply. This program shows how unfair it is to expect workers to make a living on less than a living wage. I can't say it enough — we're still in a pandemic, and these front-line workers are still doing essential work, and they still deserve a living wage.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the government immediately extend the wage top-up for essential workers and ensure that employees can directly access the program even if their employer does not apply?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** What I have garnered from the question today is: (1) a validation that this program is effective; (2) it seems as though there is some information that the Leader of the Third Party has garnered or has access to — that there are some employers that have not used this program, so I want to share that. It seems, too, that there were employees who tried to move this program forward in Economic Development and with whom, I guess, the Leader of the Third Party has spoken. I'll reach out to the deputy minister and see if we can get that information moving up through the department so that we can address this. In such cases, I'm always willing to step in and directly call an employer and let them know how important this is, which we have done day in and day out since March.

There hasn't been a day go by when we are not reaching out and trying to work to make the situation better for workers, for the business owners, and for the private sector. I think that this approach has resonated within the sector.

Again, we have done a tremendous amount of work. We are cued up to continue to put the supports out that we want. I think that there will be more to come on this. Again, I offer the invitation to the Leader of the Third Party for specifics. If she wants me to work on some things where some people are missed, please send me an e-mail or call me. I will come down to her office and help where I can.

### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic contact tracing**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** On November 12, there was a flight from Vancouver to Whitehorse that was flagged as having a potential COVID-19 exposure. On November 15, there was another flight, this time from Whitehorse to Vancouver, that was flagged as having a potential COVID-19 exposure; however, the Government of Yukon did not send out any official notice that this flight had been identified. Yukoners had to find out from the government of BC and the airline. According to the BC Centre for Disease Control, Yukoners who were on those flights may have been exposed; however, the Government of Yukon did not issue a similar notice until this morning, several days after those others issued a notice. Why was this?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to acknowledge the staff at the Health Emergency Operations Centre who are working day and night to do contact tracing. There are many, many files to follow through on. As a note, over the weekend, we have conducted over 250 assessments and contact tracings. So, with respect to the member opposite's question, it is important to note and acknowledge all the efforts and the great work that has been put in.

When we speak about contact tracing, an important component of Yukon's pandemic management is contact tracing, which involves investigation, investigating recent cases and contacts, and informing individuals of possible COVID-19 exposures. Contact tracing is overseen by the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit, which is closely connected to the chief medical officer of health. I want to highlight that because the response time and the responsiveness of the department is stellar in its operations.

The efforts that they put out there in notifying clients and patients of Health and Social Services or those individuals who have come in contact through positive results — and the process of contract tracing is evolution, and it will continue to evolve.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The government frequently states that you can get the most up-to-date information on yukon.ca. However, we know that there are two possible COVID exposures for Yukoners on November 12 and November 15, on two flights coming in and out of the territory. If you go to yukon.ca and click on the possible exposure notice, there is no mention of any of these flights until late this morning. Even now, the November 12 flight is not listed on yukon.ca.

Why does the government not think it is necessary to notify Yukoners of all possible exposures as soon as possible?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** To verify: The government is not responsible; Members of the Legislative Assembly are not responsible; I'm not responsible. I have authorities to manage a structure. We have staff in place. We take the advice of the chief medical officer of health. We are responsive and responding appropriately to the pressures — absolutely, I am responsible. We have many experts in the field. We follow epidemiology; we follow evidence. The staff of the Department of Health and Social Services have worked hard over the weekend. They have worked hard over the course of the last few days to keep Yukoners safe. I'm very proud of that effort.



I want to say that individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 have been contacted by Yukon Communicable Disease Control. That's what I'm referring to.

I would like to advise and inform Yukoners that they must self-monitor for symptoms and get a COVID test if they begin to show symptoms. Dr. Hanley has come out and spoken very clearly to Yukoners. I would like to direct Yukoners to go to the yukon.ca website and follow the procedures.

I would also like to say that Yukon Communicable Disease Control has done an excellent job and excellent work in contact tracing throughout the pandemic. We remain in a strong position —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** As was just mentioned, the government states that you get the most up-to-date information at yukon.ca. Can the minister update its notification procedures to ensure that Yukoners are notified the next time a flight inbound or outbound from the territory has a COVID-19 exposure on board?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Again, thanks to the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit for their contact tracing. Look: Everybody is slotted into categories. There is low risk, high risk, and then there is direct contact. So, when there are flights, there are flight manifests. The YCDC takes those flight manifests. They directly contact all the people who would have been nearby. That is why they don't necessarily go out there and publish "if you were on this flight" — because they contact everybody directly. Where we don't know — where we think there is a low risk, but we don't know, then we put out "Okay, if you were in and around this business at this time..." or "... in this location at this time..." So, it is a range of risks, but when it comes to the flights, the YCDC is contacting directly. So, that is the reason why.

I think that what we ought to be saying to all Yukoners right now is that the contact tracing is going — they are working very hard; they are doing a great job — as far as I understand — in reaching out. When I have talked to individual nurses in our communities, they talk about the strength of this contact tracing and the levels to which they go to make sure that Yukoners are informed. So, it is a range of differences. If it is just not specific to individuals and it is low risk, that is when it is put out on the website.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic testing**

**Mr. Kent:** The Christmas season is around the corner and we know that there will be a significant number of Yukoners returning to the territory for the holidays. So, has the government considered any additional measures related to this influx of people coming into the territory? Also, will they consider expanding testing criteria to allow returning Yukoners travelling home for the holidays to get tested, even if they aren't exhibiting symptoms?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I can think of three ways that we are working on this. I will leave the testing question to the Minister of Health and Social Services. With respect to borders and border enforcement, there is work that we are doing. I have

already said in this House that we are sending more resources down to Watson Lake.

We will meet every flight. So, if there are additional flights, we will work to staff up to make sure that those are staffed — but also, with respect to communication. This is around how we talk to Yukoners, around the situation with travel, self-isolation, and just how we deal with our families over Christmastime and how everybody stays safe.

We have seen, just over the past several days, that the Premier and Dr. Hanley have had additional livestreams to talk about some of the new initiatives.

We will continue to message — whether that's directly through, for example, meetings with municipalities and First Nations or whether that is through more public channels through the media or through livestreams or through the website — but we will try to use them all to keep Yukoners safe over the holiday season.

**Mr. Kent:** There are many young Yukoners who are out of the territory attending high school or university or who are in the military or advanced sport programs. Almost all of these young people will be coming home for the holidays — in many cases, for just about two weeks. The holidays are a welcome reprieve from the stress and mental toll that many of these teenagers face while pursuing their academics or sport development or military service away from their families.

So, last week, we asked about this and the answer seemed to be a no, but we would like to bring it forward again.

What is the government's plan for the holidays and will it include expanded and rapid testing for young Yukoners who find themselves in this situation — returning for the holidays?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** As noted by the previous question, of course this is evolving. The question that the member poses right now around the influx and the return of students and others who come back for the holidays — the department is working very closely with the chief medical officer of health and his staff. We are taking advice and not testing asymptomatic people at this time. What we are doing is we are ramping up additional isolation sites. The minister responsible for the CEMA orders will make decisions with respect to alternatives.

At this moment in time, there are limited opportunities, but we do want to assure all Yukoners who are returning that we will make every effort to ensure that we provide the support that's required. We want to look at ensuring that we provide an opportunity for Yukoners to have an enjoyable Christmas — one that's free of COVID, one that's safe for the families to gather and of course for the students to come back to the Yukon and enjoy their families. We will work with our staff and work with the chief medical officer of health as we design the model around care for these individuals.

**Mr. Kent:** So, back on April 17 of this year in a press release, the government said that they would be getting the rapid GeneXpert testing device to provide results quickly on-site.

Can the minister confirm that we have this device in the territory? Will the government be purchasing more? Will those students and other young people get access to rapid testing as

they return for the holidays so that we can reduce the burden on students and other young military members while also ensuring the safety of the territory?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Throughout our response to COVID-19, we have taken an evidence-based approach to testing. We are working very closely with the BC Centre for Disease Control to provide a gold standard of testing. We have GeneXpert testing capabilities at the hospitals. Now, is that going to be used for testing? That would certainly be under the advice and direction of our health experts on determining which test options are best suited for Yukon's context, including the two newly approved lab tests that have been recently identified.

Rapid-testing devices do not replace the importance of having a robust, centralized testing strategy. We continue to work with our partners in BC and continue to work with our facilities through our health centres, through our hospitals, and through the experts who provide the direction to this government and to Yukoners. As they present with symptoms, they are assessed and provided with the necessary guidance and direction from the experts in our professional staff.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

#### Notice of opposition private members' business

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, November 25, 2020. It is Motion No. 346, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

**Mr. Kent:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, November 25, 2020. It is Motion No. 345, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

**Speaker:** We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair (Mr. Hutton):** Order, please.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chair:** Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

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

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

#### Department of Environment

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Chair, I have with me today Chris Mahar, Director of Finance, and Deputy Minister John Bailey. I just want to take a moment to acknowledge the department for preparing the briefings and preparing the budget. I will start by speaking a bit about the supplementary submission before us today.

The Department of Environment contributes to a healthy, sustainable, and prosperous future through environmental stewardship and effective management of Yukon's natural resources. The responsibility for safeguarding our land and water and fish and wildlife is not taken lightly and is done in partnership with Yukon First Nations, Inuvialuit, and other governments, as well as many other agencies and organizations and citizens.

Much of the department's work is focused on maintaining our biological diversity and upholding principles of conservation so that all Yukoners can continue to use the land for harvesting, for culture, for recreation, and for economic purposes.

The supplementary budget before us today that I am presenting will see an increase of \$1.5 million to the Department of Environment's budget.

Our COVID-19 response resulted in the largest increase to our operation and maintenance budget at \$1.2 million. This includes but is not limited to: additional front-line counter personnel so that we can continue to serve our clients; contracts for increased cleaning to keep workplaces safe for employees; and overtime and travel costs for enforcement officers who have provided border control services throughout the pandemic.

The remainder of this increase includes: \$67,000 to support continuing projects under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* that were not completed in 2019-20; \$264,000 in carry-over funding from the Climate Change Secretariat for funds not spent in the last fiscal year; and \$10,000 to hire an intern under the clean leadership professional development program. All of the above items are fully recoverable from the Government of Canada.

Under this capital budget, we are requesting an increase of \$1,000 for the cost of equipment purchased under the *Inuvialuit*

*Final Agreement*. This cost is also fully recoverable from the federal government.

Before I wrap up, I would like to highlight some of the good work that the Department of Environment has completed this year and the initiatives that our budget will continue to support. In September, we were pleased to release two milestone documents. This includes *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*, which is our response to the climate change emergency which will help us build sustainable, resilient Yukon communities by 2030, as well as the *Yukon Parks Strategy*, which sets direction for Yukon's parks and campgrounds over the next 10 years and which will see significant investments in our communities.

I would also like to thank all of the Environment staff who took on a role as a CEMA enforcement officer, helping keep our borders secure against COVID-19.

Mr. Chair, I thank you for your time. As well, I just want to acknowledge the staff again for doing great work getting us through the pandemic and keeping Yukoners safe to this point. We will continue to see a rise, I guess, in terms of the border security as we go forward. The conservation officers will be back supporting the CEMA orders. Thank you.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I want to begin by thanking the officials who have joined us from the department for their time and for their support in providing us with important information about the activities of the government and the Department of Environment.

I do want to take a moment to also thank those employees — the minister spoke of them, the COs and some of the Yukon Parks' staff — who were enforcement officers for CEMA. They left their communities and sometimes went right across the Yukon to go and step up to the plate during a pandemic. I know that sometimes they have very short notice and they had to run and do that, so they should be commended for their work — especially our conservation officers because there are a lot of activities that they do anyway throughout the summer besides having to do that on top of it. So, I do want to thank them.

I also want to thank the minister for her opening remarks. I have a number of questions about the department's budget, but I also have some ongoing activities of the department that this budget will support. I guess I'm going to begin with some general questions, Mr. Chair, and then I will transition to some specific ones later.

I guess some of my first thoughts and questions here are — we have heard from a number of staff that there has been a lot of changeover in the senior management of the department. The department has been facing some general staffing morale issues.

Can the minister give us an overview of some of the broader strokes of any recent changes in senior management? Can she provide some comment on what she is doing herself as the minister to support employees and foster a positive workplace for the employees?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** As I indicated in my opening statements, the supplementary request before us is for \$1.2 million specific to — mostly related to COVID expenses.

I would be happy to respond to the questions around management and of course the additional supports within the department during the COVID pandemic. As experienced throughout government, we have seen significant pressures. We have seen mobile — the department is working out of office and working from home. We have seen staff working remotely. We have also seen staff working out in the field and utilizing alternative methods of communicating. So, significant efforts and work have been put into the Department of Environment, given that we are generally a people department where we interact with the clients when we deal with enforcement, enforcement officers, environmental monitors and such.

We also look at working toward protecting Yukoners as we go through the pandemic. So, there are lots of great efforts and work in the department. We have a diverse and talented group of individuals who have certainly gone above and beyond during the pandemic.

Through innovation and creative use of full-time, term, part-time, seasonal, and on-call positions, the department offers 282 positions and currently employs a total of 266 employees. There are always — through attrition and other pressures, we do have vacancies which usually average around 15 to 16. I just want to say that the department is at full capacity right now. We have a dedicated team of seasonal employees as well. We have a permanent senior management team. I am very pleased to acknowledge that.

DM Bailey clearly has a wealth of knowledge and experience. He comes from the private sector and has worked in First Nation governments, has worked in industry, and has worked across the north. He has now been with us for two years. We have an ADM who has been with us for two and a half years and who has worked in government in various departments. Our other ADM has moved up in the department and has been there now for one year.

They are doing an excellent job, I would say, and are working now on a response to ensure that we have continued support in the program delivery during these unprecedented times so as not to disrupt service, but to maintain staff morale and maintain the service model we have of putting out the necessary supports to ensure that Yukoners are comfortable and feeling supported as we look at enhancing the programs that we have currently, maintaining the programs we have going forward, and not jeopardizing any of the measures that we have in place right now.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. I thank her for talking about the DMs and the ADMs, but I was just wondering — one of the big things is leadership from the minister. I am just wondering what the minister is doing to support the employees and foster a positive workplace, separate from what the initiatives are within the department. Are there other things or something that the minister is doing to foster a positive workplace for those employees?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Well, I can certainly speak for my leadership and my involvement with Yukon and Yukon First Nations, spending many years working as the chair of the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, many years working with Yukon First Nations implementing and negotiating elements of

chapter 16, and working with renewable resources councils. I would venture to say that I have a wealth of experience based on my many years working in that field. I am a hunter and a trapper. I work with the department, and I understand the dynamics of government. I also have met with staff over the course of the year. Since I started, in fact, I have had many, many sessions with the staff, and I continue to foster leadership in that regard by keeping an open door and by allowing briefings that involve the staff.

I certainly am not bold enough to say that I have — like with any of my files, I rely on the department and on the experts within the department to give me guidance on best management approaches as we move forward while still fostering development and fostering leadership within the department. The many briefings that we have with the department involve the DM and the ADMs. By virtue of that, we have connections throughout the Yukon and continue to have, of course, dialogue with our partners, and we collaborate with our stakeholder groups as well.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. Can she comment on all or any recent changes that have occurred with regard to adapting to the pandemic? I am pretty sure that every minister who gets up will get asked the same question. What measures has the department taken in response to COVID-19? More at the workplace — we understand the CEMA officers and some of the other stuff — but more at the workplace.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** As I highlighted earlier, the Department of Environment has 282 positions. With those 282 positions, we have a very diverse department. We have some field staff; we have some office staff; we have managers; we have policy folks; and, of course, we have biologists and experts in environment and environmental sustainability.

So, ensuring that we provide opportunities for the staff to work safely as they continue to deliver the services that they're employed to do, we certainly have to put measures in place to allow that to happen during the pandemic. Moving through the pandemic, we have made some changes within the department — changes for remote work sites. The department has maintained almost all of its services to Yukoners while minimizing the potential risk and impact on staff, clients, and our partners. The front counter remains open every day — throughout the spring and summer.

The pandemic has required us to adapt and innovate new ways to deliver programs and services, such as encouraging clients to use the online system for hunting and camping permits and delivering online education and events rather than in-person gatherings. Staff work hard to offer virtual versions of our regular annual programming, such as the Celebration of Swans, the Bear Fair, bear safety information sessions, Wild Discoveries, and the Bioblitz.

There has been very limited impact on our capacity to fulfill essential roles and services that are our responsibility. We were successful in supporting all hunting licences and fishing activities, selling over 10,000 fishing licences and over 4,000 hunting licences.

The environmental enforcement inspection staff have also contributed heavily to the front line of enforcement orders

under the CEMA — the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* — while working at the border checkpoints.

We delayed the start of the camping season in order to develop a reopening plan to reduce COVID transmission risks and to allow staff and visitors to enjoy the campground safely. Parks staff adapted their operations to ensure that necessary travel, sanitation, and hygiene practices were in place to allow for the safe reopening of campgrounds. Several staff were temporarily deployed to assist the Emergency Coordination Centre and the Health Emergency Operations Centre.

I'm really proud of the work of the Department of Environment staff to support the government-wide response efforts to COVID-19. They continue to provide services despite the uncertainty of the pandemic.

The department staff have — of course, as I just highlighted — been deployed in different areas, but we have also provided many opportunities for the staff to work from home and provided them with the technical support that they needed so they could stay at home and work from home.

We work with our field staff to adjust protocols so that they remain safe while they're in the field.

I want to just indicate in here as well that we worked very closely with the Public Service Commissioner and the Public Service Commission as they look at a government-wide approach to the pandemic and work through the protocols that have been established for all of government.

**Mr. Istchenko:** The minister mentioned something that I do want to highlight — the front desk and how important that is. I've heard from many of my constituents who are having trouble during the pandemic with certain departments on getting an answer or being able to have a face-to-face conversation. I was glad that the Department of Environment safely, through Plexiglas and everything else — but I heard so many positive things — whether they called the local conservation office in one of the communities or went to 10 Burns Road, they could actually ask a question, get an answer, and not have to wait for an e-mail or leave a message on a phone. That is key to public service. Thank you — and please pass that on to them and thank them for that.

When it comes to COVID-19, the last thing that I have directly on this is a broader question. Some of the initiatives across the department that the government has underway — like whether the government is out consulting, or with the department's budget — I'm sort of wondering how COVID-19 has affected the day-to-day operations within the department. I'll be a little bit more direct: Has it affected the way in which the department does consulting? I would imagine that it has affected the department's budget. Maybe the minister could speak a little bit to that.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I want to just acknowledge that COVID-19 has had a pretty drastic impact on how we conduct our business in the Department of Environment. The staff work very hard to offer virtual versions of our regular, annual face-to-face meetings. As the member opposite indicated, we have set up measures within the office to allow face-to-face interaction with Plexiglass to protect our staff and the public.

In the measures that relate to our consultation and consulting interactions, it would be the same. There have been adjustments to protect citizens, protect our interaction, and limit interaction — so less face-to-face and more virtual engagements. During COVID, we had started providing more opportunities as we were seeing things improving, but now we have sort of ramped back up to ensure that we have very limited contact on a full capacity, but still fulfilling our essential roles and services that are our responsibility.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. These are tough times, and I am glad to see that everyone is adapting safely.

Let me turn now to the Yukon Parks branch. Of course, there will be some discussion about the new strategy, but I want to start the conversation with campground-related questions. The minister highlighted this a little bit in her opening remarks, but the campgrounds opened later than usual this year in the spring. At the time, the minister said that it was because of COVID-19, but at the press conference, the chief medical officer of health denied that he made any recommendations about campgrounds. Can the minister explain why it was okay to delay the spring campground opening in light of how popular the campgrounds are with Yukoners?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The 2020 campground season looked a little bit different from previous years due to health and safety measures that had to be put in place in response to COVID-19. The delayed start to the beginning of the camping season was put in place in order to develop a reopening plan to reduce transmission risks to staff and visitors. As we know, our campgrounds are used as playgrounds as families interact with one another, and we have many campsites that are shared among friends. We did this in coordination with the chief medical officer of health when we could not meet the mandated orders and guidance given for travel in the Yukon — the issue with hygiene and sanitation that was required for our visitors and staff under the COVID-19 parameters.

So, people required to self-isolate and non-residents who were travelling through the Yukon within a 24-hour period were not allowed to camp at the campgrounds, but we wanted an opportunity to open up the campgrounds for Yukoners. So, the measures that were taken in the early season were really to allow that to happen. It was to allow us to work on measures to ensure that we protected our Yukoners as they were out and about, enjoying our many campgrounds that we have across the Yukon.

I have just acknowledged that the occupancy rates for the season were very, very high. Many of our campgrounds were at or near capacity, and that was attributed to the protocols that were established and set in place by the staff at the Department of Environment. Of course, that was done under the guidance of the chief medical officer of health's recommendations.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, the minister just started to talk a little about the 2020 camping season — how busy it was. Can the minister discuss that with us actually from the perspective of the department? Of course, campgrounds are very popular — extremely popular — with Yukoners this year and have offered a bit of a reprieve — like she said — from COVID-19

lockdowns. So, can she provide a little bit more metrics about campground usage? Did some of the farther-away campgrounds get used more? Does she have some statistics — things like that?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** As I am understanding, the department hasn't yet compiled all of the data from the season. Once the data is available to us, then I would be happy to share the numbers of the campground usage.

I just want to say that what I understand from the department is that they've seen significant usage in the campgrounds over the summer given that Yukoners were limited to travelling within the Yukon. They were seeing, on a daily basis, full campgrounds and lots of usage. All of the campgrounds were occupied with very succinct numbers. I don't have that in front of me, but I would be happy to provide that. Under normal — the member opposite would know this as a previous minister — the numbers — we don't usually compile the numbers until January or February, so we wouldn't have that generally until then anyway. I might take a little bit of time to get those numbers together.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. I do look forward to seeing those numbers when they're compiled and I understand that they are compiled. I guess, sticking with that question, I'll ask a couple more related to it.

A couple things happened. Of course, we were all locked down, so we couldn't go anywhere. I'm just wondering, at a very high level, were some of our farther-away campgrounds used a little more? I know there was a bit of a program that the department started last year on exploring the farther-away campgrounds.

The other thing is the BC bubble. When we were in the BC bubble, I did notice more traffic from British Columbia. So, just at the high level too, did we see campground use from BC residents?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** As I understand it, most of the campground use was by Yukoners. The data for BC residents — I don't have that in front of me, but that will certainly come out in the data in January or February.

The campgrounds farther away — a lot of effort was put into trying to promote usage of campgrounds across the Yukon. We were seeing a higher uptake of the campgrounds in Faro, Congdon Creek, and the Tombstone — it is pretty popular, and it is always, always full. Quiet Lake saw a significant increase as well. So, that is some of the information that we have right now, and that's from the Parks' officers as they were out and about throughout the summer months.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, let's turn to the parks strategy. This is pretty much a political question: Can the minister explain why the Liberals have decided to increase camping fees during a pandemic?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The parks strategy outlines a number of new initiatives — improved services and expanding service in campgrounds further — opening now for five months. We are looking currently at building new campgrounds and of course modernizing the existing campgrounds and putting the efforts into that. There are a number of pieces of equipment in the campgrounds that did not meet code requirements. In order to

sustain service levels in our parks, that was the intent of increasing the fees. That will be starting in 2022.

The draft strategy proposed an increase for 2021. Considering the impact of COVID, we pushed that out significantly. We worked very closely with our tourism sector and of course the department in looking at the fee increases. I want to just say that the fee is consistent with the desire to improve services in all of our parks.

**Mr. Istchenko:** It's ironic that 2022 is the year after the election. So, can the minister elaborate on the decision to increase camping fees for Yukon seniors?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Increasing camping fees has nothing to do with the election. It certainly has everything to do with the service delivery and the expanded park infrastructure and adding additional campsites. It's about enhancing services. As well, the strategy proposed an increase in 2021. We are in the middle of a pandemic and we certainly don't want to penalize individuals for using campgrounds during this time, so that is why it was extended to 2022.

We have the lowest camping fee rates in the country. The increase in fees is consistent with improving cost recovery, but it also aligns with other jurisdictions. Camping fees cover about 10 percent of the services. With the new fee, it will cover 22 percent. The government is currently covering 90 percent of the fees associated with parks, parks management, and services in each of our parks. This is significant support to all of our campgrounds — and, of course, enhanced services at the same time. In comparison, if we look at jurisdictions like Alberta, they charge 39 percent against cost recovery. We are currently at 10 percent. This is just as a note. We want to just suggest also that the objective is not to penalize but to enhance services. The campground fees for seniors is part of this process as well. It is part of the increase in the service fee across the board.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Again, I just want to note that it is pretty interesting that the Liberals will be implementing all of these new fees in the year after the election. When it comes to seniors, seniors built this territory. They put their time and effort into making the Yukon a better place. I firmly believe that the seniors should camp for free.

Let's talk about the new parks strategy, which includes the development of a new campground in the general Whitehorse area. Can the minister tell us what locations they are considering? Can she also discuss the size of the new campground?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Moving toward camping fees, as I indicated, is to provide enhanced services. Currently, the seniors will be obligated to pay 50 percent of the camping fees, which is not seen anywhere else in the country, so I want to just highlight that.

It is not about penalizing. It is about giving enhanced supports and services. We have taken efforts in our parks system to increase mobility access, and as we know, seniors oftentimes require additional supports when they would like to go camping. So, we are taking efforts across all of our parks system to ensure that we have mobility access for seniors and others who have mobility issues. I want to just make note of that.

As we look at enhanced campgrounds across Yukon — particularly as we indicated in the strategy — part of the feedback that we received from Yukoners during the engagement was looking at a campground in the proximity of the city for easy access. That will be done in consultation and collaboration with our indigenous partners. We are, of course, in the midst of a pandemic, so it is not possible for us to do that now, but that is in the plan and in the strategy — to start the discussions with First Nations to look at a potential campground within 200 kilometres of the city — looking at upwards of 150 sites, as a possibility.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I want to thank the minister for confirming again, for the record here today, that the Liberals will be increasing fees for seniors who like to camp.

I am just wondering, with the new strategy — and I asked about the new campground. I am not sure if the minister said, but I didn't hear this — can she tell us which locations they are considering?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** So, the location hasn't been identified. As I indicated, we are currently in discussions. We will continue to have our collaboration with the Yukon First Nations, look at options, and have some continued engagement around possible sites within approximately 200 kilometres of the city.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I'm wondering — is there any money in the budget for this yet?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The question that is being asked by the member opposite refers to the mains and is not referring specifically to the supplementary budget. It takes a bit of time to find the detailed information in the mains. I want to just acknowledge that we have finalized the parks strategy. The parks strategy was done in consultation. We've had lots of engagement and feedback from multiple partners. We will continue to work with our partners as we look at finalizing the parks strategy, implementing it, and going forward. The parks strategy and planning — we do have resources within the mains to look at the planning element of the strategy.

**Mr. Istchenko:** If the minister can commit to a legislative return or something letting me know where that is in the budget please. The strategy also contemplates new boat-in or hike-in campsites. Can the minister tell us where those will be if there are locations picked for those yet?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Basically, it's the same answer to the question that the member keeps asking. We have our engagement process that we will have with the Yukon First Nations around the future of a new site within 200 kilometres of the city. We have some specific parameters around what that might look like. We're looking at possibly a 150-site facility. As that evolves, I would be happy to share that information as we continue to have the dialogue.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, the strategy also contemplates adding sites to existing campgrounds. Have they made a decision on which existing campgrounds would be expected to see new sites added?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The response to the question is: The department hasn't yet identified the campgrounds that will be expanded. I think as we look at campground improvements —

there are significant resources already being put in place for campgrounds. As I indicated earlier, we are spending resources on mobility access in some of the campgrounds near Whitehorse. We did that at Wolf Creek campground just last year. We will continue to do that enhanced support in our campgrounds as well as identifying future expanded sites. We have some opportunities that we're exploring and that will be done in collaboration with our partners.

**Mr. Istchenko:** It sounds like there's a bunch of work being done. If the minister could just — maybe through a legislative return at some point in time, she could get back to this side of the House on which campgrounds — like I had asked — are going to be getting upgrades. Most of them are in rural ridings that we're in. It would be nice to know so we can do our due diligence and pass that on to our constituents.

I want to stick with campgrounds. My last question is: What is the plan for campground access this winter? We're stuck here again. I don't think there are many of us with flights to beaches this year — unless the beaches have snow on them.

I'm just wondering about winter access — will some campgrounds be opened for unserviced use? Which ones? Are there dates or times or is this something that the department is still working on?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would be happy to advise Yukoners as the strategy evolves and the department does its work with the communities with regard to the campgrounds that are being upgraded in the next fiscal year and of those we just completed. I know it's continuous upgrading. I will be happy to provide that information.

With winter access to which campgrounds — I guess the question was: Which campgrounds have winter access? There are non-gated campgrounds that are accessible to members of the public. The Tombstone Park is one. I can — of course, I don't have that in front of me, but as I understand it, those campsites are identified on the yukon.ca website. I would go to that site and get the information. I just don't have it at my fingertips.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I guess we'll leave campgrounds. There is a lot of information there that I still need to gather. I guess I'll go to yukon.ca.

I would like to turn now to wildlife management. We're of the view that the relationship between the department and the Yukon hunting community has declined considerably in recent years. The result of this has been that there is increased scepticism from the hunting community about proposals put forward by the government, especially with regard to new approaches to limit hunting.

Let's start with the 2020 suite of proposals that are currently being considered by the minister. We have seen a letter to the minister from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board with those recommendations. We know that the minister has responded to each of them, but I have a few questions.

The letter from the board corrected the minister's language with regard to the term "reject" as opposed to "set aside". Can the minister explain what the issue was there, for us in the House today?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Can I ask the member opposite just to state the question again? I didn't catch the last part. Thank you.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, the letter from the board corrected the minister's language with regard to the term "rejected" as opposed to "set aside". Can the minister explain what the issue was there for us?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The language that was used — "set aside" versus "rejected" — the language in the letter was an administrative oversight and that has since subsequently been corrected, for the record.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that.

Let's turn to the adaptive management measures for moose that the department has proposed. So, can the minister give us her understanding of those proposals and explain whether or not she supports them, and why?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Procedurally, as the member opposite would know, under the recommended changes as required under the *Wildlife Act*, the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and members of the public would come forward with their perspectives and respective approaches on potential amendments that come forward, and the Fish and Wildlife Management Board then proceeds to do consultation and engagement across the Yukon. Some of the measures that are coming forward with respect to moose management and adaptive measures are currently under discussion and consideration. No decision has yet been made. Certainly, that recommendation would go before the Cabinet Committee on Legislation. When that happens and the discussion evolves, we will be happy to talk about that, but it is important that our management approach respects First Nation final agreements and is effective in managing harvest within sustainable limits.

This past spring, Yukoners were provided with additional time to review and comment on three moose management proposals through the Fish and Wildlife Management Board's *Wildlife Act* regulations public review process. We have asked for a bit of an extension, given that we were in the height of a pandemic. The board advised that this was acceptable, so the recommendations are currently under consideration with a response expected back to the board this fall.

**Mr. Istchenko:** When it comes to the adaptive management measures, I wanted the minister to explain a little bit about them, which she sort of did, but she didn't really say whether she supports them or not, and why.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would just again highlight that, when we have these discussions about measures that are being considered under the *Wildlife Act* and when we look at co-management efforts around the sustainability of pressure areas, the discussion happens with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board. The member opposite is well versed in that, as a former minister responsible for this area. A process evolves, consultation happens, the recommendations are brought to the board, the board brings the recommendations to the minister, collaboration happens, and technical discussions evolve. As those things evolve, the information is absolutely confidential until it is made public.

My opinion, when it comes into the discussion, is really irrelevant at this point. The technical process and the public

process have been defined for us. It is very clearly defined under the chapters of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* that speak to co-management and to conservation. Of course, the *Wildlife Act* sets the parameters in how we proceed with wildlife management measures.

**Mr. Istchenko:** There have been many public presentations about these proposals. I was simply looking for the minister's thoughts on them because it was she who put the proposals forward. Can the minister comment on the current timelines? We understand that she may be beyond the prescribed amount of time set out in the UFA. I think she spoke a little bit earlier on this — on these proposals. Can the minister confirm this?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I'm absolutely familiar with the *Umbrella Final Agreement* as it sets out parameters on co-management. Chapter 16 lays out some parameters for us. Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board is set in place to govern and to provide recommendations to the minister around management measures. The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board is working very closely with the Department of Environment as we look at the recommendations brought forward. They have been informed and are in agreement, given that we are, right now, in the middle of a pandemic. They are absolutely in support of the extension and granted that, in fact.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I better watch my time. I think it's elapsing quickly.

I would like to bounce around on a few other wildlife management issues. How much in this year's budget is there for surveying animal populations? How does this compare to, say, the last four years?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I will just highlight that, in the supplementary budget as presented, it does not speak specifically to anything with respect to wildlife surveys. It speaks a lot to COVID and COVID-related expenses. The member opposite wants to speak about the mains and specifics to the mains. The objective of today's debate is to look at the supplementary budget, and I have highlighted that in my opening statements. I would certainly be happy to entertain the questions that are presented which are in the mains and are not specific to the supplementary budget.

The member has Environment's budget, I am assuming. It was distributed a while ago. The allocated amount for Fish and Wildlife is \$8,128,000.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Before I continue on with that, I just want to go back to something that I had missed. I had written it down, and I think this is important.

Can the minister tell us when she last met with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can confirm that I have met with the chair and the vice-chair this past summer. I know that the department is in frequent contact with the board. I am certainly happy to have conversations with the board, and, of course, I have extended that invitation to the chair. I have met with the chair on different occasions, and I will continue to do so.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I think that it is important that, when you meet with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board,

you meet with the complete board. So, the last time she met with the complete board — can she answer that, please?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can confirm that I have met with the complete board. Given that we are in the middle of a pandemic, it is not advisable to meet in those settings. I would be happy to meet with the board. I have extended the invitation to the chair. We continue to collaborate on a regular basis. I would certainly be happy to meet with the board again.

The last board meeting was in October and we did have staff at the meeting. When receiving an invitation myself, I do attend those board meetings, as requested by the chair.

**Mr. Istchenko:** There are things like Zoom meetings or virtual meetings, so the minister could meet. I don't think I got the answer. Was the last time that she — the minister — met with the board in October 2019?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can confirm that I have met with the board. I have met with the chair. I know that the staff have had continuous engagement with the board. As I indicated to the member opposite, I have met with the chair and the vice-chair in the last couple of months. I will continue to have those conversations and dialogue.

As we know, we are in the middle of a pandemic. I am most certainly aware of Zoom and the virtual opportunities. The invitation is there. We will continue to work with the board as we look at the changes to the moose management obligations and the *Wildlife Act* obligations. We want to look at developing and enhancing our engagement. We also want to acknowledge that the department meets regularly with the board. We have a member who sits on the board, so we are always connected to the board. We will continue to ensure that the board is well versed on the efforts of this government and also that the connection is there now and into the future.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I want to switch to the Hart River caribou. I have a couple of questions: What year did the Alaskans come to the Yukon government with the management plan? When did TH sign the agreement to put the plan in place?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I'm not certain that I understand what the member opposite is asking. The Alaskans and harvest management plan in relation to the Fortymile caribou or in relation to moose — I'm not certain — Porcupine caribou maybe? If he can elaborate, that would be very helpful for me to better understand and respond.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Sorry for not being specific — the Fortymile caribou.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With respect to the Fortymile, we're just pleased to say that Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has now signed off on the harvest management agreement with the government. This effort took over 25 years — really focusing on the recovery efforts among Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Wildlife Management Board, the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council, and of course the Government of Yukon and the State of Alaska. I'm assuming that's the question.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in supported the management plan. We most recently opened up the hunting with that herd. The State of Alaska, in terms of its structure on allocation, has been predefined through this management plan.



As I understand things, the — I have to just stop for a moment. I do have a hearing impediment; I do wear hearing aids. I want to just acknowledge and admit that here now. I cannot hear when there are multiple conversations happening and I just want to ask my colleagues respectfully if I can just — it interrupts what I'm hearing coming here and what I'm hearing over here — if I can just ask for that respect. It may be funny for some folks, but that is the reality that I live with every day, and I am not going to apologize for that.

We have been working very collaboratively with Alaska since recovery began in 1995. We, of course, have seen some significant challenges there, but we have established a harvest management quota with each jurisdiction, with 65 percent of the sustainable harvest going to Alaska and 35 percent to Yukon. The Government of Yukon has participated in recovery planning with Alaska. Of course, that plan was approved by the Alaska Board of Game.

Alaska has shared with Yukon its concerns about the herd reaching its carrying capacity and we have seen historically the population crash, and we certainly want to look at the sustainability of that herd as we go forward. It is important for us to work with our partners as we look at enhancing now that we have opened up harvesting and we have signed off on the harvest management agreement. That is a Canadian agreement, but we do have measures in place that have been historically agreed to with the State of Alaska. Alaska's harvest management plan for the Fortymile indicates that they would harvest their allocation, and we are trying to work out some alternative formal arrangements. As the member opposite would be aware, that formal arrangement was done not — I correct myself — it is not a formal arrangement; it is a mutual commitment that was done, not through a formal process, but a mutual commitment to work together on the sustainability of that herd.

The State of Alaska — in terms of its collaboration and its efforts — Yukon First Nations, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Dawson Renewable Resources Council, and, of course, the Government of Yukon meet on a regular basis. I know they meet every year — perhaps twice a year, technically — to talk about the sustainability of the herd and the harvest management.

Alaska has, of course, the habitat and the herd tends to migrate more frequently in the State of Alaska. That allocation, in terms of the herd range, is much larger. We have indicated some challenges there and want to continue to work with Alaska as we look at the sustainability of that herd long term.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I just want to note the comments from the minister before she started answering. It is hard to hear in here. There was no laughter on this side. I'm trying to listen to her, Mr. Chair, and I'm trying to listen to what she says — vice versa — but there was no laughter on this side of the House. Stuff gets recorded in Hansard, so that needed to be put in there, Mr. Chair.

So, maybe I'll speak a little closer to the mic. Actually, the sound system is bad in here, anyway.

So, can the minister discuss the contribution agreement with the Yukon Fish and Game Association? Why was the funding cut to this organization?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The Government of Yukon has a working relationship with the Yukon Fish and Game Association. The department officials have met with the association during their public engagement period. Again, they have looked at the conclusion of the recommendations. They have been working very closely with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board around public processes and the decision on the annual funding to support the association by providing them with \$70,000 in the mains. This was to ensure that they provide input on management measures — and, of course, participating in their public engagement with their membership. We do have other organizations that are being considered as well as we look at our budget requirements in supporting our various working groups that we have out there. This also includes the Elk/Agriculture Conflict Working Group, the grizzly bear/bison management plans, and looking at engagement sessions and providing opportunities in different venues. Given that the association is a non-profit group and that we have many other organizations that we fund, my understanding is that this amount was reduced from \$80,000 to \$70,000, which still meets the obligations of the Yukon Fish and Game Association.

**Mr. Istchenko:** When was the last time that the minister — not the staff of the department, but the minister — met with the Yukon Fish and Game Association?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can say that I have met with them on two occasions. Given that they are a non-profit organization that provides recommendations to the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, I tend to spend my efforts — given that my portfolio requires my engagement under structured processes —

I want to just acknowledge that they have had opportunities to engage, and I'm very happy about that process. I certainly want to support the association's operation and engagement with the Department of Environment. The collaboration continues with the Department of Environment. I have met with them in the past. I certainly would be open to meeting with them again.

**Mr. Istchenko:** She mentioned that she had met with them two times, but she did not give me a date. Can she please give me a date?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would be happy to talk about the process. At this moment in time, I'm not able to specifically give a date of when I met with the Yukon Fish and Game Association, but I would be happy to talk about the funding that we provide to the association to allow them to conduct their work and to support this non-profit organization and their meaningful input into fish and wildlife management and — by collaboration of that — provide recommendations to the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

As I indicated, there are many boards and committees across the Yukon. I make efforts to meet with the boards as they request. I would be happy to meet with any board that requests

a meeting. I have met with them in the past, and I would be happy to do that again in the future.

**Mr. Istchenko:** It sounds like it has been a while.

I want to switch over to the Finlayson caribou herd. Is there a recovery plan in the works?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** We are committed to addressing, with the Ross River Dena Council, concerns around hunting, wildlife management and conservation in the First Nation's respective area. The observations and, of course, the input from the department indicates a decline in the Finlayson caribou herd since 1990, and respecting our shared concerns for the herd, the decision was to issue no licence hunting permits in 2018-19, and that continued on.

The outfitters' quota was set at zero, and that is an indication that we certainly need to put our efforts together and work together to look at addressing the herd levels.

So, the department is working with the Ross River Dena Council around the herd management and stabilizing the herd so that we can see increased harvest levels — a very similar situation with what we have seen historically with the Fortymile. We'll continue that work with our partners and we'll eventually see the numbers rise back up so that we can open up the herd to a public process in the future. That may take some time, so we — as I indicated many times to Yukoners — are looking at our concerted effort to protect the herd from further decline, and that means that we must put in place a management measure to sustain that herd for longevity.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I will just leave that alone. What is the status of the court case with regard to the emergency closure of the Finlayson caribou herd?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I was just trying to seek some clarification around the court case, so I'm just trying to determine what the member opposite is referring to with respect to which court case it is. I'm not sure, but I would be happy to respond once I get a little bit more clarity.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I will just move on. Has the minister met with the affected outfitter in that area?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** No, I have not met with the outfitter for that area.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Chair, would the minister happen to have the special guide licences — I'm just wondering how many were issued last fall and what the success rate was, seeing as we were in a pandemic.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I was just seeking a little more clarification around the outfitter in that particular area who was referred to. I can acknowledge that the department has met with the outfitter and continues to do so.

With regard to special guide licences from last fall, we still clearly don't have those numbers and they won't be available for a bit.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Chair, what I was actually talking about — the government had replied to the outfitter's legal challenge — so when I asked about the court case, that's what I was talking about — if the minister can comment on that, please.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Given that it is a judicial process, it's not something that I can speak to at this point, but once that is resolved, I would be happy to speak about it.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I want to go back to the question that I asked about the special guide licences because it was special circumstances in there with special guide licences. Can the minister tell me how many were issued last fall? What was the success rate? How many were able to go out — because we were in a pandemic and travel and things like that were a bit of an issue?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I don't have that information. The department is still compiling the data, and once we get that, I would be happy to share that, but at the moment, it's not — certainly, we're still having folks out there, so I don't have those numbers yet.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I look forward to seeing the stats on that.

Speaking of outfitting, I would like to get a few questions in on that. What work is being done with the outfitting industry with their losses due to COVID-19? Of course, you know that wildlife is key and with the way travel was this year — you know that the industry took a huge hit. I'm just wondering what work is being done with that industry with their losses due to COVID-19.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** We've had many, many discussions in the Legislative Assembly about the business relief fund through Economic Development. We know that the outfitters have been supported as businesses. I encourage them to, those who are identified as not receiving support, to please proceed to connect. We would be happy to provide some support and guidance there as well.

We acknowledge the impact that COVID-19 has had on the outfitting industry as most outfitting clients are not able to travel to Yukon this year. Yukon outfitters and Canadian clients can self-isolate for 14 days on outfitting concessions. We've worked through the operational plan with colleagues at the civil emergency measures — connections through Community Services and of course through the chief medical officer in terms of operational planning that has been approved.

To date, there were 18 out of 20 outfitting concessions that had approved plans — so significant effort and support around options, including supports for clients within Canada and the isolation requirements and making some accommodations in terms of supporting the outfitters.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I understand the business relief fund and the programs that are set out to help all businesses in the Yukon. I do know that 18 of the 20 outfitters put plans together and they did get some customers, but it was devastating, like it was for the tourism industry. I am just wondering what direction the minister, during this tough time on the outfitters, has given to the department or what work is the department doing other than the business relief program that the minister spoke about or the outfitters working on plans and going through that process through CEMA to try to get the odd customer to make a go of it? What is the department doing to work with outfitters?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can confirm that we have worked very closely with the outfitting concessions and the outfitters in putting together their plans. We have worked very closely with

the chief medical officer of health staff, and we have worked with Community Services. I can say that the outfitters harvested 35 to 55 percent of their normal harvest this year, recognizing that they, of course, were restricted to Canadian clients. The international clients obviously were limited. The business relief program and the northern business relief program provided significant supports, and we continue to provide supports there.

This year, the outfitters harvested 83 sheep, 87 moose, and 52 caribou, which is an indication that they have met 55 percent of their quota. I would say that, in addition to that, they have taken 23 grizzly bears as well. The alternative self-isolation plan for the outfitters helped them immensely to meet 55 percent of their harvest numbers.

I am happy to work with the industry at any given time. As I just highlighted, the department has done a really great job in looking at alternatives for the industry, appreciating that we have seen a decline — the hit that COVID has had on the industry, which is not to be taken lightly.

I can just safely say that the department has done a really great job in just looking at alternatives with them and quickly mobilizing and putting in place the supports so that they can accept clients and do so in a safe manner so that we can continue to protect Yukoners. The safe transition from another jurisdiction into the Yukon and then out to the concession was done in a very diligent and quick fashion to allow for that to happen. I am very pleased with that, and I want to just acknowledge that we are still not out of the woods, but the season has concluded. Hopefully, we will have a better year next year.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I don't know if you noticed, Mr. Chair, but the minister had a lot of information there about harvest data with outfitters — percentages and stuff like that — but when I asked about the special guide licences, which was also during the same time, the minister didn't have that information.

So, are there going to be any changes going forward to the outfitters' quotas as a result of the reduced season?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would venture to say that perhaps it is a little too early for us to make that determination.

**Mr. Istchenko:** As I have earlier today in this House, I will ask the minister again: When was the last time that the minister met with the Yukon Outfitters Association? I am looking for a date and a time.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can say that I have met with the Yukon Outfitters Association in the past, and given that we have outfitters throughout the Yukon, I haven't met with the association of late, but I would be happy to have engagements in the future, should the Yukon Outfitters Association request the said meeting.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I want to talk just a little bit about trapping, which is near and dear to my heart, among many other things, but I like getting out there.

The fur industry markets have crashed. We have lost one of our major fur buyers in Canada. I am just kind of wondering, in light of that, how many new trapping licences were issued last year. At a very high level, are we seeing an increase in the number of people going and doing the trappers course, or is it just kind of status quo?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Given that we are in the middle of a pandemic, I wanted to just know from the department — trying to get some more information about the process established for trapping courses and the uptake on that, given the limitations in terms of how many folks you can have in close proximity. We're working on getting those numbers, but I understand that the courses are fully subscribed under the COVID protocols. As I understand it, the licences are pretty consistent from last year to this year.

As the member opposite knows, trapping is not at its prime, but we want to continue to certainly ensure that our young trappers are educated, informed, and provided the training that they need. The courses will continue throughout the Yukon. Given that we have limitations with COVID, we may have to do more courses to still capture the same number of individuals interested in taking trapping courses.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. I'm wondering if the minister or the department is contemplating any trapper support programs in light of the crash of, basically, the fur industry.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** It's not something that the department has discussed.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I'm just wondering when the last time was that the minister had met with the Yukon Trappers Association.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The member opposite wants to know when I met with these organizations. I will say to the member opposite and to the associations, if they require and request a meeting with me, I would be happy to attend a meeting with them. I have never received a request from the Yukon Trappers Association to meet with them, but I do meet with trappers on a regular basis — individual trappers. I would be happy to extend the invitation — of course, my door is always open. I'm certainly happy to meet with any organization that wishes to meet with me. Thank you.

**Mr. Istchenko:** What was the number of bears destroyed due to human-bear conflict this year? Is it higher or lower than last year? Do you have the numbers?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The number of bears identified this year in human-wildlife conflict was 55, which is down from last year.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that.

I want to switch over to the big furry animals in my riding and partly in the member's riding too — between Carmacks and that whole area. How many bison were harvested last year compared to the last five years?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I certainly don't have those numbers in front of me. I would be happy to get those numbers from the department, but it's not something that I would have at my fingertips. As we look at the supplementary budget and we look at the debate today before us, they are certainly not numbers that the department would provide me as we have the budget debate.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Has the department or the minister — through some of the recommendations that might come out of the bison technical team — considered any changes to hunting opportunities?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** We are reviewing and updating the Aishihik bison management plan to ensure that it reflects current priorities and issues. There is a Yukon bison technical team that is leading the updated plan. The team includes representatives from territorial, federal, and four Yukon First Nations, as well as four renewable resources councils and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. The bison technical team is expected to provide the plan to the Fish and Wildlife Management Board for public review sometime this winter. I would not pre-suppose the outcome on that in light of the fact that we have a technical team. They are mandated to review the process and provide recommendations.

As I understand it, they are expected to have their recommendations back sometime within the next four to six weeks.

**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 before the Committee is Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I want to welcome everybody back to the House here.

When we left, we were having a discussion about the bison harvested last year compared to the last five years, and I want to ask a couple more questions about bison.

How many bison does the department harvest at the end of the season for data collection and samples?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can confirm that there have been zero bison harvested this year. The program has ended. I do want to correct the record. I certainly misspoke earlier and I had some incorrect information. I do want to say, as of — and it's not 55 bears — I had indicated that it was down from last year. As I know now, it is actually — as of November 18, we had 29 bears destroyed and five have been translocated; 29 were black bears and eight were grizzly bears.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for correcting the record.

We'll stick with bison. How many bison does the department harvest at the end of the season for data collection and samples?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Zero.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I'm under the understanding that, every year at the end of bison season — when it closes — the department actually goes out, collects data, gets samples, and harvests some bison. I just wanted to know the number.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I just note that the program has ended, so there were zero bison harvested for that purpose.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I wanted to talk a little bit about conservation officers. I want to talk a little bit about the minister's decision to use the budget to purchase AR-10s. Can the minister give us a more detailed response than we received

in Question Period about the rationale for the purchase of these guns?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to remind the member opposite that the supplementary budget presented today consists of \$1.5 million for the Department of Environment specifically for responding to COVID pressures. A significant portion was related to COVID and the operation and maintenance of the department, which came to \$1.2 million. The questions that are being asked at the moment and that we have fielded for the last two hours do not speak to the supplementary budget that we are here to talk about. The member opposite is asking a multitude of questions about meeting times when, in fact, the objective here is for us to refer to the supplementary budget.

With respect to the questions around assault rifles, the member opposite would know that there are exemptions made in the federal legislation that speaks to assault rifles, or alternative rifles, for conservation officers and enforcement officers. The Conservation Officer Services branch has issued a public tender for new patrol rifles. The patrol rifles are intended as a public safety tool. They are required to provide the necessary protection required for the safety of conservation officers and the public when responding to high-risk situations, including dangerous wildlife.

The current issue bolt-action rifles are not meeting current service requirements for a variety of reasons, including the lack of available weapon-life quality control concerns and a lack of manufacturer support.

So, the current bolt-action rifles are, of course, very difficult to modify, so the alternative had to be put into place. That means that existing rifles first need to be modernized, and the exemption is given by the federal regulations that allows peace officers to use an alternative. In this case, the regulation complies with the federal regulations, allowing conservation officers to have this rifle as the regulations allow that federally.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, when the minister approved that going out for tender, was she aware that these guns were on the list of the guns that were being targeted by the federal government — the federal Liberal government — when she made the decision to approve their purchase?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** We weren't aware, but the department certainly is following the protocols as established and set for them as they look at the tools that they need to successfully protect themselves and the public. Of course, that means that we will abide by the rules as they have been established for us. The federal laws exempt law enforcement officers, and that is, I guess, the section of the act that applies in this instance. They are certainly prohibited by public use. However, there are exemptions, and we are aware of the federal processes, but as the tender went out by the department, we are looking at the clause that provides for an exemption.

**Mr. Istchenko:** There seems to be quite the contradiction between our MP and this Liberal government when it comes to this issue.

I want to switch now to elk. We have heard a lot of questions from constituents and concerned stakeholders about the management of elk in the territory. Can the minister update

us on the current management of elk from the perspective of the Department of Environment? We understand that they introduced a predation permit for elk with a limited number of PHAs per year. So, we are looking for the minister to tell us how many have been issued this year and how this program has been going.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I don't have that number in front of me, but I will certainly endeavour to get back with the numbers. As I noted earlier, the objective today is to speak about the supplementary. That specific information is not at my fingertips, but I would be happy to endeavour to get back.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I will look forward to getting that information also.

At a very high level, does the minister believe that the agricultural industry is currently satisfied with the government's response regarding elk management?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The elk management plan, as it was renewed in 2016, prioritizes and addresses conflicts between elk and agriculture as a goal. Now, there is a working group that meets with the farmers, and they met with them this past fall. They continue to work on the conflict.

Throughout the summer, there were continued conversations with stakeholders as we rolled out the new approaches as a result of the discussions. We will continue to move 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 and providing financial supports.

Now, with regard to the working group, we have the agriculture industry, we have the Laberge Renewable Resources Council, we have the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and we have a number of participants on that working group who will provide direction in terms of how we deal with the elk and the agriculture industry. As I understand it, the departments are working very closely on an approach in terms of ensuring equal representation and voice on that working group.

**Mr. Istchenko:** We understand that a farmer has taken legal action against the Yukon government. I understand that the minister can't actually comment on the case, but can the minister tell us what the action was that was taken against the government and the current status of it?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** There are continued conversations between the stakeholders as we roll out new approaches to co-management. Of course, the agricultural industry is as important as elk conservation and elk management.

Specifically regarding legal actions — I am not privy to speak to that on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, but I will speak about the processes that have been established with regard to the co-management efforts that have taken place over the course of time and as we move forward with a multi-pronged approach to maintain and more closely manage elk in the Yukon while still maintaining our agricultural industry in that particular area, which seems to be posing a bit of a conflict. We have issued a conflict hunt for elk to try to cull the herd and deter them from entering into these conflict zones. That was

done very closely in collaboration with our working group. As I understand it, we have had 25 elk taken this year in total.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I want to talk a little bit about the area of wildlife management related to adaptive management. The department introduced new measures for sheep in the hunting zone of game zone 7 this year. Can the minister tell us about the government's approach to this change? Why was it done, and has it worked?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The new sheep permit system in game management zones helps to ensure a sustainable harvest by allowing us to adapt permit numbers to changes in sheep harvest patterns and success rates, as well as sheep population information. These changes are based on recommendations from the sheep working group with members of the Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the Government of Yukon. The sheep permit holders have greater flexibility in where they hunt within the sheep management zone. That includes multiple subzones.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, does the minister feel that the changes that the department has implemented are consistent with the advice and the recommendations from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Yes, they are.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Has the minister — because I know on this side of the House here — heard concerns from Yukoners and the Yukon hunters about the changes in this approach?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The government, as I indicated, had some significant concerns that have been brought forward — recognized that and made some management adjustments in the game management zone. Looking at resident hunters, including the Trails Only Yukon Association members who have expressed concerns about increased hunting pressures — we have looked at the individual management zones. We have looked at the input from the Fish and Wildlife Management Board on a series of recommendations, and the board supported the recommendations. We have heard, of course, very positive views. There will always be responses that we hear back that are not in agreement, but we try to balance that in terms of the best interests of conservation and conservation management. Always, that will prevail in terms of the approach that we take.

The sheep working group was created under the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and they've made the recommendations. That's where we are.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I'm wondering if the government would actually reconsider this approach and go back to the way it used to be.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** That is not something that we are considering at the moment.

**Mr. Istchenko:** This concludes my questioning for today. I am going to turn it over to the Third Party.

I have a couple of comments at the end. I do want to thank the staff for being here today, and I really want to especially thank the staff who aren't here but are on their phones providing advice and information to the minister.

I believe that the Premier has put in almost a full day of work here answering questions in the House. It was highlighted by my fellow colleague that this is part of the job. When it came

to the Spring Sitting to debate actual budgets, it was very short. We were in a pandemic; we understand that. So, when we get up in the House on this side and have questions, they are questions from our constituents, and we like to bring them forward. This is our opportunity to bring them forward where they are recorded in Hansard so we can show our constituents and those people who have concerns or who are happy with some of the government policies what is going on, and that we are doing our job. I want to thank everybody for being here today.

**Ms. White:** Welcome to the officials here, of course, as always, and I thank them for the work that they do throughout the year.

Before I get started into questions, Mr. Chair, I would really like to take a minute to hold my hands up and to thank the folks within the Department of Environment who were redeployed toward the Watson Lake border. When you are supposed to be doing the backcountry supervising of the Tombstones, Watson Lake is not exactly where you thought you would be working. I know that folks made sacrifices to do that and that we appreciate the work that they did, and I acknowledge that it wasn't fun and it wasn't easy — but just how important it was. I know that the minister feels the same way, as do her officials, so I just wanted to make sure that, when I had that opportunity, I just said, "Thank you". We know, as we hear every day, how this is an unusual time and I agree. It's not easy, so I just wanted to start off with that.

I do appreciate that we are here during the supplementary budget, but I have lots of questions — or a few questions, for sure. The first thing that I wanted to ask about is the status of the species at risk legislation. Where are we? There was a commitment that we would be on it, and here I am. I haven't asked about it in Question Period, but depending on today, I won't need to. So, where are we with species at risk legislation?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The Yukon *Species at Risk Act* addresses the long-term health and conservation of our species in the Yukon that are at risk. It is a Government of Yukon priority as we continue to research and do the analyses on establishing species at risk legislation for Yukon.

We will be engaging with our Yukon First Nation partners regarding the management of species at risk on settlement lands. The timeline to complete this work depends on several factors, including determining how new legislation would interact with existing legislation and whether there is support from management partners and Yukoners. Despite not having specific species at risk legislation for Yukon, we actively manage species at risk currently. There are a number of species that have healthy populations, but they are imperilled in other areas of North America, such as caribou, bison, grizzly bears, and wolverines. We know that new legislation is of interest to many groups and individuals. Based on that interest, we recognize that sufficient time and resources should be allocated to create an effective act that addresses the unique circumstances of Yukon.

We currently steward species at risk using a variety of existing tools, including the boreal caribou under the section 11 agreement that was signed in 2019 with Canada and the First

Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Gwich'in Tribal Council. We have looked at the efforts under the Peel land use plan as well in protecting specific areas for boreal caribou. We are currently working with a variety of partners on the federal priority places initiative to improve knowledge and deeper conservation actions for species at risk within south Yukon and Beringia.

We are looking at all our efforts, making sure that we continue on. We have a mandate letter that identifies the priority to develop legislation to protect species at risk while taking action aimed at protecting vulnerable species as well. This is a key priority and we are working toward it.

**Ms. White:** As I'm sure you're familiar with at this point in time, this is a pet question of mine that I ask quite often.

On March 6, 2019, in a statement that the minister made to the *Yukon News* via e-mail, it said that — and I quote: "... the Yukon Government is currently working to develop a Yukon Species at Risk Act." What I was looking for was a timeline. If the minister could be a bit clearer on the timeline of consultation, for example, or when it might go out on to [engageyukon.ca](http://engageyukon.ca). Ultimately, my goal is to have created-in-Yukon species at risk legislation like Yukon government committed to a fair number of years ago. So, I was just looking for timelines.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I appreciate the question as it relates to a priority for this government. The member opposite highlights that a species at risk act is a priority. We cannot move without our partners at the table. At the moment, we make this a priority and we are doing our due diligence. At the same time, the First Nations have indicated that they are not ready to proceed with a species at risk act because it's a joint requirement and approximately 25 percent of the Yukon is made up of settlement areas. We certainly need to take that into consideration. We cannot advance without our First Nation partners.

The species assessment and the analysis that is being done by the department will continue. It will continue as we look at legislation going forward. The opposition raises a very great point. We want to make sure that we continue on in the dialogue and do it as quickly or as slowly as our partners are with us — but we also certainly need to keep in mind that we have other tools that are readily available to us as we look at the species that have been identified as at risk and use the tools that are available to us so that we continue to protect the species that have been identified — like boreal caribou, for example.

**Ms. White:** Just for clarification, then — so the reason we are not moving forward with this right now is because our First Nation partners don't want us to develop species at risk legislation?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** So, the First Nations have other priorities at this moment. I am not suggesting in any way that they are not supportive of a species at risk act. At the moment, they have other priorities and we need to work with them on the priorities that they have. Certainly, it is a priority for them. It just doesn't find itself, I guess, in the same priority line as we do. We want to make sure that we work with them in their efforts.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that clarification. So, a number of years ago — when I was also the critic for the Environment, but there was a different minister — there was lots of conversation around the water strategy that was being developed at the time. It is something that we speak about less, but it is no less important. So, if the minister can give me, you know, kind of — well, she can give me whatever update she would like about it — but where are we in terms of the Yukon water strategy and action plan?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The water strategy wrapped up last year — but as I am conversing with the department, that conversation continues on, in terms of priorities with our partners.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

So, where could someone like me find an update on the water strategy?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The highlights of the water strategy are online, but I will endeavour to get that information to the member opposite.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I would just point out that, while searching on yukon.ca for the water strategy, it linked me to the 2014 report. It's nice to know that things are changing, and it would be great to be able to find it as well.

One of the things that I think is very important when we talk about, for example, water and the importance of it — a lot has changed, obviously, since 2014, which I am grateful for. I was having conversations about the importance of groundwater in 2014. Now we recognize the importance of groundwater, which I appreciate.

One thing that came up when I knocked on doors for the first time in 2006 — and then multiple times in 2011 and it has never stopped since — is the importance of having a wetlands strategy in Yukon. As we know, every year when we do tributes to biodiversity, we often talk about the importance of wetlands. We talk about how critical wetlands are in protecting our own biodiversity in Yukon, so I want to know what kind of involvement the minister and her department have in the development of a wetlands strategy.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Delivering a wetlands policy remains a Government of Yukon priority. We are committed to completing a policy that reflects Yukon's perspectives and ensures the benefit of Yukon's wetlands — that wetlands are sustained for all. The wetlands policy is targeted to be finalized in 2021. Given that we are currently in the COVID pandemic, that may be delayed by a few months, but I don't have that specific information in front of me at the moment. I would be happy to get back to her with that. We find ourselves in a very complex situation, especially with the uncertainty around the opportunities for engagement. I just want to say that, throughout August and September 2020, the department reviewed the policies with our partners to receive valuable feedback. We are continuing to work on the strategies.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. One thing that I struggle with — and I don't disagree that we're in a pandemic at all; I don't. I also acknowledge that climate is an issue. That is something that I'll also acknowledge, but when questions are

asked and we get told that there's a hangup because there's a pandemic, at this point in time, we're eight months in. We've adapted quite well, I think, at times — maybe less well at other times. There are plenty of opportunities to have large-scale public meetings via online forums. Engage Yukon still continues on. There are options. I appreciate that I heard from the minister when she said "in 2021".

One of the challenges, I guess — and I stand to be corrected and I welcome the minister to do those corrections. I was in this House and also in the capacity as critic of the Environment when, a few years ago, the Yukon Party decided to do a single inspection regime for mining. What that meant is that they were both the regulator and the promoter, but they also took away water monitoring from the Department of Environment. It moved from the Department of Environment to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

What we saw was both a promoter and then a regulator all in one thing. It was challenging, because there were lots of questions, and questions still remain. For example, who ensures that the environmental legislation and regulations are respected? Because now we have the environment that is being affected, but it's being looked at by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. What I wanted to know is: Does the minister recognize, and maybe even acknowledge, the inherent conflict with this dual role? Water monitoring and enforcement used to be under the Department of Environment, and then it was moved out to Energy, Mines and Resources. I wanted to know if the minister had some thoughts on that.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Just for clarification, mining promotions moved to Economic Development and water remains with Environment. We continue to work in collaboration within government as we look at the agreements between the departments to coordinate expertise, including the role for water supports, water experts, and inspectors to enforce various activities. The agreement has been in place, and I look forward to further questions.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the answer about water. So, what about the environmental inspections that would happen, for example, to a mine site? Is that done by the Department of Environment, or is that done by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** As I understand it, the inspections are done through EMR and the Department of Environment provides technical support.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister. What plans does the minister have for restoring the autonomy and integrity of environmental protection if it is currently kind of separated between two departments?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can acknowledge that the Department of Environment works very closely with Energy, Mines and Resources and our partners in supporting the inspections and the work that is done. We certainly take a one-government approach and work very collaboratively in terms of enhancing supports for both departments. There is expertise and there are professionals who work in both departments. I would suggest that they are working well together. I am not sure what the member opposite is implying with the question, but I do know

that the departments are working very well together. They are taking a one-government approach as they look at the supports that are required.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that, Mr. Chair. What am I alluding to? Well, the closer the relationship, the greater the potential conflict when we talk about development.

Again, if the Minister of Environment is responsible for advocating for and defending the environment, how is the Minister responsible for Environment ensuring that there is an independent and objective assessment at all times when we are talking about mine development? There is a potential conflict. The reason I am asking these questions is that, when it was explained to me about how we could look at governmental or ministerial roles around the table, the person who champions for the environment is the Minister of Environment.

I hear about a one-government approach all the time. I can say that, from different aspects, it hasn't worked. We can use the words, but it doesn't mean that this is how it's actually working. The champion around that table for the environment is the Minister of Environment, so how do we make sure that there is that ability to make sure that the environmental needs — for example, the ecological needs of the environment — are first and foremost in mind when those decisions are being made?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Let's talk about the comments with respect to compliance and integrity. My priority has always been, and it will always be, environmental protection and looking at conservation as a priority and looking at sustainability of the environment.

I can certainly say that I've championed many efforts, including: the protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; protecting boreal caribou; implementing ethics legislation; pushing forward regulations with respect to the Peel plan; and sitting at the negotiating table and pushing forward through litigation, representing my First Nation and that of the northern First Nations. In terms of integrity, I would suggest that I will always bring that into consideration when I look at advocating for protecting the environment and assessing the independent considerations that are the prerogative of this government as we look at our responsibilities.

We have tools that are readily available to us. YESAA, for example — the YESAA processes that have been established to allow a neutral process to take effect and always take into consideration best interests around fish and wildlife, the environment, and environmental protection. The department and this government act as intervenors on the Water Board and the YESAA processes that have been established for us under the self-government agreements.

As we go ahead into the future, we look at ecological sustainability, we look at *Our Clean Future*, and we look at climate change strategies. Everything that we're doing in this government is about protecting our environment and keeping the integrity and sustainability always in the forefront of our minds as we look at equal representation and equal voices at the table. We're going through this exercise right now as we look at our Yukon-wide water strategies. We do this as we look at co-management efforts in various fronts and various issues that

are brought to our attention around hunting concerns, for example, or hunting pressures as we look at development.

Well, certainly, we want to take into consideration everything that comes before us to always ensure that we have environmental protection and sustainability of the resources that are there and that are the obligation of Environment. At the same time, we have an opportunity to look at providing guidance to various departments when it comes to environmental integrity and supports, and that is done with the experts in the Department of Environment.

**Ms. White:** I will apologize to the minister first for the misunderstanding. I wasn't questioning her integrity. I was talking about the integrity of the environment — the physical integrity. For example, a natural space without a road — that would maintain its integrity. It would be intact.

I wasn't speaking about that. I do not question the minister's integrity. She has a very extensive resumé with lots of very cool things, and that was not my intention. I apologize, but I was still talking about the relationship between the Department of Environment and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, partially because one is about protection and one is about promotion in a different way.

The minister did reference YESAA, which is a great kind of foray into my next questions. How does the Department of Environment participate in things like, for example, land use planning? The example that I will use right now is that we have the Beaver River watershed as a small land use plan that is going in. How does the Department of Environment participate in that process?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Just reflecting on the establishment of land use plans and such in the Yukon, the chapters of the agreement certainly lay out very clearly the parameters around how we engage on land use planning and the various considerations that are taken into discussion, I guess — brought into the deliberations. There is always a senior liaison committee established on various land use plans as we progress.

The senior liaison committee is made up of representation of the parties and the interest groups as we look at the specific zone and the specific area. So, the collaboration is that liaison committee and the technical working group, with the departments of Environment and Energy, Mines and Resources co-leading and participating equally at the table, representing our respective interests.

**Ms. White:** The reason I am asking this question is — I went to the public meetings for the Beaver River land use plan. There was a conflict. We could see the conflict. The conflict was around environmental protection and mining development. The conflict is there.

The reason why I keep on coming back to that is: How does the minister, as the Minister of Environment, reconcile having the mineral promotion and development department doing the on-the-ground work of providing the Minister of Environment with independent advice about decisions that are being made? I am just trying to figure out how that conflict is resolved. I say "conflict" because, having gone to those meetings, there was visible conflict. I am not talking about people swinging at each other, but you could see that there were differences and that



they were going to be hard to reconcile. How does the minister reconcile that?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** On the specific question of the Beaver River land use planning process, the Government of Yukon continues to work with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to develop a land use plan — of course, with the priority around fish and wildlife monitoring, adaptive management plans, and the road access management plan. The agreement is between the Government of Yukon — which is the departments of Environment and Energy, Mines and Resources, co-leading the discussions — with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. In this case, the renewable resources council would participate when it deals with specific regional recommendations on co-management. I would venture to say that this process is evolving and gathering feedback as the work is being discussed between all parties and stakeholders.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

I guess one of the things I'm having a hard time reconciling then is how we can see chapter 11 of the final agreements with respect to a regional land use plan for Na-Cho Nyäk Dun when we're talking about having a sub-regional plan in there. I guess one of the challenges at these public meetings is that there was no discussion about what happened outside of those boundaries. The boundaries of the sub-regional land use plan was very — there was no discussion on the outside of that. So, how does the minister see this plan fulfilling the requirements of chapter 11 if it's outside of the regional land use planning with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Just to provide a little more clarity, as we look at the confines and the direction or the procedures as it's established for us under chapter 11 — as we look at land use plans — we know that there are two established plans. One is the North Yukon plan; the other is the Peel plan. We're in the middle of a land use plan with the Dawson Regional Land Use Plan process right now.

So, chapter 11 doesn't apply in this instance with the Beaver River plan. We took the concepts as it's defined and worked with the First Nations as we looked at an adaptive management plan. So, just for the record: The Beaver River land use planning committee includes representation from the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Government of Yukon in advancing the work.

I can say that we have worked outside of the agreements to work with other First Nations — like the Selkirk First Nation, for example, or the collaboration of the Northern Tutchone nations as we look at the Ddhaw Ghro plan. It took a lot of effort and a lot of years to get there. We are working through the same process through the Kusawa park plan.

We are trying to look at opportunities to advance and collaborate on measures that would allow us to address the concerns that have been brought forward from the department but still look at our approaches as we define the working group and develop land use plans.

Of course, perhaps the next set of land use plans will be identified formally once we conclude the Dawson regional plan — but the work of this working group is not clearly identified under chapter 11.

**Ms. White:** I guess one of the reasons why I'm bringing this up right now is — I'll just ask this for clarification and education on my side. Land use plans — when they're being developed, does it go through the Yukon Land Use Planning Council?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The land use planning commission identifies a planning region. In this instance — with the Beaver River plan — they would not have done that because it's not in the parameters of chapter 11.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that clarification. It was fascinating initially when there was a discussion about doing this sub-regional land use plan, because I contacted the council when I was trying to look for clarification and understanding. They 100 percent said, "We have nothing to do with it." So, that was kind of part of it.

Again, I'm trying to figure out the relationship between — where the Department of Environment and land use planning goes. One thing that has — well, something that has been recently — there was just the YESAB meeting in Dawson City about the Indian River wetlands. What kind of feedback or information was submitted by the Department of Environment for the YESAA process with the Indian River wetlands?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The Department of Environment is currently working on a Yukon-wide wetlands strategy and isn't specifically focusing on the Indian River. As Energy, Mines and Resources looks at mineral development in the area, they of course have to consider water management, and that is the Department of Environment's responsibility. We do feed into that process as the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources makes their decisions and recommendations going forward. We do provide water monitoring in that area in the Indian River and lead-in technically to decisions that are made.

**Ms. White:** Does the minister share the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun chiefs' concerns that continued placer mining in the Indian River wetlands, prior to completion of the wetlands policy, is a contradiction in how that planning should go if the decision is made prior to the ultimate decision being made?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I can confirm that we are working — it is an internal process — and we do continue to collaborate and work with EMR. We have had joint sessions with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and, in this case, with Vuntut Gwitchin as well to speak about collaboration in the north, and we will continue to do that in a respectful way.

**Ms. White:** I guess what I am trying to get to — and the point of the chiefs — is: Can you restore a wetland to pre-disruption? Does the minister acknowledge that this is the concern of the chiefs? They have said it in letters. Their concern is: How do you restore a wetland to pre-disruption? That is why it is a question of land use planning and development.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The question around working with the chiefs — I will certainly always take into consideration what we are hearing and work with our partners as we look at strategies. The technical question that the member opposite is asking — about whether or not the wetlands can be restored — is a technical question that I will leave to the experts to respond to. We do work with our partners in Energy, Mines and

Resources. We will continue to do our collaboration and our due diligence with our partners as well, and that is working very closely with the northern chiefs.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

In developing a wetlands strategy, just based on what we're seeing right now around the Indian River, does that mean that, if there is any kind of staking near a wetland, that wetland will not be included in a protection strategy?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Delivering a wetlands policy remains our priority. As we look at the targets, I want to say that we certainly will work with our partners. The questions that are being asked are technical questions that I will leave to the department to respond to as they work on their wetlands strategy. What I can say is that we have worked very successfully with some of our northern partners on some of the approaches to wetlands. We just signed off on the Ch'ihili Chik wetlands strategy for north Yukon.

That took a lot of years to get there and that was done in collaboration with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. That is, I think, an indication that we always look at collaboration and working with our partners as we identify key priority areas and special management areas where wetlands are identified and try to collaborate under the parameters of the land use planning process.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that, but when the minister talks about delivering a policy or the wetland — the strategy will come; the policy will come — I guess that one of the questions I have is: Are we waiting until after the Indian River, for example, wetland has been mined out?

I appreciate the example of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, but the north Yukon has had a land use plan since 2009. So, I mean, there has been protection there. The reason why I am asking about the wetlands policy, or the strategy, is because I have been told multiple times that they have been brought forward to Cabinet — different Cabinets, of course — but, you know, similar to land use planning, had we done it when Yukon government had committed to, we wouldn't be in this position because we would have already done the planning process for these areas and we wouldn't be in the spot where the conflict was arising between development and protection. That is the reason why I continue to ask about that, but I will move on — I think, probably, to the relief of everyone.

There was an application process for youth to apply for the Youth Panel of Climate Change. I imagine that we should be getting close to that. I was wondering when we would know about those successful applicants.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Going back to the wetlands policy — in 2014, the Yukon water strategy action plan directed the Government of Yukon to develop a policy for managing Yukon wetlands. Not a lot had happened since that time. We came on as a government and pushed it forward to look at developing a Yukon-wide policy and developing and using a partnerships approach and looking at public engagement. So, we have been developing the draft Yukon policy with Yukon First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, federal and municipal governments, industry, and other organizations in order to

develop a strong and consistent stewardship approach that reflects the values and interests of all Yukoners.

We recognize that wetlands are essential for biodiversity, water filtration, climate change mitigation, and adaptation, as well as for cultural and social connections.

As the member opposite noted, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has raised some significant cultural interest in the area. Obviously, we take those things into consideration as we look at designing models that have co-interests.

We look at the next question that the member opposite asked about the climate change strategy and the youth fellowship and youth approach. We are currently looking at reviewing the applicants. The process closed. We're really excited to announce that we've had a lot of interest — which is a good indication. Of course, youth are passionate about the environment, passionate about climate, and they are educated and have a lot of input to offer. We are happy to say that we are going to go through that exercise and to the selection and make the announcement in December.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that — highlighting of course that the announcement was made in 2019 in the fall. I asked the Premier at the time how people could apply because I was getting contacted by teachers and students who were doing the Climate Rise. So, I'm excited to hear that they will soon be announced. I think that they would look forward to getting on with the work that they would like to do.

I know that this is a topic that's near and dear to the minister's heart, and we don't have much time, so I think I'll end on a high note. I'm sure that the world has recognized that there has been a presidential election in the United States and I wish that we were less affected, and sometimes we are. But can the minister tell me what the next steps are for the Yukon government as far protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** A very great question. We have, in the past year, met on three different occasions with our partners. I facilitated and shared in those meetings — including our partner, Canada, at the table and GNWT — to look at supporting our Gwich'in partners and the Gwich'in nations in moving forward on protecting the Arctic refuge.

Right now, with the presidential election as it has evolved — we are optimistic, but of course we always have the hard work to do. It has taken us 30 years to get here. We've gone many times to the table to develop — and then of course the decision on the reversal through the Obama administration. The recommendations to protect the Arctic refuge and create a wilderness designation with President-elect Biden as co-president — indicating protection. We're certainly looking at reflecting on the decision that was made by the United States Secretary of the Department of the Interior to open up the Arctic refuge for significant development. We want to consistently work with our partners. So, we are now having those conversations and re-establishing our connections. It's more imminent now than before, and we're waiting for the transition to happen and considering and reflecting on where we are with the responses that we have received through the environmental assessment process.

**Ms. White:** We're so close to the end, so 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. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### **Chair's report**

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 68

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, November 25, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, November 25, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I would ask the members of the Assembly to kindly welcome some individuals who are here today. We are continuing on with our geoscience theme. With us today for our tribute is Mr. Jeff Bond, who is head of surficial geology with the Yukon Geological Survey, and his son Sullivan Bond. Grant Allan, the president of the Yukon Prospectors Association, is also with us today, as well as Lorelee Johnstone, director with the Yukon Chamber of Mines, and Samson Hartland, executive director of the Yukon Chamber of Mines.

Please help me in welcoming them here today.

*Applause*

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I would like my colleagues to help me welcome Émilie Dory, the executive director for Les EssentiElles, and Camille Lebeau, executive assistant for Les EssentiElles. Thank you for coming today.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

Every year, the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence launches on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. It ends on December 10, Human Rights Day.

This has certainly been a difficult year. Measures taken in order to limit the spread of COVID-19 have forced people to spend more time in their home, which is unfortunately not a safe place for everyone. When this reality is combined with the rising levels of anxiety and perhaps uncertainty about the future, it has led to a rise of gender-based violence locally, nationally, and internationally.

Mr. Speaker, it is being referred to as a “shadow pandemic”. The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence offers us an opportunity to address this shadow pandemic. Today, I would like to call on all Yukoners to think

about what they can do during this year’s campaign that will help end violence.

I have thought of 16 examples:

(1) Today, on November 25, you can join a campfire conversation at Roddy’s Camp at Yukon University, hosted by Les EssentiElles and the Victoria Faulkner Women’s Centre;

(2) Next, take the time to educate yourself about violence and reflect on how your own behaviour might contribute to the problem;

(3) Speak out publicly against violence against indigenous women and girls and LGBTQ2S+ people if you see it around you;

(4) Speak to the youth in your life. It is never too early to start teaching kids about gender equality, respect, and justice;

(5) Speak up against victim blaming. Victim blaming is a major reason that victims do not come forward to talk about their experiences of violence. Victims are not to blame for the violence committed against them;

(6) Challenge the stereotypes of men. Do away with the phrases like “Boys will be boys” or “You run like a girl”, and help kids to recognize the negative impact of stereotypes on their self-esteem;

(7) Ask if there are policies or practices in your workplace to ensure that it is a safe place for everyone. If you are a leader or a supervisor, put them in place;

(8) Teach kids and youth how to use a critical lens when consuming media. Children are exposed to many messages and media, including ones that promote harmful gender norms and enable violence;

(9) Make a donation to a women’s organization. Despite the pandemic, these organizations have worked tirelessly to bridge gaps in support of women and children during these unprecedented times. I would like to thank them from the bottom of my heart for the work that they’ve done on behalf of all Yukoners;

(10) Volunteer at a local women’s or equality-seeking organization. You can join their board;

(11) Hold up the young women and gender-diverse leaders in your life. Support them;

(12) Learn what intersectionality is. Learn how different people experience barriers to equality and justice differently;

(13) On December 6, take a moment to remember the 14 women who lost their lives at École Polytechnique simply because of their gender;

(14) Read the final report or summary report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It’s entitled *Reclaiming Power and Place*;

(15) When the Yukon MMIWG2S+ strategy is released, consider how you can play a role; and

(16) Run for office. Although this job is hard, we do truly have an opportunity to improve supports and address some of those pathways that lead to violence. It’s a responsibility and a very deep honour.

In closing, between November 25 and December 10, I encourage everyone to join the conversation and reflect on the steps that we can take to end gender-based violence.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which begins today.

Today marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Over the next 16 days, we will recognize a number of important dates related to gender-based violence.

This year, due to COVID-19 guidelines, restrictions, and the virus itself, we have seen families challenged and tested in many ways. Financial stress, health worries and impacts, working from home, school from home, social isolation, and increased alcohol and drug use are seen around the globe, and Yukon is not exempt. Unfortunately, along with these types of stressors, we also see a huge increase in domestic and gender-based violence.

On my way to work this morning, I listened to someone speak on the radio about the increase in domestic violence against women. The presenter used the phrase “trapped at home”. This is so scary and sad, as home should be your safe place.

We need to recognize these concerns as we head into another wave of COVID-19 and increased restrictions. We need to keep a close eye on those who may be victims of any type of violence. Check in on your loved ones, your neighbours, and your friends. As we head into what is already ramping up to be a particularly stressful holiday season, you never know who could use some additional conversation. Speak up if you suspect violence in a home. If you are a victim of violence, know that it is not right, it is not normal, and there are ways to make it stop.

Talk to a friend or a family member. Work on a plan to make sure you and your family are safe. A code phrase, if you can't speak or text freely — this could be easy to put into action, but it must be done.

I do believe the key to ending gender-based violence lies within each and every one of us. Family members and friends all have a role to play to ensure that violence stops or that violence never begins.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus in recognition of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. We honour and amplify the voices of survivors and the grassroots organizations that support them. We know that the work done by organizations like the Women's Transition Home, Help and Hope for Families, Dawson Helping Tree, Victoria Faulkner's Women's Centre, Les EssentiElles, and others is always important, but never more so than now.

This year, as the world retreated inside homes due to the lockdown measures introduced to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an alarming increase in the already existing prevalence of violence against women and girls. Quarantine and social isolation have negatively influenced mental health, increasing the risk of problematic coping behaviours, including family violence and conflict.

These factors and others have exacerbated the risk of violence against women and girls here at home, across the country, and around the world. The roots of gender-based violence are all around us — in sexist jokes that degrade women, in the language that is used to isolate, in media messages that objectify women, and in the rigid gender norms imposed on young children.

This campaign has always been a time to bring to the forefront the disproportionate levels of violence faced by women and girls, as well as diverse populations, including indigenous peoples, people of colour, LBGTQS2+ community members, gender non-binary individuals, those living in northern, rural, and remote communities, people with disabilities, newcomers, children, youth, and seniors.

Mr. Speaker, we all have a role to play in ending gender-based violence. So, today on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and kickoff of the White Ribbon campaign, we ask that men and boys be allies to your mothers, your sisters, your daughters, and aunts and take the White Ribbon pledge — a pledge that says: “I pledge never to commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women.”

*Applause*

#### **In recognition of Yukon Geoscience Forum awards**

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to this year's Yukon geoscience award winners.

The first is Lorelee Johnstone, winner of this year's Yukon Chamber of Mines Yukon geoscience member award. In her role as director of permitting and sustainability for Coeur Silvertip, Lorelee exemplified support for environmentally responsible mining operations through her work on environmental impact mitigation.

Early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, Lorelee, the Liard First Nation, and volunteers and local businesses provided hundreds of meals to community members through the Watson Lake Hearts and Hands program. Lorelee was also the mining association representative on the Government of Yukon's Business Advisory Council established earlier this year.

Lorelee has remained committed through the years to advancing Yukon's mineral industry, working for government, regulatory bodies, and mineral exploration and mining companies.

Mr. Speaker, in that role on the Yukon Business Advisory Council, Lorelee also was the lead coordinator and communicator with government concerning the YMAC group, which represented all mining groups, and did an exceptional job. Also, she worked from sun-up to sundown — and it was the summertime, so that's a lot of hours — every day on behalf of the mining industry. I don't think that you would have seen some of the positive things happen if it wasn't for that work.

Also, congratulations to her on her new role as vice-president of Whitehorse Gold Corp., which is one of the newest companies to form focused on the Yukon. She will be working with them.



Also, Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize Jeff Bond, winner of this year's Yukon Chamber of Mines Yukon geoscience community award. Jeff is head of surficial geology with the Yukon Geological Survey where he has worked for 23 years. Geohazards such as landslides and permafrost keep him occupied, as highlighted by Jeff's work with veteran placer miner Greg Hakonson in identifying the Sunnyside slide in Dawson this summer.

Jeff coordinates the placer mining forum at the Geoscience Forum and is renowned for his annual overview of the placer industry. Jeff visits a significant number of active placer operations every year, documenting their work and providing insight and understanding of their deposits. Jeff has assisted the mineral exploration and placer mining sectors, land use planning, our broader understanding of glacial history in the north, and supported public outreach. His scientific, economic, and social contributions are among the many reasons why the Yukon Geological Survey is so highly regarded worldwide.

Jeff is also this year's recipient of the Committee of Provincial and Territorial Geologists medal. The acting Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in the Yukon gets an opportunity to give that out once every 14 years. It was an honour yesterday to be able to provide Jeff with that award, which is awarded to the geologist working on one of Canada's surveys in recognition of their scientific contributions and the impacts of their work.

In closing, all I can say is: Sullivan, your father is absolutely incredible at what he does.

The third award winner is Dena Nezziddi Development Corporation, this year's Yukon Chamber of Mines and Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce Yukon First Nations in Mining Award. Under CEO Stanley Noel, Ross River Dena Development Corporation created 26 jobs and saw strong growth last year. They have provided training to a further 20 youth and underemployed individuals in the last 12 months, provided over \$100,000 to community events and sponsorship initiatives, and hosted a community summer student employment program that hired nine full-time youth this past summer in environmental training positions.

The corporation is Yukon's largest 100-percent First Nation-owned camp leasing company and Yukon's largest 100-percent First Nation-owned fuel services company and has growing construction and environmental services companies. The corporation creates jobs, provides funding support, hires youth, funds training, provides local services, and much more.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge as well Jodie Gibson, winner of the Yukon Prospectors Association Prospector of the Year Award. Jodie claims that his father was a part-time prospector, but I imagine that he is one of the reasons Jodie was able to play such a large role in identifying and expanding Yukon's mineral wealth on a regional scale.

Jodie was a project manager on the White Gold project for Underworld Resources in 2009 at the time of the discovery hole. This contributed to sparking Yukon's new gold rush. In 2012, Jodie was the project manager for the QV Gold Project held by Comstock Metals, which also led to the delineation of a deposit.

Yukon has benefitted greatly from his diligence and expertise, and I thank Jodie for his tireless dedication and hard work. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members to join me in congratulating this year's deserving winners.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 48<sup>th</sup> annual Yukon Chamber of Mines 2020 award winners. This year's Geoscience Forum, held from November 23 to today, November 25, is certainly different from what people are accustomed to attending. Due to COVID-19, an innovative, virtual conference was held with guest speakers and presenters hosting presentations, online sessions, and one-on-one sessions, as well as a trade show. Topics included innovation, infrastructure development, and environment reclamation, to name a few.

The virtual awards gala hosted by the Chamber of Mines president, Ed Peart, was a first, and to repeat his phrase, this was modern and responsible, a new way to do business. The chamber continues to support a dynamic and strong industry and a membership that is not only active, but very involved in the Yukon's mining industry.

Now, on to the winners — geologist Jodie Gibson, who has been awarded Prospector of the Year by the Yukon Prospectors Association. Mr. Gibson is a well-respected geologist who has extensive exploration experience throughout North America and has worked on various projects in the Yukon over the decade; Jeff Bond, a geologist with the Yukon Geological Survey, is the recipient of the Yukon Chamber of Mines Community Award for his work in working with active mines to promote best practices, wetlands management, his Beringia knowledge, and so much more. Thank you, Jeff, for your important contributions.

Loralee Johnstone, who is director of permitting and sustainability for Coeur Mining, has been awarded the Yukon Chamber of Mines geoscience 2020 member award. Active in the industry for many years, we congratulate Loralee. Last but definitely not least, the Dena Nezziddi Development Corporation, Ross River Dena Council, Stanley Noel, CEO, and Stuart VanBibber, vice-president, are the recipients of the Yukon Chamber of Mines First Nations in Mining Award.

The corporation fosters and assists with a wide range of community economic development initiatives and maximizes local participation in resource development for Ross River citizens. Congratulations, and continue the amazing work.

A huge thanks to the chamber's board of directors, staff, and conference team for the outstanding productions. As well, kudos to the always fantastic sponsors, partners, the delegates, speakers, exhibitors, and the many volunteers who made this year's forum awesome.

To the focus of this tribute, all of the recipients of the awards, your roles and influence in the industry are immense and your awards are so well-deserved. Congratulations again, and good luck in the coming years.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Mr. Istchenko:** I have a letter written to the Hon. Chrystia Freeland, federal Minister of Finance, from Currie Dixon, Leader of the Yukon Party.

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

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

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports increasing the use of virtual care and developing options for Yukoners to connect with care from their homes and in their communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Liberal government to:

- (1) announce public health measures as soon as possible and through appropriate Government of Yukon channels after decisions are made;
- (2) share information about the government's pandemic response with all MLAs and not just members of the Liberal caucus; and;
- (3) end the practice of politicizing public health announcements by branding them with the Liberal logo.

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

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Housing initiatives fund

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Affordable housing is a significant challenge for many Yukoners, and we are working hard to address it. On November 16, 2020, we launched the fourth intake of the housing initiatives fund to support the construction of affordable housing for Yukoners across the territory.

Shovel-ready projects in Whitehorse can receive \$60,000 per unit and up to \$600,000 per project. Shovel-ready projects in rural Yukon communities can receive \$90,000 per unit, up to \$900,000 per project. Project concepts can receive up to \$20,000. First Nation governments, First Nation development corporations, contractors, community organizations, and the general public can apply to this \$3.6-million annual fund to support projects that will increase affordable housing options in their community.

This funding can be used with other Yukon Housing Corporation programs such as the municipal matching construction program, the developer-build loan program, and the federal funding initiative. Over the past three intakes, this

program has successfully supported projects that will lead to over 350 new affordable homes in Yukon communities. These projects are creating new housing for rent and for sale which increase the availability of affordable housing options for Yukoners. These projects will help Yukoners access affordable housing in the private market to First Nation housing providers and community organizations.

Of the 43 projects supported through the fund, 33 of these projects applied through our shovel-ready funding stream and 10 through our project concept stream. To date, 10 shovel-ready projects have been completed and 17 projects are underway. Six are working to start construction.

While most projects have been able to begin work on schedule, others have had to refine or adjust their plans due to the pandemic. The ongoing challenges of building here in the north work to align with other funding sources to ensure that their projects are successful.

One important project that I would like to highlight is Normandy Manor. Once completed, this privately owned and operated seniors supportive housing project in Whitehorse in the Takhini subdivision will provide 84 new housing units. This is one of the positive steps taken by our government to alleviate the ever-growing pressure for reliable housing for our elderly population.

We are pleased to see that many of the shovel-ready projects have started or completed construction. We are committed to work with all of our proponents to help them succeed, and the sooner those units can provide housing to Yukoners in need, the better.

This year's intake is the second year that we have included a project concept stream which supports projects that are in the preliminary phases of planning. Many individuals and organizations across the territory have ideas for housing projects. We are helping bring these ideas to life.

We encourage governments, community organizations, developers, and individuals to apply to this year's fund. Together, we can help to support Yukoners to find a home that meets their needs and that they can afford. Our government is proud to have been part of the effort in bringing over 350 homes to Yukoners. We look forward to supporting the construction of more homes going forward. Thank you.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this ministerial statement. We appreciate the updates from government on this initiative.

As you know, the housing wait-list has skyrocketed under this Liberal government from 105 in July 2016 to 316 as of October this year. Any efforts to reduce the wait-list that has grown significantly under the Liberals are welcome.

The minister said that shovel-ready projects in Whitehorse can receive \$60,000 per unit, up to \$600,000 per project. She then goes on to reference the Normandy project as part of this statement. This sounds like a promising project.

On November 16, the Premier stated, during debate on the budget, that the project has received approximately \$4.5 million in Yukon government funding, plus \$1 million from Canada. The Premier said that it came out of existing

capital resources in the Yukon Housing Corporation budget. Can the minister tell us what line item those dollars came from?

Of course, we know that the Vimy Heritage Housing Society is a not-for-profit organization that is also looking to build an assisted living facility here in Whitehorse. We know that all three caucuses met with Vimy representatives prior to the start of this current Sitting for an update on this project. Is the government contemplating supports for Vimy out of this program or through the Yukon Housing Corporation budget?

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on the topic of housing today.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her statement today. Affordable housing is indeed critically important in an environment such as ours. Anything that can be done to encourage and support the construction of affordable housing is applauded. As far as the housing initiatives fund as a whole, last week I requested from the minister's office a list of each project and the completion stage that they're at. I look forward to receiving this information soon.

Because so little information is publicly available about one of the projects the minister referenced, I want to start with a few questions about Normandy Manor. As the minister of both the Yukon Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services, I'm hoping that, with the one-government approach, she will provide some clarity on this one particular project.

How much money has Yukon government funded toward the construction of Normandy Manor? Has it been \$60,000 a unit, to the maximum allowable amount of \$600,000, or is it a different amount? Has the Yukon Housing Corporation entered into any other agreement with Normandy Manor, like guaranteeing a number of units to be rented through the corporation? As the Minister of Yukon Housing Corporation who is also the Minister of Health and Social Services noted, this would be a privately owned and operated seniors supportive housing project. My next question is about whether this is Yukon government's first step toward the privatization of senior and elder care in Yukon. What model of care will be provided at Normandy Manor and what scope of assistance will residents of this building have access to?

While the fund is full of promises, the housing situation in Yukon is dire. So, clearly, it has not done enough to alleviate our housing crisis. The minister can make a ministerial statement about housing every single day for the rest of the Legislative Sitting, but it won't change the reality that Yukoners face when looking for a place to live. That reality is that housing in Yukon is harsh. It is harsh for the young family who sees their dream of home ownership slipping away as real estate costs increase much faster than their wages. It is harsh for the retail worker who has to spend 50 percent or more of their revenue to rent an apartment that is too small for their family. It is also harsh for the 360 people who are on the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list, and it is harsh for the mobile homeowners who were forgotten by most programs announced by this government.

So, the minister can make more announcements and ministerial statements praising the work done on this issue, but

as long as the lived reality that people face every day isn't getting any better, it will ring hollow to Yukoners who continue to struggle to find appropriate and affordable housing.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I am very pleased with the collaboration on all projects that we have delivered under the Yukon Housing Corporation — always looking for collaboration. Collaboration is the way of the future, in terms of working together in finding solutions to Yukon's housing challenges.

We know that there have been historical concerns and issues with the catch-up/keep-up requirements — in particular, in rural Yukon communities. We know that Yukoners are in need of new affordable homes. We know that Yukoners across the housing continuum face differing circumstances. We work hard to provide Yukoners with a wide variety of housing solutions to meet their needs.

We acknowledge the need for affordable housing and we will continue to address that as our population increases. Our government supports a multi-faceted approach to bringing safe and affordable housing to Yukoners; our programs reflect this.

Today, I spoke of the fourth intake of the housing initiatives fund which is supporting the addition of 350 homes throughout the Yukon — different from the last three intakes. We have increased the funding threshold to reflect higher costs of construction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The rural per-unit grant has increased from \$80,000 to \$90,000 and the Whitehorse per-unit grant increased from \$50,000 to \$60,000. The Normandy Manor project is currently under construction and will provide an additional 84 housing units for Yukoners. We have reached out to many and we'll continue to work with the Vimy Heritage Housing Society to support them as well.

As the Members of the Legislative Assembly are aware, we have supported Vimy in its endeavours and its initiatives as well. We expect one in five Yukoners to be seniors or an elder by 2040 and we recognize that and recognize that we have significant work to do with our partners to provide more options for our elderly.

Some of the solutions we are working hard on bringing to Yukoners are immediate, such as the recently announced Canada-Yukon housing benefit that provides a rental subsidy directly to the tenants. Some of the other housing solutions such as the housing initiatives fund are undertakings that are more complex but will increase funding for housing significantly as the units become available and projects become available. We are always on the lookout for new and creative housing solutions for Yukoners. Whether your housing project is shovel-ready or in a preliminary planning stage, our government consistently demonstrates that, if the goal of affordable housing for Yukoners is shared, we can be a true partner. I am enthusiastic about the fourth intake of the housing initiatives fund. Together with our partners, we can significantly improve housing in all of our communities.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Just before we begin Question Period, I will note to members that I have been advised that there will be a

test of the emergency alert system which is estimated to take place at 1:55 p.m. on cellphones today.

In light of that, I would ask that all members actually physically turn their cellphones completely off during Question Period as we do anticipate that, even if you are on silent mode, it's possible that the emergency signal will interrupt the proceedings.

You can of course reactivate your devices after we complete Question Period.

I hope that members can get by for the next 25 or 30 minutes. I anticipate that members' phones are generally not completely off, but in any event, I have told you.

This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: COVID-19 pandemic public health measures

**Mr. Hassard:** Way back in October of 2017, the Minister of Health and Social Services was asked to update Yukoners on a health conference she had attended, and she shockingly responded — and I quote: “That’s above my pay scale.”

Yesterday, the minister was asked about the government’s public health response to the pandemic, and she made an even more outrageous claim. The minister actually said — and I quote: “The government is not responsible; Members of the Legislative Assembly are not responsible; I’m not responsible.”

“I’m not responsible.” So, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Health and Social Services and the government are not responsible for the government’s response to the pandemic, then who is?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I’m quite happy to speak to Yukoners about the great work that we have done to provide significant health improvements for all Yukoners. My role, as a Health minister — it is certainly not my role alone, which I have indicated; it is the role of all partners to work toward better health initiatives and better health outcomes.

With respect to comments that are made by the member opposite — continuously, throughout the session, members of the Official Opposition perhaps like to misquote and put misinformation out there. I indicated that I am not solely responsible, as a Health minister. I have partners that I work with. We have First Nation partners; we have the chief medical officer of health; we have many individuals in our community who work together. I will certainly not make decisions that are going to compromise the health and well-being of Yukoners.

I will do it in good faith with my colleagues on this side of the House. We have significantly improved the lives of Yukoners by delivering essential services that members of the opposition have not done. I can say that in good faith, standing here, to assure Yukoners that, during the pandemic, we will continue to provide all of the supports they require to get us through this terrible pandemic that we are in the midst of.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, it’s interesting that the minister talks about misinformation, when those are actually her comments, not mine — not anyone’s from this side of the Legislature.

The Minister of Health and Social Services yesterday made the outrageous claim that she and her government are not responsible for the government’s response to the pandemic. It’s absolutely baffling that, in the middle of a pandemic, a Health minister would get up in the Legislative Assembly and tell Yukoners, “I am not responsible.” But until this minister is no longer the Health minister, it is her responsibility.

With respect to a vaccine, what preparations has the Department of Health and Social Services done? Have they started work on a plan to roll out a vaccine, and will certain groups be prioritized over others or will it be first come, first served?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that the minister spoke very eloquently today about the shared responsibilities. I want to thank her for her leadership on that, making sure that she is one part of a collaborative government on that when it comes to not only the pandemic response, but Health and Social Services reaching out and through her leadership in housing as well, and her many partners in governments across Yukon and nationally. It is an extraordinary job on so many different fronts.

The member opposite talks about planning; we talk about how we will do that together. As a result of the evolving and unprecedented nature of the pandemic, we have adjusted how we work — absolutely. We plan to ensure that we have better alignment across government, maintaining business continuity and facilitating pandemic recovery. Part and parcel of that is the distribution of the vaccine as it occurs in Canada. We have had lots of conversations at the Council of the Federation and the First Ministers’ meetings on that. We have been notified there nationally and also regionally as well that the focus will be on marginalized individuals, on our elderly people, and our health care providers — and that will be no different in the north.

I think that the one thing that would be different here in the north is one of those considerations that we are always pushing on the national level, which is the fact that rural and remote communities need to be prioritized as well. The northern premiers — all three of us — all agree in that chorus.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, as I said, the Minister of Health and Social Services was asked a simple and straightforward question about her decisions and her government’s response to the pandemic. In that response, the minister said, “I’m not responsible”. Well, those are important issues and we would hope that the minister would stop dismissing them.

We have seen concerns recently with one of the vaccine candidates, this one from Pfizer. This potential vaccine needs to be stored at minus 70 degrees Celcius. If this vaccine candidate is chosen, we will need to have adequate equipment to keep it cold. Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us if she has done an assessment as to whether we have the appropriate equipment to store this vaccine? If we do not have this equipment, is the Department of Health and Social Services looking at acquiring extreme cold storage options?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, when it comes to the distribution of a vaccine, I have joined the other premiers — all but one premier, I guess — to say that we really want to see a

national strategy. How confusing would it be for 13 different strategies right across the nation?

The member opposite mentions Pfizer — one of the options. There are many different vaccines coming out, as well, that do not have the cold-storage obligations that the Pfizer vaccine has. We'll note as well that this particular vaccine can be stored for up to four or five days without that extreme temperature, but the member opposite does rightly identify that this is a variable of concern, especially for regions that wouldn't necessarily have — very remote communities right across Canada — access to this. Luckily, third trials and advancements have been going on with the Oxford vaccine, with Moderna, and others. There are options. We know that the federal government has bought millions and millions of doses. We will continue to work with the federal government, and we will continue to push for a national strategy when it comes to vaccination.

### **Question re: COVID-19 exposure notifications in schools**

**Mr. Kent:** Yesterday, the government discussed the notification process for schools in the event that someone who attends or works at a school tests positive for COVID-19. The government has stated that, if there is a case in a school, not everyone who attends that school will be notified. We've heard from a number of school communities that are very concerned with this approach. They feel that this information is needed to make decisions about their health and safety and the health and safety of their kids.

Why does the government not think it is necessary to notify everyone who attends a school if there are positive cases discovered there?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. I want to just reassure all members of this Legislative Assembly and, of course, all Yukoners that the health and safety of our students is our number one priority. I would like to take a moment to really thank the teachers and administrators for their incredible hard work and dedication to learning during this stressful and unusual school year.

Despite the challenging circumstances, we have had a successful first semester, and I think that this is something that Yukoners need to hear. We've done well in Yukon, and I want to thank the students for being so flexible and adaptable over the past few months as we work hard to keep them safe.

In terms of the specific question, if there is a confirmed case, the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit will identify and directly notify anyone who has been in close contact with that case. They will provide direction on who should stay home and self-isolate. A confirmed case will not necessarily mean that a school will be closed. Again, YCDC will provide direction on who needs to stay home and isolate, which may include specific classes or groups of students.

I look forward to further questions.

**Mr. Kent:** So, currently, the possible exposure list on yukon.ca gives information about stores and restaurants where there may have been contact. This allows people to make informed decisions about their health and their safety.

However, under the government's current plan, they will not be sharing similar public health information as it relates to any COVID-19 cases that are found in schools. It was reported that, instead of notifying everyone at a school that a case was discovered there, administrators would only be notified on a confidential basis. This means that parents, students, and, of course, teachers might never find out if there are positive COVID-19 cases discovered in their school. Teachers may have been exposed as they move throughout the school or have supervision responsibilities at recess.

Why has the government decided that it is not necessary to inform all teachers about positive cases in their school?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the follow-up question.

Again, we are working with the chief medical officer of health, and we're taking the lead in terms of how we deal with these situations. I have listened for the last couple of days, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how some of the questions have been framed and some of the attacks and types of insinuations about the systems that we have in place in Yukon.

As a Yukoner, I want to speak to Yukoners — that we have strong systems in place and we are following the lead of the chief medical officer of health. He is an expert in this field. He is an expert in epidemiology, and we are absolutely lucky to have such a professional person working with us in Yukon.

As I've stated already in this question, the health and safety of our students is our number one priority, and we have had a successful opening of schools, thanks to the Minister of Education and the team that she works with.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the chief medical officer of health. I look forward to another question if the member so wishes.

**Mr. Kent:** For the minister, these are health-related questions. There are no attacks. There are no insinuations.

My first question was about notifications for the student population. My second question was about notifications for teachers who may have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus.

In Alberta, they have a school outbreak map that shows the current status of COVID-19 in K to 12 schools across the province. Schools in that province that have two or more confirmed cases will be identified on that map. In Nova Scotia and British Columbia, media stories identify all of the schools where there are positive cases or possible exposures, yet the Yukon government is refusing to share this information with the public.

Why is the government not following the lead of other jurisdictions when it comes to notifying citizens about COVID-19 exposures in schools?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** If there is a confirmed case in Yukon, the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit will identify and directly notify everyone who has been in close contact with that case. They will provide direction on who should stay home and self-isolate. A confirmed case will not necessarily mean that a school will be closed. Again, the YCDC will provide direction on who needs to stay home and isolate, which may include specific classes or groups of students. YCDC will also determine who needs to be notified within the

school community while still ensuring the privacy and security of personal health information. YCDC will notify parents directly if their child has been exposed, as well as school administrators, on a confidential basis. The school administration does not notify students, staff, or families; YCDC does.

Again, we are working with our Yukon chief medical officer of health, and we will continue to do that. We are not Alberta, as the member opposite has referenced. We do work with our colleagues across the country, but we take our lead from our Yukon chief medical officer of health.

**Question re: Air traffic control services**

**Ms. Hanson:** Nav Canada has announced that they are reviewing services and will be cutting air traffic controller jobs at different airport towers across Canada. The Whitehorse airport tower is included in their review and is at risk of losing the air traffic control services. Currently, air traffic controllers are in the tower in Whitehorse from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Flight service specialists are then available at the airport for the remaining hours.

Has the minister spoken to Nav Canada about the possibility that the Whitehorse airport will no longer have air traffic controllers?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** During this time of uncertainty, Yukoners demand consistent leadership and clear information. The member opposite's question this afternoon certainly provides the opportunity for me to provide that to Yukoners. I have been in touch with the president of Nav Canada, Neil Wilson, earlier this year. I was actually in conversation with him, asking him if there's a possibility of him forgiving fees that our aviation industry has to pay to Nav Canada. Of course, we have forgiven our fees at Whitehorse International Airport and airports across the territory, and we are seeking partnership with Nav Canada on that initiative.

During that conversation, I learned the precarious nature of Nav Canada's funding arrangements and how they do receive money, so I am not surprised that Nav Canada is actually examining how it might cut costs during this time of COVID-19.

I have also heard, Mr. Speaker, from Nav Canada employees here working in the tower, and I have heard their concerns about possible changes to the staffing levels at the tower. We know that air traffic is down in the territory right now because of the pandemic — down to levels not seen since 2015. We also know that this is a temporary measure.

We are currently in conversation with Nav Canada, and the Department of Highways and Public Works is assessing the situation.

**Ms. Hanson:** So, now we've heard that the minister has had lots of talks — great. The fact is that safe air traffic management depends on the air traffic controllers in the tower. The president of Air North has stated that the loss of these jobs would degrade the level of safety at Whitehorse airport. Flight service specialists — perhaps the minister understands what their function is — would cover the full 24 hours but only provide advisory services around weather observation, runway

conditions, and air traffic. They do not direct pilots, leaving it up to the pilots to keep safe distances from other planes.

What is this government doing — actually doing — to ensure that Whitehorse airport maintains its level of safety for all pilots flying in and out of our airport?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I said in my previous answer, Yukoners demand consistent information on matters. I'm happy to answer the members opposite's questions this afternoon.

I know that this is an issue of concern to Yukoners. I also know that currently staffing levels at the tower have not changed. We are currently at the same position we were last week, Mr. Speaker, and the week before that. We do know that air traffic at the airport is down to levels not seen since 2015. We do know that this is a temporary situation. We do know that we have heard concerns raised by the aviation industry in the territory that they do not want to see service levels cut at the tower — that this is a matter of importance to them. I have heard that as well, Mr. Speaker.

So, at first blush, this government does not support such measures being taken by Nav Canada. We will certainly communicate that to Nav Canada.

That said, the Department of Highways and Public Works is working with our partners — one of them being Nav Canada and the other one being the aviation industry in the territory. We're assessing the situation and we will work with our partners to make sure that the safety of Yukoners, when it comes to our aviation industry, is maintained and that we actually maintain a level of service in the territory that is needed in the territory. We know that COVID-19 has reduced flights.

I'm happy to answer the next question from the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

**Ms. Hanson:** As the member has pointed out, due to the pandemic, the commercial and private flight numbers are significantly down — not just in Yukon, but across Canada.

We pointed out earlier in this session that, by waiving airport fees and commercial aviation fees, there could be unintended consequences for Nav Canada. It is also not lost on those of us who are around that this a direct consequence of the privatization of air traffic controller services that occurred under the Chrétien Liberals.

The federal Transport minister has said that, before Nav Canada moves forward on more cuts to staff and downgrading of airports, they will work with Nav Canada to ensure air safety in Canada. Has this government — has this minister — spoken with the Transport minister in Ottawa to voice the safety concerns heard from commercial and private pilots flying in and out of Whitehorse airport?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the history lesson from the Member for Whitehorse Centre this afternoon. The safety of the travelling public is of course of utmost concern to me and to the aviation industry in the territory as it is to Nav Canada and virtually everybody who works in the aviation industry. We are going to make sure that, whatever happens up at Whitehorse International Airport, the safety of the travelling public is paramount.

I have spoken to Nav Canada. I have spoken to Air North and other aviation companies in the territory. I'm aware of the concerns of the employees who work in the tower and their commitment to safety in the territory. I want to make sure that those jobs and that the safety of the aviation industry is maintained in the territory and I will do my utmost to make sure that's the case.

I don't support cuts to Nav Canada's flight staff — and frankly, I don't think it's warranted. Our aviation industry, once this pandemic is dealt with, is going to rebound in a way that will be absolutely glorious. I look forward to those days, and we will need those staff in the tower when that happens.

**Question re: Yukon Hospital Corporation funding**

**Mr. Cathers:** Even before the pandemic, the Yukon Hospital Corporation was under a lot of strain, due to chronic underfunding by the Liberal government. Last year, as shown in the Hospital Corporation's 2019-20 annual report, they finished the year with a deficit of almost \$4 million. That's directly from their annual report. The Liberals claim that they gave the hospital an increase in core funding last fiscal year, but in fact — as hospital witnesses told the Legislature last week — some of the core funding for last year wasn't provided until after the fiscal year concluded. For an entire year, the hospital was forced to run in a deficit. The Liberal government withheld millions of dollars in hospital funding until we were in a pandemic.

Does the Minister of Health and Social Services now realize that Liberal neglect left our hospitals without the resources they should have had? What are they doing now to make up for years of neglecting the needs of our hospitals?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The members opposite had the opportunity to ask questions of the board — the witnesses who were here — and spoke specifically to them around their services — the excellent services that they provide for Yukoners. The overarching priority for the Hospital Corporation — and that of Health and Social Services and this government — is collaboration on a large number of initiatives to improve the quality and efficiency of our hospital and health systems.

We have worked together to address the priorities. As I indicated many times in the Legislative Assembly, the increase in the budget for the Hospital Corporation from the time we started is 29 percent — 29 percent. We brought in supports and services; we have expanded the scope of practice; we have brought into the Yukon specialized services, and we did that in collaboration with the Hospital Corporation. We will continue to work in good faith, going forward, to address many of the other significant projects that are coming forward — of course looking at "Wellness Yukon", looking at the directives of the *Putting People First* recommendations, and doing that in collaboration with our partners.

**Mr. Cathers:** The Liberals can write all the talking points they want, but the facts disprove their spin. They left the Hospital Corporation with a \$4-million hole in its funding last year, and they only provided a band-aid after we were in a pandemic.

When the Hospital Corporation witnesses appeared, the Legislature learned that they have seen increases in pressure for services across the spectrum. The CEO said — and I quote: "... in this past year, almost every ambulatory and inpatient service increased by greater than, say, three percent. Some of them are up to possibly 10 percent. That is something that we will have to work with government on to ensure that our core funding — our base funding — keeps pace with what we see as far as increases."

He also told us: "... chemotherapy has increased by 5.7 percent". In response, the Liberal government is giving our hospitals a paltry 2.5-percent increase to core funding this year and a retroactive increase of 2.5 percent to make up for the hole in their funding last year.

When will this government ensure that the hospital's core funding actually keeps pace with the increase in services and costs?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to just reiterate for the member opposite and for Yukoners that we continue to work with the Hospital Corporation. In the height of the pandemic, we increased their budget over \$6 million to provide necessary supports to the Hospital Corporation during these unprecedented times. We are working continuously to assess the situation as it evolves. We are working very closely with our Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit, we are working with our chief medical officer of health, and we are working with our partners at the Hospital Corporation.

I would venture to say that we have many pressures coming at us through Health and Social Services. We will not politicize it. We will work together with our partners to meet the needs of Yukoners where they reside. That means that we provide services also through our community health centres. We provide services and supports to different venues and with different methods. We certainly want to acknowledge the good work of our Health and Social Services staff and the Hospital Corporation as well, which has been doing an exceptional job. I want to just extend my appreciation to them as well. Without their support and without the support of Yukoners — acknowledging their patience — I would say that we would be in a far more dire situation, but we are not, and that is because of our partners and the good work that they are doing.

**Mr. Cathers:** The Liberals can try to spin this all they want, but the hospital's own report shows a \$4-million deficit for the last fiscal year. The witnesses confirmed that and that the needed funding wasn't even approved until we were in a state of emergency.

Providing core funding for our hospitals 12 months late is unacceptable. The Liberals neglected our hospitals right up until we were literally in a pandemic. The hospital witnesses told us — and I quote: "... it is a 180-day wait for an MRI..." and that "... our current wait time to see a visiting cardiologist is approximately five months." Yukoners are waiting for health care services while the Liberals have been neglecting hospital funding.

Will the Liberals now admit that their neglect for the hospital has been negatively impacting health services and

ensure that hospital core funding starts to actually keep pace with the increases in services and costs?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** The member opposite is not listening to the answers from the minister. She started by saying that, absolutely, increases have happened over the last four years to that core funding for the Hospital Corporation, but yet the member opposite is saying that he only figured out when they appeared as witnesses that there are pressures at the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, what I have seen under the leadership of the current Minister of Health and Social Services was creating strong, respectful partnerships and working together collaboratively with health care and individuals for the well-being of all Yukoners — and that is by working in partnership with the Hospital Corporation, working in partnership with her other lead, with Housing as well. But, more importantly, if we went back to the Office of the Auditor General's scathing report of the Yukon Party's acute care policies and the Peachey report that came out of that asking for collaborative care of government, we had to wait until the leadership of this government to actually start implementing that collaborative care model.

Our government believes that the best way to care for Yukoners is to integrate our health services by offering health care that provides health to the whole person — the situations and their supports, as well as their physical health — and we can make sure that they have access to the services that they need to be healthy. That comes with increased funding to the Hospital Corporation — compared to when the Yukon Party was in — that comes to increased supports and services, and that comes under the current leadership of the current minister.

#### **Question re: Yukon Fish and Game Association funding**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Over the past several years, the relationship between the Liberals and the Yukon hunting community has declined considerably — from sending mixed messages on the law of general application, to the cancelled Finlayson caribou hunt, and now the government's proposal for limiting moose hunting. The hunting community has increasingly felt like an afterthought for this government.

Disagreements can happen, but the Liberal government sent a very clear message in this year's budget. They cut the annual budget for the Yukon Fish and Game Association and let them know that a further cut is coming next year.

So, what message is the Minister of Environment sending to the Yukon hunting community by cutting the annual budget of the Yukon Fish and Game Association?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** So, our government has been working to keep Yukoners safe. We have provided many opportunities to work with our partners. The Fish and Wildlife Management Board is a key instrument, of course, for fish and wildlife management in Yukon with respect to the self-government agreements. We work very closely and collaboratively with the renewable resources councils — sufficient resources are in the Yukon to provide the engagements that are required to allow us to look at addressing many of the concerns that are brought to our attention.

I am happy to say that the Yukon Fish and Game Association is receiving funding to continue its business in terms of meeting its membership needs. I can say that there are many opportunities for engagement, and we would be happy to work with Yukoners and give Yukoners an opportunity to participate in a lot of the good work that's happening right now.

We have successfully implemented, let's say, some of the initiatives that were left to lag by the Yukon Party — the Dhaw Ghro management plan; the Peel land use plan; the engagement and initiatives around the Dawson district land use plan; the ATAC road. There are many successful initiatives that require partnerships, and I look forward to further questions.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I don't believe that I got an answer. I asked what message the minister was sending to Yukon's hunting community by cutting the budget of the Yukon Fish and Game Association. The Yukon Fish and Game Association offers amazing programs, and they encourage Yukoners to get outdoors and promote 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 outdoors event.

Will the minister just change course and restore the budget of the Yukon Fish and Game Association, please?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to thank the Yukon Fish and Game Association for its efforts to reach into Yukon and provide opportunities for women and children and educational opportunities. We will continue to work with the Yukon Fish and Game Association, as I have indicated. We have given them sufficient resources within the budget.

If, through this exercise, it's deemed insufficient, we will continue to work with them, and we would like to work with the department and work with the association as we go through this fiscal year to determine the efforts that are put forward and whether or not we can increase the resources. If we are able to deliver through other methods, then we will look at collaborative approaches.

I want to just again extend our appreciation to the members of the Yukon Fish and Game Association for their part in educating Yukoners. I want to just say that there are opportunities for us to continue to collaborate, and I look forward to those conversations.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Cutting the budget of the Yukon Fish and Game Association sends a pretty clear message to Yukoners who like to hunt. Even worse: Prior to signing the contribution agreement, the government insisted on opposing a clause that would require any communication from the association to be approved by the department. This is effectively a gag order imposed on the organization by the Liberals. This gag order was aimed at preventing the Yukon Fish and Game Association from speaking up on behalf of its members — which is their right — and criticizing decisions that it felt weren't in the best interests of its members.

But thankfully, Mr. Speaker, after seeking a legal opinion, the Yukon Fish and Game Association pushed back and got the Liberal gag order removed. But it still raises a question: Why



did the Liberals try to impose a gag order on the Yukon Fish and Game Association?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Certainly, the objective of this government is not to put a gag order on any organization or any individual. We demonstrated that we work in a collaborative approach with all of our partners. We have structures that have been established in terms of how we do engagement across the Yukon. I want to just acknowledge again that there are tools and mechanisms available to us and we use those effectively.

I want to just say thank you again to the many partners that we have in the Yukon for their expertise, their advice, and their guidance as we look at the structures around fish and wildlife management. The approaches that we take have to be in the best interests of conservation management; they have to be in the best interests of fish and wildlife; they have to be in the best interests of the environment and the ecological requirements to support and enhance the way of life of the indigenous peoples of this country and this territory. The parameters that have been established for us allow us to engage through those mechanisms.

I am pleased that the Yukon Fish and Game Association has a huge membership. Members — my friends — are part of the Yukon Fish and Game Association and they also provide advice to this government. I continue to look forward to their input and their collaboration.

**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. 346

**Clerk:** Motion No. 346, standing in the name of Ms. White.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support front-line workers through the COVID-19 pandemic by:

- (1) extending the wage top-up program for essential workers beyond 16 weeks; and
- (2) ensuring employees can apply directly to the wage top-up program for essential workers if their employer does not apply on their behalf.

**Ms. White:** Today, I'm happy to speak to this motion about the wage top-up program for essential workers. Before I get to this motion itself, though, I want to be very clear: Every worker deserves a living wage whether we're in a pandemic or not; it's a question of dignity.

I think about J. S. Woodsworth and a quote that rings near and dear to me, and it says: "What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all." With that, I commit to all Yukon workers that I'll continue to fight for them. I will fight for their right to a decent

wage — and that's a living wage — until that's a reality for everyone.

We know that a living wage is far from the reality of many Yukoners. Our minimum wage currently sits at \$13.71 an hour. The living wage to support a family of four with both parents who are working full time in Whitehorse while accessing all existing support programs, both federally and territorially, is over \$19 per hour.

When the pandemic arrived and it became obvious that many essential workers were not making a salary they deserve, that's when we saw the gap. It's nice to be called a hero or to have your work recognized, but when you bring home a paycheque that doesn't allow you to pay your rent, applause and praise are only worth so much.

When the flaws in our system became so painfully obvious, that's when the government had to act, and that's when the wage top-up program was announced. It's a top-up for all essential workers who make less than \$20 an hour. A worker can access up to \$4 an hour to bring their salary up to a maximum of \$20 an hour.

Let's be clear: This wage subsidy doesn't replace a living wage. It's temporary, and it is government subsidizing employers so that employees can earn a living wage. It's not ideal, but it puts money in the pockets of the lowest paid workers. In the middle of a pandemic, this is an important stop-gap solution.

Initially, the program was capped at four months, or 16 weeks, for these workers. Yesterday, after I asked the minister about it, it was announced that the program was renewed for another four months, so now it's up to a total of 32 weeks. That's a good step, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the minister for that, but it's still not enough.

We're on month 8 of this pandemic, and the maximum that a worker can access this program is for eight months. What happens next? This program is based on the idea that essential workers deserve a living wage because of the critical work that they're doing during a pandemic. This pandemic will last for more than eight months, so why do these workers only deserve a living wage for part of the pandemic? That's the question that we're left with.

Once a worker has used up all eight months of the wage top-up, they will still be doing the exact same work. They will still be in the middle of a pandemic, but they'll be bringing home roughly \$600 less a month. Losing up to \$600 a month is a huge deal. It just doesn't make sense. We would like to see a commitment from this government that this program will be in place throughout the pandemic. It's about a question of fairness.

The second aspect of this motion is administrative, but it is no less important to Yukon workers. One big flaw in the program that we see is that it can only be accessed by employers on behalf of their employees. The government has made it sound like this is just a matter of giving information to employers, but unfortunately, that is not the case. There is no doubt in my mind that most employers would do this for their employees, and we are happy to hear about the 1,300 employees whose employers did access the first four months of

this benefit, but some employees didn't receive this support because their employers didn't fill out the paperwork.

The minister might make it sound like we should just tell them who this is, but we have already done this. When employees in this situation contacted our office, we directed them to reach out to the department, and we know that staff in the department did all they could — so, hats off to them. We know that they reached out to employers, they explained the program and offered assistance in completing the application, yet some still didn't do it. The department knows who these employers are, but currently there is just no way that the money can get to the workers if the employer refused to do their part, and that is not fair because this program is not a benefit for employers; this is support for workers.

I also have no doubt that some of the workers in this situation didn't approach me, and I don't pretend to know all of those who missed out on that support. Maybe they don't have a good relationship with their employers and they don't want to risk making it worse, or maybe their company is a large multinational that only has an employee or two in Yukon, and they won't bother with government paperwork.

So, there are many situations that could explain why this administrative approach is preventing workers from getting the benefit that they deserve. Don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker. I can understand that administratively, from the government perspective, it might be much easier to administer this benefit through employers. I have no problem if the government wants to continue working with employers in getting this benefit to their employees, but there has to be a backup process. There needs to be some workaround for employees whose employer is not cooperating to get them the money and the support that they deserve. The wage top-up program is for employees; it is for workers. It is not for employers, so it makes no sense for employees or workers to be penalized for whatever reason if their employer doesn't apply on their behalf.

I am absolutely confident that the hard-working folks at the Department of Economic Development can figure out a way for these employees to get what they deserve — to get the support that they deserve. The department could continue reaching out to employers, giving them information and helping with the process, but if the department realizes that a given employer is just not engaging and not filling out the application on behalf of their employees, there should be a separate process for workers to apply on their own, because they still deserve the support and they still deserve this wage top-up.

Mr. Speaker, we are in Yukon, and our population is small. We have the opportunity to right a wrong for some Yukon workers. I hope that the minister will demonstrate that he can work with outside and opposition feedback and act on the suggestions that will help strengthen this government program that has been announced under his portfolio. I have the utmost confidence in the ability of our civil service to develop a workaround for workers who are denied this benefit through no fault of their own. All that is missing is a clear directive to that effect from the minister, so I hope that he will make this commitment today, and I look forward to the conversations that follow.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I want to thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing forward Motion No. 346 today. Essential workers have continued to provide the services that we need every day since the beginning of the pandemic. We are so very thankful for this. Our government was pleased to announce the initial program back in May, which could be applied retroactively to March 15. We were also happy to announce the extension of this program just yesterday, which will run through to February 15, 2021.

The Yukon essential workers income support program provides essential workers with a top-up of either \$4 per hour or an amount that would bring their wages to \$20 per hour, whichever was less, for 16 weeks. For this program, Yukon workers providing essential and critical services listed in annex 1 and 2 of Yukon government's guidelines for the delivery of critical and essential services qualify. The Yukon essential workers income support program provided a wage increase to more than 1,300 essential staff at over 100 businesses between March 15 and October 3.

These businesses and their employees are located all across Yukon, from Old Crow to Watson Lake, and represent a number of sectors — retail, accommodation, food services, health and social assistance, administrative support, real estate, transportation, warehousing, agriculture, and forestry. Workers who have already received the benefit during the original program period are eligible to receive the wage top-up again. We urge employers to take advantage of this.

Just this afternoon, we received a letter from the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce identifying their support that this program would continue and identifying that they would advocate on behalf of the program to work with employers and ensure that employers have the right supports and advocate to ensure that programs such as this are used to their fullest and that workers who have the opportunity to receive this benefit do receive this benefit.

To date, one of the challenges, I'll say, is that — yesterday during Question Period, the Leader of the Third Party identified the fact that there were individuals who had not had the opportunity to receive these funds previously because their employers had issues with the program or didn't want to opt in or, as we just said, maybe didn't want to do the paperwork — whatever it may be. Again, as stated yesterday, I will work with our department to ensure that we reach out to those businesses. There's a bit of a difference today in what we're hearing in the opening statement from the Leader of the Third Party. It was identified that the information concerning those businesses or employees was forwarded to the Department of Economic Development.

This morning, I requested, through the deputy minister, to find out if there were businesses that did not opt in to this for particular reasons that they may have had with the program. Once again, I haven't received anything yet — not to say that we may not get it this afternoon or tomorrow.

Also, it's interesting that, yesterday, the Leader of the Third Party, during the media scrum, said that there was no opportunity to share that information with me, but today the

comment is that actually the information was shared but was shared with the department. I think anybody who knows the tenacious and passionate approach of the Leader of the Third Party would say — I don't think, at any time, as an MLA, that individual wouldn't make the opportunity to share that information if they were passionate about it. I think I have always tried to make myself available to those things.

Again, what we know to date is that there are some businesses — we don't know which ones they are. We don't know how many there are. We think there are three, four, or five.

Again, I'm looking at this, and until I find some information, I feel like we're moving to solve a problem that may not exist. If it does exist, then we'll work through it.

Now, one of the things that may help with employers opting in with these would be the fact that the Government of Yukon did receive some concerns during the first iteration of the program that the \$50 administration fee paid out to applying businesses did not cover the additional cost involved with raising the employee wages — those would include the Canada Pension Plan remittances and employment insurance premiums.

One of the changes that we did make — and our government recognizes the concerns of employers — and so we have raised the administrative fee that employers receive from \$50 to \$100 — so that has doubled — per employee. The program was set out to be employer-driven as the payments are taxable income to employees, making it necessary for the source deductions to be calculated from the wage top-up.

But what I'm struggling to understand is why the Member for Takhini-Kopper King didn't reach out to me directly to relay the concerns that she claims to have heard from employees whose employers were not applying on their behalf — no letters, no e-mails. On top of that, she waited until the initial program wrapped up to raise the issue in the Assembly. That's very interesting.

The team of employees from the Department of Economic Development have been working incredibly hard, and I appreciate the kind words from the Leader of the Third Party to the work that they've been doing to ensure that businesses and their employees are supported through these difficult times.

I know that one of the key opportunities for us was having a chance to meet with organized labour to understand what the challenges were. We talked about that yesterday a bit. Labour reached out and had some discussions about wanting to ensure that their voice was heard. I think that, from working with labour before — whether in the role of a shop steward or negotiating collective agreements on behalf of union members — I think that it's very important to be able to sit and hear their perspective. That then led to the opportunity to have senior people within those union groups as well reach out and to talk about what was happening in different jurisdictions.

I appreciate the fact that they touched on — we also brought in the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission to those meetings. It was echoed that this was not something that was happening in other jurisdictions. I know that having that opportunity to talk about what was happening

on the ground and then for us to take that information on behalf of the employees — in the same way that I'm offering up now — back to some of those organizations and companies — whether they be large retailers — and to be able to voice what we're hearing from government and request that those employers maybe tweak what they're doing or improve what they're doing to ensure the health and safety of those employees.

Again, I have heard the Leader of the Third Party saying that she'll fight for employees, but that's what was happening throughout the summer — to ensure that we were listening to those employees and understanding the interface between — in some cases, where there was a collective agreement in place, to ensure that was followed and that those individuals were safe and that the proper mitigation was put in place. I think that was something that was very helpful — to be guided by those individuals on things that we could help business do better and for us to understand their situation.

Again, concerning the Department of Economic Development — their commitment and dedication to developing and executing programs is deserving of recognition. I'm thankful to the team that I have an opportunity to work with. The department has regularly promoted all programs available, including this one.

There have been social media posts, proactive outreach to employers, and the chamber of commerce advertisements, in addition to the information available on yukon.ca.

This promotion will continue with the announcement of the extension, Mr. Speaker, with the goal of maximizing the number of participants. When the funding became available through the Government of Canada, the Department of Economic Development spoke with a number of businesses to get input on how to best deliver funds to essential workers. The feedback received helped establish the initial program.

Ahead of the program extension, research was completed by the department through a survey to participants. So, again, we went through the program, looked at the balance of funding that we had, and looked at ways to best impact analysis. My hope would be that, if there is information that's still forthcoming from the department and the Leader of the Third Party had directed or had reached out to the department, we will endeavour to get the details of that. If that has occurred, then information that was provided would have been part of the data that was analyzed to ensure that the program was improved on in the next iteration.

I think that interaction between the Leader of the Third Party with the department — as was stated — would have been helpful — or was helpful in the creation of this. Again, I'm speaking in a form where I don't have — I'm going on what I've heard and I'm still endeavouring to get the details of that communication flow.

The survey that we provided asked the following questions: As the current program concludes, would you consider applying again if a similar program is implemented in the near future — if each employer was provided with \$50 for each registered employee? Was your participation in the program impacted in any way by the current employer

compensation? We asked: Is there any other feedback as well in regard to the program?

Here are some of things that we heard in that analysis: “I thought that the program was great and extremely helpful.” “Employees were very grateful and otherwise would have left to find employment elsewhere.” “Easy to follow application process, and Shirley was very easy to work with” — a shout-out to Shirley as well, in the department. “Good program. Cost of living was high, so it has helped the employees.” “I applaud Yukon government for implementing this program.” “Very appreciative of the program to be able to provide that for their staff.” Another quote: “Well run, easy to apply for, and happy that it was administered through Ec. Dev.” Another comment: “Great program, helpful staff. Initially seemed complicated; however, once staff began the application, they realized it was very straightforward.”

So, as I indicated earlier, there was also feedback with regard to the cost to administer the program, with many expressing the need to increase the administrative fee. This feedback was incorporated into the extension that we spoke about earlier.

We will continue to advertise the program to inform the employers and workers of the extension and we will continue to urge employers to apply for the program to support essential workers here in Yukon. I would be happy, again, to work with my colleagues from all parties represented in the Yukon Legislative Assembly to ensure that the programs we deliver have the greatest impact possible in this very difficult time. However, employers — we believe — are best suited to deliver the Yukon essential workers income program, and that is how we plan to deliver the extension of the program through February 15, 2021.

Also, what was identified or spoken to in the initial comments today was that the individuals who had maybe previously not received that — again, we are going to try to search to get which businesses may have not used it. A good point is that those businesses can now use it; those employees can still feel the full impact of this program. Again, we just need to figure out which businesses have not.

If this is the case again where there is a business and the partial reason was that they felt that the incurred costs in the remittances was a barrier for them to do it, I think that the adjustment that has been made here with the doubling from \$50 to \$100 to offset the MERCs should be something that makes this easier to use and does not put a greater burden on those individuals.

Just for the Assembly — as members are here representing many different corners — I touched on this yesterday, but just for the record and for Hansard — by the numbers, paid out as of November 18: Whitehorse has seen the largest amount, at almost 95 percent, at \$1,603,613; Haines Junction is the next largest area that has used this at \$30,322; Dawson City has seen an expenditure by businesses there of about \$22,041; Teslin is at \$11,162; Carcross is at \$8,217; Carmacks is at \$4,129; Watson Lake is at \$2,311; Keno is at \$2,174; and Old Crow is at \$1,846. For the communities that you might have noticed were missed, I have reached out to business owners. In some

cases, those businesses are owned by development corporations or First Nation governments. We have reached out to their leadership to let them know that the program exists. In some cases, the rate that individuals are paid surpasses what we have used here as a benchmark.

As well, as we move forward, if we are all dealing with one or two cases, I think the best approach — it will probably be a different perspective from the Leader of the Third Party — and course of action for us with one or two businesses is to communicate with them. We can have the department communicate.

I want to be respectful of the employees. I don't want them to feel uncomfortable. They can share that information with a third party anonymously and then just let us know which business — or we can reach out, or we can have the chamber — there are lots of different ways to do it, but I think we can reach out to those businesses and let them know this program exists, but if we have one or two businesses — hopefully, as well, that the increase and the administrative grant that we're providing per participant also alleviates any of the pressure on this — I think that the majority of employers are happy to be able to support their front-line workers with something like this.

But if there are one or two cases — or three or four, half a dozen cases — I don't know; we haven't seen them yet — but if there is, I think our first option is to reach out and speak to them. Restructuring a program — of course, the individuals who are in our policy teams and delivering these services have the talent to work these, but I believe that the best use of time, energy, and work — now that we have tweaked this, let's use a program that's in place before going back through a process to fix it, when we haven't seen if it's actually going to meet the total needs.

My sense is — let's see if there's a problem, before we start changing our program to make other solutions. We don't have the concrete evidence of that, and if we do, we have some ways to remedy that beforehand.

As you can tell, we think that the program that is in place is a good program; we think it's effective; we think we have other tools that we can use to ensure maximum participation. Again, I don't think that there's a reason here for us to be supporting this motion, because I think what happened is that this was a motion the Third Party wanted to bring forward. The timing was unfortunate in that we have been working on this and it was rolling out. I approved of our notes and it went out, and then there's a bit of redundancy now in this motion that we are debating today.

I look forward to comments from other members of the Assembly.

**Mr. Kent:** I'm going to be very brief in my comments today. I will be the only one speaking on behalf of the Official Opposition to this motion. We thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing it forward. It certainly identified some potential deficiencies within the existing program. We do support the program, and, of course, we do support essential workers.

One of the issues that I wanted to just put on the record here is something that we've heard from some of the smaller retailers here in Whitehorse. I'm sure it affects others throughout the Yukon as well. I'm hoping that the minister can take note of this as the ongoing evaluation of the program continues. Perhaps they're able to pivot just to address certain situations, but again, I think that one of the unintended consequences for some of the small retailers is that they ended up competing for their staff with some of the subsidized employers. Some of the smaller mom-and-pop shops on Main Street here in Whitehorse ended up losing staff to some of the companies that had the wage top-up. I just flag that for the minister and hope that he and his officials can work that through, because that's certainly something that I had heard and other members in our caucus had heard right off the top, as I mentioned, as an unintended consequence for what this program was intended to do, recognizing that these programs, of course, were rolled out very quickly and were designed to achieve a specific goal. Again, that's just one of the consequences that was identified to me.

With that, I will close my remarks and thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for bringing this forward, and we will be supporting this motion here today.

**Ms. Hanson:** I just wanted to say that I'm perplexed by the Minister of Economic Development's comments this afternoon. I'm perplexed for a couple of reasons, and he may not be interested in hearing them, but I will say why I'm perplexed.

What the Leader of the New Democratic Party put forward today wasn't something that she fabricated. The comments that I heard from the Minister of Economic Development remind me of a word that we're not supposed to use in this Legislative Assembly, but it is a form of manipulation in which a person sows seeds of doubt, making people question whether or not they actually meant what they said or if their perception of the issue is accurate. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the New Democratic Party's perception of the issue is accurate because it does reflect the lived experience of people who have reached out to her.

I heard the Leader of the New Democratic Party make repeated acknowledgements of the efforts of the Department of Economic Development staff to work with recalcitrant employers, to work with them to try to get them to recognize the importance of their employees being able to access this bridge financing and give them something toward a living wage. What she was suggesting was not a holus-bolus change to a program that those same officials developed at great speed. It was simply looking to find out whether or not there was, in my words, a compassionate administrative approach.

Despite what the Minister of Economic Development said, as he repeatedly tried to sow doubt as to whether or not there is any veracity to what the Leader of the NDP has put forward on this floor today — is the lived experience. Despite that, if there are one, two, or five, does that dismiss that lived experience of those families and of those individuals? Should we not be concerned about them? I think that we should be.

I am disappointed that the Minister of Economic Development has demonstrated again the rigidity of this government. They talk about working with the opposition. When the Leader of the New Democratic Party puts forward an idea that embraces the work that was done and the response yesterday to extend the program, but points out a small but significant omission that impacts the daily lives of Yukon citizens — whether it is a handful or more, they are Yukon citizens. Why should they be denied that because the minister isn't really sure about the veracity of the comments, the statements, and the motion put forward by the Leader of the New Democratic Party?

To sow doubt like that, Mr. Speaker, really calls into question the integrity of the process in this Legislative Assembly. I thought we came here to speak truth, so when a member puts forward a motion like this, I trust that it is not a game. I trust that they're putting it forward because it's a valid social policy issue — in this case, a socio-economic policy issue. The scope of it may be narrow in terms of its application, but it affects some Yukon citizens.

So, the Leader of the New Democratic Party is simply asking for some flexibility — some nimbleness in response — by the Yukon Liberal government. Clearly, that's not on.

Again, I just express my regret and my disappointment, and I anticipate that we'll hear all sorts of bowing down to the leadership about this being the way we do it. I'm sorry — that's not the way it should be done. I'm disappointed.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I want to thank the Leader of the Third Party for bringing this motion forward today. I think that it's a very important topic, and I'm happy to speak to it. I want to thank all the speakers who have had an opportunity to speak so far. I want to just address one of the points that was just made by the member opposite. I don't believe that my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, was dismissing the experience of workers. I heard the Minister of Economic Development say that he wants to work with the opposition — and if they would please share the information in order to help. That's what I heard. I wanted to just address that off the top.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the essential workers who have done a tremendous job during this pandemic. Without them, our essential needs would not have been met. They are truly our everyday heroes, and we recognize the significance of these workers in our Yukon Territory and throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a couple of minutes to really acknowledge them. They are our caregivers, our medical workers, our first responders, and technicians. They are workers supporting groceries, pharmacies, and hospitality. They are all people providing communication, Internet, and information, and all people providing transportation and transporting goods to Yukon — our truck drivers, our bus drivers, our school bus drivers, and the workers in the upstream supply chain for essential services needed to support critical infrastructure.

They are all so vital, and there are many more, of course, Mr. Speaker. They are our friends and our families. They have

played a critical role in our lives, providing us with a lifeline during this very hard time — these hard times.

Again, as my colleague, the Minister responsible for Economic Development, stated earlier, our Liberal government took action to ensure that low-income essential workers were financially supported.

I would also like to reflect a little bit on some of the other supports that we've put in place throughout the pandemic. We were quick and had an early response to ensure that our business community was supported through a number of really key programs. One of them is this essential workers program — but the Yukon business relief program, the sick leave benefits. Most recently, we have expanded some of those programs to include specific business supports for the accommodation sector. We're working toward the non-accommodation tourism sectors as well and not-for-profits.

The reason that I mention this is because our government responded quickly and put in place the programs that were needed to support our business community and to support and ensure that businesses could remain open and that folks were able to continue working. We're seeing sectors close throughout the country again. I just want to express my gratitude to all Yukoners who have adjusted and who have done everything that they possibly can to ensure the safety of Yukoners and to also ensure that we have the goods and services that we need. I think that we all can agree how blessed we are to live in this territory and to have what we do.

As the Minister of Tourism and Culture, it goes without saying that essential workers are key to our industry. Essential workers have allowed our restaurants to stay open, our hotels to remain clean and welcoming and safe, our gas stations and supermarkets to function properly — all of those are great supports for Yukoners and travellers as well. When we were receiving visitors from BC, we would not have been able to sustain travel without these essential workers.

As the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, my heart goes out to our most vulnerable population. Women are the hardest hit — as I referred to today in our tribute to the 16 days to end gender-based violence — impacted by increased levels of gender-based violence but also in the economy.

I want to just reflect a little bit on that from that perspective. We are well aware of those issues, and we're working to address them. One of the areas, in terms of the — as we talk about the shadow pandemic — this is from the United Nations Foundation. They stated that: "The COVID-19 pandemic is clearly aggravating economic inequalities faced by women. A new study suggests that '... the COVID-19 pandemic will have a disproportionate negative effect on women and their employment opportunities. The effects of this shock are likely to outlast the actual epidemic.'"

Studies show that "... the sectors that have been most affected by the COVID-19 crisis so far are those with high levels of women workers, including the restaurant and hospitality business, as well as the..." — entire — "... travel sector." Daycare workers and childcare workers are essential to help women get back into the labour force.

On the other side of the reality — I want to just, before I get to this next point, say that we know that women are particularly hard hit by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We're working with our partners to minimize the impacts and to ensure that women in the community are supported now more than ever.

We put in place — as I said, sick leave programs, access to funding, funded childcare for essential workers, and eviction protection are all ways our government has been supporting women through the pandemic. I think that there are a lot of different angles and today we're just talking specifically about this fund. But I do think that you have to look at it in a broad sense to appreciate the hard work and thoughtfulness that has gone into responding to this global pandemic that we find ourselves in.

In terms of violence against women throughout the pandemic — but in general, violence against women is three times higher in the north and three times higher yet for indigenous women. Another United Nations report outlines: "Crowded homes, substance abuse, limited access to services and reduced peer support are exacerbating these conditions. Before the pandemic, it was estimated that one in three women will experience violence during their lifetimes. Many of these women are now trapped in their homes with their abusers."

For those reasons — and for many more — it's crucial to support our essential workers. This is what our government has been doing all the way and will continue to do. I want to reflect — again, the Minister of Economic Development clearly outlined the program, the work that has gone into it — the announcement yesterday — and has really offered the Leader of the Third Party an opportunity to work together to ensure that we provide the information that is needed to address the issues. As the minister has stated, this is — we've extended the program. I know that we're debating it now, but there really is no need to support this motion today in the way that it has been presented. I will leave it at that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**Speaker:** If the member now speaks, she will close debate on Motion No. 346.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Ms. White:** Eye-opening, I guess, is part of it. It is interesting to me — you know, when I communicate with ministers and if it is about a specific thing, I have to have casework letters and that means that someone needs to give me consent to be able to speak about them or their issue. So, when people would stop me and say that they hadn't been able to get the top-up because of their employers, there was no casework letter. What I did say was — I suggested that people contact the department to ask. I guess one of the questions that I would put back to the minister is: Did the department collect that information if an employee contacted them?

You know, when the minister was listing out the amounts and the communities — and I really appreciate that, and I will go back through Hansard to see it — but the idea that a community like Watson Lake — less than \$3,000 went in for wage top-up — makes me question if everyone there makes

more than \$20 an hour. I mean, there are a fair amount of businesses and a fair amount of workers in Watson Lake, so if they all earn more than \$20, I think that is fantastic. Hearing about other communities and the amount of money that had gone into those communities to support workers — I question if all the workers who were able to access or should have been supported by that program were able to access that program. That was all. I wasn't asking that the program get re-written; I was asking that there be a workaround so that employees could access it.

I guess the decision could be made that it is about me and my lack of action or what I should have done. I think that is an unfortunate way to look at it. As the Third Party, we have six questions a week — and if it makes the minister feel any better, I have had that question for a while and other things kept popping up. Finally, yesterday, after hearing again from someone who wasn't able to access it and knowing that the program closed, it was like, okay, now I just have to get it forward.

It's unfortunate to hear some parts of the debate. I am hopeful that the folks who weren't able to access it the first time around — maybe their employers will change their mind and then they will be able to collect that initial 16 weeks and from this point forward, because up to \$600 a month is a substantial amount.

I guess, with that, I will wait for the vote.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Disagree.

**Mr. Adel:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Disagree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Disagree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

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

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

*Motion No. 346 negatived*

### Motion No. 345

**Clerk:** Motion No. 345, standing in the name of Mr. Istchenko.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Kluane:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to support the recovery of the restaurant and bar industry by eliminating the automatic annual federal excise tax increase on beer, wine, and spirits.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to this motion today. As we all know, the tourism industry in the Yukon is facing a catastrophe. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting travel restrictions have created an incredibly dire situation for the entire industry. In September, the executive director of the Tourism Industry Association put it bluntly by saying — and I quote: “We are looking at potentially a complete collapse of the industry.”

One of the sectors in this industry that has been particularly hard hit has been the restaurant and bar industry. When the pandemic first hit, they were one of the first sectors to face limits and even complete closures. Since then, they have struggled to reopen and recover. The recent second wave of the pandemic and further public health measures now threaten to limit even the slight recovery that some of the restaurants and bars had begun to see.

While everyone recognizes the importance of taking these measures to protect public health, there are economic and social consequences to the businesses and the workers. This is obviously concerning not just for the owners of these businesses, but for hundreds of Yukoners who are employed by them. It is well understood that the restaurant and bar industries are major employers across the Yukon, so we have been looking for ways to support these businesses. I know that both the federal and territorial governments have offered a lot in terms of supports for the businesses; there is no doubt about that. We support many of the economic and business relief programs and supports that have been put in place by the various levels of government. I think we have spoken about those in this House many times, but we think we can and should do more.

When some of our Yukon Party team learned about the Canadian Chamber of Commerce “Our Restaurants” initiative, we took notice of some of the policy suggestions that were being presented. In particular, we noted that the campaign to repeal the automatic annual federal excise tax increase on beer, wine, and spirits was an important policy recommendation they had identified. In fact, there is an active campaign underway. I don't know if you know this, but it's led by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to encourage the federal government to take this action.

The letter has been signed by hundreds of businesses across the country. This morning, the last time I checked, there was only one business from the Yukon that had signed the letter, which was Yukon Brewing, but I understand that the Canadian Chamber of Commerce is hosting information sessions for Yukon businesses in the upcoming week, so we hope there will be more.

Before I say much about this campaign, I should note some of the background on the tax itself. The new tax structure was introduced in 2017 by the federal Liberal government. In short, the 2017 budget imposed a two-percent hike in beer tax, which at the time added five cents to a case of 24 bottles. This caught a lot of attention at the time, but what was less noticeable was the increase on beer, wine, and spirits every year at the rate of inflation. The escalator provision means the tax increases every year automatically.

This means that these tax increases never need to be tabled in Parliament, never discussed, as it is the standard course of action of a Liberal tax increase. At that time, this measure was criticized by several industry organizations, academics, political journalists, and notably, the Senate. In fact, in their review of the budget bill, the Senate tried to delete the escalator tax, but unfortunately, the Liberal majority in Parliament at the time forced these automatic tax increases back in.

There are plenty of excellent explanations out there about why the new tax structure introduced by the federal Liberals was a bad policy, but I think the submission to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance by Beer Canada on May 26, 2017, is worth citing. I won't go on at length, but I will encourage listeners to review the document.

Beer Canada made six arguments at the time for repealing the excise tax escalator, and those were: The escalator is too rigid and insensitive to regional economic circumstances; this unnecessarily adds to a challenging and uncertain business outlook; it conceals future tax increases from democratic oversight; it contradicts the Liberal government's commitment to evidence-based decisions; it is inconsistent with Canada's national alcohol strategy; and the final one, it was opposite from the direction recommended by the Prime Minister's economic advisory panel. Despite the many arguments against moving forward with this new escalator tax, the federal Liberal government did so anyway. Since then, a new tax structure has been in place and has been rising annually ever since.

Let me return to the recent campaign by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. On November 4, the chamber made public a letter sent to the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance minister Chrystia Freeland on October 30. The letter from the Hon. Perrin Beatty, President and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, was at the time co-signed by 261 other businesses and associations. Since that time, the number of signatures has increased, and the number of those signatures is continuing to increase.

The letter urges the federal government to repeal or freeze its planned excise tax on beverage alcohol currently scheduled for April 1, 2021. Let me quote from the letter — and I quote: “We are writing on behalf of Canadian restaurants and the hospitality industry, agricultural and other supply chain members, alcohol producers and consumers to ask that Finance Canada repeal the alcohol escalator tax in the government's upcoming update to Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan. The escalator tax is an automatic increase to excise duties that has gone up four times in the last three years and is scheduled to increase again on April 1, 2021 further driving up

the price of beverage alcohol for consumers and businesses that are struggling.”

It went on to say: “Canada has some of the highest alcohol taxes in the world. On average, 47 per cent of the price of beer in Canada is from federal or provincial taxes. Approximately 65 per cent of the price of wine is due to taxes and on average 80 per cent of the price of spirits is taxes. The escalator tax increases that tax burden every single year on April 1.

“The pandemic has resulted in a collapse in bar and restaurant sales for all beverage alcohol. Another increase to the escalator tax will increase hospitality industry costs, affecting their ability to attract customers and retain employees while they try to survive and recover from government-imposed shutdowns. As new indoor dining restrictions are implemented in various parts of the country and patio season ends, tens of thousands of restaurants and bars are in danger of closing their doors permanently. An increase in excise duties will also hurt Canadian brewers, wineries and distillers who will lose access to much needed capital that they would otherwise invest in their operations, employees and products as they try to navigate the huge loss of sales to restaurants and bars.

“When the escalator tax was first introduced, we expressed concern that a permanent automatic increase in duties every year was not warranted given Canada's exceedingly high alcohol tax rates. We also believe that the escalator shields tax increases from necessary parliamentary scrutiny and approval and that the rigid and automatic nature of the escalator does not allow the government to account for economic circumstances such as those we are experiencing right now.

“Now is not the time to increase alcohol taxes on middle-class Canadians, our struggling restaurants and bars and domestic alcohol producers. Our request is that you repeal the escalator tax through the fall update to Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan or the next federal budget. At a minimum to support Canada's economic recovery, the escalator tax increase should be frozen so it does not increase excise duty rates on April 1, 2021.”

That was the letter. So, as members will note — and I read it in the House today — the Canadian chamber makes some excellent, excellent points. I also wanted to note that the Leader of the Yukon Party had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce last week to discuss the initiative. Following that meeting, we decided to add our support to the Canadian chamber's campaign. Earlier today in this House, I tabled a letter from the Yukon Party leader to the federal Minister of Finance. In fact, he noted that — and I quote: “... this excise tax ... will add to the costs on the hospitality industry and will affect the ability of those businesses to attract customers, retain employees and try to survive and recover from government-imposed shutdowns or restrictions.”

Another quote out of that letter that was written by the Leader of the Yukon Party: “This is especially true in the Yukon, where our businesses rely considerably on revenue from visitors and tourists.”



This motion that I have put forward supports this campaign led by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Its passage today would send a signal — and I say this for all members in here. Its passage today would send a signal to the federal government that there is broad support to repeal this misguided tax plan that was put forward by the federal Liberals back in 2017. Of the utmost importance, it will also send a signal to our hospitality sector — whether that hospitality sector is in Haines Junction, Dawson City, downtown Whitehorse, Watson Lake, or our communities that we have in the Yukon — that we are trying to find new ways to help them survive and recover from this health and economic crisis that we all face.

From what the Yukon government has said to date, I believe that we are in agreement about the challenges faced by this important sector of our economy. We said it on both sides of this House.

So, I am hopeful — very hopeful, actually — that they will agree with this motion, join us in supporting it, and demonstrate to Yukon businesses that, while we disagree about some things, we are indeed capable of coming together to find new ways to support our business community.

I will end with that for now, and I will look forward to hearing from others about this motion.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, thanks for the opportunity to rise today to speak to this motion. I want to begin by saying that we are supportive of restaurants, bars, and our hospitality sector, but I do want to note that, at all times — whenever I have worked with the hospitality sector and licensees, the other thing that we have always talked about — and what is also critically important — is social responsibility.

So, let me just start with what we have been doing for businesses broadly and for the hospitality sector. We put in place the business relief program here in the territory right away. It was an initiative brought forward by Economic Development and worked on by the Minister of Tourism and Culture and her team because they recognized the pressures that were coming on to the tourism sector — and how to make sure that we could get supports to our businesses as they navigated this pandemic.

We have just recently extended that to the end of March 2021. As we continue to move through the pandemic, we will continue to watch all of these programs, including the wage top-up that we were speaking about in the last motion. All of these programs that we're talking about continue to be responsive to the state of the emergency that we have here, how to support Yukoners, Yukon businesses, and Yukon workers, and how to keep people safe.

I will make this statement, even though it is somewhat obvious: The business relief program is open to the hospitality sector, and there are some businesses that are taking advantage of it because they are in trouble. There are actually some businesses in the hospitality sector that are doing okay, and they don't actually need that support right now. It really does depend, but I agree with the Member for Kluane that there is a deep concern in the hospitality sector right now.

I will also note that the business relief program works in partnership with CanNor and their northern business relief fund. I think that we came out first, and then, I think, CanNor developed their program to complement the work that we were doing, and we have been working closely together at all times.

Beyond this, I will also acknowledge that the Minister of Tourism and Culture announced, through a ministerial statement about a month and a half ago — early in October — about \$15 million identified over the next three years for tourism recovery and relief. I know that, since that time, the minister has announced several sectors that are supported — the accommodation sector and events was supported almost right away as the pandemic hit the territory and the country. I know that the minister has been meeting regularly — and her team has been meeting regularly — with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, TIAY, to talk through how to develop the plan for other sectors, including hospitality. I'm sure we will hear something soon. I know that work has been ongoing.

At the same time, when the pandemic first hit and we saw the pressures on restaurants and bars, I started meeting with members of the Business Advisory Council, with reps from the chambers of commerce, and with licensees to talk about their concerns around their ability to survive as businesses during this pandemic and also to be able to continue to make it through.

I heard the member opposite — the Member for Kluane — talk about a “government-imposed shutdown”. I guess that we did choose, out of an abundance of safety for Yukoners, to close restaurants and bars. Again, that sort of suggested that we weren't considerate to bars and restaurants. I think that the way I would frame it is that we were considerate of Yukoners' health.

I have heard questions from the member opposite asking about why we don't open up to Alberta to allow tourism to come from Alberta. The response has always been that it is dependent on the epidemiology. That is what we are looking at — how to protect the health of Yukoners — and the health of Albertans, for that matter — and the health of Canadians. It is not that we are opposed to tourism from Alberta, but what we are looking at is how to protect the health of Yukoners. I am thankful that, after the five weeks of the Member for Copperbelt North bringing back the motion to this Legislature about whether or not the members of this Legislature support a state of emergency, we now know that all members of this Legislature do agree that we are in a state of emergency.

Similarly, with bars and restaurants — early in the pandemic, they were closed in order to protect the safety of Yukoners. They were allowed to open up in a phased manner as we worked through the phases of our recovery here in the territory. Currently, bars and restaurants can be open to up to 100 percent of capacity, but they also have to consider social distancing within. That is still making it difficult for them to operate fully and thus to be able to have a strong income.

What the member opposite did not mention when he talked about the national initiative — that, by the way, it is an inflationary rider on the excise of liquor, which I think is in a range of between one and three percent. If inflation is low —

as it is now — then it will be at the low end, so we're talking about a one-percent increase — so it's an inflationary rider.

What he didn't mention was that we have, since May of this year, decreased the cost to local licensees by an additional 13 percent. We've already given 13 percent, and what is being argued today is whether or not we should express our concern to the federal government about one percent.

The challenge that I have is that there was no mention of social responsibility by the member opposite. What I'll say is that when I've met with the industry here, with licensees, to talk to them about how to support them — at every turn, we as a corporation have said: "We do want to support you, but we need to address social responsibility as well." Because right now, during this pandemic, we also know that some people — certainly vulnerable folks — are turning to alcohol too much and the harms of alcohol — which we have every year — have now increased. Those harms are significant. It's not to say that everybody who consumes alcohol is suffering from harm, but it is to say that we have to be very careful that we are working to promote social responsibility and to foster responsible consumption — because as soon as it is not responsible consumption, the harms are significant.

In fact, today we had a tribute to the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. I heard from members of this Legislature about concerns around wellness and substance use and how people stay safe during this time. We can't on the one hand look to support licensees and on the other hand ignore that problem; no — they need to be considered together. That's why I was concerned when I didn't hear any reference to social responsibility or the harms of alcohol from the member opposite when he stood to speak. Maybe his colleagues will speak about them when they get up.

When I talked with the licensees, we discussed what we could do over the very short term to get them some immediate relief, but we talked about how we needed to move that in a way which would address the issues of social responsibility more.

Just, I think, two months ago — sort of later in September — I sat down — we had a one-day Zoom workshop with licensees to talk to them about how the Liquor Corporation could be supportive of restaurants and bars over time. In my opening remarks, I talked about social responsibility. I have met several times since then, over the phone, with some of the members of that panel and I know that they have asked us if we can extend our discount for a short time. We have agreed, but we have also said that we need to move on to other programs. I know that we do want to look at how to improve their profit margins and we do want to look at special-order processes for logistics for them, and we also want to look at online ordering. These are all things that we can work on to assist them, but at the same time, we need to always keep social responsibility as one of our prime objectives. You will know this, Mr. Acting Chair, as we brought in the new *Liquor Act* last fall.

I thank the Member for Kluane for tabling the letter today. I did have a look at it. Again, I didn't notice any reference to social responsibility in the letter from the Leader of the Official

Opposition. I will continue to say that, in my role as Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation, I will never divorce those two things. We need to address the challenges of alcohol if we are there to also support alcohol with our tourism sector and our hospitality sector — restaurants and bars.

I noted — as the member opposite was talking about some of the references from across the country, as people are working to look at this issue from the provinces — the provinces are in a different place from us, thankfully.

Where the Yukon has been — I don't want to say that we haven't had challenges; we absolutely have, in particular, thinking about our restaurants and bars. I know they have faced challenges. I understand that, but I do think that it is different in the provinces. They have had more restrictions. They have had more lockdowns. They have had more challenges with their second wave. At all times, we need to be a little bit humble about that, because if we don't make good decisions here, we could be facing similar challenges.

When the member talks about shutdowns — what we are doing, as a government, at all times, is looking to protect the health and safety of Yukoners, because the pandemic represents a lot of uncertainty, and I think Yukoners need consistent leadership and accurate information. It's critical during the pandemic.

The basic thing being asked for here — we have already provided supports for Yukoners and Yukon businesses, right now. We're working to find a more sustainable solution that will address the issue of social responsibility, because we recognize and acknowledge the harms of alcohol. I have previously tabled in this Legislature the analysis of the costs and harms of substances. You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that the number one issue is alcohol. When you look at it and measure the impact that it has on our territory — it's significant. We need to be careful that we are not, in any way, increasing that or exacerbating that — in particular, during the pandemic.

While the first part of the motion — which talks about helping restaurants and bars and that industry to recover, that we will continue to support them — we don't support the motion, as it's worded here. We just continue to encourage that, as we talk about these issues as a territory or as representatives in this Legislature, we acknowledge the challenge of social responsibility at the same time.

Again, thank you to the member opposite for bringing forward this motion as part of their private members' motions. I guess that this was their priority. I am not saying that this is not an important issue; however, I was surprised to see that this was the priority, given all of the issues that we are facing as a territory. It is their prerogative which motion to prioritize and bring forward today and I look forward to further debate on the motion.

**Mr. Cathers:** I wasn't originally planning to speak to this, but I do have to rise in rebuttal to the Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation and Community Services. It is unfortunate that this really seems again to be reflective of the Liberal government's attitude toward business, which can sometimes be characterized as "If it moves, tax it; if it stops

moving, subsidize it.” Unfortunately, in this particular situation, what I don’t think the member and his colleagues have understood is that the heart of the motion brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Kluane, is urging the Government of Canada, as one step in supporting the recovery of the restaurant and bar industry, to eliminate their new automatic annual federal excise tax increase on beer, wine, and spirits.

This is not a proposal for government to remove all current taxes, but simply to stop automatically increasing it — because it is one thing that will make it progressively harder for an industry that is already very much struggling as a result of the pandemic. It has seen significant effects here as well as across the country that have affected not just the owners of these bars and restaurants, but also their employees.

While the minister can use talking points about social responsibility all he wants, again, we are not proposing something that would increase the availability of alcohol or eliminate all taxes on it. We are simply asking the Government of Canada to recognize that, at a time when this sector of the economy is down, it’s not the time to keep adding new taxes and more burden on small business owners who are struggling right now to keep going and are looking at the future with concern about whether they can stand back up again and get back to where they were as prosperous businesses that contribute to the local economy as well as help their employees put food on the table.

So, we will, of course, close by encouraging the minister to reconsider the Liberals’ anti-business position on this motion. This is a great motion brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Kluane, and we have an excellent letter as well, written by Leader of the Yukon Party Currie Dixon to the federal minister regarding their current plan to keep raising the taxes on this sector of the economy. We would encourage the Liberals to rethink their pro-tax approach and instead adopt a pro-business approach, a pro-employee approach, and a pro-economy approach.

**Ms. Hanson:** You know, I had, honest to god, not intended to speak to this motion. I do find — I mean, to me, it is symbolic again, though, of what we have seen every Wednesday in this Legislative Assembly, where this could be easily resolved. If the Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation felt that it was important that this motion had the caveat of social responsibility added to it, they could have — like they do so many times — introduced a motion to amend the motion as put forward by the Member for Kluane.

As I understand it, the Member for Kluane was seeking to have this House basically say that this Liberal government joined with the opposition members to join and say to the federal Liberal government: “We think that there is an overstep here. We would like you to step back a bit during this period of time.”

The Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation knows — probably better than anyone else in this Legislative Assembly — how strongly I feel about his role — our role — with respect to the social responsibility aspect of the

Liquor Corporation. He also knows how strongly I feel about how that social responsibility aspect has been so woefully underplayed, both in the day-to-day activities and in the recent amendments to the legislation.

So, it is one thing to say — I mean, I have stood in this Legislative Assembly time and time again and pointed to the various reports — whether it is the chief medical officer of health’s reports or the *Putting People First* report or the aging-in-place report — time and time again. But at the same time, this minister, this government, has continued to divorce — basically, to effectively support privatization of our liquor sales, to allow the advertising and establishment of private liquor stores throughout the city, to say, on one hand, that we know the social impacts and we know the health impacts and the economic impacts of unfettered alcohol sales, but at the same time, profiting from those.

I’m finding it a little hard — it’s incongruous. There’s a lack of congruence between what’s being proposed — what’s being said as an objection to the motion put forward by the Member for Kluane — and the reality on the ground. I find that really difficult to accept. I’m ambivalent, quite frankly, on the merits of this motion, but the argument put forward by the Minister of Community Services — also responsible for the Liquor Corporation — is not ringing true in terms of the actions of the government when they had the opportunity to be very clear when they brought forward the new *Liquor Act* — as the minister knows, from the very first encounters with him as MLA around issues in my riding. I watch every Friday, and I watch the number of off-sales venues that have been approved by this government, with extended hours, and I wonder — really? Is that social responsibility?

I think we are charged, as Members of the Legislative Assembly — and particularly those who are given the privilege of serving as ministers in this capacity in this Legislative Assembly — to ensure that the rhetoric we use is matched by the actions we take.

I absolutely support the minister in his comments with respect to the vital importance of social responsibility, but it’s a stretch to see how that is applied in the context of — other than chastising the Member for Kluane for not including that in his motion — oversight perhaps. The opportunity was there for the minister, if he felt so strongly about it, to amend the Member for Kluane’s motion and make it reflect what he thinks is necessary — what his government thinks is necessary.

I guess I just see it as a classic example of this Liberal government dismissing any attempts by members opposite to raise issues that they are hearing from, perhaps, parts or segments of the Yukon economy, Yukon private sector, that they don’t. That’s unfortunate, but that’s a reflection that we’re seeing time and time again every Wednesday when private members have an opportunity to raise — as the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, the Leader of the New Democrats, did this afternoon. It’s disappointing to see a government that says, “We want to work with you, but you know what? We don’t really. We want to listen to you, but no, we’re not listening because we already made our minds up, and we came into the room prepared with the statements that we’re going to make.”

So be it — that's unfortunate. I kind of hoped that the democratic process was a bit more robust than that. After 10 years here, I'm beginning to think that it's less and less so, because it's speaking points only and it is the party line. I didn't think that this was what I was elected for, Mr. Speaker. I thought I was elected to reflect the concerns of Yukon citizens, whether I agree with them all or not.

I think we've made it very clear — both my colleague for Takhini-Kopper King and I. I don't agree on many things that perhaps the Member for Kluane, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, or even the Member for Porter Creek North might put forward, but I'm willing to listen to them and maybe try to find a way of accommodating the concerns that they have, but I find that's not the way that anything is received across the way. That's unfortunate.

I'm optimistic that someday we may actually have an exchange of ideas in this Legislative Assembly. We may be able to engage without having prepaid announcements coming at us — paid by us and paid at the cost of democracy. I'm disappointed, Mr. Speaker, but that's not, unfortunately, unusual over the last four years.

I will rest on the hope that there might be a day when we actually have a conversation that isn't either questioning my integrity or that of my colleagues on this side of the floor for bringing forth issues, questioning whether or not we have a valid understanding of issues based on what citizens tell us. I hope that there will be a day when there is that kind of exchange that demonstrates what I have heard as the mantra, but not the actions, of being open and accountable and transparent, because those words have become beyond risible in the context of this Legislative Assembly.

I'm disappointed. That's not new. It's Wednesday.

**Mr. Hassard:** I didn't intend to speak initially today either, but I think there are a couple of things that should be addressed. It's interesting that the minister has essentially said that he feels that there are more important things that we could be discussing here today than this motion brought forward by my colleague, the Member for Kluane. That's concerning.

The government can take time doing ministerial statements, talking about — a good example would be the other day when we talked about a housing project that had been completed and open for 11 months rather than getting an update on a drive-through testing clinic for COVID.

I think that a motion that encourages the government to work with the federal government to not have tax increases in these troubling times — to me, that is an important motion. I spent my entire life in business, and businesses, I think, are integral to our society. If we don't do everything we can to encourage and try to help people out in their businesses, then we're failing as legislators.

The other thing that's concerning is that we heard from this government, on numerous occasions, how they want to work with everybody and that good ideas come from all sides of the Legislature, yet as we heard from the Member for Whitehorse Centre, instead of bringing forward an amendment to this motion with regard to social responsibility — because that

seems to be the sticking point for the minister — the government will instead choose to just vote it down — use their majority and vote it down.

The minister talked about the motion brought forward by the Member for Copperbelt North a few weeks ago. We spent, essentially, two and a half Wednesdays talking about it. The opposition continually brought forward amendments to that motion to try to make it stronger and put more meat on the bone. The government had the prerogative and they used their majority to vote those amendments down. As I said, that was their prerogative and their choice, but at least we brought forward amendments that we felt would strengthen the motion. It really is unfortunate that the Liberals, rather than trying to work with opposition members, choose to just dig in their heels and use their majority to vote things down rather than really look at the big picture and work together.

**Mr. Hutton:** The members opposite have made this look like it is a very simple issue; you either support business or you don't. It is not that simple. Keep in mind the businesses that we are talking about here.

Alcohol is a psychoactive, mind-altering drug. My definition of a drug dealer is somebody who sells a psychoactive, mind-altering drug, knowing that it can cause harm to people, for profit. Let's make it cheaper. Let's make it more accessible. Every time you make it cheaper, more people get in —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Mr. Hutton:** Excuse me — I have the floor, I believe, Mr. Hassard.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

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

**Ms. McLeod:** If the Speaker would remind members to refrain from using proper names.

#### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** The members will refer to each other by the ridings that they represent or the portfolio that they have. That is an oversight from time to time, I'm sure, but nevertheless, I would remind members to please keep vigilant in that regard. Also, let's avoid having conversations back and forth. That includes the Member for Mayo-Tatchun — you should stick to the contributions that you are making, and I will listen closely to everyone to ensure that I can hear what you are saying. If I have any issue hearing what you are saying, I will intervene as required.

**Mr. Hutton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The motion is a little confusing. Last week, we heard the members opposite talk about support for the cannabis stores here — criticizing the members on this side of the House because we were competing with private cannabis. I didn't hear any request about cutting the taxes for the cannabis retailers. They are business people here too. So, if you want to pick

winner and loser among the business community here, that is not something that I can support. This is a really simple issue for me. When there is more availability to alcohol and people have more access to it, more people die in my communities. I go to more funerals.

I am happy that the legalization of cannabis provided us with the opportunity to finally talk about alcohol as the drug that it is. You know, it is not a beverage. I didn't teach my kids that alcohol was a beverage; I taught them that it is a drug. I think that is something that we should all be teaching our children. It is the most dangerous drug — not just in Canada but in the entire world. It kills more people than every other drug put together.

We have an opioid crisis in this country. In 2017, Canada lost 4,000 people to opioids. It is a crisis and it is sad. In 2015, we lost 5,082 Canadians to alcohol-attributable-only death. That's another crisis and it's one that we've ignored for far too long in this country. Social responsibility — there is a massive social responsibility on these people who are selling these drugs to our children. I'm struggling to see any value in this motion at all.

Do the members opposite not see the correlation between alcohol availability and increased hospitalizations? I heard members in Question Period this afternoon talking about the hospital being underfunded. Last year in Canada, 77,000 hospitalizations occurred from alcohol-attributable-only causes. Each one of those resulted in an \$8,100 average cost, compared to a \$5,800 cost for anybody going in there for any other reason. We're putting a tremendous burden on our health care system every time we increase alcohol sales in this country.

The profit that the Government of Canada — that any provincial government — makes off it doesn't come close to paying for the harms that alcohol does in our society. We all get to pay for that. The big drug companies — Seagram — they don't pay for it; we do. Social responsibility is not just on us; it's on these people who are producing, manufacturing, and distributing these drugs.

From 2009 to 2018, we've seen a 37-percent increase in alcohol-related traffic violations in the Yukon. Impaired driving went up drastically last year and the year before. More Yukoners are having accidents, injuring people, and killing people on our roads. "Let's make booze cheaper so that businesses can survive. That's a great idea." It shouldn't shock anybody over there why I'm not going to support this motion. I've carried enough people who have died from alcohol-related illnesses to their graves in all three of my communities. Enough is enough. It's time to have an honest conversation about the cost of alcohol in this country.

Canada-wide — because they changed the impaired driving laws in 2018 — we saw the largest increase in impaired driving in over 30 years — a 20-percent increase in impaired driving across Canada last year — because legislation got rid of two really weak defences that people had used to get around impaired driving for years. Now they are gone — and now our roads are getting safer?

The RCMP are doing a better job of keeping our streets safe, but more Yukoners are operating their vehicles while impaired. It is not just impaired driving. In 2018-19, Yukon saw the largest increase in police-reported crime across the country, with a 21-percent increase. We talked earlier in this House today and people spoke about gender-based violence and spousal violence. You can speak to any RCMP officer and they will tell you that 75 to 80 percent of all these incidents involve alcohol.

According to the World Health Organization, Canadians consume more alcohol per capita than the worldwide average. That's something to be proud of. Better yet: Here in the Yukon, we are the champions. We are the smallest province or territory, but we consume 13.2 litres of pure alcohol per person every year. That's great. Let's support businesses that sell this. What is more disturbing is that Yukon is leading Canada in sales and lagging the country in social responsibility.

In this pandemic — when people are already suffering — people are turning to drugs and alcohol and they already have drug and alcohol problems. This is just making it worse. The only possible outcome we can have from making alcohol cheaper is to exacerbate all of those problems. How can any member opposite think that this is a good idea?

A few weeks ago, the members opposite wanted to have a select committee on mental health. Talk about mental health — let's lower the price of alcohol; that will do wonders for the mental health of Yukoners. That is just crazy. Every single one of us, Mr. Speaker, have friends and family who have been negatively impacted by alcohol in some way. Many of us have lost friends and family. I am no exception to this, Mr. Speaker.

This motion does an excellent job of displaying the lack of understanding from the members opposite of how serious this drug is — and that's exactly what it is: a drug. It's killing our youth at a rate that exceeds fentanyl, cocaine, heroin, and every other dangerous class 1 narcotic circulating in our communities. It is the absolute champion when it comes to killing our young people. In 2019, Canada averaged 10 deaths every day related to substance abuse. Seven and a half of those 10 were attributed to alcohol.

Maybe you start to get a sense of why I'm not a big fan of alcohol. Every day, we lose an average of seven Canadians — seven friends, seven family members — because of a drug that we have the nerve to call a beverage. Let's call it what it really is: a silent killer; a burden on our medical facilities, staff, and infrastructure; an agitator that leads to domestic violence and assault; a mind-altering substance responsible for the deaths of countless innocent people; a suicide drink.

As a society, as a government, we dedicate an enormous amount of time, energy, and money just trying to keep the issues of alcohol in check, and the members opposite want us to cut this industry more slack, while Canadians and Yukoners are literally dying daily from the very substance that the Yukon conservative party is advocating for.

I grow tired of this, Mr. Speaker. I'm tired of having to educate people on an issue that quite literally rests under their noses, because they're more concerned with helping the drug dealers make money by killing their fellow Canadians than they

are concerned with helping those who struggle with its addictive and destructive qualities.

I guess I shouldn't be too surprised, though, given that the Yukon conservative party has a history of putting profits and money ahead of human quality of life and basic decency. They're so concerned with how quickly the Liberal caucus can produce graphic images — using a stock image, a placeholder logo, and a box of text — all to fire up constituents about mandated masks that they couldn't be bothered to fact-check the issues on alcohol before tabling this out-of-touch motion in this House.

For the record, producing a graphic like that takes about three minutes — which ironically is about as much time as the members opposite spent contemplating this motion. They talked about the devil being in the details and about unintended consequences of the words that are in motions. Go home and think about that tonight, members opposite — about the unintended consequences of the words in your motion.

If they spent half the time researching and understanding these topics as they do criticizing this government, perhaps their arguments and criticism would be more succinct. Perhaps their credibility wouldn't be crumbling beneath them. If this isn't a sad indication of how outdated and out of touch the Yukon conservative party really is with the reality that we face, I don't know what would be — and they have the nerve to call themselves “progressive”.

Alcohol doesn't need our support, Mr. Speaker — the alcoholics do; our communities do. Those who grieve lost loved ones, friends, and family because of drunk drivers — those are the people who need our support. We need to stop investing and cutting costs for socially irresponsible industries and start putting that money into rehabilitation so that we can create a world where our children and our grandchildren have the support they need to thrive, not just survive. Living by the bottle is not thriving — for many Yukoners, it is barely surviving.

**Speaker:** If the member now speaks, he will close debate on Motion No. 345.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Mr. Istchenko:** I do want to thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre from the Third Party for her comments. I had thought, also, along those same lines as her — that this would be a great opportunity to send a message that we support our business community.

It was very unfortunate to hear some of the comments from the Minister of Community Services. I am not certain that the Liberals realize that this is not a campaign being led by the Yukon Party; this is a campaign being led by Canada's business community — the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. It is a letter signed by hundreds of Canadian businesses, asking specifically for how this motion was worded. At least one major Yukon business signed this letter. As I pointed out, the very well-written letter from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce lays out why this change will help the business community across Canada.

It would have been awesome if the members across the way would have listened when I was speaking. It was very disappointing to hear the negative comments that the Minister of Community Services and other members across the way made about the hospitality sector earlier, which suggested that this motion — which, as I pointed out, is specifically a request from the business community. For the minister to suggest that they do not care about social responsibility, that was very disappointing — to hear the Liberal Minister of Community Services say that about the business community. It was also very disappointing to hear the Liberals suggest that the business community is irresponsible and does not care about social responsibility.

We even heard one Liberal member of the Legislature refer to bar and restaurant owners as “drug dealers” today. My god, Mr. Speaker — what an outrageous and disappointing statement for the Liberals to make about small business owners in our community. You know what, we will forward the Liberals' comments to the dozens of business owners who are following this debate today and are hoping to see this federal tax repealed. I should mention again that the wording of this motion was written in collaboration with the business community. By the way, nowhere in the motion is it advocating for more access to alcohol — nowhere in the motion.

Sometimes, I think that the Liberals see political conspiracies everywhere. This is not a trick motion, Mr. Speaker. This was a very simple, straightforward motion about a specific policy request from the business community to help them through a pandemic. This was literally just a request from the business community. It was just a nice way for us to voice our support for the business community here in the Yukon and across the country to show that we support them. Unfortunately, what the businesses will see is that the Yukon Liberal government made negative comments about them and voted against this important measure that we could then take to support the industry. That is their record and we will make sure that, on the doorsteps during the next election, every business owner and employee of restaurants and bars knows that the Liberals made these negative comments about their industry.

Mr. Speaker, after listening to the comments from the Minister of Community Services, I had a quick conversation with the Member for Whitehorse Centre. We talked about the previous Legislative Assembly, when the Liberals only had one member in here. When we used to debate motions on Wednesday, we would all vote in support of these motions — and I think it was a race to see who could get the press release out first — but we were supporting things in general for all Yukoners. During a pandemic, not wanting to support the business community is so disappointing from these Liberals. That the Liberals are going to vote against this idea that came directly from business is just disappointing. Let's get the vote over and done with.

**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. Frost:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Disagree.

**Mr. Adel:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Disagree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

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

**Speaker:** The nays have it. I declare the motion negatived.

*Motion No. 345 negatived*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**Chair (Mr. Hutton):** Order, please.

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

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agree.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public

Works, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Department of Highways and Public Works — continued**

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome to round two. My officials, Mr. Gorczyca and Mr. McConnell, are just taking their seats. I welcome them to the House this afternoon. Thank you for joining us, gentlemen.

I look forward to hearing questions. On the floor today is our supplementary budget number 1 for the season. We have a total of \$11.5 million in O&M to talk about this afternoon and about \$22 million in capital. I look forward to the members opposites' questions on those items. I will leave it to you.

**Mr. Kent:** I welcome the officials back to the Assembly here today to provide advice and support to the minister. Of course, everybody knows that we had a very short and abbreviated Spring Sitting — nine days — due to the global pandemic, so I don't think that it will surprise the minister that we have some policy questions that perhaps aren't related to the supplementary budget because we didn't get a chance to ask those questions in the spring.

So, the first one that I wanted to ask about is with respect to the *Airport Act* and the timing of the regulations. Can the minister tell us if those regulations are being developed or if they have been finished? I know that the Aviation Advisory Group was playing a very big role in that work, so I am curious when the last meeting of that committee was and if there are minutes available for those meetings.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The last meeting of the Aviation Advisory Group, which is now in full swing, was last week. I addressed that committee. As the member opposite knows, the committee is there to help us and advise us on matters relating to aviation and provide advice to me. I have had a lot of discussions with the aviation community over the last several months. The last time was at this committee meeting last week. It was cordial, I fielded some questions, and then they conducted the substantive part of their own meeting.

I look forward to hearing what they have to say to me about the results of that meeting.

The *Public Airports Act* regulations are on the cusp of coming to Cabinet. I told the committee last week that I expect to have those regulations before the committee as I pledged to do sometime in the early new year. That's my update as far as the aviation act, the regulations and the aviation advisory committee.

**Mr. Kent:** If the minister can direct me to them — if they are available on the website — are the minutes available from those Aviation Advisory Committee meetings? I know that the last time Highways and Public Works was up for debate, we asked about the Procurement Advisory Committee and if the minutes were available for those or if they would be made available.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the question from the member opposite. To remind him, the last time we met and I was questioned by the member opposite, he did ask about the

minutes. I did tell him at that time that the minutes of the meeting of the Procurement Advisory Panel are not public. They're shared with members inside there. It's the same with the Aviation Advisory Committee. As I said, that committee has been struck to provide me with advice — advice to the minister — and the minutes of those meetings are shared with the members of the committee, but they are not public.

The member opposite also, I think in his opening remarks this afternoon, referenced the short Sitting this spring. I do appreciate that. I will remind the members opposite there though that we did actually debate the entire budget. The budget was passed by this Legislative Assembly after debate. We let go — a lot of our legislative agenda last spring was shelved to provide the opposition members time to debate the budget, and at the end of the budget debate and after the end of that last night — which we extended and we actually made offers to sit as long as the members opposite would like to sit — at the end of that session, we unanimously agreed to meet again on October 1, which we did.

We met all of our commitments and we're happy to answer questions in this extended Sitting this time. We're into day 29. We have another 16 days to go and we're certainly looking forward to a fulsome, wholesome, and really incisive debate with the members opposite.

**Mr. Kent:** I guess we will agree to disagree on whether or not the entire budget was debated in the nine short days that we had in the spring before adjourning because of the pandemic.

That said, I do want to move on to a couple of other topics before I turn the floor over to the Member for Whitehorse Centre. There are a number of studies that have been conducted with respect to aviation. Let's go through them one at a time. The first one that I have in front of me is a Stantec report dated May 23, 2017. It is entitled *Government of Yukon: Yukon Aviation System Review*. It is an aviation system review and investment recommendations. As I mentioned, Stantec was the contractor. The minister may not have this information, but I am hoping that, if he doesn't, he can commit to get back to us. What was the cost of conducting this system review and what information was used as part of the plan of action that is on page 74 of that document?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The member opposite, I am sure — I mean, we're straying. We're not only not debating the \$30 million that is in the supplementary budget today, but we're not even debating stuff that was in 2019-20, 2018-19, or 2017-18; we are back to stuff from 2016-17.

Actually, that report that was, I believe, commissioned by the former government — this system review. It did land in May 2017, shortly after the election. I will have to review the document because we don't have it here; it is going back a long way.

I will note, though, for the member opposite that, after the election, I went to research aviation in the territory — after I was assigned this portfolio — and came across the website “The War on Aviation” in the territory. It was pages upon pages of problems with aviation in the territory and some of them were very specific. They had to do with sewage systems up at

the airport. Some of them were a lot more general and had to do with policy problems. So, I knew right away that there were problems with this system of aviation in the territory, and I met with the pilots, shortly after being elected, at a general meeting up at the airport site. I have had several meetings, of course, with pilots and aviation companies since then — many, many, many — and really got a sense for the industry.

One of the things that I was told early in my time in this portfolio — by a former member of the members opposite's government — was that the 2040 document setting guidelines — setting planning — for the coming years was not adequate. It wasn't good, and so we actually re-tooled that. That is what Yukon's Flight Path — and the significant document that we are now just on the cusp of releasing in the next few weeks is the re-do of the work of the previous government, which we were told at the time was inadequate.

Having seen “The War on Aviation” in the territory and the grousing — and the serious issues that were raised by the aviation sector online and in other areas — we set to work. We are still in the process of straightening out and planning for the future. The Flight Path document, the re-do of the 2040 document, is about to land, and that will lay out the investments that we plan in the Yukon's aviation system over the next 10 years.

We're in the grips of COVID-19, of course, and having that problem, but we have seen a heavy investment in the aviation industry. Since we came into office, we have paved the Dawson runway, we certified the Mayo airport, and we have worked very hard to get Whitehorse International Airport out of the doldrums and to get it the proper equipment so that it can maintain the runways in a way that befits an international airport. We have made sure that it had the baggage-handling equipment so we didn't lose our certification and the proper safety/security systems up at the airport so that we retain the certification of that airport. That was work that should have been done many years ago, but we're catching up, and we're going to continue to invest in this absolutely vital industry for the territory.

The investments that we have made have been strategic. They have been critically important, and I'm very proud of the work that my colleagues in the Highways and Public Works department have done over the years to right the aviation industry and bring it closer to true. I don't know if we're there yet. I don't think we are, but we have made huge strides, and we're going to continue to make those investments and improve this very vital infrastructure for an industry that is absolutely critical to the territory's people and for its industry.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for his revisionist history lesson he just gave us with respect to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport 2040 document.

I'm on the website — yukonflying.com — and I'm going to read to the minister an e-mail from the former ADM of Transportation at Highways and Public Works, dated Monday, February 20, 2017, months after the minister was sworn in as the Minister of Highways and Public Works. It's to the Yukon Aviation Advisory Group — yes, a group that already existed



prior to the introduction of the *Public Airports Act* by the minister.

It says — and I quote: “YAAG Members,

“As discussed at our January 18th meeting...” — again, a time when the member opposite was the Minister of Highways and Public Works — “... attached for your review is the Scope of Work from the Terms of Reference for the update of the Vision 2020 planning document for the Whitehorse Airport. I haven’t included all the administrative pieces that will form the tender package as I didn’t think that would be of much interest to the group. If anyone would like to see them I am happy to share them with you.

“We would like to tender this package fairly soon so that we can get the work underway as soon as possible. As such we likely won’t have another YAAG meeting before we tender so I would ask if you have any comments or suggestions you send them to me no later than March 2<sup>nd</sup>.”

Again, that is signed by the former Assistant Deputy Minister of Transportation in the minister’s Department of Highways and Public Works. When the minister says that a former colleague with the Yukon Party government said that the ENWIA 2040 document had flaws, it is his document; he was the minister. It was not tendered under the previous government. He can’t point fingers and he can’t blame the other government like this minister and his colleagues like to do all the time. This is a tender issued by this minister and this government when it comes to ENWIA 2040.

As I mentioned, there were three separate reviews when it comes to aviation. The first was the system review — yes, it was started under the previous government, but as I mentioned, it was signed off and completed by this minister. There was the ENWIA 2040 document that the minister doesn’t seem to remember initiating when he was the minister — again, I have this e-mail in front of me from yukonflying.com. Then we have the third review that this minister has undertaken, which is *Yukon’s Flight Path: Aviation System Investment Strategy for 2020-2030*.

As I mentioned, we know who the contractor was on that initial system review — it was Stantec, as I mentioned. So, I am hoping that the minister can provide us with a cost. I am curious as to if the minister can provide us with who the contractor was and what the costs were on his ENWIA 2040 document that he said is flawed. I am also curious as to if the minister can provide us with the information on the costs and who the contractor was for his third review of aviation since he has been the minister — *Yukon’s Flight Path: Aviation System Investment Strategy for 2020-2030*.

This minister, as I have mentioned, has undertaken three separate reviews. We haven’t seen the results of any of them. The system review has overlaps with the Yukon’s Flight Path document, so again, we are looking for some answers from the minister with respect to money spent on these three separate reviews and some accountability from the minister that he actually understands which of these are his responsibility — because he was the minister in 2017.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I did hear a lot of indignation from the member opposite, but not really a question. But he was

talking about the process and I will endeavour to get him an answer because of course I currently hold the position of Minister of Highways and Public Works. Contrary to the assertions of the member opposite, I take that very seriously and it is a responsible position.

The member opposite was talking — I was talking earlier about the state of the aviation industry when I was appointed to this role. Early in the mandate, I heard from aviation industry representatives that there had not been enough consultation on the master planning documents. We undertook a more robust engagement consultation process after getting the aviation act passed. We now have Stantec again about to present us with the Flight Path document, which is the result of a really deep dive into consultation and into the industry to make sure that the planning document that we have to guide our investments over the next 10 years represents the community, including the aviation industry.

We also have — the member opposite mentioned — the Yukon Aviation Advisory Committee, the volunteer group. What we’ve done and what we heard from industry is that they wanted a direct and a more formal mechanism to advise me — the Minister of Highways and Public Works, whoever that may be — on aviation industry matters going forward — again, because they did not feel that they had been heard in the past. So, we actually endeavoured to get the Aviation Advisory Committee put in place. That entity is now in place. It is meeting, it is discussing matters related to aviation, and it is advising the Minister of Highways and Public Works on matters relating to aviation in a more formal way than had been done previously.

Again, the goal of this whole process is to make sure that the aviation industry is heard and that its concerns and ideas are reflected and transmitted to the government for consideration. I’m happy to have gotten that committee in place to advise us going forward. I think it’s an important body, and I look forward to working with it into the future.

**Ms. Hanson:** I just want to say, at the outset, that sometimes I think the failure to communicate is that we use the same words and we hear them differently. At the outset of this afternoon’s debate on the Highways and Public Works supplementary estimates, the minister talked about having a fulsome discussion. I’m sure he thinks that he meant an abundant, copious — lots of words — debate, thinking that “fulsome” is solely a positive word, but the modern and the more common reference to “fulsome” — and I react, because I would like to have a full conversation — but “fulsome”, to many, is “offensive to good taste, tactless, overzealous, and excessive”. That’s not the kind of conversation that I want to have with the minister or with a minister.

I heard the minister the other day — in response to my colleague from the Yukon Party who was asking questions with respect to this budget area — making some allusion earlier, even in this short time, that he was not interested in talking about matters other than that covered in the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for 2020-21. Unfortunately, I think it’s imperative that we actually have an opportunity to raise questions, and that is our job, so I will raise questions, some of

which will be focused exclusively on matters that are identified in the supplementary estimates, but from those, there are some questions that arise that are linked to the whole of the budget, and it's impossible to sequester them, and so I don't intend to.

On November 23, just two days ago, in his opening comments, the minister identified, as is represented in the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, that \$2.5 million was transferred to the Department of Health and Social Services for the 1Health information project.

My question is — I have a couple of questions in this area, just so that the minister understands where I am going. The budget indicates that the budget for 2020-21 for 1Health is \$5 million to \$10 million — so, a range. I don't know what it is; he can tell me that. So, \$2.5 million is transferred to the Department of Health and Social Services. Is the balance — whatever it is, and the minister can fill in the blank — retained by Highways and Public Works? Has the Highways and Public Works department been managing the various iterations of e-health systems since the first federal money started to flow in 2004 for the various e-health initiatives that Canada has funded to provinces and territories? How much has been spent on this?

How many different systems — and what is the cumulative total over the last 16 years expended by the Yukon government and the federal government on developing an as yet undeveloped electronic information system for our health care system? This is something that was identified when the provinces and the federal government identified that there was a need to modernize our communications — just as we have heard from this minister and from various ministers about the importance of sharing information and all the various factors that are contained in that in terms of privacy — the modernization of that HIPMA legislation and all that goes with it.

My curiosity is both about the first part of this fiscal year — the \$5 million to \$10 million range that is contained in the five-year capital plan of March 2020. Is all of it planned to be spent this fiscal year by Highways and Public Works with the exclusion of \$2.5 million? So, I need to know that, and then I am looking for some background information so that, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and through me, Yukon citizens, through the official record of Hansard, will know what we are looking at in terms of expenditures in this important area.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I welcome the Member for Whitehorse Centre to the debate this afternoon. I thank her for her question.

When it comes to “fulsome” — I was using it as far as “generous” or “abundant” debate, but I take her point. She is a wordsmith and a lover of language, and I respect that.

The question this afternoon has to do with 1Health. We did transfer \$2.5 million out of our IRMC envelope — that's our tech envelope.

Health had an opportunity to proceed with their 1Health system. This year, we had money that we could divert to that tech project in the Health department and so we did so.

The details of the 1Health project and where it's at — it's actually a project that's being managed by the Health

department. This was a financial transaction on our part. At the moment, the Health department is the one managing the 1Health system for its department and so I would recommend that the member opposite, when we get to the Health debate, that the Member for Whitehorse Centre direct her questions to the Minister of Health and Social Services in that debate.

She also talked about 16 years' worth of tech funding. Going back to 2004 — the time of the very first iPod — the one with the scroll wheel, and the Razr phone I had at the time. It was a Motorola Razr that was wafer thin — the first phone I had. So, it goes back a very, very long period of time. Tech has evolved dramatically in that period of time.

The problem, Mr. Chair, as I have spoken about quite often, is that spending on our IT systems within government over that period of time has not really been very robust. We are working very hard to increase spending to our online systems. We have recently upgraded the servers in Highways and Public Works to allow for remote desktops which came in very handy during the COVID-19 pandemic when we asked about half our employees to work from home at the onset of this pandemic. We also have an open data repository now, which we didn't have before. We are greatly increasing our online services. We have the U-drive system that is increasing the services to the traveling public and people who own cars.

We have made huge investments in our tech, taking systems that the Government of Yukon depended on that were really pioneered in the Pong era and we had huge swaths of data and the government was at risk because of these archaic and very, very old systems. We've updated a lot of those and we're going to continue that work going forward.

I know that 1Health is another vital project to the Yukon government and for the Health and Social Services department. In my former career, I spoke often about the need to make sure that our health systems were updated to allow the data transfer between the citizens of the territory, the pharmacists, the doctors and surgeons — because there is so much data there, and it was so antique. The systems were basically paper-based systems — huge filing folders — and did not allow for the quick transfer of very essential personal information between doctors and patients, or patients and surgeons, or doctors and surgeons. 1Health is one of the ways that we're going to make sure that system is more robust for the citizens of the territory.

We had an opportunity this year to invest \$2.5 million from the IRMC envelope into health to facilitate that work, and we were happy to do that.

The member opposite references our five-year capital plan. I'm glad to find another member of the opposition who is using the plan and has found some utility in it. I know that it does provide a range of price for the project in that capital plan. The reason for that is because we don't want to give a very precise number because it is used for bidding for contracts and that type of thing, so we have to give a range, and that's why that's there.

I'm sure when my colleague, the Minister of Health and Social Services, gets up to discuss her budget, she will be happy to provide a lot more detail on this very important project.

**Ms. Hanson:** If the minister could provide a legislative return with respect to the question I asked — which was to do

with the money the federal government has contributed to the Yukon government since 2004, when provincial and territorial governments began to look at, began to develop systems to improve — as he said, in his fulsome way — in this case, I am not using it in the positive way, Mr. Chair — excessive, repetitive — the information I am seeking is to try to get a sense of how much we have invested to date on systems that are not in place. It's not about normal operational IT systems within the Government of Yukon, but on IHealth.

I don't want to go through that again. I am limited in my time, as the minister knows. We used to have ministers opposite who would do just as this minister does — stand up and speak without answering the question for the allotted 20 minutes. Luckily, he hasn't got into the 20-minute gambit.

Earlier this afternoon — and this is not a matter that is directly related to the supplementary budget, so I will put that caveat out there — I had raised a question or two with respect to some of the proposed changes that may come about as a result of Nav Canada studying the possibility of closing air traffic control tower functions across Canada. What we understand from the website and from looking at the Nav Canada site is that Nav Canada is looking at transitioning the other six towers — those being Whitehorse, Regina, Fort McMurray, Prince George, Sault Ste. Marie, and Windsor — to flight service stations, which would involve cutting the air traffic controller jobs.

Mr. Chair, I would hope the minister — in his conversations with the officials that he mentioned earlier today from Nav Canada — would have ascertained what the implications are. If he could provide this House with an estimate of what it would cost for it — we currently have flight service specialists and air traffic controllers at the Whitehorse airport, but it is cheaper for Nav Canada to change it to a flight service advisory as opposed to the full gamut, as we have now. So, there are a couple of options — as I understand it — that are available for Nav Canada — both of which will cost the Yukon government money. So, if the air traffic controllers stay and the flight service specialists go, there would be a need to install automatic weather-observing sites. If that happens, Whitehorse would not meet the standards necessary to be an alternate airport for international flights, as they might get weathered in — so that's a possibility. What costs are associated with that? What conversations has he had to determine what the implications for Yukon would be?

If we get rid of the flight service specialists because of cost cutting, there would be no one on midnights. As you will recall, Mr. Chair, I said to the minister earlier today that it is our understanding that the air traffic controllers are there from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and after that, it is flight service specialists. Has the Yukon government an estimate of what it would cost to install automatic runway lights that could be activated by pilots? Question.

These are serious issues that have implications for not just our aviation industry in the territory, but it also has implications for Yukon government budgets and for tourism. I am hopeful that the minister can either — he may not have these figures at hand, and his officials may not have done that liaison yet with

Nav Canada, but I would be appreciative if he can simply say that he doesn't have it at hand and that he will provide that by legislative return; that would suffice for this afternoon's question on that matter.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We were having such a nice discussion, I thought — and fulsome. I'm not trying to waste the time of the member opposite. I know her time is short. I was endeavouring to get her a response to a very broad question that she asked earlier, dating back to decades of spending.

I understand her curiosity, as she put it, in seeking that information. She has been a member of this Legislative Assembly for a long time. I don't know whether this *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* — the \$10 million in O&M and \$20 million in capital — spurred the question, or whether she just didn't get an answer in the other years in which she was sitting in the Legislative Assembly, but I understand her curiosity and her wanting to have answers to 16 years of federal spending that wasn't spent, or perhaps was spent, and where it went. I totally get that, and I'm puzzled as to why she hasn't had an answer to this question from previous governments or whatever, but that's speculation on my part. I certainly don't want to waste the remaining minutes of the member opposite's time today.

I hope we have an opportunity to meet again on the Highways and Public Works budget. I hope we can get through some of the other departments. I can come back here and discuss further with the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

The question that she was asking about today — on this next question — was a Nav Canada question that we fielded earlier today in Question Period.

The problem that I have, Mr. Chair, with the member opposite's tone is that it's like a *fait accompli* — that we actually have a decision out of Nav Canada to do this action, which is to gut the air traffic controllers and gut the flight service specialists from the Whitehorse International Airport and that this is what Nav Canada is going to do. I am much more optimistic. I guess my glass is half full, Mr. Chair. I see this as a discussion that we're currently having with a federal government agency. I know that the Premier has had his conversations with Transport Minister Garneau. I know that I have had my conversations with Minister Garneau and with Neil Wilson, the president of Nav Canada. We're having discussions to work out — this is an investigation that Nav Canada is doing to see how it can save money during a global pandemic in which its revenues are falling precipitously, as most of the airline industry is doing right now — and which we are struggling and working very hard with our federal partners in the aviation industry to keep afloat. The very nature of that support that we're providing to carriers such as Air North and Alkan Air and to the rotary and fixed-wing companies is keeping them flying, and it is actually providing some revenue to Nav Canada because Nav Canada did not cut its fees that it's charging aviation companies to use its services.

We are in the very, very preliminary stages of a discussion with a federal agency responsible for flight services and safety. I have heard from the local aviation industries their concerns about safety. I have said several times — more than once on the

floor — that safety is a focus of mine; it's a focus of this government. During the pandemic, we put the safety of people first. When I'm working with airports, I've been working very hard to make sure that the safety and certificates that we rely on to operate these facilities are kept up to date, and we take the necessary investments to make sure that they are looked after. I'm going to continue to make that a focus of mine, going forward.

Mr. Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

#### **Chair's report**

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

**Speaker:** You have heard the report of the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.*

#### **The following document was filed November 25, 2020:**

34-3-38

Excise tax on alcohol, letter re (dated November 24, 2020) from Currie Dixon, Leader of the Yukon Party, to Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance, Government of Canada (Istchenko)



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 69

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, November 26, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

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

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<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Thursday, November 26, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I was wondering if we could please welcome to the Legislative Assembly two folks. I think that is Mr. Doug MacLean — it's sometimes difficult to see with the mask — and His Worship Mayor Dan Curtis, who I think is here for the ministerial statement today on the release of Whistle Bend lots — if we could welcome them, please.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of the Northwestel Festival of Trees

**Mr. Gallina:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the annual Northwestel Festival of Trees. For nearly 20 years, the Northwestel Festival of Trees has been raising money for the Yukon Hospital Foundation to make access to equipment, programs, and services more affordable for Yukoners.

In previous years, the festival saw Yukon businesses decorate and display trees in our main administration building for everyone to enjoy and bid on. There was the famous pancake breakfast with Santa, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours BAH Humbug, the gala dinner, and other community events throughout the years.

With COVID-19 restrictions in place and a focus on limiting exposure for an event that is so strongly aimed at the health of Yukoners, this year the Yukon Hospital Foundation and Northwestel have collaborated with Meadow Lakes Golf Club to bring Yukoners a winter wonderland experience.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I get into the details of the special events and how organizers have adapted and created a unique winter wonderland for Yukoners to enjoy this year, I want to take some time to recognize those who have made the events this year so special and those who are with us in spirit, looking down and smiling at how these events have come together.

Paul Flaherty was the former president and CEO of Northwestel. He was with the company for 18 years and long supported the Festival of Trees and the fundraising initiatives that have helped Yukoners for generations. Last year, Paul wasn't with us at the festival to celebrate achievements. He was missed, and he will be again this year.

Mr. Speaker, Travis Adams is another member of this community looking down on us and smiling at what has been created this year. This year, funds raised through sponsorship and individual contributions will support pediatric care at Whitehorse General Hospital through the Travis Adams Memorial Fund. I hold my hands out to the Adams family, who are true community champions, and we continue to see this through the memorial fund that has been set up, but also through the unwavering commitment by Tara Larkin, Travis's sister, to keep his spirit alive and finding ways to bring this community together in times that, to many, seem insurmountable.

Finally, I will recognize with great respect the hard work and dedication by Karen Forward and her team, who always deliver Yukon Hospital Foundation events that engage and inspire our community and raise funds to support the health and well-being of Yukoners.

This year, participants in the Northwestel Festival of Trees will be able to enjoy over 55,000 holiday lights, which have been installed on the grounds of Meadow Lakes Golf Club to provide a unique and magical experience for friends and family. This is an event that requires advance reservations, and I understand that all dates are completely sold out, but I know that organizers are working to add future dates based on the availability of volunteers.

As well, in place of the customary gala events, the festival will instead host a virtual gala on December 12. This event will be broadcast on Northwestel Community TV and online, featuring stories of the past 18 years of the Festival of Trees, entertainers, and other special guests. It's inspiring to see Yukoners come together to ensure that events like this are still able to take place despite the changing and challenging environment we all face.

In closing, I invite Yukoners to join my family in volunteering at the winter wonderland so that additional dates can be added, as well as donating to the Yukon Hospital Foundation in support of pediatric services at the Whitehorse General Hospital. Finally, on Saturday, December 12, take time to visit with friends virtually and look back at past Northwestel Festival of Trees events and Yukon performances. For all of these event details, to donate or to volunteer, find the Yukon Hospital Foundation on Facebook or visit yhf.ca. Let's stay safe, take some time to enjoy these special winter events, and celebrate Yukoners past, Yukoners present, all while caring for the health of those in this territory.

*Applause*

**Mr. Kent:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 2020 Northwestel Festival of Trees.

This event, started in 2003, was initiated to help purchase life-saving medical equipment for the Whitehorse General Hospital. What started with the Close to Our Hearts campaign to purchase heart-monitoring equipment has now seen millions of dollars raised for a CT scanner, an MRI, digital X-rays, simulators, among other important devices to help Yukoners get the best quality health care right here close to home.

The festival concept was developed by former Yukon Hospital Corporation CEO Ron Brown and Vanessa Innes based on a similar event to support the Stanton Territorial Hospital in Yellowknife. They secured anchor sponsors like Northwestel, Golden Hill Ventures, and Alkan Air — major partners that believed in quality health care for Yukoners right from day one.

So many other key sponsors joined throughout the years and remain as foundation supporters to this day. These include Pelly Construction, Marsh Lake Tents & Events, Nuway Crushing, Skookum Asphalt, Save-On-Foods, Northern Vision Development, and Newmont Mining just to name a few. On top of this are the dozens and dozens of tree sponsors who have lent their time and talents to the event over the years.

We should also thank the volunteers who make this incredible event happen. The very first volunteer was former Commissioner and long-time member of this Assembly Doug Phillips, with whom I was honoured to co-chair the first campaign. Hundreds of Yukoners have followed in these footsteps.

Like every other aspect of our lives, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected this year's event. In other years, we would have gathered for the BAH Humbug Cocktail Party tonight in this building, breakfast and cookies with Santa to follow, and next weekend, the festival would have concluded with the sold-out Seniors Soirée and the Grand Ball.

This year, Yukon Hospital Foundation president Karen Forward and her team have put together a winter wonderland walk at Meadow Lakes Golf Club in support of the pediatric unit at Whitehorse General Hospital; 1,500 volunteer hours and 12 miles of lights went into it.

For those who haven't seen it yet, the golf course is magical and is well worth the walk or a drive-by to lift your spirits in these uncertain times when you may need a boost. A special thanks goes out to the Byram family, who owns Meadow Lakes golf course, for making this venue available. Another special thank you to Marsh Lake Tents & Events, Ray Chaykowsky and Helen Smith, for making this a reality.

I know that the walks were sold out early, but the foundation is trying to accommodate more people, so keep an eye on their Facebook page for updates.

You can also sponsor one or more of the 55,000 lights that are available for \$5 each, and don't forget the Home for the Holidays Virtual Gala December 12 at 6:00 p.m. on Northwestel Community TV and Facebook, which will close out the event.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to close my tribute today by recognizing and remembering Travis Adams. At the course, the number 55 is everywhere, and it's no coincidence that 55,000 lights are available. For those who don't know, 55 was the number Travis wore while racing. This past summer, we lost Travis in a tragic accident on the Alaska Highway south of Whitehorse. Travis was a businessman and philanthropist who will leave a legacy in this territory that will never be forgotten. He was also a loving partner, father, brother, and son. When he passed away, the Yukon lost a giant, and so many of us lost a friend.

The Yukon Hospital Foundation was so important to Travis and the Adams family. As mentioned, Nuway Crushing, owned and operated by the Adams family, has long been involved with this festival and so many other charitable events throughout the territory. This year, the Travis Adams pediatric fund has been set up with all proceeds from this event going to this important cause. I can't think of a better way to honour such an incredible guy.

So, please support this year's event however you can, and I know we look forward to gathering again in large numbers when it is safe to do so to help out with this incredible cause.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise in celebration of the giving spirit of Yukoners. This year, like so many other events, the Yukon Hospital Foundation's fundraising events look a little different. So, I thank my colleagues for their thoughts on the history of the Festival of Trees.

I was really lucky to have spent a fair amount of my youth with a lovely human who died in a motor vehicle accident this summer. Travis Adams was a man whose heart was bigger than just about anyone's I know.

Three years ago when I was fundraising for a wheelchair-accessible van for my friend Wayne, Travis and Nuway Crushing were one of the first who stepped up to help. He believed in community and doing his part.

The last time that we spoke this spring, he had called me to ask which organizations in town needed support during the pandemic, because that was the kind of guy that he was — always looking outside himself for where he could help. There have been so many beautiful things done to celebrate his life, but the most luminescent — the one that sparkles the most and with the most wonder — is easily the winter wonderland event that is being hosted at the Meadow Lakes Golf Course.

His friends and family have set up the Travis Adams Memorial Fund, which is so fitting, because it means that his legacy of supporting and giving back to his community will live on. With over 55,000 holiday lights hung outside to provide a pandemic-safe holiday extravaganza, this fundraiser will be supporting a cause close to his heart, and that is pediatric care. If you, like me, had full intentions of getting tickets to visit the winter wonderland at Meadow Lakes Golf Course and were gutted to know that it had sold out, never fear. After initially selling out the event, last night the Yukon Hospital Foundation sent out a call for volunteers to help in one-hour shifts to support the extension of this event. I signed up last night to volunteer. It's easy, and you can sign up too through their Facebook page. Soon you will be able to once again purchase tickets to visit this wondrous holiday celebration and join in the magic of the season.

These thousands of lights will be glowing bright, bringing comfort and joy, just like the man they celebrate.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Radon Action Month**

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Doug MacLean, the president of the Yukon Lung



Association, the president of the Yukon Council on Aging, and a former technical advisor for the Energy Solutions Centre. I acknowledge Mr. MacLean's dedication to Yukoners and his many hours of supporting all Yukoners with your volunteerism, so thank you for that.

I rise to give tribute to Radon Action Month on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the Third Party. During November, governments and organizations across Canada urge citizens to test their homes for radon and to take action to protect themselves if their home tests above the Canada guidelines. This month, we honoured National Housing Day — a day to consider housing solutions, including housing adequacy, which is also an objective under the housing action plan for Yukon. As such, I am urging Yukoners to test their homes for radon.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that can collect in houses. It is a hazard because it causes lung cancer. It is estimated that non-smokers exposed to high levels of radon over a lifetime have a one-in-20 chance of developing lung cancer. This increases to one in three for a person who smokes and is exposed to high radon levels over a lifetime.

Radon can be present anywhere in Yukon, and we have some of the highest levels of radon in Canada. The only way to know if your home has radon in it is to test for it. This year, supported by the Yukon Lung Association, Yukoners can get a \$10 subsidy for kits bought at Home Hardware. We also provided a limited number of kits to Yukon Housing Corporation offices across the territory, available free of charge. Testing for radon in your home is simple. Small testers sit in your home for at least three months, and then you send the test to a certified lab for analysis.

We urge Yukoners to mitigate, if they can. Get a radon reading in your home if you suspect that you have radon or if it is over the Canada guidelines. To help Yukoners, the Yukon Housing Corporation home repair loans can help eligible homeowners mitigate radon levels in their homes. It is important to reiterate that the only way to know the radon level in your home is to test for it. Radon levels can vary widely from one home to another in the same subdivision or area.

As a government, we take this very seriously because of the impact that radon can have on one's health. We have offered free radon testing and funding toward mitigation costs, if required, to licensed childcare programs. This winter, we will be testing any licensed programs that have recently opened.

All Yukon schools and Yukon Housing Corporation units have been tested for radon, and mitigation has happened if required. We know that the COVID-19 pandemic may have increased the amount of time that Yukoners spend at home, and so we encourage Yukoners to test their homes this winter.

Thank you to all of our partners — in particular, the Yukon Lung Association, which continues to help promote radon awareness and Radon Action Month.

*Applause*

**Ms. McLeod:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November as Radon Action Month.

Over the past number of years, radon gas has been a growing consideration for homeowners, home buyers, and business operators throughout the Yukon. Increased testing since 2006 has shown that levels of radon in some homes in the Yukon are among the highest in Canada.

Radon is a radioactive and invisible gas, typically found in basements and crawl spaces of homes. This gas comes from a natural breakdown of uranium in soil and rocks, which in turn decays and releases tiny particles that seep into homes through foundation cracks, pipes, or other openings around the base of the home. Exposure to radon is a main cause of lung cancer in non-smokers and accounts for 16 percent of lung cancer deaths in Canada each year.

If you take a look at the interactive radon map found on the Yukon government's website, you will see the results of radon testing in homes across the Yukon since 2006. Results show community average radon levels, and it's worth noting that, in subdivisions south of Whitehorse — in particular, Canyon Crescent, Whitehorse Copper, Wolf Creek, and Pine Ridge — show higher levels of radon than other parts of Whitehorse and the Yukon. Other areas, while results are lower, are still higher than the average.

Now is a good time to recognize the importance of testing for radon, and it's best to begin testing in the colder months when the doors are closed and there is little exposure to fresh air. Follow testing instructions and ensure that the test kit is set up in a low spot in your home. As the website notes, the percentage of homes tested to date is low. I encourage homeowners, if they have not done so, to invest in a radon testing kit for their homes and take the steps to mitigate if necessary.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Mr. Istchenko:** I have a letter for tabling regarding the federal escalator tax from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to the federal Minister of Finance.

**Ms. Hanson:** I have for tabling a Government of Yukon human resources directive in relation to COVID-19 working arrangements during COVID-19.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 4 — response

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I rise today to respond to Petition No. 4 regarding experiential programming, tabled in the Legislative Assembly on November 10, 2020. Eighty-two people signed this petition, which called for the Yukon government to bring what are referred to as the "Wood Street

Centre programs”, as well as all program equipment and the office administrator and principal together under one roof for the commencement of the 2021-22 school year in August 2021.

The first consideration in responding to the pandemic and planning for the 2020-21 school year has been the health and safety of all students and staff. We have worked to ensure that schools remain low-risk learning environments for Yukon students based on the recommendations of Yukon’s chief medical officer of health. In order to be able to safely return students and staff into schools during the pandemic, we have had to adapt programming across secondary schools in Whitehorse, including for the specialized programming like the experiential programs.

Keeping everyone safe required the relocation of the grade 8 students from F.H. Collins Secondary School, Yukon’s largest school, and approximately 80 to 90 students per semester who are enrolled in the experiential programs. We committed to monitoring our school programs and making adjustments to ensure that we continue to meet student learning needs while protecting health and safety.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with many difficult challenges. The pandemic is in the middle of a second wave around the world. There is not yet an approved vaccination, although there is positive advancement in this regard. In order to keep each other safe, we have been told explicitly by Yukon’s chief medical officer of health to remain vigilant. While these experiential programs are impacted, we are very pleased that they have been able to continue this school year despite the challenges that we are facing. We have been and remain committed to monitoring the current situation and to making changes as needed to ensure that the needs of these and all students are met and that our schools remain low-risk learning environments open to students.

As many will know, school districts in jurisdictions across Canada have not been as fortunate as we have been to date here in the Yukon. Here in the territory, we are fortunate to have the majority of our students attending full-time, face-to-face classes. As recently as yesterday, other jurisdictions in Canada have sent all students in grades 7 to 12 home to do full-time online learning. It remains our priority across this pandemic to have as many students attending full-time classes as is safely possible.

We have all had to adjust. I am grateful for how our students, staff, administrators, and many Yukoners have responded. What I can say is that we remain committed to ensuring the success of these important experiential programs. We will work together with the school administration, staff, and students of these programs to ensure that they continue to thrive.

The future of the pandemic is uncertain, and we must ensure that the health and safety of our students and staff is at the forefront of every decision that we make.

When we start to look ahead to the 2021-22 school year, we will continue to base our decisions on the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. Please know that we recognize the value of the immersive experiential learning

opportunities that these programs offer our Yukon students and that we are committed to their growth.

**Speaker:** Are there any petitions to be presented?  
Are there any bills to be introduced?  
Notices of motions.

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports *Putting People First*, the comprehensive health review, and the recommendations contained within.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to take immediate action and resolve long-standing boil water advisories that continue to impact our First Nation communities across Canada.

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

THAT this House supports the decision to mandate mask usage in public spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

THAT this House supports the 10-year renewable energy plan.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Land development

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** This morning, the mayor of Whitehorse, my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and I announced the start of a lottery that includes 249 lots for new homes. Growing families are wanting larger homes, seniors and empty-nesters are looking to downsize to townhouses or single-storey homes, and other Yukoners are in the market for the first time.

That is why it is so important that we have a good variety of lots. The land lottery will include 133 single-family lots, 91 townhouse lots, one duplex, and 11 multi-family lots across Whistle Bend, as well as seven previously released single-family lots. With this release, construction of lots in phases 3, 4, and 5 is now complete.

The lottery will also include five country residential lots in Hidden Valley. I’m also very excited that the first eight commercial lots around the future town square are being tendered. These lots will provide the foundation for creating Whistle Bend’s commercial, social, and recreational hub.

Mindful of COVID-19 restrictions, Mr. Speaker, a lottery application centre at the Sternwheeler Hotel and Conference Centre — formerly the Westmark — will be open on December 16 and 17, and again from January 4 through

January 8, for people to submit their applications. As well, we will livestream the draw and tender-opening events.

Because of the large number of lots, we will be drawing multi-family and townhouse lots and opening tenders for the commercial lots on January 12. We will be drawing applications on all of the other lots, including the Whistle Bend single-family and duplex lots and the five Hidden Valley country residential lots, on January 13.

Mr. Speaker, the population of Whitehorse is growing steadily. Today, with over 33,000 people living in the city and more coming, the demand for homes continues to increase. Much has changed since 2012 when the first 113 lots in phase 1 were offered and it took awhile for them to be sold. Counting today's lots, over 800 lots have now been developed in Whistle Bend. Mr. Speaker, today nearly 2,000 people call Whistle Bend home.

In the next year or so, the lots being offered in this latest lottery will bring even more families to Whistle Bend as new homes are built. Soon we will be hearing about people living on new streets such as Gypsy Queen Lane and Reliance Street. We know that Yukoners have been anticipating the release of more lots in Whistle Bend as well as country residential lots. With Whitehorse growing so quickly, releasing this variety of lots will help meet current demand and begin to build an inventory for future development.

From start to finish, each phase is about a three-year process. The City of Whitehorse plans and designs the neighbourhood with input provided through public consultations. They then pass it to our Land Development branch that oversees project planning, engineering, assessments, regulatory compliance, and project management. They tender contracts to the private sector, which does the construction above and below ground. We thank the local consultants, construction companies, contractors, utility companies, the City of Whitehorse, and their teams of people who have created the Whistle Bend subdivision so that Whistle Benders could transform it into the thriving active community that it has become.

A special shout-out to the Whistle Bend Residents Association that contributes their neighbourhood perspective to the ongoing process.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to building healthy, vibrant communities and the partnership with the City of Whitehorse is a win-win for Yukoners.

**Mr. Hassard:** I'm pleased to rise today to respond to this ministerial statement.

Now, we're always pleased to see more land become available in Yukon as we know that there's an incredible shortage of lots here in Whitehorse, but also throughout just about every single Yukon community. The lot shortage has hampered our economic growth to date. It has limited the options available to those wanting to move to the Yukon or current Yukoners who would like to advance throughout the housing continuum.

We would appreciate it if the minister could use his response to update Yukoners living outside of Whitehorse on

when they can expect further lot development as well, but we are indeed pleased to see some lots coming forward.

It's great to see more lots coming out, particularly in Whistle Bend. As we all know, that is a growing and diverse community in Whitehorse, and so many young families are choosing Whistle Bend as a place to raise their families. We also know that it's more than just young families, though. It has also become a popular place for families of all ages and generations to make their home. It has become an important hub of economic activity.

As the construction of new houses continues at a rapid pace, which provides jobs and economic opportunities for those in the construction trades and service and supply industries — and during the economic crisis brought about by COVID-19 — the construction industry has surged on and is one of the few private industries that is really thriving.

It's clear that Whistle Bend has been one of the important centres of activity for the construction industry. Unfortunately, as we know, the citizens living in Whistle Bend are dramatically under-represented here in this Legislature. This, of course, is a result of the Liberal government's decision to strike down the advice of an independent Electoral District Boundaries Commission, which their own handpicked representative on that commission referred to as "gerrymandering". As the community continues to grow, this problem will become worse, but the political fortunes of the Liberal Party were more important than fair representation for the citizens of Whistle Bend.

We're also pleased to see the release of a few country residential lots here. There is a huge demand for country residential lots in Whitehorse. While Whistle Bend offers a particular type of lot, we know that it doesn't meet the needs of all Yukoners. There are many Yukoners who would like to see the development of many more types of lots, including more country residential.

I would also like to ask the government for an update on their plans to allow for private land development. When in opposition, the Premier talked about it a lot, and the Liberals promised this in the last election and have consistently brought it up as something that they're working on, yet here we are, entering their final year, and they have nothing to show for all that talk. This appears to be another example of an area where the Liberals make big commitments and do a lot of talking, but deliver very little of actual substance as they appear to be frozen by chronic indecision.

Their inability to deliver on their promises is something that Yukoners have become used to; in fact, it's what the Liberals are best known for. So, if the minister could use some time in his response to update us on this unfulfilled commitment, we would appreciate that as well.

I would like to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by offering our thanks to the officials in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and those in the Department of Community Services for their work in bringing these lots forward.

**Ms. White:** The news that has been highlighted by the minister is indeed good news for folks wishing to build in the

capital and good news for the City of Whitehorse. We have been calling on successive governments to release more lots for a long time, so it won't come as a surprise that we welcome this news. We certainly hope that the government is putting this much effort in releasing more lots in the many communities that are also dealing with housing shortages and don't have enough lots available.

We also have to remember that there is no silver bullet when it comes to tackling our housing crisis. While this measure will help some people, it is important to keep in mind those folks who don't have the financial means to buy a lot and build a new house. What is YG doing to support them?

What about the reality of those living in mobile home parks — folks who, under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* that the minister is responsible for, are considered renters? Mr. Speaker, being told that you have to move your trailer from a park is much different from being told that you need to move apartments. When your rent rises steeply, your choices are very limited. Why hasn't the minister directed his department to close the gaps that affect these folks?

Let's think about folks who live in long-stay hotels, often without kitchen facilities and no security of tenure, because they don't have rights under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. They have no housing security and no place to go with problems that they may be facing that are housing-related.

With the recent announcement of the Canada housing benefit, I asked about mobile-homeowners. Even if they own their homes, they still pay monthly rent. So far, we know of one application that has been denied for this very purpose. We believe that they should have access to this rent support. Do the Liberals agree? When will this issue be addressed?

How does today's statement help the hundreds of folks on the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list? The Liberal government isn't suggesting the trickle-down housing plan that was so often cited by the Yukon Party — are they? That plan is flawed through and through. Without building more public housing, people will keep waiting for years before having access to the housing that they need.

Although we appreciate the announcement of new lots in Whistle Bend and Hidden Valley, there is still an awful lot of work to be done across the territory for people who struggle with housing on a daily basis.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to thank both members opposite for their support for this lot release. I would be happy to come back with a legislative return or maybe even another ministerial statement about all the work that's happening across all of our communities with respect to land development. I think it's an excellent point.

I know that we have been partnering with many First Nations in land development. We have had one ministerial statement on that already. In Haines Junction, we have had a lot of work that is happening with our municipalities, so there is a lot of work across all of our communities. I am happy to bring that information back.

With respect to private land development, we put out a call for an expression of interest recently on the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and

Rogers Street block that will focus on private land development. I understand that there has been quite a bit of interest in it. I would be happy to bring back a ministerial statement on that as well, or maybe the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — one of us, anyway, would be happy to update this House on that activity.

I agree with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the issue of housing is a spectrum and that we need to be working on all fronts. That is why the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation has been doing so much work on building more affordable and accessible homes, and we continue to do the work to look at the Canada housing benefit with respect to mobile homes.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that what we have noted in the past is that, when there is a slowdown in lot development, that is when some of the problems hit — for example, in 2008. For example, if you don't keep lot development moving, what happens is that lot prices go up significantly and it hurts the whole spectrum of housing. So, what I will note is that, over the past three years, we have now released 500 lots.

When I look backwards in time, in the final three years of the previous government, they released 150 lots. When I look at how much we are investing now — \$25 million this year and just over \$19 million last year — that compares to \$14.5 million over the final three years of the previous government. We are tripling our investment in lot development because it is needed, and we are very happy to have this. I believe that it is the largest release that has ever happened, but I just call it "lots of lots".

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: COVID-19 vaccine

**Mr. Hassard:** So, yesterday in the BC Health minister's daily briefing, the BC government indicated that British Columbia would begin receiving a COVID vaccine as early as January. Mr. Speaker, that is only five weeks away.

So, can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us if Yukoners will have access to the COVID-19 vaccine in January as well?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** This will be part of our big conversation this afternoon with all premiers, the Prime Minister of Canada, and the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada. Again, all jurisdictions are going to have a conversation about equal distribution, and we will make sure that Yukoners know exactly — when we get the details of this distribution plan, we will make that readily available to Yukoners.

What's important to know is that the Department of Health and Social Services has already identified logistical issues and is making sure that we are prepared for the inevitability. Again, most premiers are pushing for a national strategy when it comes to distribution. Again, what we are pushing for as well is making sure that our essential workers — the people who are on the front lines providing services to Yukoners — are at the front of the line with people who have compromised immune systems and our elderly populations.

Another benefit of living in the north is that — it has been pretty much unanimous across Canada — rural and remote communities also need to be identified in those lists as well. It's great to hear announcements happening right across Canada and right across the world about the pandemic. We will keep an even keel on our announcements here in Yukon and make sure that we provide the most up-to-date information for Yukoners as that becomes available.

Again, we are having a conversation this afternoon with all premiers and with the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Hassard:** Now, the Premier said that he had details yesterday, so we were hoping for something more today.

With respect to the COVID-19 vaccine, the Government of Canada's website states — and I quote: "Provinces and territories are responsible for buying the vaccines that they use in their programs."

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us how many doses of the vaccine the Yukon will be purchasing?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** What I can say is that, as we continue to manage this pandemic, our ability to access supports from a collaboration of governments — including intergovernmental collaboration just internally with our departments but also with First Nation governments, municipalities, and also the federal government — is key, and also support from Ottawa is absolutely essential, thus the crux of the reason for meeting this afternoon.

This applies to the vaccine as well, Mr. Speaker — as the members opposite talk randomly off-mic. Yukoners need to know that the delivery of the vaccine, again, is the final piece of what we need before we can fully release restrictions. We have been having excellent conversations about what recovery will look like once the vaccine starts getting into distribution. I will absolutely get the most up-to-date information for Yukoners as it become available, but what Yukoners need to know right now — past the spin — is that this government is working tirelessly to make sure that the vaccines are going to be distributed in Yukon and right across this country equally — making sure that we identify the individuals who need it the most to make sure that we reduce that curve as a nation — and we will do that in partnership with British Columbia and in partnership with all other jurisdictions in Canada.

**Mr. Hassard:** I would remind the Premier that BC announced this yesterday, so we would really hope that the Yukon would be on top of this. Dr. Supriya Sharma from Health Canada told national media this week that it is ultimately up to the provinces and territories to make the decision on purchasing the vaccine and how and when to distribute it. Dr. Howard Njoo from the Public Health Agency of Canada stated the same thing again this morning. It is the territorial government's responsibility, so can the minister tell us when Yukoners will have access to the vaccine?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** We certainly take health responsibilities as a priority. That is not something that will diminish in any way. Perhaps that is the direction that the Official Opposition wants us to go. We are looking to ensure that Yukoners are well-supported through this pandemic and we have since day one.

The federal government has established weekly meetings with federal and provincial ministers across the country. We meet on a weekly basis to have discussions around the potential for vaccines, around the distribution, and around equal distribution. We know that we have a major pandemic and excessive COVID cases in Nunavut. We know that the north is hardest hit in terms of isolation. There are quite a number of concerns. We certainly want to remain committed and vigilant in terms of what we do when we receive the vaccines and respond to the needs and concerns of Yukoners.

Once the criteria for Yukon — in terms of distribution — are finalized under the direction of the chief medical officer of health — with the pressures that we are seeing right now, we want to ensure that we have supports most readily available for our essential workers, our young people, and our elderly folks and to ensure that Yukon's most vulnerable receive the supports as they become available.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 exposure notifications in school**

**Mr. Kent:** The government stated that, in the event that someone tests positive for COVID-19 in one of our schools, they will not notify everyone who attends that school, including the staff.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us what the rationale was for this decision?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** What I would like to remind the member opposite about is that we are, as indicated, working very closely with the chief medical officer of health.

This government has been working very hard to keep Yukoners safe. The schools are no different. We work very closely with the chief medical officer of health, considering all aspects around health care, health responsibilities, and determining how information is shared.

Since March, our government has been working extremely hard with our chief medical officer to keep Yukoners safe, to keep our Yukon children safe. The Yukon Party spent its time trying to discredit the chief medical officer of health through letters to the editor. They've gone to putting in place false information. We want to assure Yukoners that we, on this side of the House — through the measures that we have in place, that Yukoners are assured that we will provide essential services and supports to all Yukoners as we're informed of situations that arise in any circumstance. They should be assured that, on this side of the House, we will ensure that all our students are well-supported.

**Mr. Kent:** So, we understand that this is a recommendation of the chief medical officer of health, but we also would have hoped that either the minister or someone in her Cabinet, would have asked the chief medical officer of health why that decision was made.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services or perhaps the Minister of Education tell us if the government consulted with school councils or the Yukon Teachers' Association before making the decision to not notify the entire community if there is a positive case found in one of our schools? If they did, when was that consultation done?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Certainly, we consult always with the chief medical officer of health. The Yukon Communicable Disease Centre will contact anyone at risk and protection of the confidentiality of students and staff is a critical priority for us here. With respect to notifications — public exposures are issued only when the Yukon Communicable Disease Centre is not able to fully identify all individuals who have been exposed to a positive case.

The centre has done excellent work through contact tracing throughout the pandemic and we remain in a strong position to keep Yukoners informed and safe and that is no different in our schools. We will work with the Department of Education — and we have been — to ensure that the students are well-supported and kept safe throughout the pandemic.

**Mr. Kent:** So, as I mentioned, we understand that this was a recommendation of the chief medical officer of health and, as I mentioned yesterday during Question Period, a number of other jurisdictions throughout our country make public the schools that have positive cases or where there is possible exposure.

So, again, I will ask this question: Did no one — including the minister in the Liberal Cabinet — ask the chief medical officer of health why this recommendation was made to not notify the entire school community when there is a case?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that what we need to remember here — and certainly, I know that Yukoners remember it — is that these types of decisions are based on the health and safety of students. They are not policy decisions. They are always measured against what is in the best interests of keeping our students safe.

If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 at a school, we will at all times follow the advice and the direction of the chief medical officer of health and the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit. We must remember — as has happened here in the territory — it is quite similar to a small community. It is a risk assessment. If there is a risk to the community, then communication will be made to the broadest possible group. If it is not a risk to the community, then individuals will be contact-traced, and the individuals will be informed.

The chief medical officer of health and the YCDC will determine how to conduct the contact tracing and communicate about any cases in a school community, and it will recommend the specific actions to be taken to respond to that situation.

#### **Question re: Canada-Yukon housing benefit**

**Ms. White:** Last week, I asked the minister about many Yukon tenants who were left behind by the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. Mobile-homeowners, who rent the land their home sits on, have been excluded from the program, even though the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* applies to them. The reality of each mobile-homeowner varies quite a bit. Some might have significant loans to pay toward ownership of their home and others may own their homes outright, but all of them have paid rent fees that can be over \$500 a month to pay. Yet these tenants — because that is what they are under Yukon's laws — can't get support from this government.

Why have mobile-homeowners been systemically excluded from the Canada-Yukon housing benefit?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The Yukon Housing Corporation is very pleased with this recent launch. The new Canada-Yukon housing benefit is in partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. It is a federal program.

The program will contribute to the COVID-19 recovery process by moving Yukoners out of housing need and providing housing subsidies directly to individuals in market rental housing.

The Canada housing benefit is a funding initiative to cover us over the next eight years under the national housing strategy. So, the CMHC/Yukon Housing Corporation's bilateral agreement and subsidy program will help Yukoners to recover from the effects of COVID-19 and that's the emphasis as it has been laid out.

We work collaboratively with CMHC to provide affordability supports to private market rental housing with this new program. Currently, paid rental for mobile homes is not covered by the CMHC housing benefit, as they represent a combination of homeowners and rental agreements. Mobile homes that are rented out as private market rentals are eligible. So next fall, after the first year of the program, we will certainly look at assessing. I look forward to further questions.

**Ms. White:** Sadly, that's just another example of this government leaving mobile-homeowners out in the cold.

So, people who stay in hotels — either over the winter months or year-round — don't qualify for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. Those who receive social assistance often don't get enough to pay their hotel room costs and have to dig into their food budget to cover part of their rent. Those who don't receive social assistance and live in hotels have to pay up to \$1,600 a month and they still don't even have access to a kitchen. The one thing that they both have in common is that they can't access the Canada-Yukon housing benefit.

So, why has the minister excluded some of the most precariously housed tenants from this program?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** So, the question around modular homes and mobile homes — I have responded to support for housing for Yukoners. The objective of this federal program is to provide supports to the individuals who are finding challenges. Now, I certainly want to say that, if a landlord or a tenant has a specific question or concern regarding mobile homes or rental units, we encourage them to contact the residential tenancies office and contact Yukon Housing. We will work with the tenant if there are staff members.

Mr. Speaker, I noted earlier in the Legislative Assembly that we will continue to work with all members of our society who are challenged and we will continue to support them to the best of our ability. Certainly, I want to encourage individuals who are challenged to come forward and work with us.

If there are opportunities within the existing parameters of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's criteria, we will do just that. We do have some other measures and other funding envelopes available to us through the Housing Corporation, so we will make efforts to support Yukoners.

**Ms. White:** So, now that's two classes of tenants that the Yukon Liberal government won't support — mobile-homeowners and those in long-stay hotels. Many of these hotels offer low-quality housing and tenants don't even have access to a kitchen to prepare meals. Tenants have no protection under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* and they don't qualify for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit because — according to the minister — that is the federal government. Yet this government is paying tens of thousands of dollars each and every month — hundreds of thousands of dollars every year — to these hotel owners to house social assistance clients in sub-par conditions. This has been going on for years. The government has refused to demand any standards of quality from the hotel owners.

Mr. Speaker, why does this government keep paying hundreds of thousands of dollars every year for sub-par housing without affording any protection to the tenants of long-stay hotels?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I note that the Member for Whitehorse Centre had indicated that this was a good question. Part of the question indicated that this has been long in existence — years, in fact.

We are fixing it. We have put over 600 units on the market. We have mobilized our resources. We have changed how we support Yukoners. We just made an announcement just recently to support Yukoners. I am very pleased with that.

We have some communities — like Watson Lake — that have never been supported. In fact, we have people who have been displaced there for years. We are now in the community working with the First Nations, the municipality, the Housing Corporation, and Health and Social Services to address those very issues — the systemic barriers that have been there for years — and we will continue to do that in good faith with our partners to address where we see the most critical need. That is what we will do. We just announced 50 units with the Challenge Disability Resource Group. We will continue to do our best effort to meet the needs of Yukoners.

I am very proud of the work of the Yukon Housing Corporation and of our partners in the communities.

### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic — public servants working from home**

**Ms. Hanson:** Last month, this Assembly was told that 15 percent of Yukon government public servants were working from home and that they would continue to work from home for the time being. The minister stated — and I quote: “The shift to many employees working from home is an important step to support increased physical distancing and to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.”

Of course, back in October, there were fewer cases of COVID in the Yukon and certainly fewer active cases than right now. Despite this fact, we've seen no push from the government encouraging Yukon public servants who are able to do so to work from home.

Why isn't this government promoting working from home to all employees able to do so, given the higher cases of COVID-19 in Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the member opposite for the question. I can assure the member opposite that the shift to working from home is an important measure to support physical distancing and to help limit the spread of COVID-19.

As the member opposite noted, when the pandemic first hit our territory in March, we immediately took action and had almost 50 percent of the Yukon public service working from home. Since then — and in line with the phases of the Yukon's broader reopening plan — the Yukon government employees have been gradually returning to the workplace based on operational requirements and to make sure that the health and safety requirements are met. The Public Service Commission supports a consistent approach to gradually return to the workplace.

Right now, we've seen another outbreak in the territory. We have a lot more cases. We also, though, have a lot more measures in place to make sure that our employees within the civil service are working safely. We've taken concrete steps to make sure that our public servants are safe in the workplace now. We're monitoring the situation on a daily basis. As events happen in the territory, we have to be flexible and responsible to the needs and the safety and health of our employees and we will certainly do that.

**Ms. Hanson:** It's good to see the minister recycle his same quote from October. Again, in October, he stated that government employees working from home were doing so effectively. We've heard the same and we agree. By and large, working from home has proven to be a success, both in the Yukon and globally. Folks are embracing their newfound work life balance, their lack of commute, and their increased productivity. These are all factors that are contained in the Yukon government's working-from-home directive.

Given the success of working from home, what is this minister doing to encourage more employees to work from home? What is he doing to enable them to do so in the future?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I want to thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for acknowledging the great work that we are doing to make sure that our employees can be flexible and work from home when the need arises.

This pandemic is a roller coaster for everybody. It hit our territory in March; we responded very quickly to safeguard — to lessen the interactions of people within our civil service by getting people home. Within a week or two weeks, we got all the server requirements needed to support 5,000 employees working on a central service. It was an incredible effort on the part of Highways and Public Works staff to make sure that staff had the tools to work from home.

We also deployed Skype for business across the government, which is a great tool for employers, supervisors, and employees to maintain their connections during this pandemic. We also started to take a look at our workplaces and made sure that they were bolstered and supported so that they slowed the spread of COVID-19 through our workplaces. Those measures are still in place. We are monitoring on a daily and weekly basis the situation as far as the pandemic goes, and if it requires us to take further action and get more of our

employees to work from home, those supports are in place to do so very quickly.

**Ms. Hanson:** I do encourage the minister — he is reluctant to read his own government department directives; I would encourage him to read this one. The government directive that was issued in June talked about working-from-home provisions. This directive mandates the creation of a long-term work-from-home policy. The COVID-19 pandemic has lasted longer than many expected. It has worsened in the last little while. It is still unclear how much longer this new normal will last. Given this uncertainty, it would be best to prepare for all possibilities.

As mentioned, the government has issued a comprehensive directive on working from home. It spells out the benefits to both the employers and the employees.

Can the minister confirm that all deputy ministers have, as required under that directive, communicated the contents of the working-from-home directive widely within their departments, and can the minister provide this House with an update, as required by that directive, on the number of public servants currently working from home and the pending applications to do so?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can assure the member opposite — this is an important issue, Mr. Speaker, and it is one near and dear to my heart. When the pandemic hit, we worked very, very quickly to get the supports and the tools that the civil service needed to work from home. We did it very, very quickly and very successfully, because not only did we get half of our workforce home to safety during the opening phases of this pandemic, but we also managed to get some nation-leading programs into the hands of Yukoners to support them during this pandemic.

We did that with brand new technology, brand new supervisor/worker relationships — people distributed throughout the whole territory. The story of this civil service in Yukon dealing with this pandemic and serving the people of the territory is an extraordinary one, Mr. Speaker — one that every single civil servant and citizen of this territory should celebrate and talk about. It was extraordinary, and we are going to support that going forward. We are going to make sure that our employees are safe through this pandemic. Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite — because I think that there's an opportunity here — that, with the work-from-home provisions that we pioneered through this pandemic, it will put the government in good stead for work-from-home provisions into the future.

#### **Question re: Canada Border Services Agency investigation**

**Mr. Cathers:** On March 12, 2019, the RCMP and Canada Border Services Agency showed up at the offices of the Department of Economic Development with a warrant for files and electronics.

This morning, the Canada Border Services Agency announced the conclusion of that investigation and that a Canada-wide arrest warrant has been issued for a former Government of Yukon employee.

Can the Minister of Economic Development provide an update on this?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, given that this is now before the courts, there is actually little I can say. We understand that the former Yukon government employee has been charged with offences under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and the *Criminal Code*.

We can confirm that the individual is no longer an employee of the Government of Yukon. According to the news release from the Canada Border Services Agency, the charges are for alleged violations committed between July 2013 and September 2016. This, of course, is before my time within this department. I would urge the Member for Lake Laberge to reach out to his colleagues. It was likely the House Leader who would have been there or potentially the new leader of the party; I'm not sure what they know. If they do, they probably should ensure that Yukoners are made aware of that. Other than that — really, no other comments.

Again, this is something that occurred between 2013 and 2016.

#### **Question re: Moose management**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Over the winter, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board has been considering a package of changes to Yukon's hunting regulations that were proposed by the Liberal government.

Three of the 14 regulation changes relate to new ways to limit moose hunting. They are quite controversial, so the board recommended an additional period of public consultation. The board submitted its final recommendations on those three proposals to the Minister of Environment in June 2020. Under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, the minister has a fixed amount of time to respond to these recommendations, and that time has elapsed.

Why has the minister not responded to these recommendations yet?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The member opposite is likely aware, as they have been asking quite a few questions around COVID-19 and the pressures that we are seeing — I think that the industry and Yukoners, of course, are also fully submersed in COVID and COVID measures. We certainly want to recognize that the Yukon Fish and Game Association, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the Yukon RRCs, and all Yukoners have participated in the consultation efforts around moose management, moose sustainability, and fish and wildlife act reviews. That process is derived from the chapter 16 agreement.

I am really pleased to see that the member opposite is referring to the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the parameters there, which sets the tone and direction that we go in. It is important that our management approach respects that process. It certainly affects the direction that we go in. In the parameters of the agreement, it defines that we must respond certainly within the time frame, as the member opposite has noted. The Fish and Wildlife Management Board has agreed to an extension, given that we are in the middle of a pandemic. The extra time was required to do the good work that is necessary.



**Mr. Istchenko:** The three controversial changes that this minister and the Liberals have proposed represent a significant departure from the current wildlife management system that the Yukon has used for decades. In the words of the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, these changes are — and I quote: “... quite substantial and deviated far from the management regimes that have been in place to date.”

The proposals are also opposed by Yukon hunters. In an interview this year, the Yukon Fish and Game Association said — and I quote: “We have some real concerns on how the recommendations were constructed, how they’ve been presented to us and what the implications are for licenced hunters in Yukon going forward.”

Rather than forcing these changes through, will the minister commit to allowing for more consultation on these controversial changes to Yukon’s wildlife management regime?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The consultation for the fish and wildlife management amendments have concluded. The extension was granted, as recommended by the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, for the moose management requirements, so that has concluded. We have worked collaboratively with the management board on the proposals to change hunting, trapping, and fishing regulations. The public review period for the proposed legislative changes was held and has since concluded.

**Mr. Istchenko:** It’s clear from what the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the Yukon Fish and Game Association have said that the controversial changes that this minister and the Liberals are proposing to limit moose hunting in the Yukon represents a massive change, Mr. Speaker.

One aspect of these broad changes that we, particularly, are very worried about — and it’s worrisome to Yukon hunters — is that they significantly increase the power to the minister. Under the proposal, the minister could have the authority to implement significant changes to the way moose hunting is regulated. Under the Liberals’ — this minister’s — proposal, the minister could implement antler configuration rules or limit ORV use in certain areas, all with just a stroke of a pen and all without consultation.

Can the minister tell us why she thinks bypassing the current Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board regulation change process and granting herself these sweeping new powers will improve wildlife management in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would say to Yukoners that the objective of moose management, the objective of fish and wildlife management, and the intent of the review process is to look at the sustainability of pressure areas. The obligation that we have as a government — I’m confident that the member opposite is fully aware, as a former Minister of Environment, that decisions have to be made when we’re seeing drastic declines in a specific area. That work is done in collaboration with our partners.

Our partners in this instance is the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board — I want to just acknowledge that the efforts in terms of the First Nation harvest and the sustainability levels in particular areas have been considered through the

regional RRCs in specific areas, and the approaches that we are taking in terms of harvest management are to remain within the sustainable limit, and that is done with the evidence and the signs that have been collected historically. I’m pleased to let Yukoners know that their input is being considered. Right now, the decision has not yet been made. We are still in the final stages of discussions with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

I’m happy to respond in the future, once that is concluded.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### **Bill No. 12: *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)* — Third Reading**

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 12, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that Bill No. 12, entitled *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 12, entitled *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would first like to take a moment to thank the Members of the Assembly for their contributions to the debate on Bill No. 12, entitled *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)*. Before the Assembly votes today, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss the amendments and the context behind this bill.

As mentioned in my earlier remarks, the tabled amendments are critical to modernizing Yukon’s legislation and to align Yukon with best practices nationally and internationally. The *Wills Act* has not been amended since it was first passed in 1954, when Yukon life and families were much different.

During engagement conducted in November 2019 and December 2019, feedback was received on what the amendments should achieve. The amendments to the *Wills Act* have been designed to reflect what we heard from respondents. With these amendments, the Government of Yukon is moving forward on our promise to Yukoners to provide modernized legislation that reflects the current needs of society. Updating the act with the proposed amendments will ensure that Yukon’s legislation is in line with current legal and social norms and remains consistent with family property and estate laws here in the territory.

As Members of the Assembly will recall, the tabled amendments are designed to: clarify technical requirements for wills; enable the creation of a wills registry in the future; to update provisions regarding marriage; include new provisions for divorce and common-law relationships; and enable the validity of Yukon wills in other countries and vice versa.

I would like to note that none of the requirements being introduced will apply to wills created before the amendments came into force. Wills that pre-date these amendments will not be impacted by these changes.

The Government of Yukon views the bill before us today as a necessary step toward ensuring that Yukon legislation is responsive to the needs of our diverse territory. I am personally pleased to provide legislation that fulfills my obligation to protect all Yukoners in an inclusive manner. These amendments provide safeguards against fraud and coercion, while ensuring that the testator's intentions are upheld.

In addition, the rights of married couples in estate legislation have also been extended to include Yukon common-law partnerships. The proposed amendments mirror legislation in other Canadian jurisdictions as well as ratify the international will convention. They represent an important step toward modernizing Yukon laws.

I urge the members of this Assembly to support the passing of the *Act to Amend the Wills Act (2020)* to ensure that we provide modern, responsive legislation that fully represents the Yukon's population.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize and thank the officials with the Department of Justice — in particular, our legislative counsel team — for their excellent work and dedication to improving our Yukon laws and modernizing them for all Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** Since I have already spoken to this bill at second reading and in Committee of the Whole, I will not add much else at this point in time.

While we might have adjusted some of the details in the legislation, generally speaking, we're supportive of the modernization occurring, particularly where it reflects being more in line with the national standard across the country. I will wrap up my remarks and we will support the legislation.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for her summarization of the amendments to the *Wills Act*. I also thank her for her willingness to engage in the detailed walk-through of these amendments to this really important piece of legislation. As she said, it's important for us all to have wills and it's also important for us to be able to understand what the importance of them is and how they can be made. So, this *Wills Act* will do that for all of us as Yukon citizens. We support the legislation as brought forward — the amendments as brought forward. I thank the minister for that.

**Speaker:** Is there any further debate on third reading of Bill No. 12?

If the member now speaks, she will close debate.  
Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I just want to take the opportunity to thank the members opposite, who I understand will be supportive of the changes — the modernization of this important piece of legislation. I thank them for their questions — in particular, the details during the debate in Committee of

the Whole — because I think that's exactly the kind of questions that Yukoners have about this — and the opportunity to make that public through the debate is always a good one. I'm happy to have answered those questions and I'm happy for this bill to come to the floor for the vote on third reading.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

#### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

#### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

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

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 12 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 12 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 (Mr. Hutton):** Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

#### Motion re appearance of witnesses

#### Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 26, 2020, Maggie Matear, Interim President of Yukon University, and David Morrison, Chair of the Yukon University Board of Governors, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to Yukon University.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Ms. McPhee:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 26, 2020, Maggie Matear, Interim President of Yukon University, and David Morrison, Chair of the Yukon University Board of Governors, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to Yukon University.

*Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6 agreed to*

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

**Women's Directorate**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Chair, I would like to start by welcoming Valerie Royle, deputy minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, here today to assist in this debate. I know that we don't have a lot of time. I do have opening comments and I know that we plan to call the department back if we don't get to all the questions. So, I just wanted to make that comment first.

Today, I am really pleased to present the supplementary budget of the Women's Directorate for 2020-21. This budget reflects the many initiatives that the Women's Directorate undertakes with our partners in order to advance gender equality throughout the territory. This government is committed to furthering the equality of all citizens and ensuring that we all have the opportunity to lead healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives. This department is small but mighty in the work that they do.

I will begin with budget line items that were impacted by or came about due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and then we will move on to other key projects.

We already know that there is an undeniable gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. One clear implication is that physical distancing and self-isolation measures mean that

individuals may be required to stay in close quarters with someone who may be violent. As part of this response, the Women's Directorate accessed \$25,000 in funding from the Government of Canada to improve the availability of safe taxi transportation in Whitehorse and support other COVID-related emergency needs.

One of the important mandate items that we have been focused on in our commitment to LGBTQ2S+ inclusion — we have been working with and have heard from the LGBTQ2S+ communities as we take steps to become a more inclusive territory. Several legislative changes have already taken place, including amendments to the *Vital Statistics Act* and the *Human Rights Act* in the spring of 2017; the *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act* in the spring of 2018; and the *Equality of Spouses Statute Law Amendment Act (2018)* in the fall of 2018. In the spring of 2020, we tabled a bill to ban practising conversion therapy on youth and adults with a guardian or substitute decision-maker. Due to the pandemic starting during that session, we were unable to complete that bill, so we brought this important bill back during this session and received assent on November 9. It is now law in Yukon.

I am proud that our government is committed to inclusiveness, equality, and respect for diversity of all Yukoners. This is not just an issue for the Women's Directorate but part of our one-government approach to equality. A key aspect of this approach is our LGBTQ2S+ action plan for Government of Yukon. The action plan will be based on engagement with Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ communities. We will focus on non-discrimination and improved inclusivity, both within Government of Yukon services and also for the Government of Yukon as an employer. Yukoners told us that there is a need for education and training in many sectors, including health and education. We also saw that there is a need for increased funding for community groups, including an LGBTQ2S+ resource and community centre. I'm really proud of the work that Queer Yukon is leading now to talk to the LGBTQ2S+ community about a pride centre.

Yukoners made it clear that they are ready for action and ready to work together to create more inclusive communities. As we move toward finalizing the LGBTQ2S+ action plan, we will continue to work closely with the LGBTQ2S+ communities to ensure that this work is done right.

Moving on, I want to highlight the work that has gone into the implementation of the sexualized assault response team. The Yukon has one of the highest rates of sexualized violence in the country. The majority of the assaults are not reported. Several populations experience disproportionately high rates of sexualized violence, including women and girls between the ages of 15 and 25 years old, indigenous people, and LGBTQ2S+ folks.

The Minister of Justice, the Minister of Health and Social Services, and I — and several non-governmental agencies — have been working to improve services for victims of violence and sexualized assault in Yukon as another key commitment. After several years of dedicated work, we have implemented Yukon's sexualized assault response team, known as SART, in Whitehorse. Learning from the good work of other

jurisdictions, we have devoted resources to SART. The team provides coordinated victim-centred, low-barrier services to victims of sexualized assault. New services within SART include a 24/7 support line for victims to call, a website, weekend SART support workers, on call specially trained medical care providers, specially trained RCMP officers, and priority access to mental wellness care.

SART also builds collaboration between existing services, including Crown witness coordinators, Victim Services, and other supports within the territory. As a result of SART initiatives, victims of sexualized violence in Whitehorse and rural communities now have priority access to mental wellness care through our new mental wellness and substance use hubs. Better coordination of existing medical and victim services is being supported by two specialized staff — a victim support coordinator and a clinical coordinator. They are working in partnership to ensure that there is continuity of care and wraparound services for victims of sexualized assault.

We are developing an inter-agency protocol, recognizing that moving to a victim-centred approach takes work. The member agencies of SART are committed to providing a coordinated and collaborative response for all those victimized by sexualized violence and to support them along whichever path they choose. This is system change — where collaboration is at the centre.

The vast majority of the development and implementation work was funded from within existing departmental budgets. As SART is implemented and strengthened in Whitehorse, we will begin the work with communities to create a model that works for them, starting with Dawson City and Watson Lake, where medical supports are currently available.

As we move to the next phase, we will start our conversations with First Nation governments in each community and build from their expertise.

Another key priority is increasing government's efforts to reduce violence against women. It has been ensuring that Yukon plays a leadership role in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Our government has been working on the issue for several years through a variety of collaborative efforts with First Nation governments, indigenous women's organizations, RCMP, and the communities. The Yukon advisory committee guided our involvement before and during the national inquiry where the grassroots indigenous women's organizations, elders, and government representatives worked together to find ways to support Yukon families and to move forward together.

As we all know, the national inquiry's final report into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls was released on June 3, 2019, leaving our country with 231 ambitious and impactful calls for justice. The Government of Yukon has worked closely with First Nations, Yukon indigenous women's groups, and family representatives to finalize — changing the story to upholding dignity and justice, Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy. The strategy outlines four main pathways to guide our action and response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: strengthening connections and

supports, community safety and justice, economic independence and education, and community action and accountability.

The strategy will outline the actions needed, but we recognize that there are years of work ahead to make them happen. We know that complex problems demand complex solutions and that we must work together to accomplish the change needed. We know that all levels of government have to be actively involved and contribute to this strategy. We also believe in doing this work in a decolonizing way, in a way that holds up and recognizes the families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and that brings all key stakeholders to the table. A whole-of-Yukon strategy means that we know that this work won't be successful without adequate time and careful consideration of which recommendations best reflect local needs and priorities.

To support this approach, we have an increase of \$90,000 to support family gatherings in order to bring family members together to review the strategy and capture their voices. The gathering was originally scheduled for March 2020, but it was cancelled due to COVID-19 and was not budgeted for in the 2020-21 budget. When the opportunity to reschedule was possible, the CMOH guidelines required that we host two smaller gatherings instead of one large one, which increased the costs associated with this work.

I'll move on now to the NGOs. For over 40 years, Yukon indigenous and women's organizations have been instrumental in providing solutions, including direct service delivery, advocacy, and grassroots leadership in the areas of wellness, healing, culture, cultural revitalization, and support to family members of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We rely on their expertise, experience, and connection with families and community members to help us build stronger programs and offer services that governments cannot provide.

This year, the Women's Directorate is expanding support to two women's organizations that would be experiencing a shortfall in funding for their programs due to budget constraints in other departments. The Women's Directorate will be providing an additional \$30,000 in funding for the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre to support A Safe Place. The Women's Directorate will also be providing an additional \$34,500 in funding for the Whitehorse affordable family housing program, which includes a small increase in funding to enable two staff to be on-site, following best practices for safety. Providing support services for vulnerable populations has always been important, but during the pandemic, they have proved to be even more critical.

Finally, there will be \$14,000 to carry forward funding for one indigenous women's organization from the 2019-20 to the 2020-21 budget. The funding is fully recoverable from Government of Canada, the Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada, and was approved by them for carrying forward.

These are the supplementary budget details that we would like to approve today. With that, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you very much for listening to my opening comments.

**Ms. McLeod:** I want to thank Ms. Royle for joining us in the Chamber today to help out with these questions that we have.

On April 3, the Yukon government announced that they were providing vulnerable women with cellphones that they could use to access calling and texting data in order to safely access supports. Now, service was cut off on May 29 after the government experienced higher-than-anticipated data usage which resulted in some significant fees.

Did the department place any restrictions on the data usage when these cellphones were provided to the individuals?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Yes, one of the unintended impacts of COVID-19 on marginalized populations was limits to safe phones and Internet access. In March, we worked quickly with Northwestel to purchase 225 cellphones and 325 voice, text, and Internet packages based on Yukon government's rate with Bell Mobility. Northwestel also donated an additional 100 phones and all 325 SIM cards needed.

These were distributed to 325 women in need by the Yukon Status of Women Council and their community partners during the month of April. The total approximate cost of the cellphone program — excluding the purchase of the phones — was \$115,000, and this is pending the final invoice. So that's still something we're working out the details on, but we anticipate that it will be in this range.

This program showed us that the need was greater than anticipated. When Yukon government was notified on May 26 that 4,865 gigabytes of data had been used, with a total cost of \$58,756, we made the difficult decision to suspend the phone lines as of May 29. I think the — sorry, just one moment, Mr. Chair.

The program included three gigabytes of shared data per phone. At the time — and this is one of the limitations of the program — we could not place hard restrictions on data per phone due to the use of YG's corporate account, which enabled us to get unlimited voice, unlimited text, and three gigabytes of shared data for \$40 per month per phone. Again, as I have said, we have worked with our partners. We worked with the Yukon Status of Women Council and the phones were distributed by them. The parameters were set out by them based on our agreement. The responsibility of speaking directly and working directly with those who were in need of these phones was the responsibility of the Yukon Status of Women Council. When we found that the data had gone over significantly, we had to act quickly. We knew that we only had a limited amount of resources in this budget.

Maybe I will just wait to see if there are more questions around this particular issue before I go on.

**Ms. McLeod:** My question was about whether or not there were any restrictions on the data usage that were provided to the individuals. The minister indicated that the restrictions on data usage, of course, came about as a result of the data plan that government was using for this purpose, so that's understandable.

I guess that part of that question would be whether or not the people who took the phones were advised of the limitations. The minister may correct me, but I thought she said that this

was part of what was expected from the Yukon Status of Women Council — to advise folks about what their limitations were in this program. The minister also said that if there was an ability — because I would have asked — to cap the limit and have service cut off when the data has been reached or receive a warning — I know that I get a warning on my phone. It seems that the minister indicated that, no, this plan doesn't have that capability.

So, were the individuals who have the phones able to track their data usage on their phones to know whether they were reaching their limits? I know that on my personal plan, I can, of course, go do that, but I don't know if that would be the case with a government-wide plan, whether or not an individual is able to go in and see where they are at with their usage for the time period — so, if the minister can talk a bit about that.

Of the 325 women who were provided with phones, how were those women in need identified?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I think that some of the questions that have arisen from that summary of what I have just gone over — in terms of the limitations of the data — again, because it was a corporate type of account, the individuals would not have been able to see the overall data usage, but warnings were given throughout. So, I know that the Yukon Status of Women Council spoke to each of the individuals who received the phones and explained that there had to be limited data usage on this — that this was for emergency purposes. The Status of Women Council also had them sign a form around the agreement with this program. Again, this was a quick response.

One of the other things that I want to say is that we were, I think, the first in Canada to provide this kind of service. It was raised with us through the Yukon Status of Women Council that this was a concern. It was also an immediate concern of mine — just knowing the work that I have done in my previous work, that this was going to cause a lot of vulnerability for a lot of people and cause a great deal of anxiety. If there was one thing — of many things — that I lost sleep over during COVID-19, the vulnerability of women and children was probably the one that I lost the most sleep over, because we knew what isolation would cause for women who were experiencing gender-based violence, particularly in their own home.

I'm not sure if I answered everything. I do want to say though, as well, that we did receive additional COVID-related funding. That was accessed through the Government of Canada, and \$23,000 was put toward the cost of the cellphone program. So, we were able to offset the cost of this to YG and regulate normal programs. I know that the folks across the way know our budgets are really small and that we stretch them as far as we possibly can.

The other great news that has come out of this is that the Yukon Status of Women Council has been able to access funding through the women and gender equality fund to continue this program. All of the devices that were given out — the 325 pieces of equipment that were given out through this program became the property of the folks who obtained them and the program has continued through our partners. I think that the investment that we made — I think sincerely — this outcome of having to have the phones disabled for a few days

— we had them up and running again by June 3, so there was that few days where folks did not have phone access. So, we were able to initiate the phones as quickly as we could. The program ended for us on July 31.

The other part I think that the member opposite mentioned in the question was: How did we choose the women or folks who received the phones? This was done by our partner, the Yukon Status of Women Council. They were the ones who did the assessment on who would need those phones and worked with all of the other equality-seeking groups to ensure that anyone in need of this type of device got the device. So, lots of good news out of that and lots of learned lessons. Again, things were put in place very quickly to respond to a need that we knew was there and that was verified through our partners.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the minister for her answers today.

I do have more questions for the Women's Directorate; however, because we're down to seven minutes' time, I'm going to turn this over to the Leader of the Third Party.

**Ms. White:** I thank my colleague for Watson Lake for that very much. Thank you. Welcome, of course, to the official.

Just to go back on the issue of cellphones — because believe it or not, it feels like it was 17,000 years ago and I totally forgot about how frustrating the cellphone process was.

The one story I want to share is being approached by someone who had been given a cellphone. What they said was that, for the first time in their adult life, they had access to information — for the first time ever — keeping in mind, of course, that the library was closed — couldn't access the library. You couldn't access, for a part of the time — and at some point, with Community Services, we'll have that conversation — there wasn't Wi-Fi available from the library. It wasn't available in the parking lot.

At the time — at the very beginning — when all the COVID stuff was going on, the vast majority of updates were online. They weren't in the newspaper. They weren't on the television. The only place you could get the information was online. This woman came to me and she said that for the first time in her life she had access to information. Then, without any warning, it stopped.

So, I appreciate that things moved quickly and that things were covered, but to blame — sorry, let me change those words. When the minister said that it was the responsibility of the Yukon Status of Women Council to let women know about their limits — I'm sure that in this House at different times — I know when I was new to cellphones and the idea of plans and information — I have nephews — and let me tell you, until you understand what data is and how it works, you miss those limitations.

I guess the shocking part, when this all was going down, was that the statements that were made in the media made it sound like it was the women's fault. I don't think that was the intention; I don't believe that was the intention; I can't imagine that was the minister's intention. But that's how it came across and that was very hard.

When the decision was made to stop — I mean, I had conversations with the women's organizations about the ability for them to reach out. One of the concerns they had was that

they weren't going to be able to contact everyone. In some cases, the phone worked and then it stopped working. In some cases, it worked earlier in the day or you might have been in the middle of something and then it stopped working. I think the one thing that it taught us was importance of information and the ability to access information.

What lessons has the department taken forward from that?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for that. I appreciate that. That was difficult to have that happen. It was difficult for me to get that call — to say there is an issue with the cellphone program and this is what it is and that we're going to have to make a decision here to do a short suspension of the phones.

It was difficult for the exact reason that I said earlier. We knew the vulnerability of the women. That was not an easy decision. The discussion I had with the deputy at the time was that it has to be quick. We advised the Yukon Status of Women Council on the 27<sup>th</sup>. We said we have a two-day period here to get the notices out to the phone users that there is going to be a short suspension of the phone because of this overuse of data. Again, there was no blaming. It wasn't meant to be done ever in a blaming way. Again, this isn't about me, but I will tell you the impact — I mean, I am displaying it right here, right now — the impact.

It was really difficult for a lot of reasons. I became a target as well. I became a target and had to endure some really harsh criticism in our Yukon society. You know what? I worked my entire life for equality and safety — particularly for women. So, that was not an easy time during COVID, given all the other pressures that everyone was under. It was harsh. To be targeted by fake media outlets like Whitewash displaying my picture and sending out messages that were just disgusting — it was hurtful not only to me but to a lot of women, especially indigenous women. I can't tell you how many calls I got from women sobbing because, for them, I am one of the people out here really advocating for their well-being and for their safety, and a role model — that if you can dream it, you can do it. So, to be targeted in that way was really hard, and it was over an issue that was not the intent.

So, I understand — I think that is what I need to say about this. Have we learned? Absolutely, absolutely — we have learned from this situation, and we know that if this wasn't a really quick response to an immediate need, we would have had time to think through and mitigate maybe — and think through what some of the issues could have been. This was one that we thought we would be able to have the controls in place through our partners. I did not have direct access and nor did my department have direct access to those who received the devices. I am happy to have been able to talk about it today because it definitely deserves discussion here in the Legislative Assembly.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for sharing that with us, but what I did ask about was: What did we learn? What did the department learn from that experience? I see the Clerk-at-the-Table looking at the time. I believe that we have a witness coming down, so I will sit down now and look forward — I can keep going. Oh, sorry, Mr. Chair — sorry to the Clerk, and

sorry to Hansard and anyone who can't see — masks make things very exciting.

Mr. Chair, I move that you report progress.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Ms. White that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

**Chair:** Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6 adopted earlier today, Committee of the Whole will receive witnesses from Yukon University.

In order to allow witnesses to take their places in the Chamber, the Committee will now recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

*Recess*

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

### Appearance of witnesses

**Chair:** Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive witnesses from Yukon University.

I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witnesses and would also ask the witnesses to refer their remarks through the Chair when they are responding to the members.

*Witnesses introduced*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I ask my colleagues to welcome Maggie Matear, who is the interim president of Yukon University, and David Morrison, who is the chair of the board of governors of Yukon University. I know that they will have a few opening remarks and are available to answer questions here today from the Members of the Legislative Assembly. I thank them for coming and for the answers that they will give and the information that they will provide to Yukoners through this process.

I will not take the opportunity to also welcome who is with them — in case I get that incorrect with masks and other things — but I know that there are a few other folks involved with the board and the university, and I will ask that they recognize them in their opening remarks. Thank you for being here.

**Chair:** Would the witnesses like to make opening remarks?

**Mr. Morrison:** Yes, Mr. Chair. We have a few minutes — not lengthy. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Minister McPhee, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and Yukoners for allowing us to speak with you today.

I would like to acknowledge that we are present on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

On May 19 of this year, Yukon University was born and is Canada's first university north of 60. I would like to thank all members of this Assembly for unanimously supporting the legislation that created Yukon U almost one year ago to the day, culminating from years of work and input from students, employees, and Yukoners.

The *Yukon University Act* enshrines the university as a hybrid institution that offers a wide range of programming and pathways for students. As an institution rooted in Yukon's history and culture, we are committed to working with Yukon First Nations and communities to meet the diverse education research needs of Yukon. The act also commits the university to include respect and honour for Yukon First Nation knowledge, world views, and educational priorities in its programming and operations, something that we are proud to lead the country in.

The act established a shared model of governance for the institution — a senate and a board of governors — and an expanded board to 17 members from 12, including representation from Yukoners and faculty. As board chair, I am excited by the diversity, experience, and passion of the board. I look forward to working on setting the university's first strategic plan, which will be developed in the coming year.

Planning continues for the new science building. The steering committee has devised a values and principles document that prioritizes flexibility of use, the student experience, reconciliation, and the integration of research and teaching. With the support of the Government of Yukon, a functional plan offering several construction scenarios has been completed.

Leading into the historic evolution of our institution in the 2019-20 academic year, our new programs are attracting interest. We have national recognition for our reconciliation and research experience, and we have demonstrated our resilience during a global pandemic. Just today, the PIVOT program, part of the Yukon University's innovation and entrepreneurship unit, has just been honoured by *Future of Good* as one of Canada's top 100 recovery projects. *Future of Good* is a magazine focused on social responsibility and sustainability initiatives.

In September 2019, we welcomed: 27 students into the new bachelor of business administration program; 35 new and returning students into year 2 of the bachelor of arts in indigenous governance; 14 students enrolled in the Yukon First Nations arts certificate; eight in the climate change policy post-degree certificate; and five in the millwright pre-apprenticeship program — students not just from Yukon, but from across Canada and around the world. Student satisfaction with course content, support services, and quality of instruction is at 90, 92, and 94 percent respectively.

We continue to demonstrate our leadership and commitment to reconciliation. Working with our partners at Vancouver Island University and the McConnell Foundation, we hosted a summer institute in 2019 that attracted leaders from 31 colleges and universities. Delegates met in Dawson City, Carcross, and Whitehorse to learn from our relationship with Yukon First Nations, share best practices, and chart a meaningful path forward on reconciliation.

Our research programs are gaining increasing attention. Dr. Michael Ross and the Northern Energy Innovation team won an award from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers for pioneering renewable energy work in Nunavut. Dr. Guillaume Nielsen was awarded the NSERC Industrial

Research Chair for Colleges in Northern Mine Remediation, reinforcing the importance of the work being done here.

We made the list of Canada's top 50 research colleges again, earning the top spot for number of paid student researchers. We have 43 of them when compared to similarly sized institutions.

Along with the rest of the world since March, our lives have been dominated by the threat —

### Chair's statement

**Chair:** Order, please. Pursuant to the Chair's statement from the 2019 Fall Sitting, five minutes is the maximum amount of time for opening statements by witnesses. You have now reached that mark.

**Mr. Kent:** I would like to take the opportunity to welcome Mr. Morrison and Dr. Matear here today.

Before I begin with some questions, I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Karen Barnes in her former role as president starting with Yukon College and then transitioning to Yukon University. I would also like to congratulate her on being one of four 2020 Distinguished Alumni Award recipients from the University of Alberta. I thank Karen for all of her work in getting and transitioning Yukon College into Yukon University, and I wish her and Dean well in whatever they have decided to do now. I notice on social media that they're self-isolating quite a bit, so perhaps they're travelling a little bit more than the rest of us are, but good for them. Again, thank you to Dr. Barnes for all of her work in getting us to where we are.

I do have a number of questions. The first set of them will come out of the 2018-19 annual report. As well, I have the financial statements for the year ending on June 30, 2019. Those are the first couple of things that I will touch on.

The first question that I will have with respect to the financials — looking at note 15 here, which is the "Government of Yukon contributions", in 2018, they were approximately \$20.7 million. In 2019, it increased by approximately \$1.3 million to just over \$22 million. I'm just curious — I know that we don't have the audited financials yet — what the contribution would be for the year ending June 30, 2020, if the witnesses have that information.

**Ms. Matear:** I thank the member for his question. The \$1.3-million increase in the last annual report reflects an increase that the government gave to us to support the efforts of transition to the university. The most recent financial statements, which are not quite audited yet but which are on their way to completion, will reflect another increase to about \$26 million.

**Mr. Kent:** So, on that same note, there are services received without charge that were, in 2018, \$3.98 million and then, in 2019, \$4.46 million. Again, do the witnesses have the 2020 numbers? And if they could perhaps just give us a brief explanation of what that line item encompasses as far as what types of services that they are receiving from the government without charge.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, the line item reflects the contributions that YG — Yukon government — is making toward the campus facility, so they are providing maintenance, custodial services, and, in some cases, landscaping — things like that. That comes to about \$4.7 million for this year.

**Mr. Kent:** I'll jump up to note 14, which is "Expenditures by object". I have just a couple of questions with respect to this line item. Again, I have the 2018-19 numbers, so if the witnesses have the 2020 numbers, that would also be helpful.

Salaries, wages, and benefits in 2018 would have been about \$29.3 million, going up to \$31.1 million in 2019. So, again, if the witnesses have the numbers for 2020, that would be great.

How much of this reflects collective bargaining increases? And perhaps, if we could get a breakdown of the number of FTEs at the college throughout 2018-19 and then, if the information is available, how many FTEs there are for the year ending in June 2020.

**Ms. Matear:** At this time, we don't have the final numbers for the 2019-20 financial statements, but I can commit to getting those to you before the second week in December when we expect to have the audited financial statements.

With respect to the member's other questions about the breakdown in FTEs, I do have that information here. If you will give me a moment just to find it. I want to make sure that I am giving the member the accurate information.

In 2018-19, we had 309 perm-term employees and 350 casual employees. That has changed just slightly this year to 298 perm-term employees and 341 casual employees. In 2018, the breakdown of the perm-terms was 103 faculty and 145 sessional instructors. Non-instructional employees were 181 perm-terms and 189 casual employees.

**Mr. Kent:** I have a couple more questions with respect to the "Expenditures by object" note in the financials here. The next line below the salaries, wages, and benefits is "Contract services". So, in 2018, there was approximately \$6.7 million attributed to that line. It went up to \$8.5 million in 2019. Again, if the witnesses do have the information with the 2020 numbers — and then if they can explain that bump from 2018 to 2019 and just a brief explanation of what types of expenditures are under this line item.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I wonder if I could clarify part of the question from the member. The "Contract services" — was that under revenues or expenses?

**Mr. Kent:** It's in note 14, "Expenditures by object", just under the salaries, wages, and benefits. Again, in 2018, it was approximately \$6.7 million, and then in 2019, it was about \$8.5 million.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I think that the question is very important. I want to make sure that I am getting the member accurate information. If I may again defer that until we have the audited financial statements, then I can provide that information in addition to those statements at that time. Then it will also provide the member with a comparison year over year.

I can also commit to providing an explanation about why those may have changed over the past year.



**Mr. Kent:** My last question, then — because all of the other numbers are relatively stable — under the “Expenditures by object” — and if the witness can’t answer and has to provide the information later, that’s fine as well — is about the “Utilities and communications” portion there. In 2018, it was about \$1.8 million and then bumped up to \$2.26 million in 2019. Again, we would be looking for those 2020 numbers and an explanation of why there was that increase from 2018 to 2019.

**Ms. Matear:** I will provide that information with the other financial numbers.

**Mr. Kent:** I have a few questions about COVID-19 measures at the university. If the witnesses could give us an idea of how many — I guess what I am looking for is total enrolment in this current academic year. How many of those students are in person and how many are online?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, based on the fall semester registrations, we are predicting a 15-percent reduction in enrolment overall for 2021 over 2019, but we held stable for 2019.

Right now, we are offering a mix of online and face-to-face programs to respond to some of the restrictions that we’re facing under COVID. The only courses that we’re offering face to face right now are courses where we cannot offer the similar experience online, so that’s mainly referring to things like science labs — biology and chemistry — and things that we really can’t do online and also the practical components of the trades.

All of our other courses are being offered online, except for those in continuing studies, and then we have very robust COVID safety protocols in place to ensure that people are following the “safe six”. Some of those course examples would include things like first aid.

**Mr. Kent:** If the witness can repeat the percentage of reduction for enrolment — I think that she said 15, but I just wanted to confirm that number.

**Ms. Matear:** Yes, Mr. Chair, for this year — the 2019-2020 year — we are about on par with last year. However, in the upcoming year, we are anticipating a 15-percent reduction starting in the winter term.

**Mr. Kent:** What do the witnesses anticipate that reduction in enrolment — what is the anticipated reduction in revenue as a result of that reduction in enrolment?

**Ms. Matear:** We anticipate a reduction of about one percent of revenues as a result of that change in enrolment.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that.

Before I move into some questions from the annual report, I will note that the president between Dr. Barnes and Dr. Matear was here for a shorter time than I think a lot of folks had hoped. He obviously moved on to, I believe, Ontario for a different opportunity, but I am curious if there are any costs associated with his initial relocation to the Yukon or back to Ontario — and what the costs were associated with the initial recruitment of the previous president — and then if there is a recruitment process underway now for a permanent president.

**Mr. Morrison:** Perhaps we could tag team on this a little bit. Dr. Matear will get some numbers for the member. The

board has not started a recruitment process quite yet, but we will be doing so in the new year. Our view of the world was that we should let everything settle back down for a bit and give Dr. Matear a chance to get in the chair and calm things down, because that move was a bit disruptive.

We do plan to — and have struck a group to — begin a recruitment process but not until into the new year.

Dr. Matear has given me some numbers, but I’m going to give them back to her because she may well have a better explanation on those numbers.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, the board hired a recruitment support company to help with the recruitment. The fee for that was \$45,000. Because the search was not considered successful, that company will provide the board with another search. The travel expenses associated with Dr. DeGagné’s tenure here were about \$4,000. He did not actually move here, so there were no monies spent on that process.

**Mr. Kent:** I was feverishly writing down some numbers. The moving expenses for the previous president were \$4,000 to get here. There were no moving expenses provided to move this individual back to Ontario. Am I correct in that?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, that is correct.

**Mr. Kent:** I will refer the witnesses to the 2018-19 annual report that I downloaded from the website. It’s my understanding this is the most recent annual report that Yukon University — I guess it was still Yukon College then — had put out.

I kind of want to walk through a few items in the report. In the message from the former chair of the board of governors Chris Milner, on page 1, I have a couple of questions from his message.

In the second paragraph, he mentions that President Barnes and her team made significant progress on conversations focused on advancing the institution through philanthropy. Future donations were announced by CIBC for \$500,000 in support of the transition to Yukon University. BMO for \$400,000 in support of permafrost research and private foundations was also stepped up as well with project-focused funding, including a \$500,000 gift from the Garfield Weston Foundation.

Just quickly back to the CIBC donation — has all of that money been received and expended to support the transition from Yukon College to Yukon University?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I don’t have the exact figures on what has been spent. I know that we have received all of the funding from the donors.

I don’t know exactly how much of it has been spent to this date. Again, I can get that information for the member when we provide the other financial information.

**Mr. Kent:** Then, recognizing that the previous question was about the CIBC funding, if the witnesses can also provide us with a breakdown of the \$400,000 in support of permafrost research from BMO and then the \$500,000 gift from the Garfield Weston Foundation and then perhaps an idea of which projects that funding supported as well.

**Ms. Matear:** Again, I can provide that information at a later date, but I don’t have those breakdowns with me right

now. I would rather make sure that I'm providing accurate information than speculate on what I believe.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that. I thank the witnesses for that. I just wanted to make sure that it was on the record as well so that, when they look back to the transcripts here, they can get a sense for everything that we are asking for.

In that next paragraph in Mr. Milner's message, it does talk — and I know that the chair of the board of governors talked about the science building in his opening response. Here it says: "Following extensive lobbying, the Government of Canada ... announced \$26M in budget 2019 to support the construction of a science building at the Ayamdigut Campus of Yukon College in Whitehorse. The building should be completed in 2023."

I'm just curious — since I believe that there is a values and principles document and a functional plan completed — are you still on time for a 2023 completion? I guess that's the question.

**Ms. Matear:** I appreciate the member's question because the science building is something that we're extremely excited about and happy to share progress and updates on right now.

COVID has reared its ugly head and prevented us from proceeding quite as quickly as we would have liked. That being said, we do have a more elaborate functional plan developed with the assistance of Yukon government and the Department of Highways and Public Works. We have a very detailed functional plan now and are ready to go to terms of reference.

We're now just finalizing the documentation to sign the agreement, and we have been talking with the government, with CIRNAC in particular, to see if there is a potential to expand the timing horizon for the science building because of COVID. That being said, the building has a relatively small footprint. We don't anticipate that there are going to be too many delays, even if we do have to maintain a somewhat compressed schedule because of our six-month delay.

**Mr. Kent:** I apologize to the witness if she said it, but I didn't get a sense, given the delays associated with COVID, of when they anticipate that building being completed.

I have just a couple of other questions on it. As far as project management goes, will that project be managed within the college, or will the Department of Highways and Public Works be doing that project management for them? Have they picked a model to build? Will it be a design/build or will it be a design/bid/build, which are two different ways of building these types of capital facilities?

**Ms. Matear:** My apologies to the member for not answering part of his earlier question. We anticipate that the science building will be finished in fiscal year 2024.

Could you repeat the second part of the question again, Mr. Chair?

**Mr. Kent:** No problem. How will the contract be structured and who will be providing the project management services? So, will it be going to a design/build, or will it be a design/bid/build process?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for repeating the question. We have been working closely with the Yukon government on this. They have been very supportive in

helping us get to the stage that we are at right now. We will continue to work with them for project management assistance throughout the course of the building.

We are hiring our own project manager as well, who will work very closely with the Yukon government's project management team. We really appreciate the expertise and the capacity that they bring to building projects, particularly in cold-weather environments. We understand that they can really help us meet some of our environmental and sustainability goals around the science building.

We have looked at both of the main project approaches, which are design/build and design/bid/build. We have decided that it is going to be advantageous to us to go with the design/bid/build. People in Yukon are more accustomed to working with that model, and we feel that this is probably going to be our better chance for maintaining an on-schedule project.

**Mr. Kent:** So, again, I note that the contribution from the federal government was \$26 million in the 2019 budget. What is the overall budget at this point to construct this building?

**Ms. Matear:** The functional plan that was recently completed this past June suggests that the cost will be about \$36 million.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the witness for that response. Just looking at the June 2015 campus master plan that was developed, I know that the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining building has been completed and is essentially in the same spot. Can the witnesses just explain where the science building will be located and if it is identified in this master plan?

**Ms. Matear:** The science building is reflected in the master plan, and the site where it will be built is the parking lot that is currently labelled as a "student parking lot". It is opposite the administration wing of the university campus.

**Mr. Kent:** Just to clarify then, I think that, on the front cover of this master plan that I'm looking at, there is an academic and research building. Will that be the location of the new science building?

**Ms. Matear:** Correct.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that.

I will come back to the master plan in a little bit after we wind our way through the annual report a little bit more.

In that next paragraph — the message from Mr. Milner — was: "In February..." — and I am assuming that this would have been 2019 — "... the Honourable Marc Garneau announced funding of over \$368,000 over two years starting in 2019-20. These funds will support the Northern Climate Exchange at Yukon College, to design and implement systems to identify potential permafrost-related hazards, such as landslides and ground subsidence." Were those funds transferred from Canada to Yukon College at the time, and have they been expended on the projects that were outlined here in the report?

**Ms. Matear:** The funds were transferred. I don't know the extent to which all of the funds were expended, and I can get that information for the member.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that.

Moving on in Mr. Milner's message, it says: "In anticipation of becoming Canada's first university in the Circumpolar north, Global Affairs will start supporting the UArctic North to North program — a student exchange program that will enable northern post-secondary students to pursue studies in other circumpolar countries. This program will be managed through Yukon College."

I'm making an assumption that, due to COVID-19, this exchange program has been suspended. Had anything been done on it previous to the pandemic? Will it restart — hopefully, this next fall or sooner when the pandemic is under control — and is it still being managed through Yukon University?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, this is another question that I'm really pleased to answer because we just formalized the agreement with Global Affairs to support that program. It has been suspended because of COVID, so we can't do international travel, but it is going to pick up as soon as we are able to resume normal activities.

We're really excited about those opportunities to share Yukon knowledge and expertise with other universities and give those opportunities to students and researchers for cross-pollination.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that.

I'm going to just flip over the page to Dr. Barnes' message in the same annual report. I have a couple of questions from it.

In the third paragraph, it says that Yukon College continues to deliver several partner degrees. In fact, there was a celebration of 30 years of delivery of the bachelor of education degree — Yukon Native Teacher Education Program, as it's known, in partnership with the University of Regina.

I'm wondering if the witnesses have some recent graduation numbers from that program and also, beyond that, if there are some numbers for placement as teachers into schools in the Yukon or perhaps schools beyond through exit interviews that you may or may not do with the graduates of that program.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I do have some figures on the bachelor of education program. Enrolments have remained steady — about 30 students in the past three years. It has grown from 10 students originally in 2016 to 25 students now. Practicum placements were delayed unfortunately because of COVID.

However, the fourth-year placements with Yukon schools are now set up for a January start, and we have 18 in total ready to go. We are trying to find better ways to track employment statistics. It's a continuous improvement effort with us. I can go and try to get the most recent figures for the member. I don't have them with me at this time, though.

**Mr. Kent:** I'll appreciate getting those numbers.

Just moving down a little bit in Dr. Barnes' message with respect to international students, it says: "An increasing number of students are coming to Yukon College from around the world. Given the Yukon's persistent labour shortages, the Yukon Government is aware of this potential source of labour, and as such, initiated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, which aims to raise awareness of Yukon

employment opportunities among eligible international students."

I have a couple of questions from this particular portion of Dr. Barnes' message. Can the witnesses provide us with the number of international students and perhaps a comparison to last year's enrolment so we can get a sense of how those numbers have gone down? I'm assuming they've gone down — but if they've gone down substantially or not. Can we find a copy of the MOU on Yukon College's website, or would the witnesses be able to provide it? It may be there. I was just unable to find it when I was preparing for this afternoon.

**Ms. Matear:** To respond to the member's questions about the number of international students that we have, in 2018-19, we had 173 international students, plus an additional 22 who arrived on a one-month study tour from Japan. That makes up 15 percent of all credit students at the university.

Unlike many universities across the country, we decided not to put all of our eggs in one basket, and so that was one of the reasons that we didn't experience a huge drop in revenues after COVID hit. We've really put the focus on ensuring that the needs of Yukon students are met.

International students do, of course, bring a tremendous revenue-generating opportunity to Yukon University. That's why this year, in 2019-2020, we were pleased to see that 179 international students, plus an additional 26 for the one-month study tour from Japan, attended. Again, we capped that at 15 percent of all of our credit students.

For this year, we are seeing a decline in the number of international students, and a lot of that is because they cannot get visas to arrive in Canada. We have 123 here right now. The majority of these were already here in Yukon or in Canada. We have a handful of arrivals from abroad this year who have successfully self-isolated. Again, we are thankful to the Government of Yukon for allowing us the use of the High Country Inn facility to support those international students in their self-isolation quarantine period. Right now, we have 10 international students who are studying online from outside Canada, and we are not planning to have any one-month study tours planned for this year.

With respect to the MOU, I can get a copy of that for the member. If it is not on our website, I will make sure that we provide that copy to you.

**Mr. Kent:** I have just a couple of questions from that. The witness can correct me if I am wrong, but I believe she said that they capped the enrolment numbers for international students at 15 percent, which was 173 a couple of years ago, 179 last year, and obviously 123 — so it would be up to 15 percent for this current year. How does that compare to the percentage of tuition? I guess my question is: Is there a premium in tuition charged to international students?

I will look forward to getting a copy of that memorandum of understanding, but what types of initiatives are used under it to raise awareness of Yukon employment opportunities among eligible international students, and what countries are targeted with that particular initiative?

**Ms. Matear:** First, I will address the question about the percentage of revenue. Tuition revenue makes up just under

six percent of our overall revenue in the past year. Half of that is from the international students, so there is indeed a premium for international student tuition. Although they make up 15 percent of our student body, or a maximum of 15 percent, they do contribute 50 percent of the tuition revenues.

May I ask the member to repeat the second part of his question? I wasn't sure if he was asking where students were coming from, or how we are recruiting students, or both.

**Mr. Kent:** I will look forward to getting a copy of the MOU that was signed, but it says in here that the signing of the MOU aims to raise awareness of Yukon employment opportunities among eligible international students. If the witnesses can give me a brief summary of what countries are targeted and what types of initiatives are used to raise awareness of Yukon employment opportunities for the eligible international students — also, if they have an idea of what the cost of implementing this MOU is.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for that question and for elaborating on what it meant. We target a couple of countries in particular — India, Japan, and China — but we also look at international students from Italy, Jamaica, Australia, Spain, Bosnia, France, Germany, Mexico, Vietnam, and the US.

In terms of the MOU, I don't have the cost of what it is to implement that program. I can say that we do use the services of international student recruitment agents. That is typical of post-secondary institutions across the country. We have a number of those agents with whom we build very robust relationships so that they understand what we can offer to international students abroad.

They are the ones who have the relationships with the communities that they serve. They are working for us as ambassadors, almost, of Yukon University to help them understand what we can offer to them. We provide those agents with a broad swath of information about not only the university but also the Yukon in general, to try to attract them here.

**Mr. Kent:** I will look forward to getting a copy of that MOU so that I can take a look through it.

I have a couple more questions on the international students. Is there a mix of which programs the students are enrolling in at Yukon University, or are they mostly coming in for degree programs? I will leave it to the witnesses to provide a potential breakdown, if they have one, of the perhaps 123 students who are there this year. What programs are you finding that most of them are enrolling in at the university?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for the question again.

We have students who are enrolled in business administration, and early learning and childcare — those are two very popular ones with international students — and liberal arts, northern science, multimedia, aviation management, and general studies.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that.

Now, in that second to last paragraph, Dr. Barnes talks about housing. I'll just read into the record what she says. I'll quote again: "Of course, an increase in students further emphasized the housing shortage issue. In February of 2018 the

Board directed the tendering of a pilot housing project with developers in Whitehorse. Kobayashi and Zedda Architects were chosen to provide micro-units in a building they were building in downtown Whitehorse. Five units were made available in January 2019 to students."

Obviously, I understand that there's a housing crunch throughout the territory — and emphasized that housing crunch in Whitehorse and then obviously for Yukon College with what you have on the main campus here. Has this pilot project continued into this year? It says that five units were made available in January 2019. Has it continued into this year? Would it be a total cost recovery? Would the students be responsible for paying the entire amount of rent for these micro-units that are part of this pilot project?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, the pilot project did not continue into this year. I don't know the exact reason why, but I can find that information for the member.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that.

Are there any other projects or, as part of the master plan, are you looking at putting in any additional student housing options on the main campus to take care of the housing shortage that you're seeing?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, yes, this is a really interesting question. It's something that we're working on very hard. We're first trying to get a more accurate grasp of the actual demand for student housing. Many students who are coming in are looking for apartments for family units because they bring their families with them when they come. That's not unusual in universities like Yukon where people are coming from remote communities.

Many of the students are looking for things like individual dorms. We have a good mix of housing on campus right now. What we often find is that we have enough housing but not necessarily the housing that students actually want, depending on what they're looking for.

We're trying to work on a feasibility study that will get us some market statistics and some more evidence-based information on what we actually need before we go forward with looking at other initiatives. That being said, we're looking at some creative ways to support housing needs in the communities, like building tiny houses in our trades section and trying to hire more local people in the communities so that people already have housing and we don't have to try to find housing in a place where it's already scarce for the people who actually live there.

**Mr. Kent:** Is there a wait-list currently for student housing in Whitehorse? Are there student housing opportunities available in the communities for students who are enrolled in some of the community campuses?

**Ms. Matear:** I can confirm that this year there is no waiting list for students to go into housing. Part of that is because of COVID. Part of that is because we don't have as many international students who are attending, and they are the ones who often are particularly interested in our dorm housing.

In terms of student housing in the communities, no, we don't have that. Again, for instructors and staff, we are trying

to hire more people actually from the communities themselves so that we're not creating more pressure on that housing stock.

**Mr. Kent:** I'm curious — with the recently announced bursting of the BC, Yukon, and territorial bubble and as far as being able to travel back and forth — if there are students who are currently in Yukon University housing who are from other jurisdictions. Has there been any thought given to what the plans are around the Christmas break if they do want to return to their jurisdiction? Is there any alternative self-isolation planning being done for when they return to housing here in the Yukon?

I guess that's somewhat hypothetical based on whether or not those students from those jurisdictions are actually in housing here.

**Ms. Matear:** I really appreciate the member's interest in this, because the excellence of student experience is one of the key mandates for Yukon University; it's something we are very concerned about.

We've taken the decision not to allow self-isolation in campus facilities. To that end, what we are doing, right now actually, is that we're working on a plan to support those students who do want to go home for the holidays. We're trying to find some sources of emergency funding for them so that, when they come back, we can arrange self-isolation for them off campus — in hotels, for example. We're working on developing a volunteer program so that people can support the students who are here over the Christmas holidays and away from their families, and we're looking at trying to implement a number of these initiatives to make sure students feel looked after and cared for, whether they choose to go back to their communities or whether they choose to stay.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that answer from the witness.

Looking again on the website, we came across the 2016 to 2021 strategic plan. That's what's referenced on the next page in the annual report. This plan was obviously designed, I think, to get the college through the transition into the university. Has work started on a new strategic plan for 2021? If work has started, is it also to be a guidance document for a five-year term?

**Mr. Morrison:** The board met earlier this week, as a matter of fact, and had their first discussion on the new strategic plan. We laid out a timeline and we've laid out a series of tasks — a large part of which will be consultation and engagement on the plan itself.

We do envisage the plan being another five-year plan. I would say that we're targeting July but maybe August or September, depending on how long the engagement consultation piece takes given COVID and the ability to get people together. It's well underway. We had a very good discussion with senior management and the board early this week.

**Mr. Kent:** I'm not trying to go through the 2016 to 2021 plan in great detail, but there obviously were a number of goals that were set. I'm assuming that the college, now the university, has met many of those goals, but are there any that the witnesses would like to flag for us that perhaps they weren't able to meet, whether it was due to the pandemic or for any types of reasons,

as far as the overall direction and goals that are identified in this document?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, the majority of the goals were achieved on time and on schedule. Some of them are a little bit behind because of COVID, but we are continuing to work on those and we will continue to do so throughout the next year.

**Mr. Kent:** I wanted to move on to the Centre for Northern Innovation and Mining and just take a look at a couple of the programs that were part of the milestones for 2018-19. The university and the centre have identified a number of different training programs. Obviously, with the governing council and how that works, often there are changes to what programs are offered. Are there changes for this current year versus what we saw in the 2018-19 year?

I'm also just curious about the trades trailers — the mobile training units — and if they are deployed to a community or a mine site at this time. If so, where are they deployed and what courses are being offered in that mobile trades trailer?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I'm really happy to address the member's questions on that, because the mobile trades trailer is a flagship program for us, and it's one that allows us to bring specialized training from Ayandigit out into the communities. So, I do have some information on those.

Since January 19, the mobile trades trailer has served 35 students in Watson Lake, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, and Minto mine. Those students were enrolled in mining workforce readiness, haul truck operations, environmental monitoring, and heavy equipment mechanic pre-apprentice. The mobile trailer is now in Dawson City for a multi-trades and mining program that was co-created with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Minto mine. Right now, there are eight students registered in that for our January 2021 start date.

**Mr. Kent:** I am not sure if it was underway prior to the pandemic and the closing of the border between Yukon and Alaska, but there were some mine simulators that CNIM owned, and I believe that they were just south, or perhaps north, of Delta Junction. I'm curious if that partnership continued. Obviously, it would be in some sort of hiatus right now, I'm assuming, with the pandemic, but I'm curious if that project and that partnership with Alaska has continued. If so, is the university anticipating that getting underway again when we get out of this current mess that we are in right now?

**Ms. Matear:** Yes — and it is a very exciting program. I actually had the opportunity to visit that last year at their graduation ceremony. Ten students completed the program earlier this year. We have had to suspend it, unfortunately, because of COVID, but we intend to pick that up again when we are able.

**Mr. Kent:** That and some of the other curriculum developed — sort of pre-Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, and then since the building has been built and the program has been offered — were part of an MOU, or an agreement signed between Yukon and Alaska. Is the university still operating under that agreement, or are they looking at renewing that agreement? At the time, I think it was signed in Juneau with the University of Alaska Southeast, so I'm curious

if that agreement is still in place or if there is work being done to renew it at this point.

**Ms. Matear:** The agreement is still in place. I don't know the status of renewing the agreement, though, and I can get that information to the member.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that. Just before I move on from the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, I am curious how many graduated from the most recent cohort that you have statistics for, and how many of those individuals ended up employed in something close to the field — whether it is in a hardrock mine or a placer mine or doing the work that they received training for?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I do know that 10 students graduated. I don't know their employment status at this time. I will see how much information we have available on that for you.

**Mr. Kent:** I wanted to ask just one question about the Northern Institute of Social Justice. I recognize that obviously there are a number of important courses that are offered through this program and through the work there. It has been very valuable. I took a couple of courses there a few years back, and I enjoyed them and found them very helpful.

I'm just curious, though, when it comes to the numbers that are enrolled in these programs, how many — again, for the most recent year that you have statistics for — individuals enrolled in these programs at the institute? If you have a breakdown, how many would have been from the public sector versus how many would have been from private sector companies — if the witnesses have that information?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for his kind words about the course quality for when he experienced some training from the Northern Institute of Social Justice. I don't have the figures or the breakdown of the numbers of who took programming through them in the last year, but I would be happy to pull those together for the member.

**Mr. Kent:** I think I took conflict communications and conflict management. I have put it to use, I think, for the past number of years perhaps. Perhaps I forgot a few things from there too, but maybe it's time for a refresher.

I just have a couple more questions, and then I want to turn it over to the Member for Whitehorse Centre so that she gets a chance to ask questions of the witnesses as well.

When it comes to the Yukon Research Centre — I know the board chair mentioned this in his opening remarks and talked about the number of students hired as far as research funding. I'm curious if the transition from a college to the university has opened up additional research envelopes, and if we are seeing that increase now or if we're anticipating increases here as the university gets more established and as it moves forward.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, again, I really appreciate that question, because research is one of the things that we hope to continue to expand on as we've transitioned from college to university.

Indeed, the transition to university does open up some more funding opportunities for us. We are looking at those.

Fortunately, we are also able to maintain some of the relationships with funders through our status as a college. We have broadened the number of opportunities that we are able to access, and the future looks very bright for research at Yukon University.

**Mr. Kent:** I just want to ask a couple of questions about the university foundation and the work that they are doing. There is a national fundraising campaign that the foundation embarked on in 2019. It is a two-phased, \$86-million campaign, which incorporated federal, territorial, and private sector funding. Obviously, that \$26-million contribution from the federal government was part of that fundraising campaign. I am curious if the witnesses have an update on where they are at in terms of timing. Are they still in phase 1, or have they moved to phase 2? How much money has been raised so far toward that \$86-million goal?

**Ms. Matear:** Currently, the foundation has raised about \$2 million for various aspects of the university operations. We are really focusing on three things right now. Raising money for the science building — I mentioned earlier that we are hoping to spend \$36 million in total on the science building, of which \$10 million we anticipate to come from fundraising dollars. We are also focusing on the Institute of Indigenous Self-Determination, which is another program that we've worked on and co-created in consultation with Yukon First Nations. We are also raising funds for student awards and student support services.

Right now, we are looking at a more formalized approach to fundraising and building a plan to manage that campaign. We look forward to being able to finalize that early in the new year.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that response.

My final question is more of an anecdotal one. I know that, in our travels and in talking to colleagues who represent rural ridings throughout the Yukon, there was a lot of concern when the college was transitioning to a university that it might present a little bit of intimidation for some of the community members to attend a university. I guess the question that I would have is: What are the enrolment numbers like in the communities?

It's difficult, obviously, with COVID to get a true reflection and a true comparison, but what are the trends like in the communities that we are seeing since the transition to a university occurred?

I'll let the witnesses answer, but that will be my final question. I would just like to thank Dr. Matear and Mr. Morrison for coming here today and answering the questions that we had.

**Ms. Matear:** I would like to thank the member for articulating a concern that we've heard throughout the Yukon, and that is: Will the Yukon University stay true to its roots and continue to provide programs at the college level and the vocational level for Yukon students? The answer is a resounding yes.

We're a hybrid university. We're different from other ones. We know that it's really important to be able to provide the broadest possible number of opportunities for Yukon students. We work very closely with partners, rights holders,

stakeholders, communities, and the government to make sure that we're responding to those needs at all times.

The 13 campuses in our communities form a vital part of what we're able to do for Yukon. It also makes us a little bit different in terms of how we try to ensure that students in the communities have the same opportunities as those who come to Ayamdigut. We recognize the value of students being able to stay in their home communities for educational purposes. If you can look for a silver lining from COVID, I think one of them is that we really accelerated our efforts to try to put more courses online so that students in the communities could stay with their families and stay at work, if they so chose, and participate from their communities instead of having to come to a different community where they may not know people or have the same number of supports.

To that end, I do have a couple of statistics that I can share with you in terms of numbers. In 2019-20, 837 students took courses at campuses outside Ayamdigut. Of those, 542 were credit core students. That's down from 2018-19 when the number was 1,600 students, 607 of whom took credit courses.

The reduction over this year is a function of COVID. It hit us at the six-month mark, so we're seeing a fairly significant reduction. However, I think it's really interesting to know that proportionally more of the community campuses were involved in credit courses than in non-credit courses. I think that's a really good sign of an increasing confidence in people that they don't need to be intimidated by taking credit courses. They don't need to be intimidated by the fact that we're a university now, because we're the same as before, but we've made the pie bigger.

We're now offering more different levels of courses for students and creating more opportunities for them to stay at home while improving their education.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witnesses for being here this afternoon. We reflect back, as the chair of the university mentioned at the outset — it was almost a year ago that we were here seeing the passage of the *Yukon University Act*. It's unfortunate that we weren't able to celebrate that transition as it was planned in May or June. I know that Dr. Karen Barnes had been quite excited about that. I was pleased to see some recognition — I think earlier this month when she was appointed as a director of Polar Knowledge Canada. Then I was doubly pleased last week — last week or sometime earlier in November — when we saw the first two honorary doctorates being awarded to Dr. David Joe and to Dr. Audrey McLaughlin. It seems to me that it is incredibly important that the transition — I've said this before. There are times when you realize how old you are, but I can remember when Audrey McLaughlin acted to do an evaluation of a program that was run here. The first time, there was a group of social service workers for *Indian Act* bands in the territory who wanted to get training. Everybody kept saying, "You can't do that; you would have to just take like a little course here and a little course there." Some of us felt that you needed to offer an accredited course. What would these people who live in communities — how could they do that? In fact, they did an accredited course and some of them went on to do degrees in social work.

Dr. McLaughlin, as she is now, did the evaluation of that program. So, it takes some time, Mr. Chair, but you do see that transition occur in our communities.

At the same time, this is a hybrid university. I know that there are concerns in the communities with respect — and in Yukon — that focus — as my colleague down the way here commented on, the importance of the trades and basic adult education and upgrading programs. I know that you share that concern.

I noted in the strategic plan — I'm just going to quote here: "Yukon College will develop and implement a plan to retain, support and attract faculty and staff in order to enrich the institution."

When it was confirmed to me at lunchtime that we were in fact going to be having you folks in front of us today, I thought, "Okay, fine, what do I know but haven't looked at in recent times?" I went back — because one of the things that strikes me when I look at an organization, particularly an organization in transition — and all of us were aware of the change at the very top with the abrupt departure of the president of the Yukon University. I thought that I should just go and look at the organization chart as it is on the Yukon University website. I have to say that I was struck by a couple of things. I do expect some turnover in an organization, but it seems that there are pockets within Yukon University where there are significant gaps. I am not sure if this is just a factor of the university not having posted updates to its organization chart since July 1, 2020, but I counted at least 20 vacancies that I would like some comment on by the board and the acting president.

When I look at department heads — for example, academic services or the chair of the Academic and Skill Development or the three vacancies at SOVA — the School of Visual Arts has become a really important arts and cultural institution not just in Dawson but throughout the Yukon, in what it does in terms of transitioning and developing artists. YNTEP — we talked about the teacher education program here. I am pleased to hear about the success in the growth of the number of students because it did have serious challenges a few years back. But when we see a faculty adviser and coordinator there in education, and when we see the chair of the indigenous governance program and another vacancy there — as we heard from the president, this is a key area. The manager of the learning commons — what I would call the library — as well. We talked about the international students, how important they are and what an incredible — not only enriching a presence for the university, but also a revenue source. We have a vacancy there.

In the community campuses, there are vacancies in terms of the liaisons in Teslin, Watson Lake, and Old Crow. I don't know if these are current or not, but what it did say to me is that — particularly, I would be appreciative of getting the witnesses to explain or to update this House as to what has been done to provide continuity, because an organization that is taking on the challenges of a university needs to have some stability organizationally. It needs to be able to demonstrate that for a lot of reasons — not just to attract staff and retain good quality employees, but also for your students, the community, and

donors. A long-winded thing, but I just wanted to set the context for what my concern is here, and I would be interested in seeing — both from the board's point of view and from the administrative point of view — what is being done to address these vacancies.

There was one that I wasn't sure about and — because, through a conversation with an individual there — I won't go there right now, but I just — if you would speak to those, please.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, if I understand the member's question, it is asking what we are doing in these times of transition, I suppose, to retain and attract employees. Is that correct?

**Ms. Hanson:** That is correct, but also, are those vacancies current — the ones I just identified? So, if they are — and it is now November — that is an issue. If those have been filled and — because some of those are significant in terms of effective delivery, even in a time where we have a lull, perhaps. But you can't have that kind of a lull or gap in an organization in order to have continuity; that is my point. That is why I was looking to ascertain whether or not what is reflected on the website, as of this afternoon, is actually correct.

**Ms. Matear:** I thank the member for her clarification. Some of the positions that are reflected as vacant on the website have indeed been filled since then. I think that it is important to note that recruitment at post-secondary educational institutions across Canada is challenging and very competitive. We are certainly not the only ones who are experiencing some churn not only at the senior management level but throughout the institution.

What we are doing to try to maintain continuity — which is again a very important concept when we are dealing with transition at any time, let alone now, when we are dealing with transition from college to university and during COVID — is that we are trying to get better at documenting processes. We are trying to get better at capturing that knowledge so that it doesn't leave with the person when the person leaves. I spoke earlier about a process of continuous improvement that we are trying to implement across the university and this is one of the things that we're working on with an aim toward making sure that we have information available for people when there is a changeover in a position so that we don't lose that institutional knowledge.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that. Of those vacancies I've identified, the key ones, with respect to director-level positions — are they currently staffed?

**Ms. Matear:** I'm afraid I don't have the organizational chart in front of me, so I can't speak to each of them, but some of the key ones have been staffed. For example, for the registrar's position, there is an interim position in place and that was the associate registrar who has now stepped in. She brings a lot of institutional knowledge into that role. Fortunately, we didn't lose a lot of institutional knowledge there.

Some of the other positions have since been filled — for example, the international student advisor. We have an excellent fellow who has been filling that role for the last couple of months.

What I can commit to is taking a look at the organizational chart as it was in July and making sure you get an updated one.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that, because when I look at significant ones — because we've put a lot of — as the witnesses said earlier today, one of the key first degree granting programs is indigenous governance. When I see the chair's position vacant, I go, "Whoa, that's not a good sign." I would like to know if that position has been filled first and then I will look forward to getting the balance of that information from the witnesses.

On that, when I look at Public Accounts — and maybe I might ask the witnesses to confirm that up until today — because I saw a regulation change today that indicated that the fiscal year for Yukon University has changed — but it's my impression from comments that I sort of heard fly by earlier that the fiscal year is different; it was the end of December. I'll get her answer on that, Mr. Chair.

What we have available to us as Members of the Legislative Assembly is the Public Accounts for the Yukon government. The notes to the consolidated financial statements are indicating, for Yukon College — so this is at the end of June 2019 — that one of the areas — there are a couple of things that arose from that, but one was that the termination benefits that had been paid by the Yukon College at the time had increased by \$240,000 from one year to the next. So, it had gone from \$334,000 to \$575,000. Not only is that kind of organizational stability important for an organization — and, as the witness said, for continuity — but it also costs money.

Can the witness confirm the issue with respect to, up until today, the fiscal year for the former college, now university, and if that trend has continued this year with respect to the almost doubling of termination payments for employees leaving the employment of the university?

**Ms. Matear:** I thank the member again for that question. I can confirm that our fiscal year-end up until now has been June 30. We asked for a change in the fiscal year-end so that we could better align our budgeting and planning processes with those of the government. In terms of the termination benefits, I don't have the actual figures for this year, unfortunately, so I can't comment on those, but once we do get the audited financial statements, I am happy to provide those to the member, along with an explanation of any statistically significant variation.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that.

Earlier in the conversation, when my colleague from the Yukon Party was raising some questions with respect to the area of international students, the witness indicated that half of the tuition that is received from students comes from international students even though they only represent 15 percent of the student population. There were two aspects of it that raised a question: What are the average tuition or student fees paid by an international student at Yukon University, and what are the costs to Yukon University for the recruitment agent, or agents if there is more than one?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I can answer part of that question but not the other part. The second part of the question is: What is the fee paid to international recruitment agents? It



varies between 15 and 20 percent of the tuition. That is pretty typical across Canada for recruitment agents. I don't have the actual tuition amount before me right now. I would rather wait to get that information than to misspeak.

**Ms. Hanson:** I look forward to receiving it. Thank you to the witness.

Mr. Chair, I am asking the witnesses for their insight into this because it was about someone who volunteered, working with students — anyway, I had heard that we are the only jurisdiction that doesn't have health insurance included in the student fees for foreign students. Is that correct?

**Ms. Matear:** I will have to check on that. I know that international students do buy health insurance. I don't know if it is included in the tuition or if it is attached as an ancillary fee.

**Ms. Hanson:** That would be helpful to get that information.

When an international student — if they do acquire private health insurance — what support services and resources are available to them on campus? As the witness mentioned, Mr. Chair, this is a difficult time for anybody who is separated from family, let alone being separated by many, many thousands of miles and dealing with cultural differences — the whole gamut — linguistic differences, perhaps. What support services and resources are made available to international students on campus?

**Ms. Matear:** When it comes to student success, we don't differentiate between whether or not the student is international or local — domestic. So, our student success division actually provides references to a number of different student services. So, we have mental health and well-being supports; we have academic supports. We are continuing to offer those face to face throughout the pandemic because we recognize that online education is not something that everybody cottons on to naturally and they may need a few more supports in order to succeed at their program.

So, using COVID-friendly protocols, we have actually set up face-to-face services at the university not only for domestic students but for international students to take advantage of. We have elders on campus. We have a virtual elder program starting in the wintertime so that we can provide services at a distance as well to students in the communities, as well as to Ayamdigut, and we are continuing to take feedback and do better at understanding the needs of the students. So, this is another one of these continuous improvement projects where we try something, we see how it works, we take input, and we use that input to inform and to improve those student services, but we are trying very hard to make sure that students have what they need to succeed. And we recognize that a lot of them are far away from their families, not just the international ones but domestic ones as well. We have seen an enormous outpouring of support from faculty and from staff to make sure that they do feel welcome and looked after. So, when COVID first started, for example, we had faculty members volunteering to provide meal service to students who were otherwise unable to use their kitchens because of COVID.

So, we have tried very hard to make sure that every student feels that they have a place to go and a safe space to talk to someone if they need those services.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that because I think that's an important aspect. I'm sure — as many of us have had kids at universities outside the territory — thinking about having your kid around the world — well, I actually have had — but yeah, the difficulty of that during a pandemic.

Can the witnesses provide some clarification — I haven't heard much recently about Arctic university, although I do see it in a liaison kind of role in the context of the org chart. I'm just not sure what the relationship is now between Yukon University and what was Arctic university in terms of circumpolar countries.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I would like to get more details on that to provide to the member. I can say though that the recent global affairs agreement that we signed to support students and researchers to travel throughout the Arctic supports our efforts to be involved in circumpolar research and education.

**Ms. Hanson:** I would be interested in following up on that because we are part of the circumpolar north and even the fact, as we mentioned at the outset here, that Dr. Barnes has gone on to be part of polar knowledge — I think we want to reinforce that.

Can the witnesses provide just a clarification — I'm trying to figure out how this organization chart is supposed to fit together because it seems that they're disparate. On page 11 of the organization chart and on page 17, there are two separate entities as depicted in the organization chart. One is the vacant chair of indigenous governance and a few positions there — one vacant, and then there's an indigenous engagement and reconciliation entity. So, can the witnesses describe the relative functions of those two entities within the university structure?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, yes, I would be happy to answer that question.

We do have an associate vice-president of indigenous reconciliation and engagement. We are currently recruiting for that position and expect to fill that imminently. The other position the member refers to is a chair of the indigenous governance program, and that is typically a faculty position that helps coordinate and advise faculty members in that section. That position is currently open.

**Ms. Hanson:** If the witness could elaborate on what indigenous governance is vis-à-vis indigenous engagement and reconciliation — in terms of within the university construct, what do those two groups of people do? What is the difference in their focus? I hate using the term "deliverable", but you know what I mean, Mr. Chair.

**Ms. Matear:** That's an excellent question. The indigenous governance program is a degree program that we offer. It's one of our flagship degrees, in fact, that we offer to students. The chair of that handles the academic and delivery components of that program, whereas our AVP of indigenous reconciliation and engagement is a management position that liaises between Yukon First Nations and management and helps provide a gateway to better build relationships between the

university and Yukon First Nations. That person also advises senior management on areas of cultural sensitivity and on ways that we can further indigenize our university, not just our curriculum but also the ways that we operate and the ways that we understand and do things.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that explanation and for the distinction between the roles. The previous incumbent to the associate vice-president position was a powerhouse and an indigenous Yukoner. Is the intention to try to recruit from within the Yukon in terms of academia — somebody with the requisite academic background — for that position?

**Ms. Matear:** Yes, it is our intention to do that.

**Ms. Hanson:** When I had asked the question earlier — and I just want to make sure that I didn't miss it — when I had indicated that one of the important pieces — and one of the witnesses had also talked about the importance of our community campuses — I just want to confirm whether or not there are still vacancies in the positions of either instructor coordinators or community campus liaisons. In July, there were three vacancies. I just want to know if the university is fully staffed in those communities now throughout the Yukon.

**Ms. Matear:** I know that we have made progress on some of those hirings. I am not sure to what extent we are in the hiring process, though. I can provide some confirmation for you on that when I follow up.

**Ms. Hanson:** When we looked again at the Public Accounts, one of the notes was that the *Yukon University Act* was passed on November 27, 2019. The notes were that the university was a hybrid institution that offers a comprehensive range of programming, including trades, adult basic education, certificates, diplomas, degrees, and applied research. The quote that was important in my mind was “The financial impact of this act is not determinable at this time.”

Given a year's experience — a rather busy year, I would imagine — can the witnesses give us a sense of the scope of what they see looming as the financial impact of — maybe it's not; maybe it's all just smooth — the passing of the *Yukon University Act*? So, you were Yukon College and now you are Yukon University — what is the difference in terms of the financial security or lack thereof of the university?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, I would like to break that response down a little bit. First of all, there are a great many articles in the *Yukon University Act* that we can't implement right away and that will take time for us to understand how to implement them and what the implications of those are. At this time, though, we are operating within our means. We typically operate a fairly lean organization to begin with. Any growth or change that we make as we progress further into the university journey will be cautious and very incremental based on the students we serve and based on the partners we work with. We are able to deliver everything that we are supposed to deliver within our current budget. We are relying on our foundation, as are most post-secondary institutions across the country, to help us supplement that money. We also have a very thriving third-party contracting and entrepreneurial side of the university that brings in its own revenues to support the programs that we need to deliver.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the witness for that. I guess the reason why I asked that question is because, as a college, the parameters and the expectations are much more constrained. As a university, as the witness has just outlined — and we have heard today some ambitious plans with respect to expansion and the science building, but I also heard him — and perhaps the witness can correct me if I misheard — but what I heard was that there was an \$86-million goal for the Yukon Foundation, of which there has been \$2 million raised. The Yukon doesn't have the deep history of, say, the Maritimes, where you have historic and small universities — small towns — but universities have deep roots of 100 and 150 years, where you have Bay Street lawyers who are going to put in \$100,000 or \$1 million. We don't have that tradition in this territory yet; hopefully, we will see that, but we don't have that.

What I am trying to get at is \$2 million — there was a significant amount of work done before the university was declared, in terms of reaching out and the various arrangements that were referenced by my colleague down the way to get that momentum going. Can the witnesses identify whether or not that has been a bit of a hiatus over the last little while or what initiative efforts have been underway with respect to augmenting the amount in that foundation? I don't know if that is the board or the administration.

**Mr. Morrison:** As Dr. Matear talked about in her previous response, this is not a “turn on the lights and we change everything”. The transition is meant to be a slow transition. It is meant to live within the means that we have and the money that we have. We have a lofty goal from the fundraising side of things. That alone will take some time. We have already raised \$2 million plus, and we see that as ramping up over time as we get people who we were able to talk to who will understand the Yukon University path forward in the future and want to support that future. So, I think that we will grow. We will grow slowly for a while and, as we get our feet under us and we have the resources, we will be able to start to grow a little faster down the line, but there is no speedy path to a full-blown grand university, as our southern competitors are. We will take our time and manage our resources.

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, if I may add a comment to our chair's response, I would like to point out that our foundation is still very young, and when COVID hit six months ago, many of the funding organizations with whom we work froze their funding, and so, that provided a little bit of a slowdown. That being said, we have an RFP out right now, actually, to work with fundraising and campaign experts who can help us develop a plan that will formalize and help us to understand the steps we need to take to raise \$20 million. So, our shorter term — and when I say “shorter term”, I mean five or six years — our shorter-term goal is about \$20 million. We are looking for expert help so that we can understand how we can actually raise that funding, and then we will move on from there.

**Ms. Hanson:** I appreciate that, and I do appreciate that, of course, during this time, things just shut down, so that activity is not high on many people's — well, it's high on those who need the money — but those who are giving it have been holding off, I think. I raised it in part because when we were

talking about the science building — and so we have an ambitious target, as I heard, to have that completed by 2023-24, but we have a gap of \$10 million. We have \$2 million in the bank. What contingency does the university anticipate being able to draw upon to fill that \$8-million gap?

**Ms. Matear:** Mr. Chair, we have some promising irons in the fire, but I am unable to elaborate any more than that at this time.

**Ms. Hanson:** You know, Mr. Chair, there are probably a million questions that I could raise, but right now, I don't have them at the top of the head.

I apologize to the witnesses. If we had a bit more notice, we could have had a better presentation this afternoon or more in-depth questions. I just had a suggestion though that the witnesses may want to follow up with the Government of Yukon, perhaps the Minister of Economic Development, when they're talking about the need to find a place to self-isolate students, given that they are providing accommodation relief — or the Minister of Tourism and Culture — in hotels. We have a whole bunch of hotel rooms that are getting paid to be empty, so perhaps there might be some collaboration that may be offered.

Anyway, I thank the witnesses for their presentation this afternoon and for being here, and I look forward to the follow-up information that they undertook to provide to me and to the member from the Yukon Party.

**Chair:** Are there any further questions for the witnesses?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I don't have questions. I see that the Official Opposition and the Third Party have ended their questions a bit early. I'm wondering if the Chair would permit Mr. Morrison or Dr. Matear to finish if they had any other additional remarks from their opening statement. I'll ask you that question first and then I'll proceed after that.

**Chair:** I would beg the indulgence of the members. If it's fine with the members, I have no objection to Mr. Morrison finishing his opening comments.

**Mr. Morrison:** I have to find where I was when I stopped. This is a bit of a guess, but I thought I got through the top 50 research colleges and then I think I ended just about there, so if you will bear with me.

I will start with this: Since March, all of our lives have been dominated by COVID, and the planned celebrations that we had that I think we were all looking forward to for the university were placed on hold. We did roll out the new colours, name, and logo across the territory and it seems — at least if you're up at the university — that students, staff, and faculty have embraced that in a big way. We did get quite a bit of national media across the territory and across Canada celebrating Canada's first northern university.

Dr. Matear has talked a good bit about this, but we did pivot most of the classes to online classes for the summer and, over the summer, developed safety protocols for in-person labs and trades. We set out protocols for those. If you've been to the university lately, it's not an open door which we think of universities as. There is control at the front door. There are standards that everybody has to meet going in and out of the university so that we know who is in the buildings.

The student success team created the Connect2YukonU service to improve response times and access to services for students adapting to a new online reality. Continuing Studies and the Northern Institute of Social Justice are reaching more Yukoners than ever before with virtual and online offerings of their short, professional, personal, and organizational development courses, workplace certifications, wellness, and social justice training.

Despite the pandemic, we have successfully delivered summer kids camps to 376 children and youth, giving them an introduction to Yukon University that we hope will stay on their radar as they continue their education. Hundreds of people have taken blended online and in-person first aid training classes since May.

With the support of CanNor and Yukon government's Department of Economic Development, our Innovation and Entrepreneurship team launched PIVOT. I talked a little bit about the award that we have just been recognized for with the PIVOT program, which is a rapid response program to help both seasoned businesses and early start-ups engage customers and adjust business practices and supply chains during the pandemic. Forty-four coaches and experts were hired to support 66 Yukon businesses. The initiative added \$255,000 to the local economy. Seventy-two percent of the supported businesses were women entrepreneurs; 25 percent overall were based in rural Yukon.

The same team is partnering with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association and the Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon to deliver Elevate, a program focused on developing businesses for re-entry into tourism markets once travel restrictions are lifted.

This month, with a generous \$100,000 donation from RBC, we are embarking on the creation of a comprehensive mental health and wellness strategy. Input from students, staff, faculty, and elders will guide the design and delivery of a new expanded initiative. These donations are just some of the fantastic fundraising we are achieving from donors who are excited and inspired by the work of our amazing researchers, faculty, and students. Overall, our dedicated faculty, staff, and students have risen to meet the COVID challenges with patience, grit, grace, and good humour. They are to be commended.

Of course, passing the legislation and bringing Yukon U into existence was only the beginning. We have a deep bench of resilient, experienced leaders across the entire university ready to meet any challenges to come. I am hopeful of the future ahead. Having a truly northern university expands opportunities for Yukoners to learn, contribute, and lead on issues vital to all Canadians — such as climate change, indigenous self-government, and sustainable resource management.

Now the real work begins as we hear from Yukoners, map out our future, and set the stage for all northerners to lead and inform national debates and dialogues.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would like to take the opportunity to thank both Dr. Matear and Mr. Morrison for being here today

and answering all the questions that the opposition and the Third Party had for them and providing a great picture of the future of Yukon University on behalf of their organization and on behalf of all Yukoners.

I would like to thank them for being here and would ask that you dismiss the witnesses, Mr. Chair, as they have completed their service to us here today and issue them thanks on behalf of us all.

**Chair:** Thank you, Ms. McPhee. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank Dr. Matear and Mr. Morrison for appearing here this afternoon. The witnesses are now excused.

*Witnesses excused*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. 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**

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

Also, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6, witnesses appeared before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to Yukon University.

**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:** The House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. on Monday.

*The House adjourned at 5:22 p.m.*



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 70

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Monday, November 30, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Monday, November 30, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Withdrawal of motions**

**Speaker:** The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the actions requested in the motions have been taken in whole or in part: Motions No. 242, 243, and 244, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; and Motion No. 240, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I ask my colleagues to help me welcome Andrew Neufeld and Erin Neufeld here today for the tribute to their parents, and Heather Green, assistant professor in the department of history at St. Mary's University, who is tuning in online, and other family members and friends who are listening.

Welcome here today. Thank you for coming.

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In remembrance of Joy Waters and David Neufeld**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** It is my absolute honour to rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to two Yukoners who left a very positive and permanent mark on our community — former Tourism and Culture deputy minister and Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board president and CEO Joy Waters, and her husband Dave Neufeld, a long-time Parks Canada historian for the Yukon and western Arctic regions.

Over their 30 years in the territory, they wore many hats, both personally and professionally. They made remarkable and lasting contributions to Yukoners' lives, both seen and unseen. As Parks Canada's historian for the Yukon and western region, David was dedicated to bringing voices and perspectives to the north's historical record that had been overlooked and undervalued. He also brought his wisdom to bear for many students whom he mentored and colleagues with whom he collaborated.

In addition to his influential and highly regarded body of published academic work, David also made it a priority to bring peers in his field together. He always seemed to have a perfectly suited "You know who you should talk to?" at the ready. Upon

retiring from Parks Canada, David lent his considerable talents and experience to assisting First Nations and formalizing and enhancing their heritage efforts. As evidenced by their recent dedication ceremony for a memorial bench honouring his memory, David's work with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation in particular leaves an incredible legacy.

Joy, meanwhile, was known for being an exceedingly kind and fair presence throughout her 30-plus years in public service. She was a model of diligence and compassion. Over the course of her Yukon government career, Joy took on leadership roles with the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, community and correctional services, and the departments of Environment and of Tourism and Culture. People at Tourism and Culture still talk about Joy's arrival in her role of deputy minister. In an effort to understand the operations of the department from the ground up, she worked the front line, greeting travellers at our visitor information centres. These types of stories are a recurring theme in Joy's professional life. Joy was known as much for her aptitude and dignity as for her humility and her kindness.

In much the same fashion as David, Joy's dedication to Yukon and Yukoners went well beyond professional realms. Whether in her role as chair of the Yukon University's Foundation Board, helping organize the 100 Women Who Care fundraising events, through her church, or singing with her choir, Joy sought out opportunities to give back and help to improve her community wherever she could.

Sharing, as they did, their knowledge and their warmth of spirit, Joy Waters and Dave Neufeld touched a great many lives. Mentors, board members, charity organizers, arts patrons, tour guides, neighbours, friends, mother, father, grandparents — their contribution to Yukon and Yukoners is immeasurable. Though their passing represents a tremendous loss, especially given that their deaths were within weeks of each other, their legacy lives on through their family that they raised, the friendships that they forged, the knowledge that they shared, and the many organizations and institutions of which they were a part.

On behalf of Government of Yukon, I extend our heartfelt condolences to their son, Andrew, their daughter, Erin, their grandchildren, and all of the family, friends, and co-workers of Joy Waters and Dave Neufeld. I ask the members of this House to join me today in paying due tribute to these exceptional Yukoners.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** I will be brief in my tribute here today. I knew Joy and Dave as constituents and I also had the opportunity to work with Joy during her work in some of her capacities with the Yukon government. I also had the opportunity over 20 years ago with Dave, who joined us on a boat trip from Lake Laberge to Dawson City.

I enjoyed spending time with both of them and appreciated their work on behalf of the territory. I would just like to extend my sincere condolences to their family and friends on their passing.

*Applause*

**Ms. Hanson:** On behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus, I also join in paying tribute to the lives and the enduring contributions of Joy Waters and David Neufeld. On Friday, I joined with family and friends of David and Joy from around the world for a virtual celebration of life for a couple who touched so many people in Yukon over the past three decades.

It is a testament to the love and respect that so many felt for Joy and David that almost 1,000 views of the service have occurred since Friday. Bev Brazier, the minister of the Whitehorse United Church, set the tone for the service by describing Joy and David's participation in a planning-your-own funeral workshop a few years ago. At the end, Joy had prepared a neat list of goals, hymns, and readings that would serve as a guide for families and friends.

David's was blank with the exception of one word: "storytelling". So, we were privileged to share in a virtual campfire with beautiful renditions of favourite hymns from the Persephone choir that Joy had been such an integral part of. We heard stories both funny and touching of the many river trips, of Joy's love of cooking and of the sharing of those meals and memories, and of David's deep and abiding love for history, of what is to be learned from the rivers and the land they both loved — Yukon.

Anne Leckie reflected that, when Joy was deputy minister of culture, she visited Mayo, and when Chief Simon Mervyn met her, he immediately renamed her "Joyful Waters", a fitting name. In addition to their many contributions to public service in Yukon over the years — Joy with the Yukon government and the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board, and David through his long career with Parks Canada — Joy also served as chair of the Yukon University Foundation and David as an adjunct professor, a member of the Yukon College board of governors.

There is so much more that could be said about their involvement in so many diverse sections of our community. Mr. Speaker, we thank Joy and David's children, Erin and Andrew, and their extended family for continuing with a family tradition of openness and inclusion at this difficult time. Toward the end of the service, the Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre posted a quote from indigenous author Thomas King's Massey Lectures in which he said: "The truth about stories is that's all we are. It's a known fact that stories can be our greatest teachers — when they're well told, when their lessons remain unstated, when we can ponder their many nuances. Stories can be strong enough to make magic."

We are thankful for the enduring magic created and shared by Joy Waters and David Neufeld.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling a legislative return responding to a question from the Member for Copperbelt South during Question Period on November 18.

I also have a legislative return responding to a question during Committee of the Whole from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin on November 23.

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

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### **Bill No. 302: Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act — Introduction and First Reading**

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 302, 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 Bill No. 302, entitled *Act to Amend the Civil Emergency Measures Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 302 agreed to*

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

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports doubling the current medical travel subsidy from \$75 per day to \$150 per day.

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

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### **Yukon Resource Gateway project agreement with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation**

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am pleased today to update this Assembly on the latest Gateway project agreement. The Government of Yukon and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation have reached a project agreement to upgrade three bridges along the Freegold Road.

The project agreement provides funding for Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation to effectively participate in the planning, design, regulatory processes, and construction activities of the project. The Government of Yukon and Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation will work collaboratively to develop and implement a training, employment, and business strategy for this project. The strategy will also enable First Nation citizens to qualify for employment.

All of the Yukon Resource Gateway project agreements are subject to Yukon's assessment and regulatory process that includes public input and consultation with affected First Nations.

This is our second Resource Gateway project agreement with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The first project agreement was for the Carmacks bypass to enhance community



safety. That project is now underway. This new project will also improve infrastructure to support reasonable resource development while providing local employment and training opportunities. The Yukon Resource Gateway project is enhancing the development of Yukon's resource sectors and providing economic opportunities throughout the territory.

The project agreement includes reconstruction or replacement of the Crossing Creek bridge, Bow Creek bridge, and Seymour Creek bridge on the Freegold Road. Project agreements between the Government of Yukon and affected Yukon First Nations are a funding requirement for the Yukon Resource Gateway program.

As I noted, our government has negotiated several project agreements with First Nation governments. In June 2020, the Government of Yukon and the Liard First Nation reached an agreement to upgrade parts of the Robert Campbell Highway. Improvements are proposed for kilometre 114 to 171 on the Robert Campbell Highway between Ross River and Watson Lake.

In March 2020, the Government of Yukon and the Ross River Dena Council reached an agreement in principle for bridge replacement and safety improvements on the North Canol Road and construction resurfacing of kilometre 354.9 to kilometre 414.4 of the Robert Campbell Highway. That is the stretch between Ross River and Faro.

Finally, in January 2020, the Government of Yukon and the Liard First Nation reached an agreement for the first phase of upgrades to the Nahanni Range Road. Phase 1 upgrades include two bridge replacements, one bridge rehabilitation, and improvement to lines of sight.

Including this project announcement today, more than \$185 million has been identified for capital construction costs for existing Gateway projects.

Our government recognizes the value of working with First Nation governments, and we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Hassard:** I am pleased to respond to this ministerial statement on behalf of the Official Opposition. We note that there was also a news release on this from last week. Of course, the timing of the new news release and this ministerial statement is quite notable. The last time that this government did an announcement about the Resource Gateway project was right in the midst of an affected First Nation's chief and council election. In June of this summer, the Liard First Nation was in the final days of their election, and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources announced the signing of the agreement related to the repair and upgrade work on the Robert Campbell Highway.

Unsurprisingly, several candidates took notice and criticized the minister's decision to make such an announcement during the First Nation's election. In fact, the July 1 headline of the *Yukon News* read — and I quote: “Newly-elected Liard First Nation chief accuses YG of interfering with election”.

At the time, the *Yukon News* asked the Liberal Cabinet if they believed that they had interfered in the election, and according to the article they — and I quote: “... did not respond

to questions about whether the Yukon government believed it had interfered with LFN's election.”

We asked the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources this same question last October, and he dodged it, but we can't help but notice that this announcement was made in the final week of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation election. In fact, their election is today.

Following the previous allegations against the government, we asked the government about their policies and protocols related to making announcements during the election of other levels of government. We would ask the minister today to address this in his response. Could the minister explain why the government keeps making announcements during other governments' elections?

As the minister has said, this is the fifth project announced under the program that the Prime Minister announced back in 2017. We know that the government has struggled to deliver on these projects and timelines. It was way back on September 2, 2017, that the Premier participated in a photo opportunity announcing an investment in the Resource Gateway project, and since that time, the Liberals have missed several key milestones for this project.

According to Infrastructure Canada's website, the Yukon Liberal government originally told Canada that the construction of the project was forecasted to begin on June 1, 2018, and to be completed by March 31, 2024. However, the government has amended and significantly delayed this project. According to Infrastructure Canada's website, construction for the project will only begin this month, more than two years late, and the project will now be completed on March 31, 2031 — a whopping seven years late.

In fact, the Infrastructure Canada website says that construction was set to begin on November 16, so hopefully the minister can let us know if the Liberals missed another timeline or not.

So, several years after the Yukon Liberals announced this project to great fanfare, very few dollars of the \$360 million announced back in 2017 have actually been spent. Members of the Yukon mining and construction industry have been waiting patiently for these projects to move forward, and it's not lost on any of them that the government is scrambling to announce these projects on the eve of an election.

**Ms. White:** So, the Yukon NDP are pleased to hear about the upgrade of bridges along the Freegold Road. When we attended a community meeting in Carmacks much earlier this year, the connection to the land and the importance of participation and accessibility to potential projects were discussed. People want to work. They want to work close to home and in jobs that are meaningful, so it's important that citizens have training opportunities for these jobs, and we look forward to learning more about these initiatives in the future.

We are also pleased to hear that the Village of Carmacks and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation are getting closer to their subdivision wish near the Carmacks bypass road. As we all know, housing is of critical need in every community across the territory. Land use plans are an important piece of the

puzzle that were missing throughout most of the territory. Land use plans allow First Nation governments, communities, individuals, industry, conservation groups, and others to highlight their values on Yukon's landscape and for uses to be clearly established for the land. Whenever we visit communities and visit with First Nation governments, the issue of land use planning always comes up, and it came up when we last met with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation in the Village of Carmacks.

I have two questions for the minister: Why does the Yukon government continue to move toward these larger projects in the absence of land use plans, and when might we see a land use planning process start in the Northern Tutchone area?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the members opposite for their responses today. I am very pleased to announce today our fifth project agreement under the Gateway program. Without an agreement with affected First Nations, there is no project. Negotiations with First Nations are essential for projects to proceed. Negotiations take time, Mr. Speaker, and rebuilding trust takes time. In the aftermath of the Peel debacle, rebuilding trust has been job one for this government.

Let's compare this latest agreement to the number of agreements signed by the previous Yukon government. Mr. Speaker, that number was zero. So, five agreements with First Nation governments under our Liberal government and zero agreements under the Yukon Party — nada, donut, goose egg. This should not come as a surprise to anyone who has been paying attention to Yukon politics over the last number of years. One of the defining characteristics of the previous conservative Yukon Party government was its inability — some would say even unwillingness — to work with First Nation governments. We saw that on the Gateway program, on changes to the YESAA contained in Bill S-6, on the Dempster fibre line, and, most significantly, on the Peel land use plan.

It is worth noting, Mr. Speaker, that the two ministers leading the way on the Peel plan were the candidates who placed first, Currie Dixon, and second, the Member for Lake Laberge, in the recent Yukon Party leadership race. That approach landed Yukon in the Supreme Court of Canada.

As I noted earlier, Mr. Speaker, it is also worth noting that the lingering resentment and distrust from that unnecessary legal battle was one of the impediments that needed to be overcome to make Gateway happen.

The Yukon Party hasn't changed its approach to First Nation relations since then. They elected the architect of the Peel plan as their leader — Currie Dixon. Their approach was to meet First Nation governments in front of a judge. Our approach is to meet First Nations at the Yukon Forum and at the negotiating table. The agreement that I am outlining today will lead to upgrades of three bridges along the Freegold Road. It includes the reconstruction and replacement of the Crossing Creek bridge, Bow Creek bridge, and Seymour Creek bridge. The project agreement provides funding for Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation to effectively participate in the planning, design, regulatory processes, and construction activities of the project.

This is our second Resource Gateway project agreement with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The first project agreement was for the Carmacks bypass to enhance community safety. That project is now underway, and I will have an update on that project soon.

As I noted, project agreements between the Government of Yukon and affected First Nations are a funding requirement for the Yukon Resource Gateway program. Without these in place, there is no Gateway project. Again, that is why so little happened in the past under previous governments.

As I noted, our government has negotiated several project agreements with First Nation governments, including this project announced today. More than \$185 million has been identified for capital construction costs for existing Gateway projects.

This is important work, Mr. Speaker. It is going to put our citizens — all of our citizens — to work. Gateway is going to improve our road network for our citizens — all of our citizens, including residents of Ross River, who have been at the end of a gravel road for decades. It is going to improve the economy for our citizens — all of our citizens, Mr. Speaker. Our government recognizes the value of working with First Nation governments, and we will continue to do so.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Yukon Liberal Party support for alcoholic beverage industry

**Mr. Hassard:** During the pandemic, one of the hardest hit sectors of our economy has been bars and restaurants, yet when we proposed a simple tax measure to give this sector a boost in these difficult times, the Liberals voted it down. In explaining why they were voting against our motion, a Liberal representative said — and I'll quote: "Keep in mind the businesses that we are talking about here."

Again — quote: "Alcohol is a psychoactive, mind-altering drug."

Again — quote: "My definition of a drug dealer is somebody who sells a psychoactive, mind-altering drug, knowing that it can cause harm to people, for profit."

Does the Premier agree with the comments from a member of his Liberal team that bars and restaurants in Yukon should be thought of as drug dealers?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First of all, I just want to touch on the fact that there have been a number of different tools that we have used to support businesses during this period of time around COVID and that have been shared with and have supported many different parts of the industry — part of that, of course, being restaurants and bars and such.

Again, the Yukon business relief program provided to a number of bars and restaurants — I know that we have Economic Development debate later this afternoon. We will have a really good opportunity to get into some of those sectors. Probably some of the biggest supports and percentage of supports have really gone into the hospitality and restaurant sector.

Also, our paid sick leave rebates were offered as well to bars and restaurants — again, another piece of important support. As well, our Yukon essential workers program, which we just extended, also was offered up.

So, I think that it is important to illustrate that, throughout this pandemic, we have stood by all sectors of our economy, and that being, of course, bars and restaurants, as well as micro breweries and others. I think that we have demonstrated our support there and understand that it is a vibrant and important part of our economy.

**Mr. Hassard:** It is also important to note that this isn't about the government's relief programs. This is about a Yukon Party motion and the Liberals' response to that motion. In speaking further about why the Liberals were voting against this support for bars and restaurants, the Liberal Party representative launched into a tirade against bars and restaurants, implying that they are not socially responsible and are selling drugs and alcohol to children. In fact, when speaking about bars and restaurants in the territory, he said — and I will quote again: "... there is a massive social responsibility on these people who are selling these drugs to our children." Not a single other Liberal member spoke out against these comments.

So, does the Premier agree with the member of his Liberal team that these hard-working businesses in the Yukon hospitality sector are selling drugs to children, and will the Premier disavow these disparaging comments?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** What I can speak to on this, from a standpoint of the role that these entities play within our economy, is that — first of all, the Leader of the Official Opposition is speaking to comments that were made during private members' day.

Private members' day does give an opportunity for all members in the House to speak to — usually on things that they are very passionate about. I think it's important to understand that my colleague spoke from his heart about a number of things that mean a lot to him. He's passionate about it. The communities that he represents have been affected by alcohol. He shared, I believe, his own personal prerogative on it, and I will stand here and say that I support my colleague on his personal comments. I think that's what we should be able to do. We should be able to walk in here and share that during private members' day. I can hear from across the way — I've been in that particular industry. I have many friends who work in that industry. I've owned businesses in that industry. I've paid my rent through that industry, and I support that industry. That doesn't mean that I'm not going to be able to stand here and not still respect my colleague for being able to stand up and say what he means and how he feels.

**Mr. Hassard:** I'll remind the minister that he had every opportunity to stand in this Legislature and speak against this motion and actually show his support for the industry, but he chose not to. Yet in response to our proposal to support bars and restaurants, the Liberal Party representative suggested that brewers and distillers in the Yukon were akin to big drug companies and were profiting from harming Yukon society. He said that brewers and distillers don't take social responsibility

seriously. In fact, when speaking about bars, restaurants, and brewers in the territory, he said that the Yukon Party was — and I quote: "... more concerned with helping the drug dealers make money by killing their fellow Canadians..."

Does the Premier agree with this comment made by the member of the Liberal team that these hard-working businesses are making money by killing Canadians? If not, will he disavow these disparaging comments?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The member opposite is correct. On that particular day, I did not stand up to speak on that topic. What I did do is speak, on phone call after phone call, to people who work in that industry. When they called me — and these are individuals who own operations — in those particular times, I did explain the context of what was said and explained the context of what had happened.

In most cases, after those conversations, the individuals who are owners and who make their livelihood in this industry had a different prerogative based on that — maybe what they had heard from members from the Yukon Party who might have reached out or those who work with the Yukon Party who were quick to go out — but I can tell you that, when there was an opportunity to speak to those individuals and explain the context, they were much more understanding of the comments that were made. I think that this could be spun for days and days. It can be turned and spun, but the reality is that it is a challenge in the Yukon. We should all be aware of that.

The comments that were made were tough comments. I can say that, in my prerogative as Minister of Economic Development, I respect the people who work in that sector. I also respect the ability for somebody to come in here on private members' day and speak from the heart.

#### **Question re: ATAC Resources tote road project**

**Mr. Kent:** ATAC Resources has spent over \$100 million in the past 13 years on their project north of Keno City. In May 2017, the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board issued a favourable recommendation for the tote road to ATAC Resources' exploration project. On March 5, 2018, almost a year later, the road was conditionally approved based on the completion of a sub-regional land use plan by March of this year. At the time, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources stated — and I quote: "Absolutely, this is a new way of doing business. This is actually how you get business done."

However, on Friday, ATAC Resources received notification that the Liberal government has denied their application. Unfortunately, it seems like this new way of doing business is actually just a new way for the Liberals to shut business down. Can the minister tell us why, after this project received a positive recommendation from YESAB, he strung them along for over three years just to reject them?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First, to answer the question, I want to congratulate Alexco Resources. We had an opportunity on Friday, I know, to support — so, when we talk about businesses shutting down — they just opened, actually. That would be the third mine in this mandate that has opened. It is a little bit of a

different situation than what we found ourselves in when we arrived here.

Concerning the proposal application from ATAC Resources, there was a decision that was made by the chief mining officer of lands. The company, first of all, did not demonstrate sufficiently in its application that significant adverse environmental and socio-economic effects identified in the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board evaluation would be appropriately mitigated. That is the first item. Secondly, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun identified a number of significant adverse impacts that may occur on its treaty rights, including impacts to hunting, fishing, trapping, and its use of the area for traditional pursuits if the project was to proceed at this time. So, the Government of Yukon agreed with these concerns and determined that the application did not appropriately or sufficiently indicate how these impacts would be mitigated.

**Mr. Kent:** So, in a November 2 letter, ATAC Resources pointed out numerous instances where the Liberal government and this minister have missed every single deadline associated with the project. In that letter, they state that the 42-day timeline set forth under section 9.3 of the Yukon *Quartz Mining Land Use Regulation* formally expired at the end of July. Since missing that deadline, the company has noted — and I will quote: “... every timeline provided to date has passed without resolution.”

It is not lost on the mining industry that this minister is all talk and no action and has been sitting on this decision for months. He waited until after the annual geoscience conference to notify the company.

So, did the minister think that holding off on this decision until after geoscience would shelter him and his government from criticism?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No, upon signing up for the job, I understood that lots of criticism comes with it — no issue there.

What I will say is that a decision was made inside the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — a professional group of individuals who work there. The person who is asking me these questions from Copperbelt South was a former minister and understands the professionalism that is there and the ability of the team that is there to analyze applications. That is what they have done.

Concerning consultation, I know that one of the things that has been a challenge throughout the fall of this year and in the spring is ensuring that you meet your consultation obligations within a COVID reality. We have strived in every instance to do that, and I will leave it at that. There essentially have been a lot of pressures for all departments to be able to still meet those obligations when there are concerns and anxieties about people coming to communities and maybe moving that to a virtual format.

**Mr. Kent:** So, the Liberals have told us that their new way of doing business is actually good for the mining industry. The minister even said that this is how you get business done. Well, here is what the CEO of one of Yukon’s leading mining companies said this morning in a news release — and I quote: “We are extremely disappointed with, and surprised by this

decision...” Then he goes on to say — and I will quote again: “If this road can't be permitted following a positive environmental and socio-economic assessment decision and years of governmental encouragement to invest in the project, then you have to wonder if Yukon is in fact open for business.”

So, the Liberals have strung this company along. They have failed to follow their own rules and timelines, and now they are sending the signal to the mining industry that the Yukon is not open for business.

Does the minister think that this new way of doing business has improved certainty for investment in the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I think it’s important to make a note that the proponent that has applied for this application, which has been noted here, does have the ability to improve their application and apply for this. This is not a full stop on this. They do have that opportunity.

But what I will say is that I appreciate the comments that have been reflected by the member opposite, but I also was in a meeting this morning with a CEO of another mining company. What they said to me and the deputy minister was that, out of their complete budget for next year — and they have operations that are throughout the United States, including areas that have a lot of mining investment in the southern US — if they had a place to spend their money between the US, British Columbia, and Yukon, they would spend it in Yukon. In the Yukon, they would spend it in the Mayo area.

You know what — I appreciate the comment, but there are other CEOs who feel differently about this. We encourage them to invest. We also encourage them to sit down with First Nations in the traditional territories where they work, build healthy, good relationships — that is something we’ve said from the start. You have to be ensured that there’s a good balanced approach here.

#### Question re: Yukon Liberal Party donations

**Ms. White:** Last week, after months of pressure, the Liberals released a statement about the \$100,000 in anonymous donations that they received last year. Unfortunately, the statement contained no information about who the donors are, and all that the public has learned is that the Liberals brought in \$47,000 at a hockey game in a suite at Rogers Arena in Vancouver. Under Yukon’s laws, a corporation has to declare publicly when they go so far as meeting or even just calling the Premier, yet that same corporation can donate thousands of dollars to the Liberals completely anonymously. Yukoners understand that this makes no sense, although the Premier will say that he respected the law, because he said it before.

Why is the Premier satisfied with the bare minimum when it comes to transparency, and will he finally disclose who gave his party \$100,000 in anonymous donations?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, again, we’re working within the rules of fundraising. I do know that the treasurer and the party did have a conversation with Elections Yukon and provided information to them as well. At that point, it was determined again — again — that there’s no issue here. We’re well within the rules of fundraising. We did have a very successful year in fundraising. Again, the \$100,000 is not from

one particular person, and it also doesn't include all of the costs to put on these events as well. I wish it was a \$100,000 donation — or donations, plural — but that's just not the case.

At the same time, our treasurer has done the due diligence to double back and to ask those questions and to just make sure that all of the information that was shared was enough for the current rules and found again — even providing more information — that we're well within the current guidelines for fundraising.

**Ms. White:** So, the Premier keeps on saying that he has played within the rules. Well, we better hope so, but it doesn't make it ethical.

Let me be clear: I'm not asking if what the Liberals did is within the rules; I'm asking the Premier if he thinks what was done is moral. I'm asking the Premier if he thinks receiving \$100,000 from anonymous sources is open and transparent. The Liberals found a loophole in the law that allows them to hide who their donors are. They don't have to use that loophole, but they're choosing to, and that's the issue.

Leadership is about doing what's right, not just the bare minimum. So, will the Premier show leadership and disclose who gave \$100,000 in anonymous donations to his party?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** No loopholes — again, we did everything within the current rules. I hear the Yukon Party laughing. They used very similar abilities as well when they were in government to collect money. Again, Mr. Speaker, we're doing everything within the rules. This is not a loophole. This is using the current rules of fundraising. I'm very happy that we had a very successful couple of years in fundraising. The \$100,000 is not from an individual. It's from a few different events — for one — and it also doesn't include all of the costs that go into making those events happen.

The members opposite — the NDP — can call it a loophole. It is not.

**Ms. White:** I know that the Premier doesn't like talking about his anonymous donors, and we understand why. The lack of transparency that this shows doesn't look good on the government. It makes people wonder what they have to hide and who they're really working for.

In the last election, the Liberals received a \$50,000 donation from a single mining company. In this last year, they received a \$12,000 fishing trip. It doesn't look good, but at least these donations are public. Accepting \$100,000 in anonymous donations is even more questionable.

In Yukon, donations over \$250 are supposed to be public. The Liberals found a loophole by inviting their donors to a fundraiser in a suite at Rogers Arena in Vancouver. Will the Premier commit to stop using the loophole that allows him to hide the identity of corporations or people who donate over \$250 to his party?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** What I will do at this point is to thank folks and individuals who have shown their support to all three political parties. It's extremely important that all political parties have the ability to get the message out there and to communicate to voters what their campaigns are, what their platforms are, and what the differences are between those three parties.

The Yukon NDP will have you believe that there is some kind of loophole. No, we're absolutely within the current rules.

I know that, in previous years, the NDP relied on federal union support. That tap has dried out. I do know as well that they've had events outside of Yukon — making support for people to support their party outside of the Yukon.

But again, we all have our methods in which we are going to fundraise. We're all doing it within the rules, and I encourage folks, if you want to support political parties, to get out there and show your support with volunteer work. If you can, make a donation. That would be great as well.

But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, it's extremely important that all political parties have the wherewithal and the ability to get the messages out to make sure that Yukoners have informed decisions when it comes time for elections.

### **Question re: Alaska Highway corridor upgrades**

**Ms. Hanson:** On the Let's Talk Hillcrest website, there's a handy section with frequently asked questions. One of those questions asked how the road can be safer for pedestrians and bikers when the highway is being widened. The response from the government is to say that two traffic lights will be in place, ensuring that pedestrians and bicyclists can stop traffic to cross safely.

These lights were also mentioned in a May press release and in the ministerial statement from October 14. There has even been activity around the traffic lights, but we have yet to see them in action.

Can the minister explain how the highway can be safe for pedestrians and bikers when the government's sole safety feature isn't working?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm happy to address the question on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon. I know that this is an issue of great importance to members of Hillcrest and highway travellers from around the country and around the territory.

Mr. Speaker, we have installed the traffic lights in Hillcrest. Those traffic lights are currently rescheduled to be programmed last week. With the recent second wave of COVID hitting the territory and the restrictions that the chief medical officer of health has recommended that we put in place in the territory, the national company that actually does the programming for those lights — and it is the one company that we use and the City of Whitehorse has used it as well — is unwilling to come to the territory. They have said explicitly that they will not come during this second wave of COVID.

Late last week, I talked to the Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works for an update. We are working very closely with that company to alleviate their fears and work — maybe there's remote programming we can do. We're looking at solutions because we want those traffic lights operational, and we're working with the company down south to make that happen.

**Ms. Hanson:** So, the story gets more interesting. This was announced; these lights would be ready in May; they would be ready in October. Then, at the end of November, the minister says, "Oh, they were going to be installed last week." The minister and his Minister responsible for CEMA have also told

this House that there are plans and there are opportunities for alternative isolation plans. So, what we see here, Mr. Speaker, is that the sole safety feature of the highway project wasn't prioritized earlier, and what matters now is ensuring that folks have a safe way to cross the highway as soon as possible. It is dark outside, visibility is decreasing, and signage is being buried under the snow. In wintertime, crossing the highway is dangerous. I drove there last night and it is black at that corner.

Can the minister say when and how he is going to make that highway safe for pedestrians and bikers as a contingency while he is waiting for this other alternative that he has suddenly announced today?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have answered the question this afternoon, and I don't think that the member opposite — the traffic lights exist. We have them in place. They have been installed. The problem is the fact that the electronics need to be programmed, and the company that both the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon government rely on to get that programming done is not willing to come to the territory after the bubble burst with BC.

Now, I understand that there are ways that you can work in the territory that are safe. The company itself has taken the decision not come to the territory. We are working with that company to alleviate their fears and come up with alternatives. They have not yet made an alternative isolation submission to my colleague, the Minister for Community Services. We are currently working with that company to find out what the impediments are and what the fears of that company are. Once we have dealt with those fears, I am sure that they will come north and actually program the lights.

I am well aware of the commitments that we made, and we had every intention of fulfilling them last week, but the collapse of the bubble with BC has impeded our ability to get those lights programmed. We are working very hard with that company, at my direction, to make sure that happens.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for that explanation with respect to traffic lights. We have all seen those traffic lights wrapped in black plastic over the last number of weeks.

The other issue, as I mentioned in my question, is signage. Without proper signage, the highway near Hillcrest isn't only dangerous for pedestrians and bikers, it is also dangerous for vehicles. Signs are buried in snow, one pedestrian crossing sign has gone missing, and snow is piling up at the crossroads near the airport, creating blind corners.

Despite a wider highway, when the lines are being covered by ice and snow, folks will stick to what they know. If vehicles continue to speed through this intersection of the highway, it's only a matter of time before someone gets seriously hurt. The highway at Hillcrest is dangerous, and it looks like nothing has been done.

Will the minister commit to increasing signage — at least commit to increase signage while we're waiting for those lights to be put up?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm a bit puzzled at the member opposite's assertion that it looks as if nothing has been done. I have driven that highway several times and continue to, and I can see the profound difference in the road that runs along the

Alaska Highway in front of Hillcrest and Valleyview and whatnot. There's a profound change there, Mr. Speaker.

The problem is that we have installed lights — the light standards are up there — and they are dark because they have not yet been programmed. I have told the member opposite this afternoon that I am well aware of the concerns of the residents of Hillcrest. I know that my colleague, the Member for Mountainview, has also been in touch with her constituents on this matter. I take this seriously. I am working with the company to make sure that those lights are programmed properly. There's fear there. I don't know what's driving that fear, and we're working with the company to alleviate it to make sure that those lights get programmed so that the vast safety improvements that we've made on that highway in front of Hillcrest and Valleyview — or this next level of safety is put in place.

I do not take the members opposite's assertion that this is unsafe. The road through Hillcrest and Valleyview has been made vastly more safe by the work of Highways and Public Works this last summer.

#### Question re: COVID-19 vaccine

**Ms. McLeod:** Last week, national media reported that the federal government announced that they are expecting enough of the COVID-19 vaccine for three million Canadians to be vaccinated in the first three months of 2021. On a per capita basis, this means that only 3,300 Yukoners will be able to get vaccinated before April.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us what assurances the government has that the federal government will give Yukon access to more than that?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I'll start — and I'm sure my colleagues would like to join as well in second and third answers. But last week, we had a very frank discussion with our fellow premiers and the Prime Minister about the national approach to the vaccine delivery. We discussed the importance of waiting for regulatory approval to be given out for the vaccines, as well as providing additional information to Canadians as it becomes available.

Many details still need to be finalized, including the number of doses that will be available and the timelines for rolling out the vaccine across Canada once that vaccine — or vaccines — are approved.

Our team is definitely working very closely with all jurisdictions — federal, provincial, and territorial colleagues — to ensure a coordinated approach as we work toward the approved candidate vaccines. In my conversations on the federal level when talking at the First Ministers' meetings or the Council of the Federation, we are reiterating on a very regular basis the importance of equitable distribution but also recognizing the importance of rural and urban considerations for the vaccine as well.

We have all the assurances that an equitable distribution will be made right across Canada.

**Ms. McLeod:** According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people aged 50 to 64 are 30 times more likely to die from COVID-19. This risk increases

to 220 times more likely for ages 75 to 84. According to the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, there are 14,578 Yukoners above the age of 50. If the vaccine is distributed on a per capita basis, that means that only 3,300 Yukoners will get access to it in the first quarter of 2021, which only accounts for 23 percent of that risk age group. Vaccine distribution and rollout is the responsibility of the territorial government.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us how the Government of Yukon will prioritize and roll out the vaccine?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, to elaborate a little bit further on what the member opposite talks about as far as distribution, the six million vaccines that were announced by federal Minister LeBlanc and his team was six million doses for three million people; however, that was just the very first. The conversation that the federal government has been saying on the national news is that this will start in January and will increase from there, so it's not the be-all and end-all when it comes to vaccines; there will be more after that.

Again, I spoke about, on our side, the conversations that we have been having in several forums. We have also been speaking at, as I said, First Ministers' meetings and public health and emergency measures tables. We have been forming new relationships to make sure that we have the supply chains needed and the supply lines being built. Fair and equitable access to the vaccine is a key priority for this government in all of these conversations. This includes getting vaccines out to key populations that are high risk.

The member opposite spoke about elder populations — absolutely. Add into that, as well, long-term care residents, immunocompromised individuals, health care workers, indigenous, remote, and northern communities — that is the voice that Yukon brings to the national stage at all of these tables. We are working very closely with all of our partners in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, as well, to ensure that northern circumstances are considered, and we are extremely vocal at these tables.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, last week, the Prime Minister told premiers that they are expecting two-thirds of the initial vaccine that Canada has access to, to be the Pfizer vaccine. This vaccine must be stored at minus 70 degrees Celsius. Last week, we asked the Minister of Health and Social Services several questions about preparation for this vaccine that she has refused to answer.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us if her department has done an assessment of whether we have the appropriate equipment to store this vaccine? Is the Department of Health and Social Services looking at acquiring extreme cold storage options?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I can say is that I know that we are coordinating this conversation with Joint Task Force North. I know that, last week, one of my assistant deputy ministers and the head of emergency response were on calls with General Carpentier to discuss the logistics around this rollout, including such things as making sure that the vaccine is kept at a safe temperature, how to get it into our physical communities, and how to work to deal with the prioritization

— to deal with the most vulnerable first. So, there is a coordinated effort being put in place. I don't have an answer today specifically on whether all of those logistics are dealt with, but I do know that they are being addressed as we speak. Of course, it is dependent on the type of vaccine and the logistics will be based from that.

What I can say for all the members of this House and to you, Mr. Speaker, is that this work is being developed now — how to make sure that we keep Yukoners safe through the pandemic and as we roll out the vaccine.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### **Bill No. 17: *Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)* — Third Reading**

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 17, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 17, entitled *Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 17, entitled *Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members of this Assembly for their contributions to the debate on this bill. I'll now just take a few moments to revisit the amendments we are proposing in Bill No. 17, *Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)*.

As mentioned in my earlier remarks and during the debate, the *Enduring Power of Attorney Act* has not been amended since it was first passed 25 years ago. The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring that our legislation keeps up with the changing realities of Yukon, and these provisions will ensure that safeguards are in place to protect Yukoners with enduring powers of attorney.

Enduring power of attorney documents are a vital option for Yukoners faced with the prospect that they may become incapacitated and unable to manage their own affairs. We know that enduring powers of attorney can be a useful alternative to a court-ordered guardianship, but they can also make a person vulnerable to financial abuse, misuse, or fraud.

The proposed amendments include strong, protective measures to prevent and stop financial abuse. Mr. Speaker, in addition, the proposed amendments are designed to improve accessibility by providing a means for Yukoners to make a valid enduring power of attorney without having to obtain the services of a lawyer.

During engagement which was completed in the spring of 2020, feedback was received on what we should include in the amendments. The proposed amendments take into consideration what we heard from those respondents. In

addition, the proposed amendments are based on recommendations from the Uniform Law Conference of Canada and align our legislation with other jurisdictions in Canada.

The proposed amendments are designed to follow three general themes: There are changes to formal requirements and processes for making an EPA, or enduring power of attorney; there are increased protections against financial abuse or improper use by attorneys or those named to take care of someone else's affairs; and there is clarification of the attorney's roles, responsibilities, duties, and liabilities. Again, by "attorney", I mean the person who is indicated to make decisions on behalf of another.

The Government of Yukon is pleased to bring forward these amendments which will modernize enduring power of attorney legislation in the territory and mirrors legislation in other jurisdictions across the country.

We know that passing this legislation is a progressive step forward — one that is necessary to provide safeguards for Yukoners who have enduring powers of attorney and which fulfills our obligation to ensure that Yukon legislation is inclusive and accessible.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments will enable us to ensure that enduring power of attorney legislation here in the territory meets the needs of today's Yukoners and protects their interests.

In conclusion, I recommend and urge Members of this Legislative Assembly to support the passing of Bill No. 17 or the *Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)*. I will take this opportunity to thank all those, particularly at the Department of Justice, who worked on this matter to bring it forward and draft the documents so that we might have this modernization move forward and debate it here in the Legislative Assembly.

I would also like to thank all those Yukoners who participated in the engagement when that was occurring previous to this bill coming forward. Their opinions and interest certainly made Bill No. 17 responsive to the needs expressed by Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** The amendments in this legislation are largely in the nature of housekeeping. We have discussed them previously in the Assembly. At this point in time, we will be supporting the bill proceeding forward.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for her remarks this afternoon with respect to Bill No. 17, the *Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)*.

I think that, as we saw during the October 29 second reading debate of this Bill No. 17, these amendments provide clarity and that the EPA deals with property and legal matters only and finances and property. I say that because oftentimes — and it certainly was evinced in debate during questioning that there can be, or has been, in the public sometimes a confusion about what's covered under an EPA and what's covered under an advance directive. I thank the minister for setting on the record clarity with respect to that.

One of the things that I think is really important about the amendments to the *Enduring Power of Attorney Act* and the amendments that are proposed in Bill No. 17 is that there is going to be a revised standardized form that, as the minister had indicated during that second reading debate, will be developed as regulations are developed. This is important because this is the form that will make it clear how an EPA — an enduring power of attorney — can be done without a lawyer. If I or anyone in this House wants to complete an EPA — an enduring power of attorney — without a lawyer, I or we will be required to use that standardized form that will be developed for this purpose. That really reinforces, as I have said numerous times in this House before, the importance of getting those regulations done as soon as possible. A person is granting significant power and authority when they sign an enduring power of attorney.

In her closing comments, I hope that the minister can give this House a sense of when we might anticipate seeing the regulations that will give effect to Bill No. 17.

Mr. Speaker, we will, of course, be supporting Bill No. 17.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard on third reading of Bill No. 17?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the comments from my colleagues across the way in relation to Bill No. 17. I am afraid I don't agree with the Member for Lake Laberge that these are largely housekeeping amendments. In fact, they are not technical or housekeeping amendments. Bill No. 17 contains significant and important progress for Yukoners, including — as mentioned by the Member for Whitehorse Centre — the ability for individuals to make enduring powers of attorney or sign documents for enduring powers of attorney that don't require legal advice or sanction. That is an important opportunity going forward.

There are also significant changes that include protections for individuals from potential fraud and other opportunities in Bill No. 17 that will modernize the *Enduring Power of Attorney Act* to the benefit of Yukoners. I thank them for their comments. I appreciate that the regulations — I'm afraid I don't have my note with respect to when that might be the case. I know we discussed that in Committee of the Whole, but I take the Member for Whitehorse Centre's point that the regulations are critically important. I don't remember them being terribly complex, although they will include the form, as noted, and that will be an important piece for Yukoners. Again, regulations — as soon as possible so that this might proceed to the benefit of Yukon citizens.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

**Division**

**Speaker:** Division has been called.



*Bells*

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.  
*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 17 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 17 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 (Mr. Hutton):** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

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

**Department of Economic Development**

**Chair:** Is there any general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Chair, I would first like to welcome the officials to the Legislative Assembly today. The deputy minister is here — Mr. Justin Ferbey — as well as the acting director of Finance, Beth Fricke, who is with us as well. Both individuals, as the Assembly would know, played critical roles over the spring and summer, and have continued to do so, dealing with what has become a very active time for the Department of Economic Development. They have done a job that all Yukoners should be proud of on the work they have done to date, and I know they will continue to deliver with that passion and understanding of the responsibility that they have in these very important roles.

Mr. Chair and Hon. Members, as the Minister of Economic Development, I rise today to introduce the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for the 2020-21 fiscal year.

Mr. Chair, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Yukon has undertaken unprecedented steps and implemented rapid responses to support Yukon's economy. As we step cautiously through recovery, we are committed to supporting our residents, businesses, and communities through this global crisis. The path to recovery is not one size fits all. It looks different from household to household, business to business, and sector to sector. I think that it is important to speak frankly about this reality and the complexity of it.

For some businesses, their operations were not impacted at all by the pandemic. For other businesses, the pandemic resulted in an unexpected windfall with unprecedented increases in activity, sales, and revenue. Other businesses have suffered a complete and utter loss of business activity, and there is the whole spectrum in between.

Our tourism sector, as the Minister of Tourism and Culture has spoken to, is one of the hardest hit with the global responses and movement of the pandemic absolutely impacting us here on a local level. It is through the supplementary budget that we will see the economic response to COVID-19 and the supports that have been put in place through the Department of Economic Development, and, of course, all increases are a direct result of the COVID-19 response supports.

The Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program, which we've touched on here — to date, we're looking at about \$4.3 million that has been allocated to that. The Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program was introduced this past spring to provide lower income essential workers with a wage subsidy of up to \$4 an hour to a maximum of \$20 an hour for up to 16 weeks. This program is delivered in partnership with the Government of Canada, which allows the program design to be done at the territorial level in order to best meet our specific needs here in Yukon. The program is focused on services identified as critical or essential in the guidelines for the delivery of critical, essential, and other services. Our essential workers have continued to offer the services and goods that Yukoners need on a day-to-day basis.

The Assembly and all Yukoners have recognized the work that those folks have done under a tremendous amount of stress. There was a point when people were not moving. They were there, continuing to make sure that we were supporting and that folks had what they needed.

Again, an increase of \$4,336,000 is identified for the Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program within the supplementary budget.

Paid sick leave program — the Department of Economic Development quickly identified the need for paid sick leave to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The paid sick leave program allows workers or self-employed Yukoners who are without sick leave to stay at home if they are sick and required to self-isolate for 14 days and still meet their basic financial needs. The program was part of the stimulus package that was announced on March 16. The dollars identified for this are \$1.2 million. The program has been extended to March 31, 2021, as well, in response to the ongoing needs for Yukoners to self-isolate. We have seen over the last couple of weeks that a program like this is so important. So, again, there is \$1.2 million to continue support for this program.

In the spring, we announced that Yukon businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic would be supported with assistance to cover fixed business costs. The business relief program has been the backbone of our economic supports, giving businesses grants to cover their fixed costs. These costs include rent, utilities, and business insurance — just to name a few. This program was a lifeline and gave Yukon businesses the support needed to manage through this difficult time. While some businesses have been able to rebound and no longer require support, others are still experiencing hardship.

The Department of Economic Development worked with industry organizations and local businesses to help Yukon businesses and workers impacted by the pandemic, and this important work continues through the extension of this program. Through this supplementary budget, we are allocating \$12,024,000 to support this program.

As well, our adaptive pandemic response — we are looking at \$2 million there. One of the fundamental realities of the pandemic is the necessity to plan for the unexpected. This is particularly true with elements of our economy and our risk and result. Again, dollars have been put aside to ensure that we can deal — as we see these pressures mount, it gives us an opportunity to be able to pivot if necessary — of course, all the while, analyzing our programs to ensure that the programs that we have in place are — we're not seeing gaps — working hand in hand with Tourism and Culture.

As well, there is another item in this budget; it is for \$100,000. This is the last item. It is just a quick one, and it falls more into the realm of a housekeeping piece. There was \$100,000 in the 2020-21 main estimates in flow-through funding for the Canada-Yukon business service centre. These funds are now being paid directly by CanNor to Yukonstruct. Again, there was a change to our books.

To summarize, we are putting forward an increase of a total of \$19,460,000 in operation and maintenance for the Department of Economic Development. This is a very

significant increase and it probably has not been seen before, based on where we usually are for the mains. These funds are singularly dedicated to directly support our economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The work that the department undertakes using these funds will continue to pave our path to recovery during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we will continue to adapt and respond as the impact on Yukon evolves. I would also like to thank the department for their efforts as well as the Yukon Business Advisory Council, which really helped and advised us to structure many of these programs, again, working directly with business and the local chambers in their commitment to supporting Yukon's economy.

I encourage Yukoners again to take every opportunity that they can to shop locally. It's so important as we go into the month of December. Please — if there was ever a time, this is it. Again, it will take a concerted effort on all our parts to support our local economy and see this through.

With that, I will leave it to my colleagues for questions, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Chair, I want to begin by thanking the minister for his opening remarks and thanking the officials from the department for being here today. I also want to thank the officials from the department who have been working throughout this year implementing many of the business relief programs on behalf of the Yukon government.

I know that many of them have had a lot of new material, programs, and responsibilities thrust right onto their desks. We have been in touch with a lot of the local businesses about their interactions with the department. I want to note that the majority of the businesses we hear from all note that the officials genuinely seem like they are trying to help and are doing the best they can to ensure that local companies can access all of these supports. I want to note for those officials in the department that we understand that it has been a challenging year and we really do want to thank them. If the department heads can pass that on — that they have made considerable effort and we thank them and commend them for that.

When we have debated budgets of the department, I typically like to begin by asking about the adjustments that the departments have had to make with regard to COVID-19. Just at a very high level, can the minister begin by telling us a bit about how the staff in the department have adjusted to the pandemic? How many Economic Development staff are working from home? Has that changed throughout the year, and how many staff are currently in the building on Alexander Street?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think it should be noted that one of the things that I know the deputy minister — upon taking on this role and is in full agreement with — is trying to ensure that individuals in particular roles — mostly in the advisors' roles — do have the opportunity to be out of the office before COVID started — getting out there and interacting with the business community, understanding the needs of the business community. I think that's key.

Along those lines, as well — I know, in all staff meetings that I've had an opportunity to attend, I have always — through

the work of the deputy minister — just a challenge to see if individuals within the department could work in different ways. I think that what many people have found is that the resistance to that concept — I'm not saying the department, but just generally I think within society — the resistance to feeling that people could work in an effective way or that you were getting sort of the most out of your colleagues. That was something still to be questioned, I think. What we've seen since March is a government continuing to operate, a government that has risen to the occasion week after week, and in many cases, individuals were doing that from home. That adds to the whole conversation about what future work looks like. We're seeing that right from the financial industry across the country through to, you name it — and there is going to be an industry that has really pivoted quickly in understanding what the needs of their employees are.

Within the department, most folks are there every day. We have about 10 people right now who are rotating between being in the office and being at home. I think, as the year has gone by or as we have moved through 2020, people have come back. I don't have exact stats of what the incremental changes were, but that's where we are today. I think folks have been very effective in the work they have done.

**Mr. Istchenko:** In my question, I also just asked about how the staff in the department have adjusted to the pandemic, and it sounds like 10 of the staff are rotating from home. I was just hoping that maybe the minister would just elaborate a little bit more on the safety protocols at the office and stuff like that.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Chair, there has been orientation with individuals on staff concerning the appropriate protocols, the "safe six", ensuring that people are following the most appropriate protocols to keep people safe.

It was just shared with me — one-way hallways, proper spacing, the wearing of masks. All of those different items are being done.

Also, each branch has taken on other responsibilities. Of course, there is cleaning that's done on a regular basis, but also, over and above that, the department has been very prudent in making sure that areas that are used a lot — they take turns making sure that those areas are clean and are safe to use. Overall, concerning what the feeling is from staff, what has been shared is that, going into this second wave, appropriately, there is some anxiety around that. I know that the folks within the senior team as well as human resources are just monitoring to make sure that people are feeling comfortable, and if they need accommodations put in place, they can have that work done.

Overall, I think that's generally in every industry right now. In our community, we've seen that over the last couple of weeks. As there have been more COVID cases, there's a greater anxiety around this — whereas other jurisdictions have been experiencing things in a different way than we have here.

I hope that answers the question and gives a sense of what is happening in the department.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Yes, thank you for the answer from the minister.

I want to turn to the specifics of the budget before us relative to the amount voted today — basically the biggest increase in this appropriation. This is related to the expenditure of the Yukon COVID response.

In the briefing, officials provided a bit of a breakdown. The first component of the \$19.56 million was related to the Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program, which is approximately \$4.3 million. This is a program that was recently extended. Then there is the paid sick leave program, the business relief program, and a final line of what the government called "COVID-19 impacts".

Before I dig into each program, I would just like the minister to discuss a bit about the speed at which these programs came in. I'm just wondering what sort of policy development and due diligence was done to develop these programs. Were the department officials offered new training to deliver these programs? Of course, in many cases, the staff who are delivering these programs are trained on the delivery of different programs. Was any additional support put in place to the existing staff?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'm going to speak sort of broadly around the creation of programs. To answer quickly off the top, the deputy minister was sharing that there were multiple staff trainings on the delivery of programs. That there was work that was done was just shared with me.

We have a group of individuals who are working in the department — and again, what an exceptional job they did. They had a very short period of time to either tweak existing programs or build out programs and then deliver them. They're professionals in the world that they work in. I do agree that it's important to understand from one program to another, but at the same time, there are core competencies that individuals have that can then be applied to the delivery of multiple programs.

The sick leave program, which would have been the first program — that was March 19. To give you a sense, the Arctic Winters Games was cancelled on March 7. That's a good anchor to try to remember back to. Then, 12 days later, they were — sorry, March 22, I apologize. So, on March 22, the paid sick leave — so we were looking at it 15 days later, so in just over two weeks, that program was put together.

There were a lot of long hours. The norm was to reach out to the deputy minister and check in to see how things were going. There were a lot of late evenings where pizza was being ordered, and people were continuing to do the work that they needed to do. They knew how absolutely important that it was. Again, it was a very short period of time, but a group of fantastic policy folks — number one — and strong leadership — we have a really talented economist there who did a lot of work for us and continues to do a lot of work. The finance team came in as well — and being able to look at the resources that we had to identify the program and to cash-flow it out to understand what the optimal program was to maximize the impact of those financial resources. All of that work was happening so quickly. That is what we saw within the sick leave.

The next program that went out was on April 9, which was the Yukon business relief program. I think the department —

and huge kudos to the deputy minister. There was a lot of conversation. We watched what was happening around the country. There were conversations happening between ministers of economic development, some formal and some more casual in nature. Everyone was scrambling to try to figure out how they were going to shore up their different sectors. That was about a month from the Arctic Winter Games.

But the other piece that I think was really important was that we struck the business advisory group. Actually, the first meeting that we had was on the Monday, I believe, after the Arctic Winter Games — I believe it was a Saturday — and then, two days later, we pulled in a group of people who were primarily affected by the cancellation of those games. That group — there were chambers involved, retailers, and all of the folks who had the biggest impact from the Arctic Winter Games. We were just entering into this new reality. Within that, it became very clear that it was important to strike a group very quickly, so that's what we did.

We tried to do our best in a way that brought a very diverse group of folks together and at the same time. Certainly, as we went along, there were times when I worked with the Member for Whitehorse Centre and there were maybe industries — or there were industries — that were missed, and so folks reached out to me and said, "Look, you could really add more people." It is a tough thing to do. You start to grow this group of folks and you don't want to leave people out who represent a sector, but at the same time, you are trying to figure out how — for every one of us in here, I know that all of us have taken on roles — whether as elected officials, non-profits, NGOs, or community groups — but we have all chaired meetings, and you can imagine when you get to a point where you are doing it virtually, and now you have 30 people. Those are difficult processes to undertake. You still want to get value from it.

So, anyway, that group came in. We identified a group of individuals. Folks kindly lent their time and expertise, and then we started to have a discussion with them. At the same time, the department had some good sense about programs that we needed to do. It landed perfectly where the Business Advisory Council came and said, "Look, you need to shore us up." We were in a position where, upon the analysis of what we thought that would look like, which is tough to do — but really, to do the due diligence from a financial perspective, the teams dug in, they projected what we thought the uptake would be on a program, and then, again, cash-flowed it out. Of course, we had to come up with our proper budget number to be able to go to Management Board and request the funds for this particular program — and make sure that you have enough to support the folks in it.

It's a policy conversation, and I appreciate the question from the Member for Kluane, but the folks in that department — when I think about everything that they have worked on over the last number of years that I have had a chance to work with them on, it was extraordinary. The sick leave program — the federal government has come in and essentially used this as a template, or a blueprint, for the Canadian program. That is what we have been made aware of.

But the business relief program is something that has been so important because, even over the last couple of weeks as we have gone into this period where we have seen more cases and when we no longer had the BC bubble, the first thing you start to think about is — in my role, the announcement is made and then you start to think about: What are the implications to the business sector, and what are the implications to the greater community? Having the business relief program built out by the department gave some comfort in the sense that there was a program ready. We knew that initially there were just under 500 businesses that used that program. Then, when we went into post summer and into September, then we know that the number dropped down — in that 125 to 150 mark, I believe. I'll go back and pick the exact numbers, but it is in that range. We knew that they were primarily tourism operations because that part of the economy was still in a really tough spot. Knowing that you can wake up on Monday or Tuesday and ask companies if they are affected by these decisions — in many cases, they might have been clients already. You have their pertinent information, you have a relationship with them, and you're in a position for them to come back to you very quickly if they need to request that help and support.

I think that this is something that — again, talking to ministers from other jurisdictions, they just — I will say that, even though we're in the House and we have the ability to have the supports of the House when we speak, I would say that, without identifying the provinces or territories — in dialogue with ministers of all political backgrounds — some of them, when we were on the phone, just said, "We're in a position where we're just going to have to let businesses close. There's nothing we can do."

In some cases, ministers were saying, "We are going to look toward different parts of our economy right now. That's what we have to do. We're going to be looking into completely different sectors." Understanding the magnitude of what was happening here, but then trying to understand what that would be in a bigger centre — we were very lucky that we had the ability to come together and have this program in place and that it shored up businesses. When you look at the statistical information, it was good to see, in that period of time and under the definitions that we used, that there might have been a business closed for a month or two, but then we saw the reopening piece.

The officials just corrected me. March 22 — and this is for Hansard — was the date when I believe our program was communicated for the sick leave. March 26 was when it went live, so it was a bit longer — 19 days versus 15 days. The business relief started in April and ends, of course, March 31.

The essential workers program start date was March 15. That is a great one, too. I want to make sure that is the right date, because it might have been a bit earlier, so I will get back with that. This program was one where we had to identify the money that was provided to us by the federal government. I know that there has been some talk in the House about how we could have maximized that particular program. I think that what we tried to do was take a look at money that has been allocated to us and understand what — I guess you would call it the

“sweet spot” in getting that money out to make as much of an impact as we possibly could. It was effective on March 15, and it goes to February 15 with this extension. Right now, that is what we are looking at.

There was just one other piece of information that I wanted to share with the Member for Kluane. On the Yukon business relief program, there were 522 applications, so it is over 500 now. It was just under \$6 million — \$5.91 million. That was as of November 25, so this is where we were last week on that particular program.

For the paid sick leave rebate — from March to November, there were 84 employers who have been approved to date. We had some last week and we are in a good position to continue to inform folks about that in the hopes that all the employees who are seeking that and who meet the criteria through their current remuneration will have employers who support that — and again, ready to reach out if need be.

I think that’s the time period. Again, focusing on — there was the in-house training, the core competency that exists within the folks who are there — a multitude of skillsets from finance right through to policy to having economists who can do the work — a group of people who, again, have risen to the occasion, have put programs in place that are really keeping us moving — and not just something that rolled out in the springtime but programs that are timeless within the construct of COVID-19 — I’ll put it that way — really strong work on their part.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I’m going to have questions on each one of the programs, so I will stick with one program at a time.

The Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program — let’s begin with a little bit of an overview. Can the minister tell me who is eligible for this program and who is not? Where did the decision — where did the minister decide to structure this program from?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The structuring of these programs — the question asked: How did the minister decide to structure the program? For Yukoners — what happens is that we have a group of talented individuals who help structure options for these programs and then present them, build a case, and, most times, will give a series of options around some key points.

That’s what has happened. I’m lucky that I get to sit down and look at what’s essentially pretty much a finished product, and then the department will look for me to endorse it, and then it moves on to another process within the governance structure. Then it will go to Cabinet and, if need be, Management Board.

Let me just talk a little bit about the programs. The essential workers provide the services that we need every day throughout the pandemic. To support these efforts, the government launched the Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program to provide temporary financial support for lower income workers who deliver these essential services. Businesses, non-governmental organizations, and governments that are delivering essential services can receive a wage subsidy of up to \$4 per hour for each eligible employee, increasing their wage to a maximum of \$20 per hour for up to 16 weeks.

The program has been extended until February 15, 2021, to remain responsive as the COVID-19 situation evolves.

Essential workers who received the benefit during the initial program that we had are once again eligible. The Government of Canada has agreed to provide funding for this program. We talked a little bit last week just about the extension, but also the \$100 — we moved it from \$50 to \$100 on that.

I’m going to go through a bit of background about the program, but let’s go into the question of eligibility. The basic program design eligibility requirements are — part-time or full-time and seasonal workers earning a pre-program wage rate of less than \$20 per hour before taxes and deductions and providing essential services will be eligible. Workers will receive a top-up — so it is part of the design — of either \$4 an hour or an amount that brings their wage to \$20 per hour, whichever is less. The top-up is available for each hour worked by an eligible worker — so, generally a 40-hour workweek — to a maximum of 640 hours over that 16-week period. Now, of course, we’ve extended that. Overtime hours are not eligible under the program.

To assess the eligibility of salaried workers, the hourly wage will be calculated as the annual salary divided by 2,000 working hours — equivalent to working 40 hours per week for 50 weeks. All Yukon businesses, community organizations, or government operations can apply for their eligible workers. This program applies to all Yukon workers engaged in providing essential services identified in annex 2 of the Yukon government’s guidelines for the delivery of critical and essential services that we have.

Employers accessing the temporary wage subsidy are eligible applicants. Employers accessing the Yukon government’s staffing up labour market funding program will be automatically enrolled in the program through the Department of Education where they receive the top-up. Both the employer and essential worker must be Yukon-based. A Yukon-based business must meet three of the following criteria: (1) has a resident, agent, warehouse, office, or place of business in the Yukon; (2) is subject to the Yukon *Income Tax Act*; (3) has a valid registration with Corporate Affairs *Business Corporations Act, Partnership and Business Names Act, or Societies Act*; and (4) has a valid municipal business licence where applicable.

Community societies or associations are defined as being organizations that are registered societies under the Yukon *Societies Act* and are in good standing and that are based in a community.

Employers, again — we talked a bit about that, which was the \$100 per registered essential worker to defray payroll expenses — such as Canada Pension Plan contributions, employment insurance, and Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board premiums — and reflect the administrative burden that is associated with applications and encourage participation in the program. The amount will be paid at the time the employee is registered.

I think that it is a pretty good understanding of the eligibility and a bit about the design and structure. Again, we had that opportunity to do the early work on it.

I just want to make sure, before I sit down, that I have answered all the questions. Maybe I will just touch quickly on

what parts of the sectors have used the essential workers the most.

The Yukon essential workers — we have seen the biggest uptake in accommodation and food services — about \$435,000. We have seen, in the administrative and support waste management and remuneration services, about \$16,000. I am going to go through these exact numbers for Hansard. On our top line, we have accommodation and food services — \$435,614. In our administrative and support waste management and remuneration services — \$16,605. Under agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting — \$20,030.

Under educational services, there is \$60,383; information and cultural industries is \$3,354; other services — I can endeavour to get that, but it's \$2,615. Professional, scientific, and technical services — \$28,972. Retail trade, our biggest user of the program to date, was \$636,740 allocated to that sector of the economy. Transportation warehousing — \$9,209. Wholesale trade — \$1,456. This gives you a bit of a sense. As of Friday, Mr. Chair, the program has paid a top-up to 1,292 employees, so just around 1,300 employees who have used the program.

I think it's important to show that there is a lot of hard work done by the department on this.

I will get into subsectors. In the subsectors for the program, there are the accommodation services. Accommodation services have used \$36,751 so far of this program. Administrative and support services is \$16,605. Air transportation has used \$9,209. Animal production and aquaculture — \$3,812; building materials, garden equipment, and supplies dealers — \$85,034. For crop production, we have seen \$16,219. Again, educational services — we touched on it before — is \$60,383. Electronics and appliance stores — \$1,335; food and beverage stores — \$320,291; food services and drinking places — \$398,864; gasoline stations — \$31,646; general merchandise stores — \$134,171; health and personal care stores — \$29,427.

I'm not going to address some of the subsectors because there was nothing allocated. I will just name the ones that we did fund: motor vehicle and parts dealers — \$21,107; non-store retailers — \$7,696; personal and laundry services — \$2,615; petroleum and petroleum products merchant warehouses — \$1,456; professional, scientific, and technical services — \$20,972; publishing industries, not counting digital online except Internet — \$3,354; and sporting goods, hobby, book, and music stores — \$6,031. So, there is really good detail there, I think, on what we've spent.

Then, not as much uptake in the communities on this for some — we've seen, to date, when we look at allocation — in Carmacks, we've seen \$3,430; Haines Junction — \$17,698; Teslin — \$8,904; and the bulk in Whitehorse at one point — \$1,184,946. Again, the bulk of it in Whitehorse but some communities using — and again, making sure that we share this information with the chambers — Whitehorse chamber, Yukon chamber, and others out there. They have, of course, in the communities — most of the organizations that represent the private sector have a relationship with the Yukon Chamber of Commerce.

I think that we have hit the questions that were asked by the Member for Kluane. If I have missed anything, please let me know and I will add it as we answer questions for the next couple of programs.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Given the speed here that we are at, I do have many more questions about the essential workers program, the paid sick leave program, and the business relief program, but I am going to switch gears a little bit here. I am looking at how things are going here, so maybe I will read them all in later or maybe I will do it in a legislative return.

Let's turn to the Economic Development programs and some of them now. Let's start with red tape. The Liberals had a fairly significant platform commitment in 2016 related to reducing red tape and increasing access to e-services. To our knowledge, this work has been led by the Minister of Economic Development.

Can the minister give us an update on the work that his government is doing to reduce red tape?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Sure, I think that we can have a discussion about red tape. Red tape reduction is in both mandate letters. In the first mandate letter, it speaks about my work and the work to focus on with the Minister of Community Services. The second mandate letter talks about the work that I am to undertake with the Minister of Community Services and, I believe, with the Minister of Highways and Public Works. I caught a little bit of a nuance in there saying that we believe that the Minister of Economic Development is leading this. I think that really what happens is that the departments come together and identify the points in the mandate letters. They take that into their work planning and then they undertake the work. It is our job to communicate and interface back and forth with the deputy ministers and senior leaders to understand how that work is proceeding. I think that, just for clarity, this is important to address.

Yes, we are, of course, absolutely committed to a user-friendly environment for all stakeholders and working to reduce red tape and manage regulatory processes for Yukon businesses and individuals. We know that this is key to make Yukon a competitive place to work and do business. During the pandemic, COVID-19 program applications were available for download and submission online. A single application process was developed for the Yukon business relief program and the Canada Northern Economic Development Agency's northern relief fund — again, folks working across government departments to streamline regulations and reduce barriers to accessing government services and, with our provincial and territorial counterparts, to reduce regulatory challenges through implementation of the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*, which falls directly into the Department of Economic Development.

Departments have implemented a number of service enhancements online. As the member opposite had asked what were some of the things that were there, I will give a few examples of further enhancements. The Yukon corporate online registry and improved Bids and Tenders website, which you have heard about over the last bit in the House, is really through Highways and Public Works, but we support that work in the sense that it is important to be able to streamline that. We

continue to seek ongoing feedback from the business community and individual Yukoners to ensure that we are on the right path. We know that efficient and fair procurement processes are important to Yukon businesses and we are also putting resources, policies, and processes in place to improve government procurement.

When I look back at some of the actions taken, I would say that, although it may not seem like a red tape reduction, I think that the absolute elimination of the small business tax is probably the one, when I look back over the last four years — it is — how do we reduce red tape? Well, there is no small business tax in the Yukon anymore. I think that is probably — when you talk to businesses — eliminating the Yukon small business tax was a really important undertaking. I think that probably helps our private sector as much as any of the work that we have done. It is important for them to have access to those dollars to reinvest in their businesses and hire more Yukoners or to invest in new equipment — all of the things that you can do with some of those tax strategies.

I touched on a few things there. Again, work that has to continue on — I think that we could go into different departments that I have responsibility for. There is other work that has been done to help streamline some of the processes. So, I will leave it at that, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Sticking with red tape — as the minister probably knows, the leading organization in Canada that looks at government measures related to red tape is the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, CFIB. According to CFIB, the Liberal government hasn't been doing much. Every year, CFIB issues a report card on how the provinces and territories are doing on reducing red tape. This year, the report card didn't even include the Yukon. I'm not sure what happened there.

But the 2019 red tape report card was quite scathing for the government and it gave the Liberal government an F — a grade of an F — for this work in that report. They said — and I quote: "It is unclear any progress has been made on the following election commitments to: collaborate with businesses to identify barriers to competitiveness and modernize the existing regulatory environment; reduce red tape and regulatory burdens for small business while maintaining standards for business operations; reduce red tape for Yukoners accessing service..."

It seems that CFIB certainly didn't think the Liberals have done much to achieve their platform commitment. The minister spoke a little bit earlier, but what other plans does the minister have? I have spoken to lots of businesses and regular old Yukoners and it seems like, for them, everything costs more and there is more paperwork. What are the plans to address this failing grade that the Yukon Liberal government has received?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I've never heard it called "CFIB", but the next time I talk to them — it's the Canadian Federation of Independent Business — CFIB. Out of the last mandate — year after year, the Yukon had been given very poor grades. It was kind of a standard thing, whether it was under the Yukon Party or under us. My challenge would be — and I think we would have to go and have that dialogue with them — is that we didn't even hear comments from the Canadian Federation of

Independent Business when we eliminated the small business tax.

I've listened to the lead on COVID and what they have asked jurisdictions to do. The Yukon business relief program essentially knocks it out of the park on what that organization has looked for jurisdictions to do.

I know the Member for Lake Laberge might even send a text. He has a lot of good pictures with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business folks when they're in town or even when they're in Vancouver. Please — if anybody is in constant dialogue with them — reach out to them and let them know the programs that they are looking for in this country around COVID — we have put them in place and they can look for great examples.

Now, I can tell you that there are other organizations that also work on behalf of the private sector in this country and globally. In many cases, they have reached out to us and have asked us about the good work that's happening. Again, I think there is more to this story, and I will do my best. What I remember — not that they didn't grade us this year, and as the member opposite said, I don't know what that's all about. I think when they said they didn't grade the jurisdictions in the north, they also had put out a statement that, because of the uniqueness, I believe, of the northern territories, they were going to try to recalibrate how they do their grading. Now, I could be wrong — and I know my officials have shared with me a little bit of information here. I can check anyway to see, but I believe that's really what happened.

When I look back at the work that the department has undertaken and the work that I've been able to do, I think — when it comes to red tape, I think trying to ensure that we are really client-centric is part of it. Within the department — trying to make sure that we have a one-window approach when you meet with advisors, for example, to help businesses navigate through COVID regardless of whatever funding stream is there to reduce our administrative burdens during that and also looking at trying to get rid of systems that are in place that are well past their due date and trying to upgrade those and take more of a digital approach and again looking at our application processes.

I respect the work that all these organizations do, including the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, but I also remember being requested to go to a debate in the election process during the writ and all of sudden there was a moderator from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business who showed up in town that was organized. In our discussions with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, we have made overtures to say, "Hey, let's work together. How can we share some of the work that we're doing?"

I think that there have been some comments from there on things that we haven't done. The things we have done — which, to me, would seem absolutely in line with their mandate and their ideology — we've heard crickets. Maybe we have to do a better job. Maybe what I'll do is thank you for this. I'll work with the department; we'll write a letter to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. We will focus on our COVID programs. What we'll also do is talk about the fact that

we've eliminated the small business tax and taken that corporate rate down from 15 to 12 percent. We will see if they will reflect on that work with positive comments, which seems well in line with what they try to cheer jurisdictions and policy makers on to do.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I want to switch to the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*. In January of this year, the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* parties, including the Yukon, announced that they were conducting a review of their party-specific exemptions. Can the minister provide us with an update on this review? Who is leading the review from the Yukon government? When can we expect to see a report, and has the minister given any direction in this regard? Are they considering dropping any of our party-specific exemptions?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** A little bit of background, Mr. Chair. By being part of the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*, we ensure that Yukon businesses have access to markets and investment opportunities beyond our territory. The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin — it's a while ago since we talked about this — in his role in the department, was there through a lot of the early policy development work. It was shortly into the start of this mandate that things had come together. The Minister of Economic Development for Ontario hosted the signing and the final pieces were put together.

I believe that we have the most exemptions of any region. We're utilizing these exceptions and special provisions that Yukon negotiated to increase local employment, support small firms, and enhance regional economic development.

Yukon supports other jurisdictions as they reduce their exceptions to the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*, and we are currently negotiating our exceptions on non-medical use of cannabis and electricity transmission.

I'm not going to delve too much into the specifics. It's essentially mandate negotiation. There have been times where the department has come and sat with me and talked a bit about a series of options — what position we're going to take at the negotiating table. I know that we had some concern around the discussion around transmission. Part of that led to — as I understand it, and I'll look to my officials — but it was really about ensuring that — if you were signed into that package, you would have to ensure that, as you link in — so, not now, if you were just thinking about a forward-thinking position. If you linked into a North American grid, there would be a standard of infrastructure that you would then have to ensure was in place. In the future — it is not something that is going to happen while I'm in this role, but we wanted to think ahead and understand what that would mean — the implications.

As you can imagine, in the Yukon, we have a real range of quality of transmission — or capacity, I should say. We wanted to ensure that we thought through that piece. The direction, of course, was for us to look for an exemption on that piece as well.

We're working with our partners in other jurisdictions through the Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table, the RCT, to improve the regulatory environment in Canada. We're also continuing to negotiate rules on financial services through the financial services working group in providing

inputs to the other CFTA bodies, including the working groups on government procurement and alcoholic beverages.

The national economic impact for our exemptions is very small in the larger scheme of things, but removing any of these — and the question was: Are we looking to remove? We're not. At no point have I looked to remove exemptions because they could, even though they are small in a national sense, they would have potentially very negative effects locally — again, while really not making an impact on the national scene.

Under the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* with Yukon, the government has an option, as well, to bypass the procurement rules for contracts up to \$1 million, and you have heard the Minister of Highways and Public Works talk about this. So, we can use that 10 times on a fiscal year basis, and we maximize these procurements and suppliers to create economic opportunities across the Yukon. So, that is something that has been in place. I think that this government is probably, I believe, the first government to use that. It is an exemption that we think is a great tool.

Again, as a result of our negotiations, Yukon University, hospitals, and municipalities are exempt from the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* procurement rules — so more good work by the department there. The agreement will not impact territorial legislation or protections related to indigenous people, language, the environment, culture, or health care. These are all exempt from this.

The *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* has also created a number of working groups that our teams play a role in to advance certain aspects of the agreement or to potentially expand the agreement into new sectors. Yukon government is actively participating in all of these working groups to ensure that Yukon's interests are considered and protected. The working groups include alcoholic beverages, financial services, cannabis for non-medical purposes, the development in the food sector in the territories, and trade in fish and fish products that we're involved in.

I am just going to check with the officials. I think that I have a good sense of who is leading it, but I am just going to confer. Shay Kokiw continues to lead the negotiation team with help from the policy group, and as well, the department continues to reach out to outside legal. We are aware of the protocol. I know that the Member for Kluane is kind to me on this. He probably would have let me get up to finish answering his question, but I will leave it at that.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. The minister was alluding to the three areas that they were focusing on when he was on his teleconference this year — financial services, cannabis, and alcohol. Can the minister provide us with an update on some of this negotiation stuff that is related to it?

My questions are: What is Yukon's position with regard to reducing regulatory barriers to the trade in cannabis, and what is the latest with regard to trade in alcohol? Also, can the minister tell us about efforts to reduce barriers in trading alcohol? I know that there was previously a move to limit or unlimit, but some jurisdictions, such as Yukon, were reluctant.



That was with the importation of alcohol. Can the minister update us on that and answer those questions, please?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** In these particular instances where we have had some questions from the member opposite, I just want to say that, when these undertakings are happening, we try to ensure that we sit down and speak with the individuals in the private sector. We have done this around the conversation about alcohol — sitting down with companies like Yukon Brewing, understanding their position, and making sure that our negotiators can take that forward.

I do appreciate the questions. I think it's best — I'm going to work with the department to get the Member for Kluane a written response, because we have to be very careful about the confidentiality around the negotiating position and where we are at within it. I just want to make sure that we are prudent in that endeavour. We will go back to the written record in Hansard and work with our team to provide a written answer to this that I can bring back to the Legislative Assembly.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that and I look forward to that return.

Let's switch gears here and head to the business incentive program. It's pretty well understood by this House and by the business community, but I had a few questions about this year in particular. We have heard from a number of businesses that the department has consulted regarding possible changes to the business incentive program. My questions, I guess, are: Has the minister considered making changes to BIP, and if so, what changes were considered? If the minister does consider these changes to BIP, will he commit to thoroughly consult with the business community before he makes them?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** So, the business incentive program, for folks who may be tuning in and are not aware of it — or BIP, as it's also called — supports businesses bidding on Yukon government tenders, enabling government investments to support local economic activity and diversification. The program encourages employment and training opportunities for Yukoners as well as the use of our locally manufactured products.

In 2019-20, it supported 360 Yukon employees, including 65 apprentices. I know that the Leader of the Third Party has asked that question quite a bit — if we are using that element of the program.

In 2019-20, we had a significant uptake in the program. We continue to see Yukon contractors secure government contracts with Yukon tradespeople, apprentices, and goods manufacturing benefiting from the program. The Department of Economic Development has had discussions with the Yukon Contractors Association regarding options to update the program. We continue to explore options to modernize the goods and services component of the program. Any changes to the business program would have to be compatible with Yukon's domestic and international trade commitments.

I'm going to be respectful. I'm not going to, in a sense, go through all the detail of the payables that went out. What I can say is that it has really been hard in conversations to identify a clear direction that we believe is going to make the most positive impact.

Mr. Chair, if you don't mind, I'm going to say hello to Mr. Steve Rose who is here today and is a former Assistant Deputy Minister of Economic Development. Mr. Rose and I worked together to figure out how this program — and with the officials and the deputy minister — could be optimized. There are reports going back years and years and years where, for the business incentive program, there had been a program analysis. What impact is it making? Is it working? Then it would kind of sit for a while. Coming into this role, a lot of individuals were looking at other jurisdictions. They had a business incentive program. The name was the same, but there was a bit of difference within it. I think that had a lot to do with the value that could be identified within procurement scoring versus paying a rebate out, which is what we are doing here.

We went to the Contractors Association and we sat with them, and it was probably 50:50 in those meetings where some people really wanted us to try to restructure the program and others who are some of the biggest employers and most successful contractors also said, "We use this program, and the way that it's structured right now is helping."

One of the situations that we saw — it was really an advantage — was where we worked with the City of Whitehorse. We extended the program to the building of the municipal services building, and what we heard afterward was that the local contractor that built it made their bid work because they knew they could use this program. We ended up seeing Ketza Construction build that building and hire a bunch of Yukoners.

I want to be open to the Member for Kluane. Have we contemplated trying to change it to optimize it? Yes, we have. I would have to say, though, that we don't have a concrete direction for that. At this point, we're not touching it; we're leaving it as it is. That's what we've heard from more individuals — to leave it as it is and to use it. There seems to be a lot of uptake in it.

I want the member opposite to be able to ask some more of those questions. I'm not going to go through which companies used it and how much they used it, but I can say that there is a big uptake on it. It has been used a lot. There are other sectors that are now thinking about it. I think we have to see if it can be extended to ensure — maybe it's something that we're just starting to have the discussion about, but can the agricultural industry use this? Does it make sense that a product is grown here? Can that help with institutional procurement? How do we work to ensure that there is the maximum amount of Yukon-grown food inside our bigger institutions here? How can we deal with that delta of what they need to charge to produce something here versus it being produced somewhere else? Those are all the things that we are still contemplating.

Again, there are no changes being contemplated. If there were changes at this time, we absolutely would be going out to have a broader conversation. Through those broad conversations, we have had pretty clear direction to date.

**Mr. Istchenko:** The minister did speak about allowing the City of Whitehorse to be eligible for BIP, so I guess I do have a few questions that might have to come back in a legislative return. I am pretty sure that, now that this has almost

been completed, there was an announcement that the applications were rolling in for that project. How much money is in the budget for BIP in light of the massive new project? Does the minister have any idea how much money will be spent on BIP rebates just for this project alone? Before he made the decision, did he ever ask how much it would cost to allow the city operations building to be BIP-eligible? I am just wondering if the department had planned for this at all.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The anticipated ask for the BIP program in 2020-21 is estimated at \$919,932. BIP payment averages in the last five years have seen a high degree of variation between a low of \$865,749 to a high of \$2,463,139.

I am just going to see if I can identify the amount for the city building.

I apologize, Mr. Chair. I will get back to the member opposite with a written return concerning the total projected cost associated with the city building. I know that, as the member opposite has just touched on, a lot of those filings would still be coming in as the work is being concluded on that, but we will come back with best estimates on that particular cost.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Are there going to be other non-YG projects that will be considered for eligibility moving forward? I know that the minister has spoken a little bit about agriculture, but maybe First Nation-owned projects — things like that?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** One point of clarification — speaking about agriculture, I was referring to agriculture products more — not as the sector using the program for the procurement purposes in the sense to build something — and the member opposite probably has what I was getting at. If you grow a product and you're selling it in Yukon — the same way that you are building something — can you use the BIP? That is where the agriculture industry has reached out and said, "Is this something that we can use?" We have had the president of the Yukon Agricultural Association match them up with the BIP coordinator so they can have a discussion to see if that is something that fits.

Other than that, to be very open, other than answering these questions today and having a conversation around the agricultural piece, not much has come up. I haven't had any discussions with First Nation governments about extending — or other municipalities. It is something that has been used, I think, twice in the history of Yukon: once for the Canada Games Centre building and then another time for the building of the newest city building that has been put together.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that.

I want to go back to CFIB a little bit. We discussed earlier that Liberals got — for their lack of action to reduce red tape — but it was something that the minister had said, so I had somebody look into this for me. The minister mentioned that CFIB hadn't commented on the Yukon's COVID-19 relief. So, just to correct the record for the minister, there's an entire section of their website about it.

Something that also popped up to me: Can the minister provide an example of some red tape that he has reduced? For the minister's reference, red tape is things like — I know the minister probably knows this — forms, paperwork that needs

to be filled out, and regulations. Can the minister just give me one example?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Can I just get a clarification on the comment there — the preamble before the question? What is it that exists on the Canadian Federation of Independent Business website? I just didn't hear it correctly. Is it comments about COVID programs, or is it comments about the Yukon's COVID programs?

**Mr. Istchenko:** It's the Yukon's COVID-19 relief.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Okay, that's good. I hope that the comments by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, as stated on their website about our programs, are positive. I'll have a look at that, and then we'll make sure — if they have said positive things, we'll send a letter that says, "Thank you". Then we'll also identify some of the tax measures that we had and share that with them as well. I apologize; I haven't been on the Canadian Federation of Independent Business website in awhile.

So, give an example — during the pandemic, if you were dealing with a situation within your business around COVID-19 and you were at home and needed to go through a process to access one of our programs, one of the things that we did was that you could get a digital copy of that. You could download that and then provide that submission back to us. It was a single application process.

We also coordinated it with the federal government and the territorial government. Again, I think it needs to be said that Sierra Van der Meer — what a great leader in that organization — did a fantastic job on behalf of CanNor and all Yukoners. She was a strong voice within the federal public service to make sure that we had great programs here. I know she worked very closely with our team — just to give one example.

I think that's something — if you look back over the last — I don't know, probably a couple of decades — I could be wrong here; probably the Member for Whitehorse Centre knows better than all of us — but when was the last time that we could identify, digitally download, get an application, and apply for a program that was co-delivered by the federal government? That was the work of the great public servants on this. I know that filling out applications previously when I was in the private sector — how many trips would I be making into offices trying to drop stuff off and make sure they got in? I think there are some real pieces that are changing.

Another one that is just simple, but is very important is that, under the stress that people were in, businesses had to work up their spreadsheets and numbers about where they were. Again, the department provided a tool where folks could input essentially their costs and the reductions in some of their revenues, and then they could calculate their rebates through that sheet. If their bookkeeper or accountant is not readily available, some of those things can be really daunting. Having something that is really user-friendly, again, is something.

Now that we have that tool, we can use it and augment it into different work that we do within our department. Many would say that it is a very powerful tool when they are taking into consideration their time. It might not seem exactly within the definition of "red tape reduction" as identified by my

colleague from Kluane, but just going out and making sure that we are interfacing with businesses, meeting them where they are, and working with them in that form I think is important.

I am going to leave it to the Minister of Community Services at some point in the near future when he comes in — a great opportunity as well to talk about some of the red tape reduction. Again, I will identify that this is an area of interest.

With all of us working together in the mandate and having folks really work on it, I am going to say that, after having investment in business and having private businesses, being told that the small business tax has been eliminated — as a business person, this is something you like to hear. It's the first time we've seen that happen in the Yukon. I think it was a big undertaking. Maybe it's not within the criteria of what folks think is a red tape reduction, but I think most would look very fondly on that one.

For the business incentive program — I'm going to answer that question while I have the data. For the City of Whitehorse, as of March 31 — with stuff still coming in — it was \$303,926.

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

Is there any further general debate?

**Mr. Istchenko:** Welcome back everyone. One thing you will always get from the Yukon Party is how we unequivocally support the mining industry — one of our oldest sectors in the Yukon.

Earlier in Question Period, we were a little bit interested when the minister announced that he had met with the CEO of a company this morning and said they were ready to invest millions of dollars in the Yukon. Can the minister tell us which company this was?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Today, what we were doing was following up on our conversations from the Geoscience Forum. These are times where we reach out to folks and usually have an opportunity — some of the companies — we didn't have a chance to meet with all of them. I think it is best right now — we are now going back into Question Period to talk about Energy, Mines and Resources' questions. Energy, Mines and Resources will be called, and there will be, I'm sure, ample opportunity to talk about all of the things that are of concern and priorities for the Yukon Party.

What I would say, if we're really talking about — as the member opposite said, that the Yukon Party — one thing that they always do is support mining. I think that was sort of like the opening preamble.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** So, this year, I think that we are pretty happy with the ability to again increase the YMEP grant to an

all-time high. So, I think that's something with an economic program and it's good that the Member for Copperbelt South has shown up with some vigor as well and is talking off-mic, fired up; that's good.

I think the Member for Kluane is asking questions, so I think — unless it's the Member for Copperbelt South — I would be happy to take questions from him as well.

Maybe just to clarify, Mr. Chair: Can you let me know who was asking me questions from the opposition today? Is it the Member for Kluane? Then we will continue on.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I beg to differ with the minister. I believe a comment about investing millions of dollars into the Yukon — I would actually say that's economic development in the Yukon. That's why the question was asked here today, but if the minister wants to wait for my fellow colleague during debate on Energy, Mines and Resources, that's fine by me.

What I want to get into now is — I'm going to run through quite a few questions about the programs we were speaking to earlier. I hope to get a legislative return on some of these. If the minister does want to tackle a few of them and then I'll turn the floor over to the Third Party.

The first program that we did have quite a few questions on — and the questions we have are questions that come from working with our constituents and our businesses and all those, just like the members opposite do. I'm sure every MLA has had a call on something asking why this was done or why that was done.

When it comes to the Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program, how did the minister select the rate of \$20 an hour? I'm understanding, in the minister's earlier comments, that it's the Department of Education that administers the program. Can he clarify that? Who in the department is authorized to approve applications and distribute money? At what thresholds?

A key one that has been asked by lots: Is any of this funding recoverable from Canada? If so, how much?

We would also like to find out a little bit about the uptake of the program. What has it been like?

I'm going to switch now to the paid sick leave program which, to my account, is \$1.2 million of this expenditure. We found out from the minister earlier when the program went into effect. We note that, in May, the Premier issued a joint statement with the premiers of Manitoba and British Columbia welcoming the federal government's paid sick leave program.

So, in his return, can the minister tell us how the federal announcement changed the Yukon's program? Is this now funded by the federal program? Is there a written policy in place for the program? If there is a written policy, can he share that with the Legislative Assembly?

There has been some discourse at the national level about making this program permanent. Can the minister, in his return, discuss this and explain what the government's position is — this is important — with regard to making this program permanent? What was the uptake in the program — how many businesses and how many days off? Can the minister provide some metrics about this program? With all the programs, I am

just wondering which branch of Economic Development is administering this program.

The biggest one here, of course, is the business relief program. That line accounts for approximately \$12 million. It's also one of the most complex programs for Yukon businesses because of the interaction and connection between the Yukon government and Canada. Let's start by getting an explanation about how the program works. I was looking for the minister — but with time restraints, I just see that we probably don't have enough time.

One question that I wanted to ask about this program is a little bit about the limits. Are we correct in stating that a business that is accessing the program to the maximum extent of \$30,000 a month will run out of eligibility after three months? The government has announced an extension of this program, but it did not lift the total maximum limit of \$100,000. Can the minister explain that decision? Some businesses have asked why the total limit didn't also increase. Who in the department is authorized to approve applications and distribute money? Is there a written policy also in place for this program? Have businesses been denied funding? Were they permitted to appeal the process, and what is that process like? What sort of metrics is the government collecting? Can the minister give us an overview of the uptake of the program — how many businesses have accessed it and at what levels have they accessed it?

From what we have heard, many businesses that accessed this program also frequently access a federal program through CanNor. This is one of the questions we get quite a bit. Can the minister tell us about the information sharing between Economic Development and CanNor to help develop this program?

We also note that the CanNor program has a different eligibility than the Economic Development program. I'm a little bit concerned about why the programs have conflicting eligibility.

Also, one of the components of the COVID-19 response is what the department calls the "COVID-19 impacts", and that is slated for \$2 million. We would like a bit of a breakdown on where that money will go — basically what it's slated for.

In my closing, it's not lost on all Yukoners, it's not lost on us on this side, and I'm sure it's not lost on the hard work from the department — it's clear that these programs were thrown together quickly; they had to be. We were in a pandemic. We totally understand that. We understand how it was imperative of time. With every program and with anything, there are always hiccups with a brand new program that's fast.

When the minister does get back or if he has time to answer it today, I'm just wondering if the minister and the government will agree — and I think this is important. There will probably be other jurisdictions that will be asked the same thing — an internal audit of funding that is provided to local businesses under all of these programs that they have.

Just in my closing remarks, I do again just want to reiterate our thanks on this side to the officials who are here today, but really to everybody in Economic Development and throughout the government. I mentioned it in the last department that I was

debating, which was Environment. Their window and door were open for people who went up there to ask about hunting-related issues, trapping licences, and anything to do with Environment, and there were people there. During the pandemic, the work that the employees in Economic Development did was above average, and it was awesome, to tell the truth, so just a big thank you to them.

I'll cede the floor, after the minister gets up, to the Third Party.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'll go one step further: I would say more than above average — we went back through and rolled programs out. These folks went back to tweak those programs, and from program to program, I don't think there were big amendments made; there were tweaks made. Yes, programs were put together in a short period of time.

I think that part of our takeaway is to understand: What is the time to build programs? What was reflected to me was that we had individuals in the Department of Economic Development who love policy and love working on policy, and to be able to build something, to do an analysis, to be able to put your budgets together around that and, at the same time, to understand how important your work is and then to be able to deploy that in such a short period of time — it doesn't happen a lot in the public service. So, yes, I think that the program has had some tweaks, but, really, when we go back and think about how many tweaks there were — pretty minimal, really.

I want to be respectful to the Member for Whitehorse Centre. I know that there are a lot of questions there. We do have most of that information right here. It would be an hour of me going back through statistical information, application interests — I know that members love that, but I will hold off, and we can put it in a submission.

I think, overall, it is the data that the Member for Kluane wanted to see on those different programs — uptakes and analysis. As we talk about identifying or analyzing our programs, we are still in a position where we are using these programs. How much they are used will really depend on what happens around restrictions and COVID and all of those different impacts.

Quickly, I think, just to be respectful to folks who are here with me — we will go back and we will look at how we chose the dollar amounts for essential workers, who has approval levels within the departments — all of those things.

Just in finishing, the only comment that I will make is that what I have garnered today — there were some very specific questions around trade, which are important ones; there were some very specific questions around our programs. There was a lot of reflection around the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I have had a quick chance to go through the Canadian Federation of Independent Business' website where they do reflect upon the programs by the Yukon. In some cases, what they are asking, I think, as I quickly looked at it, was for us to extend the programs. They support those programs; they just want to see them extended for a longer period of time. So, it seems like there is a little bit of validation from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business on the programs if they are asking them to be extended.

There was a comment about support for the mineral sector. I appreciate that, and we will stick it back into Energy, Mines and Resources, but there are companies that are service sector providers and that have been supported through the Yukon business relief program, so we did have that program helping so many that are critical to that sector — the mineral sector and the resource sector.

In closing, I would just say to the member opposite that there is good validation and support for programs — identified it. So, why did you vote against them? That's my question. If you are celebrating them, you know they were critical, you know they are supported, and you're looking for guidance and advice from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business — and they are coming in and saying that we should extend the programs, again validating — why would you vote against them? Why wouldn't you support these programs when we were at second reading? If these are what is holding up our economy — and every day there are questions in Question Period about the tourism sector. This Yukon business relief program has been the greatest tool that we've been able to use to sustain us as we go forward. Again, if you are really, legitimately there to support them, I hope at third reading you support the programs that have kept the economy going — which a bunch of hard-working public servants have done — and programs that were built through advice from the private sector.

I will leave it at that and look for questions from the Third Party.

**Ms. Hanson:** I was a bit thrown off by that rousing ending from the minister opposite. I will try to gather my thoughts and reflect.

We didn't debate Economic Development at all during the Spring Sitting, so we haven't had an opportunity to actually engage on the Economic Development portfolio for some time.

I just wanted to start with the big number, and then we can go from there. Of the \$19.5 million in the supplementary — there's a change when you take everything off when you take the \$100,000 off to make it \$19.4 million — is 100 percent of that recoverable from Canada? What percentage is recoverable from Canada?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I just want to clarify: Was the question the total amount of the supplementary budget, or was it just pertaining to the larger line item, which is the Yukon business relief? Which amount was the member opposite seeking to see if it was offset by federal funds?

**Ms. Hanson:** I'm referring to the line which says "COVID-19 Response" for Economic Development.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Chair, out of the \$19,560,000, the dollars that are supporting the Yukon essential workers program — which is \$4,336,000 — are the monies that are offset through federal funding agreements at this time.

**Ms. Hanson:** I'll go on to the next question, but if I am incorrect in my assumption that the balance then is — so 100 percent of the \$4,336,000 that is listed in the documents that we received — it is 100-percent recoverable and the balance is being borne by the Yukon consolidated revenue.

The minister provided some background information with respect to the paid sick leave rebate. He indicated that there were 84 employers who had availed themselves of this program. Can the minister tell us how many employees that covers? That's really what we're talking about. I understand that was what was budgeted for the paid sick leave program, which has, as he said, been extended to March 21 — so it's \$1.2 million, but what has actually been paid out of this program to date?

Has there been consideration that some employees will need a second 14 days' paid leave with the increasing numbers? We're seeing a surge. We just saw today — just as I came in here today — that 46 people died in BC yesterday. It's easy to imagine that someone could have had to isolate during the summer or this fall, and they will need the same ability to self-isolate over the next couple of months given what we're seeing as a surge.

The minister can correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Chair, but it's my understanding that this sick leave rebate doesn't mean that all workers have access to paid sick leave; it has to be used all at once. It sounds great with 14 days, but as I understand it — for example, if a retail worker wakes up one morning — a retail worker who does not have access to paid sick leave from their employer — and has a sore throat and a runny nose, a headache — all symptoms listed on the COVID website — again, these are essential front-line workers — if that employee decides to do the responsible thing and not go in to work and does get a COVID test, they would qualify for the rebate program. Now, let's say that the test comes back negative, and they could get back to work two or three days later — three to four days, more likely. If their employer uses the rebate for those two or three days, it won't be available again for this employee, as I understand it; I'm asking the minister to clarify that.

I don't know about you, Mr. Chair, but I think most people have a headache, runny nose, sore throat more than once a year. In these COVID times when people are being asked to be hyper-diligent and hyper-aware, then we need to be cognizant that there's going to be a different impact, particularly for front-line workers who have no access to paid sick leave.

I would like the minister to tell us how this program will help this retail worker the next time they wake up with these COVID-like symptoms. That worker could be faced with a pretty terrible choice. They can do the right thing by not going in to work, but this might mean they can't afford their rent or to put food on the table.

So, my question is really: Why is the program structured so that the rebate can only be used in one go — like, one time?

From a public health perspective, it doesn't make sense. I would say that it's not just the vulnerability of, say, the retail worker, but we have auxiliary-on-call workers who are working in similar situations who don't have access to sick leave.

Can the minister provide that clarity with respect to the paid sick leave — the number of employees, and then what consideration has been given to the fact that some employees may have had to access this — are they one time only and that's it?

How are we going to accommodate this to deal with the real issues — the real lived reality of people on the front lines with no benefits?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There have been 150 employees who have used the program to date, for folks who have been tested, and have used the program that was rolled out by the Yukon government and now are finding themselves in a situation where they may have to go back and get tested again. The federal program that has rolled out is stackable with the Yukon program, so there would be another program that they would have an opportunity to use to go out and get tested again.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for that. That, I'm sure, will provide some sense of relief. It is good to get that on the record.

When the minister was talking about the Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program — we have talked about a lot of things here this afternoon — the discussion this afternoon was about the number of people who had applied. The minister said that the \$4.3 million, which we just talked about, is 100-percent recoverable. No, that is not the business — sorry; that is the essential worker program, and I will come back to that in a minute.

This budget that was put out there — \$12 million for the Yukon business relief program — the forecast was done based on expectations as of April 9 this year. So, we are forecasting to the end of March of this year. Has there been a recent review of that to determine if that \$12 million that was forecast in April, in terms of any indicators from businesses across Yukon, as to whether or not that is adequate? We heard today the rollout of new federal money for tourism relief, and as I understand it from sitting in on the tourism calls, this is largely managed through the Department of Economic Development. Is that \$12 million — does the minister forecast that as his outer limit?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Concerning the business relief program and the dollars that have been allocated — we monitor, adapt, and respond. That has been basically the work and the process that has been undertaken by the department, and we continue to monitor our expenditures to make sure that we have a strong understanding.

At this time, we are in a position where we have budgeted it. This is the amount we have budgeted. Of course, we are hoping to see our supplementary budget pass here, but at the same time, we are looking to ensure that we stay within our spend.

The original forecast of \$6.5 million was when we started the work; then later, when we looked at the extension of the program, we increased that to \$12 million. At this time, our feeling is that we budgeted correctly. Now, between here and Q1 and Q2 of next year — I guess the end of this fiscal year, which is Q1 and the rest this year — there have been lots of different pressures that businesses have faced. I would say that, right now, our upper limit as it has been forecasted is \$12 million, but in all cases, what we have tried to do is continue to monitor, adapt the programs, and respond accordingly to make sure that we optimize the policy decisions that are being made. I will leave it at that. Based on the current circumstances, that is where we are.

I think everyone is aware that those decisions can change from time to time. I also believe that, as we move forward — the question from the member opposite was: Is this the outer limit? Are we willing to spend more? That's a decision that is made collectively with my Management Board colleagues. I don't have the ability to do that. Would we seek other measures as we monitor? Potentially. But right now, we feel that this program, with the circumstances we are in, is properly funded at this time.

**Ms. Hanson:** I appreciate the minister's answer right up to the last part there, because when I asked the question about whether this is the outer limit, I wasn't really asking him whether they are willing to — because I think that we would have to respond. He just chastised the Member for Kluane for not blindly voting in support of the supplementary estimates, but when he says that then they collectively make a decision about how they move forward or how they collectively will respond to this, that collective does not include members of this Legislative Assembly. It doesn't even include backbenchers of their own governing party.

My concern here is that I'm just trying to get this information because the only time we have is this very limited time here. We haven't had the conversation as members of this Legislative Assembly about any of the decision-making process on any of these issues since March 19.

The minister had outlined, with respect to the essential workers program — and I thank him for the figures that he did provide this afternoon. We were told in the briefing that we would — because I had asked for actually a breakdown of both the Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program — and I was told that I would get it by legislative return — and another area as well. I had asked for the demographics with respect to the various programs, and I was told that I would get those as well.

However, as the minister said today, Whitehorse makes up almost 95 percent of the amounts of money that were paid out to top up essential workers' salaries. He outlined how much money had been provided to employers in Carmacks, Haines Junction, and Teslin. We had also heard — I think last week in the Legislative Assembly in response to a question — that Watson Lake, Keno, and Old Crow were about \$2,000. The others were \$11,000, \$8,000, \$4,000 — well, roughly, because today I was told that Carmacks was \$3,430, so last week was a bit higher.

There are a couple things that come to mind. When we heard that there is only \$2,300 provided to employers in the community of Watson Lake, that might cover the top-up of one person for four months. I guess my question is: Does the minister really believe that every other essential worker in Watson Lake does not require or deserve a top-up? Is he really confident that every essential worker in Watson Lake who qualifies for this program has received or will receive the support that they need?

The minister had also said in this House that employees who have not received this kind of a top-up that they're eligible for should approach the department and that the department will send information to the businesses to encourage them to

apply. We know for a fact that some of these businesses have been in touch with the department, but despite the hard work of the department, these businesses have not applied, so their employees have ended up being penalized — not the employer.

I'm going to emphasize again, Mr. Chair, that the department is aware of who these employers are, and they were unsuccessful in convincing the employers to apply. There's only so much that a public servant can do. But even if it's only a few cases — which seems doubtful, given the numbers that we heard today and last week in terms of the uptake in places like Watson Lake or Dawson — it seems doubtful — well, it's not doubtful. It seems to me that these essential workers are the ones who are suffering. They are the ones who are being prevented from accessing hundreds of dollars that they should be eligible for because of the way this program is set up. Does the minister think that this is fair? Does he have any plans to do anything that might help these essential workers get the support that they deserve? If we're looking at an equity-based approach across this territory — that if you're working as an essential worker in Whitehorse — just because you happen to be in Whitehorse, you shouldn't have access or have it denied because you have an essential-worker position in Watson Lake.

We're not asking the minister to change the whole program. We're looking for creativity to find a way for employees whose employer is not cooperating to get the support that they both deserve and need. I think that one of the rationales that we heard very eloquently from the minister and from others in this House is that, during COVID, the stress of the COVID pandemic that we're all facing — the stress that's on everybody but particularly on those who are low-wage earners — is extreme.

So, we're looking for some sense of a recognition of the need to find more creative ways to respond to those few situations where employees can't — haven't been able to — and I guess the other part of that question is — the other part of the “maybe” is: What outreach has been done with respect to ensuring that employers in all parts of the territory are well-informed?

This does link to questions that I've asked this minister and previous ministers of Economic Development with respect to the notion of having, on the ground, Economic Development staff in regions of this territory. We heard earlier this Sitting from the minister that he was in support of having Regional Economic Development people in the communities. He told us that there was a pilot project in Watson Lake. We heard later that the pilot project was cancelled. Perhaps if that pilot project was still in place, there might be a better uptake because there would be a better understanding by employers in Watson Lake about the benefits of the essential workers program. It would be interesting if the minister could tell us why that project was cancelled and what analysis was done to determine which aspects of the pilot project were successful and which weren't.

It would be interesting to know if, in Dawson, the Yukon government has a Regional Economic Development officer. Is the uptake there reflected in the figures that the minister has?

Further, does the minister anticipate expanding the approach of having Regional Economic Development officers

based in communities, as opposed to having them based in Whitehorse? We all know that the restrictions for travel during this pandemic have made it difficult to be present in communities, other than virtually.

It's a broad range of things, but they all relate to ensuring — and I'm focusing on the front line. I am looking to know what the department and what the minister — with his responsibility for everything that occurs in that department — has directed in terms of creative approaches to addressing these very real issues on the ground.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There is a lot there. I will go back to where we started on that question to make sure that I don't miss the front end.

On the essential workers program, I think that there are very valid points made by the Member for Whitehorse Centre about uptake in the communities. We have sent mailouts to every house in Yukon. We have worked with the chambers. I think that there are valid points made by the member opposite and I think that we, just in discussion — is to ensure that we reach out to chambers again.

I don't believe that the numbers — if we cross-reference the uptake or lack of uptake in certain communities — are reflective that all individuals — that there are other individuals who can use this program.

I agree completely — to be creative and get out and communicate more. That is something that we are committed to doing. We still have funds in place that individuals can use, and I think that is a great point.

We went into a bit of a different topic at the very end of the question, and I do think that there is real value in having representation of folks. We have discussed this a little bit back and forth during Question Period.

We may have a difference of opinion to some extent. I know that some organizations that are in communities have reached out to us and specifically asked for funding that supports an individual, a coordinator, or somebody in that community. We don't have to debate. I know the member opposite's prerogative, as it was shared with me at that time, was: “But that's limited time, and so how do you really get somebody in there who has deep roots?” I agree with all of those points. Having previously worked around different communities, it made sense. Do I support that concept going forward? Absolutely. Am I going to going into human resources issues? No, I am not, but I fully support the concept. When you look at the different sub-regions of Yukon, yes, it makes sense, and when we have supported organizations to have capacity and travel within those economic corridors, it has been good.

I do support the program. If there was an individual who was in that community and who was full-time through that program, do I think that there would be more uptake? Potentially, yes; that is a great point. I don't know, because we don't, but if I broke that down, I think that the line of thinking makes sense to me. Do we think that the member opposite's comments about more efforts to see about this program's uptakes are valid? Absolutely. Are we willing to do that? Yes, we are.

**Ms. Hanson:** I appreciate the comments and the response from the minister. I will point out that I am not talking about HR; I'm talking about the broad issue of pilot projects that the minister — so, I'm very careful when I make the reference to a pilot project, because then I assume, when a government initiates a pilot project, they have some criteria for establishing a pilot project and they have objective criteria against which they can assess the effectiveness of that pilot project to determine whether it should be expanded for use in other regions of the territory. That's the gist of my question there and I would hope that the minister will touch back on that when he stands again.

The Government of Yukon had multi-page sponsored content inserted into the *Yukon, North of Ordinary* magazine recently that provided more details than members of this Legislature have been provided with respect to how Yukon businesses are charting a future during the global epidemic, which is really about the Government of Yukon's contribution. It does provide slightly different data infographics than the minister has provided us in this Legislative Assembly, but I will assume that's just because it's dated. My question is: Can the minister tell this House what the cost was for inserting this infographic and information to this publication?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I was looking for the proper French translation and I'm not going to do a very good job on that one. I was seeking it from my colleague. I just wanted to give a full breadth of the publications that we have done work in since the COVID piece.

Yes, I have to go back and look at the actual charts and data that's in the *Yukon, North of Ordinary* piece to see — I think that's what it would be — dated.

I also want to go back to the last question just quickly and say that I want to make sure that we reconcile the numbers appropriately for the member opposite because I want to make sure that our numbers are pretty current — the 30<sup>th</sup> is where I think we were on most of our charts today, but I want to make sure that I provide the newest numbers. I know from last week that I had gone through some briefing notes that I had, and then this week, there were some updated spreadsheets. We'll make sure — and that's around the essential workers program.

The piece for *Yukon, North of Ordinary* cost \$26,000. The *What's Up Yukon* — which we did earlier on, I think, in April; I'll check the date — was \$20,000. The francophone publication, *l'auroreboréale*, was \$20,000 as well. So, there has been about \$66,000 spent over three publications. *Yukon, North of Ordinary* focused on more of the relief programs and some of the stories that were reflected on how different Yukon businesses have adapted and moved.

The publications that were supported early on were more about information sharing around programs. I can get some more information, but yeah, there was a total of three different expenditures from the department on communication pieces.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for that response.

Mr. Chair, I'm sure I'm not alone that, every day when I open up my Facebook or the Internet in any way, I'm inundated — and in particular, this week — with cyber sales, and free shipping is basically the big selling point for people across the

country. We've heard, Mr. Chair, from local retailers that one of the challenges for them is to compete with the web giants when it comes to holiday shopping. We know that Yukoners love to share a bit of Yukon wherever they can. With holidays approaching and with the sales already ramping up and many people not travelling to visit family, there is an opportunity for Yukoners to support local business — like buying local, as we see all over town — by shopping local and sending a piece of Yukon to their family Outside. One of the barriers is shipping costs for retailers.

My question is: Has the government considered assistance to local retailers with shipping expenses? The minister correctly outlined at the beginning of this afternoon how nimble the response has been from Economic Development, from his policy and operational folks, and I'm wondering if he has directed them to give him some options with respect to dealing and responding to this very real challenge. If so, when might we see it rolling out? What form would it take?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First of all, I think we've watched there be a real move locally to have an organized conversation about “buy local”. We've seen the Whitehorse chamber roll out their work and now, I believe — and I will check to make sure I'm correct — that there was federal funding that was provided. There has been a group of local business people who have really focused on the “buy local” piece. I think there was some support there to have some consistent capacity working on this. I'm going to be open — I think it's a very intriguing concept to offset shipping costs. To the member opposite, I have to say I have not — to be very open — what a creative idea. It's not something that I've contemplated. We've really just tried to get folks to go down to their local stores and to buy local and to support them in that way and to continue to talk with some of the small and medium sized businesses. There are still meetings that are happening, and if there are concepts or ideas that come out of those meetings, they're usually shared with us either through Economic Development or directly through e-mail from the members who are attending.

I guess, the question kind of said, “Hey, if you were looking at this concept, have you directed?” No, I haven't. If this was something, when could it go live and when would we know about it? What I am going to do is take that advice. The officials are here and I think we should reach out to the chambers and see if that's something where there is interest in the business community for that. If there is, what does that look like? How do we do that? We are late in the season. I think that it is a great idea and, any time, I am open to those conversations. We probably have 21 days leading up to when people are still shipping items out and we have that opportunity. We are probably going to see across the rest of the country a lot of people buying local in all of their home communities.

The “buy local” work is a partnership with the chamber. Some of that “brand: Yukon” is some of the early work that is being worked on. I know that a couple of individuals who sit on the Canadian chamber — we are lucky enough to have two people sitting on the chamber. One is Craig Hougen and the other is Stanley Noel. They both are at that table with others continuing to work on a real local focus. Part of what we are



looking at is supporting product development in partnership with YuKconstruct and Yukon University, and we support the web presence for small businesses.

I am not going to belabour it and go into other work that we are doing. I will leave the questions for the member opposite, take that intriguing idea and bring it over. I will make a commitment to report back to the member opposite, probably not in the House with a written return, unless that is what is requested, but definitely reach out directly and let her know what the response is from the private sector if there is interest and uptake on that concept.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for his receptivity to the idea. I think that there is only so much that we can consume in this territory. Many Yukoners, as we all know, have family and friends across this country and around the world where they traditionally would be sending things, but at some point, when you are facing some financial constraints yourself, the shipping costs become another issue. When the businesses are competing with the giants that are shipping for free, it makes it challenging.

I would appreciate it if the minister would reach out, as he said, to — and it is not just the chambers. We are talking about the artisanal sector here — the number of small microbusinesses that rely upon being able to have sales this season is pretty amazing, but it is also pretty scary to look at the impact on them.

The minister made a comment earlier about the \$100,000, which he said is flow-through funding through the Canada-Yukon Business Service Centre, which is now going to YuKconstruct. I understand that arrangement. Could the minister, though, provide an update for this Legislative Assembly on the total contribution to YuKconstruct by Yukon government?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** This year, in the 2020-21 budget, the funding from the Department of Economic Development to YuKconstruct Makerspace Society is \$350,000.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for that response. Mr. Chair, the government has been advertising — although it is very difficult to read the advertising because it is in magenta with microscopic print and about two inches big in the newspapers — a new immigration strategy for Yukon. We think that's an important initiative. It's 2020 to 2030.

I have a number of questions — and we probably won't get to them all today, Mr. Chair — with respect to some of the matters that are contained in both the backgrounder and the discussion document for a new immigration strategy. Can the minister provide this House with an update as to the timeline for the completion of this immigration strategy for Yukon?

The implication is, as it says in the document, that: "The Yukon Immigration Strategy is limited in scope because of the parameters of the agreement with Canada and the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and Regulations. Yukon and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) are preparing to negotiate a new five-year joint agreement. A date has not yet been set to begin negotiations."

Can the minister update the House as to whether or not a date has now been set to begin negotiations on this agreement?

Failing that, how does he see proceeding with developing a strategy if it's missed by means of the fact that there is no agreement? Whatever strategy you're going to develop is limited in scope, so how is he addressing those limitations?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** If the member opposite will just give me a little bit of space, I'm going to give a little bit of background on it. Economic immigration is something that we focused on over the last bit. It's an essential tool for attracting skilled workers and developing a labour force that supports investment, economic growth, and diversification. Even going into 2021, having gone through the last week of meetings around the geoscience conference and the projected expenditures identified, we're hearing from a number of companies that feel that they are going to be in a position where they are not going to have enough staff, potentially, to meet the demands that are being requested of them, based on the quotes that they're doing.

So, since the Yukon *Immigration Strategy* was drafted 10 years ago, the territory's economy has grown and changed, and we're updating the strategy this year to ensure that it meets the evolving needs of Yukon's employers and communities.

This fall, 2020 — I am going to find out exactly what our date is on it. I believe that it is in the month of December when the consultation on this will conclude. The engagement will seek feedback on existing Yukon immigration programs, including Yukon business nominee programs, the recent introduction of the Yukon community pilot, and how the new strategy can help address issues faced by Yukon employers. I know that the member opposite would be happy to hear also that people who have been in those programs or entered the Yukon through those programs have an opportunity to reflect on their experiences. I think that is an important one, and it is just giving a chance for those clients to talk about how they believe things could be improved or what their experiences were — and, if their experiences weren't that favourable, being able to share that with us in a safe way so that we can ensure that programs change.

The engagement period for the immigration strategy has shifted, as a result. We wanted to have some of this work done in the springtime, and now it has been pushed to this fall. Again, because of COVID-19, there are health and spacing requirements. An updated engagement approach has been proposed to ensure the safety of our partners and stakeholders. The revised engagement strategy will include online surveys as well as phone interviews and virtual meetings. The inputs from the public engagement will feed into the revised immigration strategy, which is expected to be finalized later in 2020-21.

The team is very experienced. Part of what it is going to do is to be able to get us some feedback around how the programs have worked and a sense of where we need to go. I think that this is pertinent information when you are at the table. It is very up-to-date information. We have had a lot of back-and-forth with the federal government around this file. I have worked with two different ministers — Minister Hussen and then Minister Mendicino. In both cases, I started work with Minister Hussen on the Yukon pilot program, and that was really just trying to respond to our Yukon communities about it.

What I just want to illustrate is that my experience with the ministers and the immigration officials whom our officials work with — they have been very supportive. For a small jurisdiction, when you take into consideration how many nominees that we have allocated to the Yukon compared to other big jurisdictions, it has been good — having that information going into December, having a good sense of what we are hearing about where people want to go, being able to reflect that at the negotiating table, and then being able to get a bilateral agreement in place that is updated and still gives us the foundational policy pieces that we need to roll out a larger strategy.

In the current circumstances, we have focused on economic immigration. We will see if that is what we are hearing from our communities. There are definitely other streams and types of immigration programs, but in this particular case, coming into 2021, our hope is that we are going to see our economy back to where it was previous to that. There is going to be a need for folks. We understand the pressures as well that come with that, but at the same time, we think that we are on the right path for the programs.

That pilot program gives a lot of flexibility. It gave employers flexibility. A lot of individuals have stopped me and talked to me — that it was conducive to what individuals want. Some individuals want to be in a small community, but they can't find a full-time job. They know that they can get it between two or three businesses. They want to be in those places, and it's exciting to see individuals from across the world make decisions to move to some of our small communities, bolster the fabric of those communities, and increase the population in them.

I hope that gives the member a little bit of a sense about what we're thinking, and I will leave it at that.

**Ms. Hanson:** The question that I was asking — the minister sort of answered one of them, but the key question was — the statement in the minister's own document is: "The Yukon immigration strategy is limited in scope because of the parameters of the agreement with Canada and the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and Regulations ... A date has not yet been set to begin negotiations." Without that agreement, the strategy that we're working to develop is limited in scope. My question is: Has a date been set to begin those negotiations?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We are in the midst of gathering pertinent, current information about what Yukoners want to see in a strategy. A good thing to know is where you want to start your negotiations. What is your negotiation mandate going to look like? You can set a date, but you should know what you are looking to negotiate, so we are gathering that information on our strategy.

Then we reach out to the Minister of Immigration for Canada and say, "We now have a really good sense because we just finished this particular process — can we come to the table? We would like to maybe amend our current bilateral agreement that we have in place."

As I alluded to previously in my statements, we rolled out a community program that was the first in the country, so we seem to be — actually, the department and officials seem to be

very successful in ensuring that the goals of the department, as reflected and illustrated through the ideas and values of Yukoners, get to go to the table. I think what we're saying is that we're going to get this information. When we get it, we can compile it. We want to make sure we don't set a date that actually puts us in a position where we don't have our position and we haven't analyzed all the data yet. So, we will do that first, and then we'll set a date. We'll have an opportunity to see if we have to tweak our bilateral relationship. Maybe we don't; maybe what we'll hear from Yukoners is exactly where we are right now within the programs.

So, we'll get that work done, and then we will move to negotiating or to changing the bilateral agreement. I think that looks to me to be a good order of operations. It doesn't seem like we're doing anything wrong. It's important work that we're undertaking. I think that the department has a really good handle on this — and the officials who are actually looking to roll it out and then negotiate those agreements.

**Ms. Hanson:** That's an interesting approach.

The government announced in August 2019 — at the end of August and then again in September — and signed a letter of intent with the Republic of the Philippines. When we were preparing for what we hoped was going to be budget debate last spring, I went on the websites. I wanted to see what the update was, because the letter of intent had been signed by the Minister of Economic Development and the Philippines' Secretary of Labour according to the Yukon government's website on August 28, 2019.

But in February 2020, the Philippine government website said that the agreement had not been signed. So, a letter of intent may have been signed, but the agreement had not been signed. Could the minister update this House as to whether or not that agreement with the Government of the Philippines has been signed?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think this will be — seeing the time, I'm going to answer this question, and then I will move that we report progress.

We haven't signed a final agreement. There was back and forth work between the department and the Philippine government. I know it was reported to me that they would like to have that agreement signed. We anticipated that it would be something that could be done in the early part of 2021.

I know that there have been some overtures from officials that they want us to — it's very significant to them, and they wanted to have the agreement signed off. A lot of jurisdictions have reached out on some of that.

I can get an update on that as well from the department and make sure. There are a number of things that we'll follow up on — good ideas and concepts from the Member for Whitehorse Centre — and, of course, some other items that we will get more thorough information for.

Seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Pillai that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### **Chair's report**

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.*

### **The following legislative returns were tabled November 30, 2020:**

34-3-46

Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: School capacity — Porter Creek Secondary School portable mould remediation (Mostyn)

34-3-47

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





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 71

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Tuesday, December 1, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Tuesday, December 1, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** It is my absolute honour to welcome some special guests here today. In the gallery we have Jim Boyde. I am going to introduce Jim as a coach and a mentor to indigenous athletes from across the Yukon. I know that he has had an impact on all of us, so thank you for being here today — and his wife, Pam.

We have Doris Allen, the wife of the late Harry Allen, and my dear Auntie Effie is here as well. Both are former skiers, as well, and have had an impact on our community, along with Uncle Alfie. As people may know, Alfie is Annie Smith's younger brother. My brother-in-law Joe Tetlich, welcome today. I have two very special guests and a beautiful part of my life, my two older sisters, Glenna Tetlich and Shirley Frost. Both are here today for the tribute.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Frost sisters' Canadian Junior Cross-Country Ski Championships 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I rise today on behalf of all the members of this Legislature to pay tribute to the Frost sisters, Shirley and Glenna, and their cousins, the late Agnes Charlie and Mary Frost. Fifty years ago, in 1970, they achieved something remarkable — a feat that took many in Canada's cross-country skiing community by surprise, though their family, friends, and coaches may tell you that they weren't surprised in the least.

In 1970, these four young women travelled from Old Crow to the Canadian Junior Cross-Country Ski Championships in Manitoba. All four of them competed in the five-kilometre junior girls' race. They faced tough weather — about minus 25 with winds gusting and ski tracks constantly blown in. They also faced some tough competition with two skiers from Ontario favoured to win the race. But Glenna, Mary, Shirley, and Agnes had been training hard, between 40 and 60 kilometres a day. They were receiving some amazing coaching from Jim Boyd, from Alice Frost — their mother and auntie — and from the late and much-loved Father Mouchet. They were also simply talented, determined skiers who wanted to represent their community abroad.

The family had grown up in Old Crow where children in the community are very active and often out on the land. They brought all their grit, skill, and determination to that race, Mr. Speaker. The results were simply amazing. All four of them placed in order — 1, 2, 3, 4. Their achievement marked the first time, and most likely the last, in cross-country skiing in Canada that four junior girls from the same family ranked together in all top spots in a single race. It was a truly remarkable moment in Yukon's cross-country skiing history and I think in Canada's.

In the following year, Mary, Glenna, and Shirley also swept the podium at the Nor-Am Cup — the North American cross-country ski championships. Their legacy continues today. The program that Father Mouchet created — the Territorial Experimental Ski Training program, or TEST program, continues to support Yukon's young skiers today. Their story and their legacy continue to inspire. Today, they are beautiful, spirited elders who have dedicated their lives to ensuring that youth have opportunities to excel without barriers. They are humble people who are simple, kind, and dedicated to making the Yukon a better place.

Please join me, Mr. Speaker, in recognizing Glenna and Shirley Frost and their late cousins, Agnes Charlie and Mary Frost. Mahsi' cho.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any further tributes?  
Are there any returns or documents for tabling?  
Are there any reports of committees?

## REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

**Mr. Adel:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the 22<sup>nd</sup> report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates Larry Bagnell on his 20 years of service as Yukon's representative as a Member of Parliament.

**Ms. White:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:  
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to encourage and enable public servants to work from home as recommended by Yukon's chief medical officer of health.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Mandatory mask use in indoor public spaces

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Starting today, a new ministerial order passed under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* makes the use of masks in indoor public spaces mandatory for all Yukoners over the age of five. This applies to indoor areas of a building that are intended for the common use of the whole public. This includes, but isn't limited to, public buildings, stores, lobbies, hallways, waiting rooms, public bathrooms, and elevators.

Our government is committed to protecting Yukoners from COVID-19 while balancing the needs of people's lives and the economy. This mask mandate adds an additional level of protection against COVID-19 that allows us to carry on with our lives without having to introduce new public health measures at this time. When used in addition to following the "safe six", mask use can effectively help curb the spread of COVID-19. Mask use can reduce the risks of an infected person passing the virus along to someone else and wearing them can protect people from becoming infected. However, like bicycle helmets and seatbelts, masks are only effective when they are worn.

We know that many Yukoners have already been wearing masks and that many businesses and organizations have already been requesting mask use from their clientele. This mandate will add an additional level of compliance and ensure that indoor public spaces are subject to the same rules.

There are some exceptions. The current recommendations for schools will remain in place. Those recommendations are that students age 10 and older wear non-medical masks in school settings where physical distancing cannot be maintained. This order also does not apply to workplaces that do not offer services to the public. For those places, the individual workplace policy will apply. Masks should be made of a tightly woven fabric such as cotton or linen and should ideally contain at least two — preferably three — layers to help stop the spread of viruses.

To use a mask properly, make sure that it fits tightly around your nose, mouth and chin. Keep it dry and clean and make sure you wash your hands before and after taking it on and off.

I would like to encourage all Yukoners to support local businesses and buy reusable masks locally whenever possible. However, we know that buying a reasonable mask isn't an option for every Yukoner. That's why we are committing to providing masks to our most vulnerable populations. We will make over 200,000 non-medical masks available over the coming months and we'll make sure that this targets our most vulnerable. For a limited time, masks will be available at public facilities for people who do not have their own. We will also provide masks to First Nation, municipal, and territorial government offices upon request. By implementing this mask mandate, we are asking all Yukoners to consider the health and safety of their families, their communities, and the most vulnerable members of our society.

We know that Yukoners want to do the right thing. We will be encouraging people to wear masks and teaching them how to use them properly through ongoing public awareness

campaigns. Enforcing the use of masks with a fine or penalty is our last resort. We're asking all Yukoners to come together to protect their community during this pandemic and encourage each other to keep others' safety at the top of mind. As Dr. Hanley has said many times, Mr. Speaker, we are all Team Yukon.

We want to thank everyone who has already been wearing a mask and following the rest of the "safe six" to protect our community.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I would like to thank the minister for this statement. As a starting point, I would like to note that the overwhelming evidence from health professionals around the country indicates that well-designed, well-fitting masks help to prevent the spread of infectious respiratory droplets. For that reason, the Yukon Party supports mask use as a measure to help limit the spread of COVID-19 among Yukoners. When we look across the country, we see that almost every jurisdiction in the country has implemented some type of mask-use mandate. Furthermore, when we look around our communities, we already notice that mask use has become very prevalent and common. Many Yukon businesses and facilities have already instituted the requirement for patrons to use masks. Ultimately, we think that Yukoners want to do the right thing, and at this point, health officials are telling us that this is the right thing.

We would, however, like to note some concerns that we have with the mask mandate as outlined by the minister today. First of all, we continue to advocate that ministerial orders issued under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* should be allowed some type of legislative scrutiny or democratic oversight prior to being issued.

We have tabled a private members' bill that is before the Legislature now that would require ministerial orders like this one to be reviewed by a legislative committee. We think that such a process would lend itself to better outcomes and would give the government's action more democratic legitimacy. Unfortunately, the Liberals don't agree, and they have chosen to issue this ministerial order, like those before it, unilaterally, without consultation, and without input from legislators.

The government first announced this policy a week ago, and the Premier has claimed that they have been working on this for weeks, so there was plenty of time to allow for oversight. If we were all on Team Yukon, as the minister says, then this shouldn't have been an issue.

We would also like to note some concerns about the communication surrounding this ministerial order. The Liberals have once again chosen to wait until after a measure is in place to provide the public with details about it.

This happened a couple of weeks ago when they opened the drive-through testing over the weekend and didn't let Yukoners know until Monday. This type of communication has led to confusion about public health measures. We have seen discrepancies between different government sources on the ages that are affected. This inconsistency creates confusion among parents, and this confusion can unfortunately undermine support for this public health measure.



We also have some concerns about enforcement. In his press conference this morning, the Premier indicated that they would be focusing on education rather than enforcement, which we believe is the best way forward. Enforcement should be the last resort. We urge the government not to be too heavy-handed in the implementation of this measure.

We also have questions on who is exempt and how the government will ensure that those people are not targeted by harassment either by the public or by enforcement officers.

We also have not seen any clear guidance provided to businesses about their responsibilities with regard to their staff and persons visiting their business. I look forward to hearing the minister's response and hope that he will address our concerns about this measure.

**Ms. White:** There isn't a person anywhere who hasn't been affected by COVID, and we are all dealing with these challenges in different ways. Some of us have turned outward with acts of service for others, and some of us have turned inward in contemplation and some in fear.

Some believe that any action, direction, or restriction regarding COVID is an overreaction or an infringement of personal rights. I disagree. Drinking alcohol while driving was once legal, but that is no longer the case. Smoking was allowed in public places, including confined places like airplanes — but no longer. These decisions were made with the collective good of our population in mind. They weren't decided to infringe on individual rights but to protect the folks around us for the collective good.

We have the power and the responsibility to protect each other. I think that we can view the mask mandate in different ways. We can view the requirement to wear a mask with resentment, with acceptance, or even with anger, but I challenge those out there who are angry or resentful about this order to look at those around you. Do you have an elderly person, an elderly parent, or even a grandparent in your life? Do you know anyone who lives with a complex medical condition? Have you ever had to change your behaviours because someone you cared about needed that from you?

When I wear a mask, I think about my grandma who lives in a care facility. If COVID makes it into her home, she and the other residents won't be able to fight it or possibly survive it. I think about my young friends who are already vulnerable to things like the common cold whose immune systems wouldn't be able to fight this virus, so I hope that others will join me in fighting it for them.

Wearing a mask isn't just about you or me; it's about all of us, and it's about the collective. If doing something as simple as covering my nose and my mouth can protect the folks around me, then I'm happy to do it. So, we can either view this as a stop sign — something that gets in our way — or we can view this as an act of love for those around us.

I and many others are choosing it out of an act of love. Wearing a mask is a small sacrifice to keep each other safe.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to just acknowledge for a moment the words of both members opposite. I really

appreciate their comments to Yukoners just now. From my perspective, I do feel a bit like Team Yukon. I want to thank all members of this Legislature for working together to protect the health and safety of Yukoners. I'm not supposed to say "thank you", but thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I will answer a couple of the specific questions that were raised. First of all, with respect to the legislation that the opposition tabled yesterday — what I read in it was that, if ministerial orders were to come, that, within 45 days of working in the Legislature, there be an opportunity to talk about those ministerial orders. Just to let everybody know, Mr. Speaker, I signed this ministerial order this morning. The Premier and the chief medical officer of health spoke about this new order to the public, and today — on the first day back in the Legislature — I am raising it right here for us to have a chance for all of us to comment. I appreciate the comments.

With respect to communication, I agree that it is very important to get this communication out to Yukoners. The Premier and Dr. Hanley have been signalling for several weeks that it would be coming. I have been on calls with municipalities and with First Nations to talk to them about it, and so has Dr. Hanley. We've been in those conversations. I know we've been talking with the business community. Some of this policy was shaped by that input from the business community, as a matter of fact. I think that we just put the order out as of yesterday, so we will work now on a concerted educational campaign to talk both with businesses about how business owners can do this safely with their staff and with their clientele and also with the public broadly.

I appreciate as well, Mr. Speaker, that it's true that the overwhelming evidence is that masks help and that almost all jurisdictions have brought forward a policy regarding masks.

We will do our best to encourage Yukoners by modelling the use of masks to try to get everyone on board. Just to reinforce the point that was brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek North — and I will just say it again: Enforcing the use of masks with a fine or penalty is our last resort.

I thank all Members of the Legislative Assembly for our unified front on this policy. I know it is to help protect the health and safety of Yukoners. I know that Yukoners want to do the right thing and we will work to support them in that.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: COVID-19 vaccine

**Mr. Hassard:** Over the past two weeks, we have been asking about the government's plan for distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. The Premier has repeatedly told us that he is in close contact with the Prime Minister and other premiers and that he is making the case to Ottawa that rural and remote communities need special consideration. That is great, and we support the effort of negotiating with the federal government, but we know that once the vaccines are approved, there is a lot of work to get those vaccines distributed here in the territory.

The distribution of vaccines is a territorial responsibility, and in particular, it is the responsibility of the Health minister.

The government notably did not let the minister speak on this area of her responsibility yesterday when we asked these questions, so can the Minister of Health and Social Services assure Yukoners that they are working on a plan for the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I am pleased to acknowledge the collaboration between the departments of this government with regard to how we deal with COVID. I clearly have a voice to speak for Yukoners. I will do that in collaboration with my colleagues. I want to acknowledge the great work of the department and the great work of the chief medical officer of health and his team. We are working closely with our federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts. We have devised a vaccine plan. I have had meetings with my northern colleagues to speak about how the distribution will essentially take effect in the north, knowing that we certainly can't look at distribution based on our normal process. We have to look at isolation, we have to consider our population base, and we have to look at the proximity of how we deal with COVID in the north with regard to our health services — our isolation and many other factors we need to consider.

This includes having conversations with our territories and the Public Health Agency of Canada to discuss the distribution to priority populations specific to a northern context.

**Mr. Hassard:** Last week, Dr. Bonnie Henry said that the BC Centre for Disease Control has already created a COVID-19 vaccination program and that BC would be ready to distribute the vaccine as soon as it is ready. In Ontario, the government has named former General Rick Hillier to oversee the vaccine rollout in that province. They said that they will have a plan in place by Christmas. In PEI, the provincial government has put together a vaccination rollout committee. It is clear that every other province and territory is moving quickly to prepare for this, and front and centre in all of these rollouts and planning have been the ministers of health. Notably, Yukon's Minister of Health and Social Services has not been front and centre.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services please provide us with an update on the plans for the distribution of the vaccine so that Yukoners can understand how the limited amount of vaccines will be prioritized?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** What I can verify for Yukoners is that we do have a plan, despite the opposition's responses and questions — always fear-mongering, wanting to put fear into Yukoners. We have a plan. We are working very closely with our federal counterparts. We know there is a distribution, we have identified how that will evolve in the Yukon, we are working with our northern counterparts, and we are meeting on a weekly basis.

The vaccine procurement has been overseen by the federal government on behalf of all Canadian jurisdictions. The Government of Yukon will be responsible for delivering to residents, once they become available in the Yukon. We do have a plan, Mr. Speaker, and I am very happy to make that commitment today to Yukoners. Please rest assured that we have a plan in place. Once the vaccine becomes available, we will look at getting the distribution out as quickly as it comes

into our hands. We are working very closely with our counterparts across the country.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, all that we are asking for is for the minister to provide a copy of that plan to Yukoners so that they can understand what is going on here. Many of the vaccines being reviewed require two doses. So, a first dose needs to be administered and then, after a fixed number of days, they need to get a second dose. This means that we will need a strong system of administering the doses, tracking the timing, and communicating with the people who have received the vaccine.

Again, this is a responsibility of the territorial government and, in particular, the Minister of Health and Social Services. Can the Minister of Health and Social Services provide this House and Yukoners with an update on the development of this system?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** The Member for Pelly Nisutlin, as a leader of the Yukon Party, has been putting false information out there and now is clearly defining some procedures that are being considered, and not all of the facts and not all of the information is being distributed to Yukoners. We would be happy to distribute that information. We will do that in collaboration with the experts — the medical experts, our chief medical officer of health.

We spent quite a lot of time in this Legislative Assembly defending the great work of our chief medical officer of health — just now perhaps discrediting that work. I want to just acknowledge to Yukoners that, since March, we have been working diligently on this side of the House. We want to now just take the time to acknowledge the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit and all the staff in Health and Social Services, all of our staff in the Health Emergency Operations Centre for working collaboratively with our colleagues in Community Services around how we will essentially distribute the vaccines across the north with our northern partners to ensure that every person, 100 percent, is covered across the north.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic mandatory mask policy**

**Ms. McLeod:** The mandatory mask policy came into effect today. Unfortunately, this is another case of the government dropping the ball on communications. Instead of issuing guidance in advance of the policy coming into force, instead of providing definitions of where it applies in advance, instead of providing information on who is exempt in advance, the government — just like with the drive-through testing last week — waited until the policy came into effect to provide any details. It wasn't until 9:30 this morning that the government held a press conference to provide any details.

Why did the government not provide this information to Yukoners in advance?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, what we did was signal to Yukoners that the mask policy was coming. What we did yesterday — I think yesterday afternoon, I signed that ministerial order. That ministerial order had some details which we are now sharing with Yukoners. We put out a livestream

this morning with the Premier and the chief medical officer of health. I just gave a ministerial statement on it here in this House.

I think those are ways that we are reaching out with the detailed information that was decided and finalized yesterday. We will work with Yukoners. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? I think most Yukoners understand that it's a mask policy. Everybody has got the idea about wearing masks. Thank you to Yukoners who have been doing a great job at wearing a mask and doing their part because I think Yukoners understand that we will all contribute together to protecting the health and safety of Yukoners.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, now, as discussed, the government has continued to mismanage the communications for the COVID response. When I last checked on yukon.ca as of 12:10 p.m. today, you get conflicting information on who is required to wear masks. If you click on the section about masks, it says children under the age of two do not need to wear masks. On the same page, just a couple of lines down, it says the chief medical officer of health recommends wearing a mask for children 10 years of age and older.

Then if you go to the section about school buses during COVID-19, it says Yukon's chief medical officer of health requires non-medical masks as of December 1, 2020, for bus drivers and children 10 years of age and older.

Then finally, at this morning's press conference, the Premier said this applied only to children five years of age and up.

So, why is the government giving so many mixed messages?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, there is no mixed messaging other than what we're hearing from the member opposite. What we can say is that initial conversations we had with the chief medical officer of health — we were going with two years, based upon his recommendation. At that time, we did hear from concerned Yukoners. We know that Dr. Hanley and his team looked at World Health Organization requirements and the most up-to-date journalistic reviews and decided — based upon input from Yukoners and also from the most up-to-date information — to change that from two years to five years.

Now, that was explained, not only this week, but last week as well. I guess the members opposite just decide that they don't want to hear that information and then say that there is misinformation.

There is also another policy that the Minister of Education can talk about that we also explained very clearly today when it comes to schools. Again, we do recognize that change is happening, and over the last eight months, we have had a lot of different situations where the requirements and the regulations and the guidelines have changed. We would expect that the Yukon Party would help us out with the communication if there are. What I will do is take a look at the website to make sure that all the information represents the current guidelines and the current recommendations. I thank the member opposite for bringing that to our attention. Again, it is complicated. There

are lots of moving pieces here, but we want people to get their most up-to-date information at yukon.ca.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, Yukoners rely on and expect the government to provide them with clear, accurate information in advance of policies coming into force so that they can properly follow the rules. Instead, what they have had from the government are late announcements, like the drive-through testing centre last week, or a website that does not share all the possible COVID exposures as they relate to incoming and outgoing flights. Now there are a lot of mixed messages and delayed messages from the government with respect to the mask policy. The government should have publicly shared a very clear document in advance of the mask policy coming into force so that Yukoners know exactly what the rules are.

With respect to those who are exempt from wearing masks, can the government tell us how they are going to ensure that these individuals will be able to identify themselves to enforcement officers to prove that they meet the requirements for exemption?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Again, thanks for the question on masks. We appreciate this conversation here in the Legislature for Yukoners. The Premier and Dr. Hanley have been talking about this over the past several livestreams, talking about the need to move to a mask policy. We spoke about it here in the Legislature over a week ago. We then indicated publicly that it was coming. We let people know that it was as of this date today. We then brought in the policy and, with the policy, we are now broadcasting that out to all Yukoners.

With respect to enforcement, we want enforcement or using penalties to be our last resort, as I have now said three times today. Our CEMA enforcement officers, just to let you know, Mr. Speaker, are great at this. If they get brought in because someone has a concern, they will talk it through with the person. They will just have a conversation with that person. If they explain that there is a reason why they are unable to wear a mask, I am sure that is fine. We are asking all Yukoners to be respectful and kind as they go through this. We don't want anyone harassing anyone.

I think that it is all about education and I'm sure that we are all going to get there together.

#### **Question re: Whitehorse Emergency Shelter services**

**Ms. White:** The low-barrier approach to the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter has been an important step forward. It means that folks who require the services offered by the shelter can access them without fear of being turned away. But as the shelter nears two years of government operation, glaring issues continue to face both staff and the residents of the shelter.

Yesterday, the Yukon Employees' Union wrote a letter to the minister. The letter shows that the government isn't giving front-line workers at the shelter the tools that they need to support the shelter's residents and users. It lists critical gaps in training, such as mental health first aid, non-violent crisis intervention, and suicide intervention, to name a few.

Can the minister explain why, nearly two years after taking over the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, front-line workers still don't have access to this essential training?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the incredible work of the front-line staff at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. They are providing compassionate support for vulnerable Yukoners, and for this I cannot thank them enough. The hiring practices and what we do at the shelter is a priority. Like everywhere else in our system, we want to ensure that we find the right competency of skills. Where people fall short of those skills, we bring into place practices, and we do that in collaboration with our partners in the Public Service Commission.

With regard to the letter from the union, we would be happy to work with the union on some of these concerns that have been brought to our attention. I do know that, just a few short weeks ago, we announced our approaches with the Public Service Commission around transparency and equity, as well as around indigenous supports, indigenous training, and awareness.

There are certainly opportunities for us to make improvements and I want to acknowledge that here and now. We have had a short time and a short window in the pandemic to work with the services that we have, and I want to just acknowledge the exceptional support that the staff are giving at the moment.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, it has been two years since the government took over operations, and I think that, more than thanks, the shelter employees would really like essential training. The gaps in training at the shelter also have an effect on shelter residents. The services offered by the shelter rely entirely on staff being able to deliver them. If the staff aren't sure how to respond to a specific situation at the shelter, then what assurances are there that residents are receiving the help that they need?

The YEU letter also states — and I quote: “Specific policy ... on how to handle the many difficult situations that front-line staff face daily either do not exist or have not been communicated to the staff.” *Putting People First* calls for a move toward trauma-informed care, but without proper training and policies, this approach can't be put in place.

Does the minister acknowledge that these important gaps in training are undermining a trauma-informed approach at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, what I would like to speak about is the services that we do offer at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, acknowledging that we deal with vulnerable populations. It is critical that we look at trauma, at what causes trauma, at how we support the individuals, and that we ensure that we have services at the shelter, recognizing that we have limitations at the moment in terms of how and what we provide for the clients in utilizing virtual supports.

We have supports throughout the community. We have staff on site who are skilled to provide the connections.

If there are specific concerns that the letter the Member for Takhini-Kopper King is just referencing that just came in last night from the union, certainly I want to acknowledge that we

are working with our staff. We are working with the department to address some of the concerns that have been brought to our attention. Is it perfect? No, it isn't. Of course, one day, we would like to have a shelter that meets the needs of everyone.

At the moment, we have the Third Party wanting us to do one thing one day and something else the next day — shut it down, protect the businesses, do all kinds of things. Right now, what we are doing is ensuring that the critical needs of the clients who frequent the shelter are there and supported.

**Ms. White:** Just a reminder to the minister that the Yukon government — her Yukon government — took over the shelter in January 2019 — nearly two years ago. For the precariously housed, practising the “safe six” can be difficult or even impossible at times, and this is part of the challenge faced by the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter staff in working with folks who need help during the pandemic. Yet we are told that the COVID-19 staff information document that front-line workers rely on was last updated on May 22; that's six months ago.

Another issue is the lack of sick leave. Whitehorse Emergency Shelter has, until recently, relied entirely on auxiliary on-call positions. This means that they don't have access to sick leave and it puts both staff and shelter users at risk. This needs to change.

Will the minister commit to ensuring that all Whitehorse Emergency Shelter staff can access sick leave as a measure to protect the shelter staff, the Yukoners who use the shelter services, and the general public?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** We are working with our staff at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. We continue to train the staff. We are looking at all of our policies. It is evolving — the policies evolve.

As we are in the middle of COVID, we recognized that we needed to bring in supports, so we have. We've evolved since we've taken over. When Health and Social Services took the shelter over, we had 13 people in there.

Right now, we are providing services in the middle of the pandemic and we are evolving. We are providing protocols to ensure that safe protocols and practices are in place. We are looking at hiring further positions. At the moment, we have created permanent positions in the shelter to provide supports — I'm happy to say that — but we are looking at some alternatives. We are doing that with the good work of the managers and, of course, the staff at Health and Social Services. We will do that in collaboration with our Public Service Commission staff as well as we look at stabilizing our staff there so that we can ensure an appropriate complement of supports for the clientele.

Great services out into the community — to our NGO partners, I want to just emphasize the great work there and that we will continue to do our best to ensure that our clients at the shelter are well-supported.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Over six weeks ago, the Liberals said that they would give \$15 million for tourism relief, but the

Liberals have purposefully been stretching out the announcement to maximize the number of new releases for partisan gain, Mr. Speaker.

These businesses are in desperate need of relief, but instead the Liberals are playing politics with the money, and members of the Liberal team insult bars and restaurants by calling them “drug dealers”. Even after yesterday’s announcement, we still have no details on where the other \$11 million in tourism relief is going. Just imagine those businesses sitting there waiting, Mr. Speaker.

Why is this Minister of Tourism and Culture sitting on \$11 million and refusing to announce it?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, thanks for the question. I am really happy to stand in the Legislative Assembly today and talk about two new really important programs to tourism businesses. The tourism non-accommodation sector supplement and the cultural and tourism non-profit sector supplements that we announced yesterday are supplements to the Yukon business relief fund. Again, we have taken a whole-of-government approach since day one. We have introduced many programs since the start of COVID-19, including the events cancellation fund, the sick leave, essential workers, and Yukon business relief, and we are now introducing a suite of programs that are a net for those businesses that have maxed out of some of the programs. It was the same for the accommodation program that we announced when we talked about the \$15-million investment that our government is and will be making to the tourism sector.

These programs are essential. We have worked with our partners. These are relief programs, and we have a suite of programs that we have worked on since the beginning of the pandemic. We will continue to work with our partners. They helped us design these programs for them.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I believe that I asked the minister about the \$11 million that she was sitting on. She just spoke to this announcement hot on the heels of members of the party calling bars and restaurants “drug dealers”. The announcement has a major flaw to it. Bars and restaurants only qualify if at least 60 percent of their revenue comes from visitors, but bars and restaurants are struggling for a whole lot of reasons other than just a lack of tourism. There are government-mandated limitations on spacing and capacity. People are going out less. These are having serious impacts on businesses, Mr. Speaker.

The result of designing the policy this way is that a lot of businesses on the brink will not be helped, so can the Minister of Tourism and Culture tell us how the Liberals landed on the 60-percent threshold?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am happy to talk about the threshold, but first I would like to talk about the health measures that have been put in place to protect Yukoners. We have worked as a whole government. We have worked with our chief medical officer to put in place the essential guidelines to keep Yukoners safe. Those guidelines are not only limited to Yukon. This is a global pandemic. We are doing what we need to do to keep Yukoners safe.

Members across may not agree with that answer, but we followed the science. We followed the chief medical officer’s

recommendations, and businesses are complying with that. I am happy to see that, as the minister responsible for occupational health and safety, our department is absolutely working on that front, too, to ensure that businesses are supported. We are taking a supportive approach.

In terms of the 60-percent threshold, this is derived from the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon as an eligibility requirement for the Elevate program. It used to be 80 percent. We reduced it to 60 percent in line with TIA. That has actually made restaurants and bars eligible for this fund.

**Mr. Istchenko:** We totally understand that these businesses — we are in a pandemic and there are some things that are mandated, but nevertheless, they have fewer customers, Mr. Speaker.

We know that members of the Liberal team have made discouraging comments about the bars and restaurants, referring to these hard-working and highly regulated businesses as “drug dealers”. We also know that the Liberal government has refused to distance themselves from those remarks; that’s disappointing. In fact, the Deputy Premier shockingly said yesterday that he supports his colleague for making those comments. Despite these attacks on bars and restaurants by members of the Liberal team, many were holding out hope for relief, and they were disappointed yesterday when the announcement came with a huge asterisk: The only eligibility is if 60 percent of your business is from tourists. So, as we’ve discussed, these businesses are suffering from so much more than just a loss of tourism.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the government remove this short-sighted requirement?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I want to also just carry on with my previous answer in regard to the 60-percent threshold. This is based on 2019 revenues from tourism visitation. I suspect that most businesses will not have any issue showing that 60 percent of their revenue was derived from visitation.

Again, we’ve worked with our partner — with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon. We worked with them in partnership to set this eligibility requirement. I think that you’ve heard the president talk about that in the media just recently — that we have not heard any pushback around this from the industry. Actually, reducing the threshold makes restaurants and bars eligible — 80 percent would have been a struggle for them, potentially.

This is actually very much in support of restaurants and bars. I want to remind the member opposite as well that we have had all of these other programs in place, so all businesses in Yukon have been supported. I’m really happy to hear him speaking potentially in favour of programs today — maybe; I’m not sure.

But I want to remind Yukoners that they voted against this supplementary budget.

#### **Question re: ATAC Resources tote road project**

**Mr. Kent:** So, the Yukon Liberal government has denied a permit for the ATAC tote road over three years after YESAB said that it could proceed with certain mitigations. The

company began that environmental assessment process on this project in 2016.

As I mentioned yesterday, this company has been active for 13 years and invested over \$100 million in exploration in this area. The minister said yesterday — and I'll quote: "... I think it's important to make a note that the proponent that has applied for this application, which has been noted here, does have the ability to improve their application and apply for this. This is not a full stop on this."

Can the minister elaborate on this comment? Is he suggesting that the proponent resubmit to YESAB and risk millions of dollars more?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Again, for individuals who are listening to our debate today, we are talking about an application that was turned down by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. The reason that it was turned down was because of two key points.

First, the company did not demonstrate sufficiently in its application that the significant adverse environmental and socio-economic effects identified in the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board evaluation could have properly been mitigated, as the member opposite said. There were YESAB recommendations, and this application didn't meet the benchmark to mitigate those.

Secondly, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun identified a number of significant adverse impacts that may occur on its treaty rights, including hunting, fishing, trapping, and its use of the area for traditional pursuits if the project was to proceed at this time.

The Government of Yukon agreed with these concerns and determined that the application did not appropriately or sufficiently indicate how these impacts would be mitigated — so, a bit on that.

What I was referring to yesterday is that I think that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, as many know here, has always been very client-centred. There seem to be some challenges with the application, and I urge the individuals to reach out to the department.

**Mr. Kent:** In their news release yesterday, ATAC suggested that they do not agree with many aspects of the government's decision. So, in March 2018, the minister told this Legislature about the ATAC deal — that this is a new way of doing business and, in fact, this is how business gets done. Now we find out that this is just another case of this minister being a big talker but unable to deliver.

It has been three and a half years since YESAB issued a recommendation that this project proceed with mitigations. It has been two and a half years since the minister told us that this is how business gets done, but his new way of doing business is just a way for the Liberals to string companies along, waste money, and then deny their permits. The minister said yesterday that he spoke to a CEO of a mining company that would prefer to spend all of their money in the Yukon.

So, can the minister tell us: Was this before or after he told them that he had pulled the rug out from under ATAC, a company that has spent over \$100 million in the past 13 years?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I don't really believe that countering a series of personal attacks is leading to any value here for the Legislative Assembly today.

Again, I have shared, in my answer for question one, what the challenge was with the application. I would hope that, under a Yukon Party government, it wouldn't be any different.

Maybe — I would love to hear that from the member opposite: If the Yukon Party were in government, would this process be any different? This was an application that was sent in to a technical team of professionals that assessed it. So, maybe just for Yukoners: Would it be different? I would love to know that.

We will look to the expertise of our department; they will assess and we'll go from there.

**Mr. Kent:** Just a reminder for the member opposite: He is the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

On April 10, 2017, this minister went on CBC Radio to brag about Barrick Gold investing in the ATAC project. He bragged that, with the entry of Barrick into the Yukon, we now had all the major gold players in the territory. He went on to say that this was due to his Liberal government's policies and that made Yukon a great place to invest. Well, what a difference three and a half years can make.

Since that time, Barrick Gold has pulled out of the Yukon and now the ATAC project that Barrick first invested in is in jeopardy after the Liberals strung the company along for over three years. So much for his new way of doing business.

One of the very first things the Liberals promised the mining industry was a collaborative framework to deal with the issues of timelines and reassessments. Since that time, this minister and the Premier have been unable to deliver on the big promises of this file. Can the minister tell us why?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, what I do remember over the last number of years is sitting down with investors across the country who tend to finance these projects. One thing they said was, "Please — not like the last mandate where there was a lot of money spent on exploration." Inevitably, you have to make sure that mines get opened.

I think that most Yukoners are happy when we have good-paying jobs. Their children can come back to the Yukon and work to have a great quality of life. We can see that, whether you're applying for the Eagle project or you're working outside of Mayo — maybe you're applying to work at the Minto mine, or maybe now, with the many jobs that have just been posted, you have the opportunity to work for Alexco — three great companies.

I know that, when I speak with investors across the country — although we may take a lot of attacks here in the Legislative Assembly from the opposition — what they're really looking at is the fact that you can take that project and move it to that point. Usually that's done with a good solid assessment system as well as good relationships with First Nation governments.

The rest of North America understands that. The mining sector understands that. I just don't know why the Yukon Party doesn't understand it.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

## Notice of government private members' business

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of government private members to be called on Wednesday, December 2, 2020. They are Motion No. 237, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre, and Motion No. 350, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

**Speaker:** We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### Bill No. 11: *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015* — Third Reading

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

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, the House has had a thorough discussion and covered a significant amount of material during the debate of Bill No. 11. I would like to take a couple of minutes to discuss the bill and its context before the vote at third reading.

As I mentioned at second reading and discussed during Committee of the Whole, the tabled amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* are critical in order to provide greater certainty to the registration of category A and category B settlement land in the Yukon Land Titles Office. Our government has been working diligently to come up with viable options for the registration of settlement land at the Land Titles Office in a way that meets the objective marketability while respecting the First Nations' jurisdictions and protecting First Nations' land interests.

We are pleased to be working together with Yukon First Nation governments to increase opportunities for land and economic development here in the territory. To respond to the recommendations set out by the land titles registry working group, changes are required to Yukon's *Land Titles Act, 2015*, and subsequently, changes will also be required to the settlement lands regulation. The tabled amendments — the ones before the House here today — expand the definitions of “subsidiary certificate of title” and “development agreement” and recognize the authority of the Yukon First Nation governments in respect of the development agreements, plans of subdivision, and approvals of air space plans.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned during the debate of this bill, the proposed amendments will enable us to continue working with interested First Nation governments to support their use of the Yukon Land Titles Office to register their settlement land. In conclusion, I recommend that the members of this

Legislature support the passing of the *Act to Amend the Land Titles Act, 2015* as a means of responding to the recommendations that were set out by the land titles registry working group, providing Yukon First Nation governments greater certainty in registering their settlement land.

I urge all members to support the passing of Bill No. 11 at third reading. I would like to thank the members of the land titles registry working group for their diligence and dedication in finding a solution and working with our partners, particularly First Nation governments, to make this progressive move here in the territory, while protecting the rights of Yukon First Nations on their land.

**Mr. Cathers:** I am not going to speak to this at length, since I have previously spoken to this legislation. I am pleased to see this coming forward. The major changes to the *Land Titles Act* — or I should say, the introduction of the new act — was something done by the last Yukon Party government, with me as Minister of Justice. We recognize that, since that time, there were some additional changes that were identified and are necessary to fully implement the desire to see First Nations, beginning with Kwanlin Dün, to actually complete the registry of settlement land in a land titles registry.

Again, I would congratulate all who have been involved in this work over the years for their efforts. I am pleased to support the passage of this legislation.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for her summation of Bill No. 11 with respect to the amendments to the *Land Titles Act*. I would echo that I think that we have come a long way with respect to this bill. The first reading was in March. We debated at second reading on November 5 and, in fact, it is 25 years since the first four First Nations finalized their agreements and 15 years since Kwanlin Dün completed their agreements. As the minister said, it is to the great credit of the land titles registry working group that, in fact, their persistence and patience has finally seen the passage of amendments to the *Land Titles Act* that will allow First Nation governments to pass their own lands act — as Kwanlin Dün has done — which define, as they have done, the values and the uses for their lands, including the economic opportunities that may be realized as a result.

As with all of the legislation that we have passed today, and as the minister commented again today, the key to having this come into effect is that we have to have regulations passed. So, I hope the minister will be able to tell us with some clarity when that will happen, because I think — as we've all commented on — the patience and the persistence of First Nation governments in working this through with various governments of various stripes is to be commended. But if they have to wait for yet another four or five years to see regulations before any of this can actually be realized, the potential that these amendments to this act bring with it — that would be very disappointing.

I'm hopeful that we're going to see these amendments coming into effect in short order as opposed to simply passing the bill — tick; done. That's not what this is about, I hope. I

hope that we are seriously working toward the full effect of these amendments and what they could realize not just for Kwanlin Dün but for other First Nations as they move to work with the system and to the work that's necessary within their own governments to realize the potential that these amendments do bring.

We will of course be supporting this and we look forward to speedy passage and the bringing into effect of the legislation and regulations.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard on third reading debate of Bill No. 11?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity. Thank you to the members opposite for their comments and their important questions during debate.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 11 before the Legislature today is an example of responsive government. We listened and worked with our partners, with Yukoners, and with other levels of government to improve opportunities. That's what this piece of legislation is about. There are minor changes needed to the settlement lands regulation as a result of the changes that I hope will pass today going forward. We're dedicated, and my team and office are dedicated to the realization of this as soon as possible.

Of course, there have been, as we are aware in other circumstances, a need — perhaps a need, depending on the agreements — for First Nation governments to amend their settlement agreements. I can reiterate the Government of Yukon's commitment to doing that. Those are absolutely quickly done by our government, and I know that there is support at the federal government level for that to happen as well so that there is no delay there. That is a critical piece for the governments that choose to use this piece of legislation going forward — and their ability to do so.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question on third reading of Bill No. 11?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Mr. Adel:** Agree.

**Mr. Hutton:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Mr. Gallina:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Hanson:** Agree.

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

**Speaker:** The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.  
*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 11 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 11 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 (Mr. Hutton):** Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

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

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

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

Is there any general debate?

### Department of Community Services — *continued*

**Chair:** Ms. White has 17 minutes, 44 seconds.

**Ms. White:** Wouldn't we all be shocked if I took all those 17 minutes and a bunch of seconds? I am just about to cede the floor to the Yukon Party, as per our previous agreement, but one of the things that we talked about — the very last thing — on the 19<sup>th</sup> was that the opposition members hadn't had a briefing with Dr. Hanley since September, and I



would like to acknowledge right now that, after that conversation, we had a briefing last Friday with Dr. Hanley, the chief medical officer of health. I would like to say thank you, and I appreciate that very much. Sometimes, you know, things in this Chamber move at lightning speed, and I think that this was an example. I just want to say thank you. I look forward to more questions when it is my turn again.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am happy that we were able to get more of those briefings. Just based on the conversation that happened here, I did have a conversation with the chief medical officer of health and the COVID response unit.

Just to begin with, I would like to welcome back to the Chamber Deputy Minister Matt King and our director of finance, Mr. Phillip MacDonald. All of us, I am sure, appreciate when the public servants come here to help get information shared.

One of the questions that came up during the ministerial statement on the lots of lots was around community land development. I asked the department to update me on that development and I will share that here with the Committee. This is our current community work on land development. I will go community by community.

First of all, with Carmacks, we have urban and country residential industrial development projects. We have completed preliminary design options and are assessing options for cost recovery. Our target for tendering construction is the spring and summer of next year, 2021. Further anticipated land development work will be tied to the official community plan review that is currently underway.

For Dawson City, the north end development project is working through some details with the City of Dawson. Our target is for construction completion next summer or fall. The Dome Road serviced residential development project has master planning work underway and the target for completion of that planning is the summer of next year. Industrial mixed-use infill projects — we have completed feasibility assessment work. Planning and regulatory review are in progress and our target is for a couple of lots becoming available in the spring of 2021. We hope for some additional lots to be available for the fall of 2021.

We have another project around vacant lot development in Dawson. This feasibility work is nearly complete on two lots and we are working with the city to identify other vacant lots for development. Again, there are a couple of lots targeted for this coming spring. The Dredge Pond 2 country residential project is working with the City of Dawson right now around planning and feasibility and to make sure that this is still the direction in which they wish to go.

For Destruction Bay, we have completed a concept for Glacier Acres phase 2. We will be focusing on municipal and First Nation lot needs.

For Faro, anticipated land development work will be tied to their upcoming official community plan process.

We have work that has been ongoing with Grizzly Valley. I haven't had a chance to check in with my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, but we have been

working on about 11 lots there, in conversation with the neighbourhood.

With Haines Junction, work there is tied as well to their work on the official community plan which is currently under review.

In Keno, we have done some feasibility work which is completed and we're now working through some regulatory issues to enable the release of two to four unserviced residential lots. We are targeting that release in the spring of next year.

We were in conversation with Mayo today, both with the Village of Mayo and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. We have some urban infill going on and we finalized development on some vacant lots and we're commencing the design feasibility work for a small subdivision extension. Our target is five to 10 vacant lots available for the spring of 2021 and advanced planning and design of a small subdivision later this year. We're also doing some country residential work that I will talk about when I touch on Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

For Ross River, we have a zoning amendment underway for two industrial lots pending approval and we anticipate some lots being available for release in the spring of 2021. For Watson Lake, we have completed feasibility planning and design for some country, urban, residential, and industrial development projects and we are just waiting on their official community plan. We're hopeful that gets underway or those lots come out in the spring or summer of next year.

We're also partnering with several First Nations. I have spoken previously in the Legislature about Marshall Creek, but let me touch on a few others. Kluane First Nation — we're doing the Bear Creek subdivision; options are developed and we're exploring land development needs in Burwash and we're doing some road upgrades in and around Burwash. Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council initiated joint planning on the Kwanlin Dün First Nation/Government of Yukon Range Point parcels. We're working on a request for proposal right now. With the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, we're in discussion around a potential joint project between them and the Village of Carmacks for development projects in and around the community.

With Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, we're talking about land development opportunities on the upper bench. For the Teslin Tlingit Council in the Village of Teslin, we're advancing Lone Tree country residential and airport industrial projects. We think that the target for construction tenders is early in 2021. With the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and their management corporation, we're advancing some joint planning discussions around work on the Tagish Avenue and Bennett Lake parcels.

That's my update on that, Mr. Chair. I'll make sure to share this note across with the folks from Hansard so that they don't have to work through that so completely and get that for them to work from.

**Mr. Hassard:** I would like to thank my colleagues from Porter Creek North, as well as Takhini-Kopper King, for allowing me to have a few minutes to ask a few questions here. I would also like to thank the officials for being here today and assisting the minister as we work our way through these questions.

The first questions I had — or probably all of my questions — are in regard to the legislative tools that the minister has used and I guess is still using.

Let's start with CEMA or the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. Mr. Chair, I'm wondering if the minister could walk us through the declaration of the state of emergency. What steps were taken by officials? Which steps were actually taken by the minister?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Chair, thanks to the member opposite for the question. I had mentioned in Committee before that, even before we got to the declared state of emergency — in fact, even before we cancelled the Arctic Winter Games — we had fired up the Health Emergency Operations Centre. So, just in part of the planning process, I think that was the first group that we fired up. As we saw that the pandemic was actually a threat to the territory, we pulled together a deputy minister executive committee, a human resources committee, and the Emergency Coordination Centre. Those four work together; they make recommendations to Cabinet. The declaration of the state of emergency is an order-in-council. As well, the chief medical officer of health in his capacity, his office, but in conversation with other medical officers of health across the country, provides advice or recommendations to Cabinet. Then, on March 27, the state of emergency was declared in response to the pandemic. It has been extended twice — on June 12 and September 9.

I will leave it there, but following that would be when we put in place border controls, isolation requirements, enforcement, and several other ministerial orders that were there to try to serve Yukoners to help protect their health and safety, ultimately then leading to yesterday when we signed the most recent ministerial order, which was mandatory masks.

**Mr. Hassard:** Previously, the minister has indicated that he agreed with opposition members on the fact that the act is out of date and wasn't well suited to our current situation. I'm wondering if he could kind of elaborate on that and let us know what parts of the act that he doesn't feel were suitable.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Almost any act could stand some improvement. Let me give you a really clear example with this act. It doesn't discuss First Nations at all. It doesn't discuss self-government agreements. It doesn't recognize First Nations and their role as decision-makers. It's silent, and it's because of the age of the act. That's definitely missing.

The fines that we saw were at \$500 as the maximum, and that was the maximum even if someone repeated an offence day after day. It was still just a total of \$500. That's fine, maybe, for individuals, but if we're trying to deal with businesses that said to themselves, "Well, I'll pay that \$500; I don't care" — that was challenging. That's another thing that is out of date.

I appreciate that the opposition has put forward suggestions. I think that those are worthy suggestions to consider. One of the things that caught me off guard was when it took us five weeks in this Legislature to pass a motion where we all agreed that we were still in a pandemic.

I have to say that, even though pandemics are different types of emergencies than a fire, there are still times when you have to move quickly. Even today through Question Period, I

heard criticism that we weren't moving fast enough at informing Yukoners. There are times when you actually have to move, and there's an analogy that I heard from you, Mr. Chair, at one point when you were talking about forest fires. You do a lot of work to put out the forest fire, and then you have to keep an eye on it because, every once in a while, a spark flies somewhere. That spark can catch. If we're not diligent, it can move quickly. So, even though this type of pandemic is different from a flood or a fire, there still are times when we need to move quickly.

In general, I want to say that I feel that, under the act, we have been able to keep Yukoners safe — that we have been able to use the tools that are here — but I do agree and still stand by my words that there are improvements that the act could realize. I look forward to having a dialogue with the public and with all members of this Legislature on their perspectives. The whole notion of this pandemic — people have called it sometimes the "novel" coronavirus, meaning that it's not something that we have experienced previously, meaning that we should continuously watch it and try to understand how to improve our response.

Similarly, the tools that we have at our disposal — for example, the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* is something we would continuously want to see improved. I think that there has been an opportunity to learn out of the process that we've had to identify any gaps that we have and then use that to try to bring forward suggestions for how we can have a better suited act — one that would deal with a long-term type of emergency. I look forward to having that kind of dialogue with the public and members opposite.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, a couple of things in the minister's comments — he talked about the motion and five weeks to pass a motion. I would remind the minister that we were already six months into this state of emergency. A motion brought forward here in debate — they are non-binding motions, so they have no action on the state of emergency. There is no action that the government necessarily was going to do in regard to the motion, so I think that it's interesting that he feels that it was such a big deal.

The one thing that I have noticed that the act doesn't do is that it's silent on MLAs. It doesn't discuss their roles, and it doesn't discuss the role of the Legislature either.

So, I am curious — are there any other changes that the minister thinks are needed with CEMA? I am also curious as to whether he has asked the department to begin a review of the legislation.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The member is correct. We are using the existing law that we have and that was written decades ago — that I am sure they used when they looked at SARS or H1N1. This is the tool that we have in front of us, and we will continue to use it to our best ability to keep the health and safety of Yukoners at the forefront.

I guess I haven't yet formed an opinion about the role of all MLAs. I look across other legislation and it is not typical for there to be a role for other MLAs in other legislation, so should there be on this one? Then I looked across other jurisdictions, and I saw two jurisdictions in Canada that do provide a role,

and I saw others that don't. I think that this is a discussion that is yet to come. I look forward to it. I remain open to it is what I want to say. I can see reasons, but I also recognize that, if that were to come, we would need to make sure that we are not encumbering the government with taking five weeks to make a decision. That would be very difficult when you are up against hard choices that are in front of you quickly.

I think that, if there were to be amendments — for example, let's say that the members opposite — and I am curious whether they will bring their bill forward for debate. But if we were to debate it, the thing that I would be looking for is how we could put in place some time limits or something that would ensure that the health and safety of Yukoners could be maintained — so that we didn't get caught in a situation where we weren't able to make a decision in a timely fashion.

That is the challenge that I think exists with the suggestions that have been brought forward so far. Am I in favour of them? I am in favour of a debate on them. I see value in them. I disagree that the members opposite didn't have an opportunity to discuss issues with us. I have said in the Legislature — and I will say it again — that I responded to e-mails and letters from members opposite over those months when we were not here. I got one, which asked me about the ministerial orders.

By the way, just for the record, Mr. Chair, I will note that, to date, I believe that we have 20 or 21 ministerial orders. The members opposite keep referring to dozens, but that is not the case. It is not really an important point, but it is just to note that there seems to be some sort of misunderstanding. I went back and looked through all of my colleagues' correspondence to see if there were other letters that had come from the members opposite on issues of ministerial orders. Again, I found one other. We all have been here in the Legislature for a couple of months — two months today — and I haven't had questions on those ministerial orders, although I hear lots of criticisms about them. I am not sure which ones the members opposite are concerned about. Was it the one where we said to pharmacies that they should be able to extend prescriptions to help Yukoners? Was it the one where we said that people shouldn't be evicted if they are renting and isolating? Is it the one where we said that someone's property tax deadline was extended for a couple of months? I am just not sure which one was the problem — or ones — and I look forward to hearing about that.

The other reason why I think that we did still work to try to provide answers for the members opposite was — well, not me. I believe that it was the Minister of Justice, perhaps acting as Government House Leader, who wrote to the parties to suggest coming into the Legislature and having times when, first of all, we could answer budget questions and, second of all, we could answer questions about the ministerial orders which seemed to be of concern. That wasn't deemed acceptable by the members opposite. What I heard them say is that it is because it's not a session. I am sitting there thinking, "Well, okay, but isn't it answering questions? Isn't it getting to the information? Wouldn't we be public about it?" That letter went twice, and the answer was no. The members opposite were not interested in that. What they were interested in was saying publicly that this was unfair to them or unfair to the Yukon.

The focus should be around how to keep the safety and welfare of Yukoners at the forefront. I stand to say that we are happy to answer today, and ongoing, any questions about the ministerial orders and the things that the members opposite may have concerns about.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Chair, there were a lot of things in that response, but I didn't hear the minister say if he had asked the department to begin a review of the legislation.

There are a few things that he did say that I would like to speak about for a second. He talked about the Minister of Justice saying that the government would allow us to come here to the Assembly to ask questions on a variety of different things, but I don't think that this was the point. The point was about legislative oversight. The point is about ensuring that what is said here in the Legislature is captured by Hansard. It is important that what is said in this Legislature is documented for people to look at. I am sure that the minister may disagree with me on this, but there have been several times in the past four years when we have mentioned things that were said by ministers of this government, and the response is: "I didn't say that" or "That's not what I said." Well, Mr. Chair, that is why it is so important that we have everything documented and recorded, because it's very easy to say that it's not what I said or that's not what I meant, but if we have it in black and white, we have it in black and white. That's very important, and I think the minister needs to understand and respect that.

With regard to the invitation from the Minister of Justice, we responded to that on more than one occasion and never received a response back from the government. So, I think that it's unfair for the minister to say that we were offered these opportunities and didn't take the government up on them, because, no — we actually did respond to the Minister of Justice and to the Premier with ideas and options that were never responded to. I don't think that it's fair for him to accuse the opposition members of not taking advantage of those situations either.

Another thing that he mentioned — he talked about SARS, comparing what previous governments did with H1N1 and SARS and how they dealt with it.

I don't think that it's a good comparison either, because, to the best of my knowledge, there were no states of emergency called during those times. I think the minister is — while I appreciate that he's trying, I don't think that he's completely on track either.

I will ask the minister if he has in fact asked the department to begin a review of the legislation, and we'll go from there.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I apologize for not answering the question the last time I got up. That was just an oversight on my part.

Let me begin by saying that I have not asked for a formal review by the department, but I have asked them, at all times, to be marking those elements of the act that will need some help or could be improved upon. I have asked them to be conscious about it and to be thinking about it, but I have not asked for a formal review to begin. I've talked to municipalities, I've talked to First Nations, and I have said to them that we will want to review this act and to be thinking about it. What I've

asked the department to do, and other governments to do, is to focus on keeping Yukoners safe right now during the pandemic. That's what I'm asking them to focus on.

An act — or amendments to an act — takes time and thoughtfulness; it's a process. I don't want to pull energy and resources away, right now, from dealing with the immediate emergency that we are in to focus on the future of it. I have been doing my best to use the tools that are in front of me to provide the members with opportunities to share their concerns and criticisms. I will say that I look for their suggestions.

In a moment, I'm going to give an example of where I thought that it would have been great to hear — but I didn't get it.

The letters that the Minister of Justice wrote to offer opportunities to have debate on the budget here in this place, in the Legislative Assembly, were sent by the Minister of Justice on May 6, again on May 14, and again on July 24 — making that offer to have deputy ministers and directors of finance to come in to help answer questions on the budget. I will check those letters, but I am pretty sure that we did offer to have those meetings recorded and available to the public and aired to the public so that they could hear them and so that people could be quoted and held to account. I will check. We wrote to the members opposite on May 21 and June 5 to offer the same type of open conversation around ministerial orders.

I am trying to point out with SARS and H1N1 — not that it was the same type of emergency that we have today. No, this pandemic is new. It is global in nature. If you are not careful, it can take off on you in a hurry, as we saw with Nunavut. It is challenging to deal with, so I don't compare them in any way. I am just noting that you would have needed to look at the act — at the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* — when you got into H1N1 just as we did, ahead of time, when COVID started to appear in other countries. Before it was even here, we started to look at that act and say, "Let's take a look at it. Let's start to understand how we would need to respond."

I am going to give one example about how I would love to have had a suggestion from the members opposite. They put out a press release right around the end of May, and that press release was talking about concerns with a map that we were handing out to Alaskans in transit, travelling across the Yukon. They were stopped at the Watson Lake border and the Junction 37 border, and they were handed this map. In that press release, the members opposite talked about a concern that we, as a government, were picking winners and losers because there were some businesses that were listed on the back. They were there to be examples about where those travellers could stay. They were trying to be helpful, but as the press release noted, we weren't listing all potential businesses on the Alaska Highway. Well, you can't physically — there are too many businesses.

The members opposite put out a press release. Next, they called some of the businesses along the highway, and I started to get calls from those businesses. In those calls, businesses were concerned that we had been picking winners and losers. Okay, great — I reached out. I looked for the press release, but I couldn't find it. It wasn't published on their website. I called

the Member for Copperbelt South because I had heard, through phone calls, that he had been the person who put out the press release. I asked him whether he had shared that with me, because, if they had a concern about those businesses, why not talk to us so we could try to correct the problem? But they hadn't.

It turns out, as a matter of fact, that, about two or three days before they put out their press release, I got a call from the Mayor of Watson Lake with the same concern. It was maybe on the Wednesday night that I got the call. I think that, by the Thursday or maybe the Friday, we had already changed those maps. We agreed that it was not correct that some businesses were listed and not others. When it was drawn to my attention — and I thank the Mayor of Watson Lake for doing that — we changed it.

It was after that — actually, it wasn't the members opposite's idea. It was after this that they put out their press release. As their press release went out, we had already corrected the problem, so the press release was talking about a problem that had already been corrected.

If the members opposite really wanted to contribute and help, why not send it to me? Why not draw it to my attention? I went on this chase to try to track it down and figure out what was going on. That, for me, was a concern. I could pull up my correspondence with the Member for Copperbelt South — by the way, he said that he would get back to me. Well, that was June 1; I don't have anything back yet.

I just want to say, Mr. Chair, that I appreciate that everyone is working hard. I think that the members opposite are working hard and we are working hard. I think that they hear from folks out there in the public, and I think that we do, too. We are all, I hope, working to support the health and wellness of Yukoners. I just say again that, if that is the way that they are wishing to work, why did they not reach out?

**Mr. Hassard:** Again, the minister has highlighted quite a few things. He talked about the fact that they were looking at this act long before.

That's interesting, because when we brought it up here in the Legislature in March, the Premier actually accused us of fear-mongering and said that there was nothing going wrong in the world, that everything was going to be fine, and that we were actually bringing forward false information and causing people to panic for no reason.

Now the minister can stand here and say, "Well, we were actually looking at that a long time in advance." So, rather interesting — the contradiction there.

The minister talked about if we wanted to chat. He talked about winners and losers in regard to the map that they put out. Yes, they did, in fact, pick winners and losers, and it affected businesses for weeks to come. If he wanted to chat about that, we asked on numerous occasions to call the Legislature back. Let us come here and discuss some of those things. That's how democracy works. To come here and have a meeting, but not be an official Sitting — that's not democracy. We are all elected officials — every one of us in this Legislature. Part of our democratic process is to come here, have conversations about things — such as legislation like the CEMA — and have real,

open conversations to try to make things better for Yukoners. For the minister to say, “We really wanted your feedback, but we didn’t want to do it officially. We wanted you to have a meeting in the Legislature where we could talk about certain things” — that’s not democracy.

We could go back and forth about this for a long time talking about democracy and legislative oversight and who is right and who is wrong. I was trying to actually talk about CEMA, so I will try to get back on track here.

Many jurisdictions actually require a vote of the Legislature to declare a state of emergency, so I’m wondering how the minister feels about that, Mr. Chair.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Mr. Hassard:** So, the question was —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Mr. Hassard:** Do you want me to wait until you’re done over there?

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Mr. Hassard:** If the minister is done with his conversation over there, hopefully we can get questions asked and maybe get some responses.

I said that many other jurisdictions require a vote in the Legislature to declare a state of emergency. I am wondering how the minister feels about that.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** A few points — the first one that the Leader of the Official Opposition talked about — early in the spring session, the Premier stood to talk about whether we were in a pandemic. Well, we weren’t. I remember when the deputy chief medical officer of health came to talk to us about cancelling the Arctic Winter Games. She said, “Look, we don’t think that COVID is going to come here to the Yukon or the north. We think that the risk of that is low, but in order to be safe around the athletes and their supporters, you would have to isolate a team — if someone got a cough, you were going to have to isolate that whole team and their chaperones.” The logistics of it were going to be very difficult.

So, at that point in time, we had already started to look at the act. We had already started to have conversations about the Health Emergency Operations Centre, but the advice from the chief medical officer of health was that we were not — the thoughts were that we would not get cases of COVID here — at that point in time. So, that is the point in time — when we are doing preparatory work and when we are just looking at the act to understand, if we were to be in a situation where there was a pandemic or a health emergency, what the tools are that we would use.

That is just diligence. I guess that it is just my assumption — I should be careful with that assumption, but I just assume that the members opposite would have gone through the same exercise around H1N1 and SARS — because you see this happening around the world and you say to yourself, “Okay, if that were to come here, how would we prepare?”

That is different from standing up in the Legislature and saying that we are in an emergency. We were not, at that point. When the members opposite were talking about it and when the Premier stood, we were not in an emergency, but you know what? The members opposite had the mark of it in the sense

that, in short order, we went from not having an emergency to having one. That is true.

In fact, I know of athletes and parents who wrote to me about the Arctic Winter Games, expressing that this was outrageous. They were very concerned that we were overresponding and being too protective. Within a week, everyone was saying, “Whoa, that was the right choice.” I don’t know that you always know that when you make those decisions. That’s why I think that they are very tough decisions. So, that’s the first difference.

With respect to cross-jurisdictional looks, Alberta requires that extending an emergency would come to their Legislature. British Columbia does not. Saskatchewan does not. Manitoba does not. New Brunswick does not. Nova Scotia does not. Prince Edward Island does not. Newfoundland and Labrador have sort of a mixed type of response. Ontario does require going to their Legislature to extend an emergency. Québec has another mixed response. The Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and the Yukon do not require going to the Legislature to extend the state of emergency.

I stood here earlier today and said that I personally think that it is worth that exploration — and I’m willing — to see which of those options would be best for the Yukon. I have not formed a judgment on it as of yet. I look forward to having that review. I look forward to that review happening once we have time to do a review. Actually, right now, I think what we need to do is focus on the pandemic itself. That is what I think is most important.

Mr. Chair, I asked a colleague to go and get the letters that we wrote to the members opposite. I note now that we said that we would try to — and I will quote now from our letter on May 14, 2020, to the leaders of the opposition: “Hansard employees and the camera operator/broadcaster are independent contractors and deserve appropriate notice about whether they will be needed to work on the scheduled days.”

We made this offer that we would want to try to give those people a heads-up to be here because we wanted to provide that service. We do want to make it full scrutiny for the public and have everyone quoted.

I’ll leave it there again, and I’m happy to answer further questions.

**Mr. Hassard:** Maybe the Minister of Community Services isn’t aware, but a letter was sent on June 1 from the Leader of the Third Party on behalf of both opposition parties — June 1 — that has still not been responded to in regard to having discussions about how and when we could come back to the Legislature.

Now, the minister spoke about the pandemic and the Premier standing in this Legislature and telling local media outlets that we, as opposition members, were fear-mongering. The minister has said that there was no pandemic at that time. That, in fact, is not the case, Mr. Chair, and I would like to correct the record for the minister. On March 11, the World Health Organization declared a world pandemic. On March 16, the Premier stood right here in this Legislature and said, “Let me be specific ... There is not a pandemic...” The minister

really should check his facts before he goes on record again saying something like that.

Anyway, as I said in my previous question, I was trying to get back to the debate at hand.

Mr. Chair, I'm wondering if the minister can walk us through the process of issuing ministerial orders under CEMA. Are they approved by Cabinet first? Are they reviewed by other departments? Do they go through the C2P2 process? Are they reviewed by DMRC? What exactly is the process, Mr. Chair?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, I just looked up from March 16, and I will quote for the record what the Premier said on that day — and I quote: “But what I will say is that we are very lucky to be where we are right now as the world tries to reduce the curve when it comes to this pandemic. Let me be specific as well: There is not a pandemic in Canada yet. There is a pandemic announced in the world, but not in Canada necessarily.”

Mr. Chair, the pandemic was a global pandemic, as the member opposite notes. It was on its way, as we can see now in hindsight. The question just is about when those comments are coming forth.

The member opposite said that they wrote to the Premier on June 1. I note that the Minister of Justice wrote to them on June 5 and on July 24, so there was this ongoing dialogue. In that dialogue, we were offering that we use this Legislative Assembly to allow for questions to be asked and answered on the record, but because it wasn't a session — well, the members opposite can say why they didn't want that, but we did offer it several times. I've listed five times that it was offered.

I still stay, and I do say, that one of the jobs here is to answer questions as they come from the opposition, and I will stand up on my record and say that I have always tried to respond to the questions that the members opposite ask, because I appreciate that they are representatives of ridings and have constituents who are concerned and they have real and legitimate questions that they want and need answered. I will continue to do that.

Just earlier today in this debate, the Leader of the Third Party stood up to say thanks because she had pointed out that briefings had stopped and I had turned around and tried to get those briefings reinstated — so, yes, trying to make sure that all MLAs in this Legislature have the ability to have their questions answered.

The Leader of the Official Opposition asked about how ministerial orders happen. First of all, if an issue gets identified, typically, it can happen through a few routes. It could have been through conversations with municipalities, conversations with First Nations, conversations through correspondence with opposition members, our own identification, or departments — wherever the issue was identified, there is some policy work that is done.

I talked earlier about the four committees that were set up originally to deal with the state of emergency order-in-council. So, again, the deputy ministers — sort of — executive committee would receive that policy work and make recommendations forward. We always put it through both the

Executive Council Office and Justice to have a look at it. From there, it went to Cabinet.

I know that the act gives me the authority to sign ministerial orders that I deem to be necessary, but I made the decision that, whenever possible — and at all times, it has been possible — I would take the direction from Cabinet, and then Cabinet would decide whether to direct me to sign that ministerial order. Once that ministerial order was signed, then we moved down through the public education and talking with other governments.

**Mr. Hassard:** Once again, just to clear the record for the minister, we wrote on more than one occasion — I am not sure of the number, so I am not going to use a number, but it definitely was more than a couple of times — asking the government to meet and to physically sit down and discuss what the government was proposing so that we could air and share our concerns on what the government was proposing.

Mr. Chair, every one of those letters was ignored — was not answered. Not once did we get any suggestions or any ideas of when the government would be willing to sit down with us to actually discuss coming back into this Legislature under any circumstances.

Anyway, moving on, I am curious if the minister could tell us if the ministerial orders are reviewed by the Department of Justice, or is there any other kind of legal analysis done on them, Mr. Chair?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** You know what I will do, Mr. Chair? I did try to say just a moment ago that there were letters going back and forth between the opposition and us. I will table them all. I will make a legislative return of it. I will table all of the correspondence that we received from the Official Opposition. I will table the letters that we wrote —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** All oppositions, jointly — yes. I am happy to do that so that Yukoners can see that correspondence. That is a great suggestion.

As I just said when I stood last time, every time that a ministerial order was working up, we had it reviewed by the Department of Justice.

**Mr. Hassard:** We will certainly be happy to table our letters as well.

I am wondering if the minister ever considered the possibility of using targeted, time-limited legislation to address any of the issues that he has just addressed through these ministerial orders. This is something that has been used in other jurisdictions instead of leaning on this last democratic approach that excludes opposition parties. I am curious as to the minister's thoughts on that, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I guess the answer is yes — in the sense that every one of the ministerial orders that we've brought in is time-limited. They're all time-limited because they're all dependent on the state of emergency. We're using the existing law as it exists.

Mr. Chair, maybe the member opposite could start with which ones of the ministerial orders he wants to change. I'm not sure if it's a point on principle — the principle being that we follow the existing law that I found myself with or that we,

as a government, found ourselves with. The members opposite say that they would prefer something different. I've said that we agree. Let's work together on what should be different.

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

When it comes to the process, I've already acknowledged that it could sure use a facelift, and I would be happy to work with them on that front.

**Mr. Hassard:** Maybe I'll just leave it there, and I will suggest that the minister look at the private members' bill that was put forward by the Member for Lake Laberge. Maybe that would be the best way to discuss this moving forward, because it doesn't appear that this is maybe the most productive way to use the House's time.

With that, I probably will just cede the floor to other members who may have questions for the minister.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Welcome to the department officials as we head on to more questions through Community Services. I would like to pick up on the issue that we discussed and left off on the last time we met regarding the government's COVID-19 response, which falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Community Services. I think that the last questions I had asked were around the checkpoints that were placed throughout Yukon. I apologize if there is a bit of repetition here, but I will just need to clarify a few things.

First, can the minister confirm who decided where the various checkpoints were to be placed during the pandemic and, in particular, the rationale for the placement of the checkpoint at the top of the south access just coming into Whitehorse?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thanks to the member opposite for the question. If I recall how that was developed, we were hearing concerns from citizens in Whitehorse that there were Alaska plates — or US plates, I suppose — that were in the downtown area. I shared those concerns with the Emergency Coordination Centre and asked them if there could be a way where we could provide some reminders for those folks in transit to stick to the route. I think that there was a dialogue between the Emergency Coordination Centre and the Department of Highways and Public Works — and I think also with the Department of Tourism and Culture because I believe that all of the staffing was done by Tourism and Culture. So, there was some initial identification of a challenge.

That led to some development. I think that there was some evolution of the signs. I also think there were some accounts of licence plates to address it that also led to our conversation with the Canada Border Services Agency, which led to the tightening up of the rules around all those in transit across Canada.

To answer the specific question: It was identifying the concern to the Emergency Coordination Centre and then, I think, it was a conversation with a few other groups that led to the decision.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Can the minister confirm under what authority were the barricades placed on the public highways at Watson Lake and Junction 37? Was it under the CEMA act or is that an order that comes through the *Highways Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, a couple of ministerial orders were passed. Those would both be used. As I have often stood in this Legislature and said, the authority for border control flows from the civil emergency declaration. One was the enforcement measures Ministerial Order 2020/13. They have a history over time, but that was one of the first ones that gave authority for enforcement. The other one would be the border control measures, which was Ministerial Order 2020/19, which set out the parameters of who was permitted to stay and travel through the Yukon.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I would also ask the minister about the checkpoints set up by some of the First Nations. Could he tell us what interaction he had with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun with regard to the blockade they set up heading into Mayo? I think he did say that they did not provide any resources, but could he just verify that, please?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** As I've stated often, we had ongoing dialogue with communities, with municipalities, and with First Nations to talk about the situation with COVID and how we were responding as a government. They shared with us how they were wanting to respond.

The Na-Cho Nyäk Dun let us know that they wanted to put up what I will refer to as an "information stop" — an "information check". We did not supply them with resources to do that. We did stay in touch with them to talk with them about how to engage with the public — information to share. In other words, we were trying to let them know what information would be useful to be able to share with the folks they were asking to pull over. In that way, we identified it as an initiative that they wished to do and we tried to support them through information, but not through resources.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I believe it is common knowledge that it is illegal to blockade a public highway. Was that blockade or information stop authorized under CEMA, or again, under the *Highways Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** As I stated the last time when we were in debate on Community Services, this was not an information stop which was put there by us as a government. It's not anything under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. I'm not referring to it as a "blockade"; that's the member opposite's language. I believe that they were information stops only. I don't know that they were — I don't know of any contravention of any law that was in place. I think what they were doing was trying to inform the public about what was going on and to share their concerns with travellers. That's how I understood it to be, but I look forward to further questions.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I did go through that stop, so I know what I had seen.

Let me move on to a further area. In his October 7 letter to the Prime Minister regarding the safe restart funding agreement, the Premier said — and I quote: “In Yukon, municipal funding will support operating budget pressures due to COVID-19, such as additional costs for PPE, as well as staffing and operating requirements, particularly for the management of community centres, public spaces and public transit. The Government of Yukon is working directly with municipalities to understand their distinct needs. Once this information is gathered, we intend to allocate funding to municipalities based on an evaluation of their needs.”

With regard to this safe restart funding program, how was the information gathered, or is the information still being gathered from the municipalities?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Chair, I will give a quick answer here, and if I get more information, I will share it. We alerted municipalities to the safe restart funding, and we asked them to be talking with us. We started off with three-times-a-week meetings at the beginning of the pandemic. It is now more like weekly meetings. I have been in conversations with municipalities. I did a community tour — either virtually or in-person, depending on what the municipality was interested in — over the late summer, and there I noted for municipalities that we wanted them to watch and track. I had several conversations with municipalities. We asked our community advisors to be in dialogue with those municipalities. We are very close now to reaching back out to municipalities with a suggestion around that funding. So, we know that we are close now and will be — I will be reaching out, starting with the Association of Yukon Communities, and reaching through to municipalities shortly.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** We know that most municipalities are currently working on their budgets for the new fiscal year in 2020-21, so can the minister provide a breakdown of how much each municipality will be receiving under this Safe Restart Agreement?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Respectfully, I will want to reach out to municipalities first, and I am very close to doing so, and then I would be happy to share the information with members here, but just — respectfully, that is how I would like to start. I do know, for example, that the City of Whitehorse, at its council meeting just last night, was talking about the costs that they have incurred to date, and it was in the range of \$550,000 to \$600,000. I can say to the Legislature that we are very close to reaching out to municipalities and I am happy to report back shortly to the Legislature.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I appreciate that response. Working with municipalities was mentioned. Are First Nations included under this agreement? If so, will they be receiving a portion of the money? Is there also a cost share between government and Yukon under this particular agreement?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** These dollars are targeted for municipalities. That is how the fund came to us. We worked to support our First Nations in other ways. There is a cost share. It is a one-for-one cost share with the federal government and the territorial government.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** On to a few other budget items, the cost of your border control is listed at \$2.824 million. The list is long for all of the costs that it is covering, so I'm going to ask some specific questions on the bulk amount. I am hoping that the minister will break it down for me.

In that breakdown, can he tell us how much was for the call centre? What were the responsibilities of that call centre? Is that call centre still functioning?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The dollars that are in here for the call centre are \$236,000 for the first three months. The call centre was working in conjunction with Highways and Public Works. After the first three months, we put the responsibility for the call centre over to Highways and Public Works.

I'll give a bit of a response on what the high level was around the purposes of the call centre. I think that we had initiated that contract with extensions allowable so that \$236,000 would be pretty pro-ratable to go longer.

The purpose of the call centre was, I suppose, three-fold. It was, first of all, to provide information for Yukoners. If you think of the yukon.ca site and all of the information that's there, we tried to give all that information to the call-centre operators so that they could relay that information to Yukoners when questions were posed.

The second thing was that we received feedback from people. If they were calling up with their thoughts or feedback, we would take that feedback and channel it to the appropriate department. If the call-centre operators didn't have the answer at their fingertips, we put that to a group that was tasked — I talked about the communications group that was identified. There was a whole group that was dedicated to responding to Yukoners with information if they didn't get it immediately from the call centre. The great thing about the call centre, of course, was that it was 24 hours a day, it could respond in a range of languages, and we could work very quickly to have someone talking with that Yukoner on the other end of the line.

The third thing that call centre was used for was if there was a concern around someone doing something incorrect. For example, if there was an Outside licence plate down at one of the box stores or someone they thought was supposed to be self-isolating or they identified that someone who should be self-isolating was out in the public, we would take those calls through the call centre. It wasn't the only route, of course, through which people could express their concerns to us, but that was one of the purposes of the call centre.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** There was also a feature in that COVID response that gave travellers who were transiting through the territory an automated text-message app. Can the minister tell us about this feature? How much did it cost, and was it found to work? Was it adequate?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think that the automated system was in and around \$20,000. I will have to check with the department to see what the precise cost was, but that is the estimate that I have at my fingertips.

Did it work? I think so. Here is what I want to say: The whole system worked overall. It is really difficult to be able to tease out various parts of it and understand exactly how they were performing, because we stood it up from nothing. Just for



a second — just to give some acknowledgement to all those folks who worked on the front lines or in the background to make that happen — it was a tremendous amount of work and, overall, I think that it was extremely well done.

The biggest measure that I have against it is to understand how many cases we had. So, relatively few — for example, in-transit contact. There are some cases out there where we are not sure where they came from, so there are possibilities, but overall, there were very, very few cases that we could identify as even having the possibility of having come from that in-transit traffic or through the border system. The texts were successful in that they got to people. We could see, over time — because once we tightened up things with the Canada Border Services Agency, we had a way to be able to download information from them and see the check-in and check-out, and we could understand how long it was taking people to move across. That gave us more confidence that the system was working. How did texts work within that? That is more difficult to know.

We also had a system where we had follow-up calls to people who were isolating or random follow-up calls to people in isolation — not everyone, but a random selection.

We recently made the decision to include automatic texts to those people in self-isolation as well, because we think that this system is working reasonably well. One of the things that we do with a text is to say to people, “You are so many days into your self-isolation. Just a reminder that you’re not to go get groceries.” Those sorts of things — just the points of contact to keep people on track. Then we say to them, “If you need help, here’s how to reach us.” So, that’s the system as it stands now. I think that overall it’s successful. I think that it’s a steal for the \$20,000 that we had to spend, given how much was happening and the uncertainty and risk associated around all of that. I think that it was a great investment.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** In the last couple of weeks, we had a brief discussion around the border control services that went from the private sector to the Liard First Nation. Could the minister provide us an update on the transition — perhaps give us an overall figure on the cost and the change to the cost? Have there been any issues since the Liard First Nation has taken over border control?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I’ll see if I can’t get something on cost coming up because, as we said in this House, we were working to get additional measures down there. As we repealed the BC travel bubble and things were changing, we said, “Let’s put more resources down there.” We have sent staff down to do some after-hours work now. I believe that they’re still working to investigate, through a privacy assessment, whether or not we can do the video cameras, but we do have extra people there right now. I will work to try to get some numbers on what those costs are.

The report that I got this morning was that the transition is working well with the Liard First Nation. That interaction between us and them is going well and helping them through the transition. We are running random evenings, both at Junction 37 and Watson Lake. We are getting anywhere from 10 to 25 vehicles an evening. Of those 10 to 25 vehicles, only

a couple appear to be people who would require a declaration. For example, if you are coming from Jade City at Junction 37, you are inside the Yukon bubble, so you don’t require a declaration. Those checkpoints in the evening that are run are indicating to us that there is really very little traffic, but we will continue running them. We will work with the Liard First Nation and reach back out to them to get their thoughts, but generally speaking, as I had indicated in the House, there is not much traffic coming through in those hours.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Now that we are no longer in a bubble with BC and it looks like we will probably have to leave those border measures in place for a while longer, has the minister budgeted more money — or anticipated, I am sure — that there is going to have to be more spent between now and the next budget figures? He just mentioned extra staff. All of these would be incorporated into that, so is this over and above the contract that he has with Liard?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What’s in the supplementary right now is a total of about \$2.8 million around border control broadly. That will be roughly \$2.2 million which is for the physical borders themselves, and another \$600,000 or so which is for staff whom we pull across from other departments into the Emergency Coordination Centre to deal with some of these changing situations.

Those dollars, as we anticipated them to March 31, are still our best current projection, including some of these changes. We anticipated that things can move around a fair bit because it is a very fluid situation. What I can’t say today is whether or not I won’t be back at Supplementary No. 2. I’ll only be back if we need more funds, but if we need less, of course it might drop. It’s very difficult to be certain around these projections, but currently, when I talk with the department, what I can say for the members opposite is that the changes that we’ve seen in adding more resources down in Liard were at least anticipated in the sense that, when we put forward the \$2.2 million around that, it was understanding that there would be some variation and we still think we’re within that variation.

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

Is there any further general debate?

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I would just like to take the opportunity to thank the departmental officials again for being here. I will turn it over to my colleague from the Third Party. If she finishes, maybe I will have some more questions for you.

**Ms. White:** I thank my colleague for Porter Creek North and others. I am excited to be here again. Welcome to the officials, who I didn’t ignore per se when I started earlier today, but I forgot to mention them. As always, the briefings are

incredibly helpful, because it is through briefings that sometimes we are able to ask really specific questions and get immediate answers too, so I appreciate that, and I appreciate that they are here.

On November 19 — I am just going to go back to a couple of questions that I asked then, thoughts that we were exchanging, and then go on from there — I had questions about rapid testing. Just before I go on — because this could be completely and entirely the wrong department — would rapid testing fall under the responsibility of Community Services or the minister, through CEMA?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We generally give testing over to Health and Social Services, to the chief medical officer of health and the testing unit — the COVID response unit. There are some relationships with Community Services. For example, when we are talking about isolation requirements, we are always watching technologies on the forefront or protocols around testing to see if they could be replacements, but it is not directly the Emergency Coordination Centre's role, so not directly Community Services; however, indirectly, we work with them.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I just saved us going down this path, but I will put out a note for the Department of Health and Social Services that I have questions about rapid testing and where that machine might be.

On November 19, I really appreciated the exchange that I was able to have with the minister. During Question Period, we talked about alternative self-isolation plans and how it was going to relate to a job site. Things have since changed, but I did appreciate that it is not often that the question that is asked in Question Period can actually be delved into. From my standpoint, Question Period is not the most effective way to communicate or get answers, so the minister was really actively involved in that back and forth on November 19 after Question Period.

The conversation that we were able to have here was really helpful for folks in the territory, including giving them an idea of where they could go if they had concerns or similar things. One of the things that the minister committed to on November 19 was — and I quote: “I will call the Yukon Contractors Association within the week to talk about this situation as an example, and in general, alternative self-isolation plans and how they may affect subcontractors and what the thoughts are of the Contractors Association.”

I just want to follow up with that and see where we are at — if the minister has been able to have that conversation or that meeting about alternative self-isolation plans on active Yukon work sites.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Chair, we are setting up an in-person meeting now to talk about it a little bit more. I think some of the pressure came off once the contractor who had been running the job where some of these first concerns were raised made the decision to change their plans. So, we are taking a little bit of a more proactive approach around it. I do know, as well, that the Premier has been in conversation with the head of the Contractors Association.

As well, I can say that some of the other things that we talked about here in the Legislature on November 19 have been followed up on. For example, language that we put in around our decision letters to really ensure or direct that the contractor has a responsibility to share all that information with any subcontractor or their other workers or anyone who comes on the job site to make sure that health and safety are paramount — all of those things have happened. I did also follow up with the general contractor on the particular job and a couple of the subcontractors. We're trying to set up a meeting that would have a couple of generals involved, the trades, and maybe folks from CMOH to talk through how this can be done safely — maybe WCB as well.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. On November 19, one of the things that we talked about and that I said was really important is that we don't know the shortcomings of something until we find the mistake and we don't see the mistakes or those gaps until they are shown to us. Something happens and then we realize that there's a problem. I do appreciate that.

When we're talking about alternative self-isolation plans, I know that there is an active mine in the territory that has applied for alternative self-isolation plans. I have been contacted by individuals who work at that site and who live in the territory. They have concerns that they are in very close contact with people who are coming from outside jurisdictions. Initially, this company was doing a full 14-day self-isolation in town in a very contained environment before they went out to the mine site in a rural community. Then, at the end of October, that switched and now they're going out to their site directly. They're flying in, they're staying overnight, and then they're going out to camp the next day. There have been some real concerns highlighted by folks who are working on those sites.

On November 19 when we were here, I said that, if I were moving around, my colleague to my right and to my left would have to move in syncopation with me in order to keep us six feet apart, but that's not really how a job site works, including a mine site. If you're an operator and you're in a rock truck by yourself, that could be good for a good portion of the day, but if you go into a shared lunch room, cafeteria, you're using shared bathrooms, you start to cross.

In that situation, what kind of oversight comes from the department about those alternative self-isolation plans in a rural work setting?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The first thing to understand is that there is a plan that has been submitted. That plan is comprehensive in nature. It would say, for example, that here's how there is going to be a separation for washrooms, for sleeping quarters, for work, with food sometimes. Let me give an example, because different plans are different. They might have a mess area which they've decided can only handle so many people because they've got to separate people out to keep everybody separated so that you don't have to do synchronized jostling as the member was discussing. So, then they work at odd shifts and then they've got this protocol about cleaning in between, et cetera. So, there's a plan.

The next thing to note is that, for a site like a mine — and especially as the BC bubble has changed — well, even before it had changed, we said, “Okay, these are trial runs, so we’re going to look at shift change and watch and monitor” and then be able to rescind that decision should we not see that things are running the way that they ought to. I note that the plan also has within it how, if there is someone who becomes ill — not even just with COVID, but ill in general — how they are dealt with or if they come down with COVID-like symptoms — how they’re dealt with, how they’re isolated, how they’re kept separate further.

On these particular ones, we have the chief medical officer of health’s office working closely with the health professionals on-site. They went to the site and they did a pre-survey; they are going to be doing other ones as we go. So, there is this ongoing scrutiny that will be part of it. We have all sorts of folks who have the responsibility to ensure that things are being followed up on from the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* perspective. We have CEMA officers — for example, our natural resource officers have CEMA authorities. We also passed this plan across to the Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board so that they can do occupational health and safety inspections to make sure that things are being done safely.

What I understand of the plan, to be clear, is that, if there is a Yukoner who is going up to work, they should be separate from those workers who are there isolating, because that isolation is supposed to be separate and distinct. That includes work, sleep, eating, whatever — all those aspects of life in the camp. So, that is how it should be. What I will say is that is the intention and we will work to make sure that is how it is delivered.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate those answers from the minister.

He said terms like “watch” and “monitor”. So, my reply is enforcement and oversight. You and I, Mr. Chair, can make an agreement and I can tell you how I am going to do something and you can say, “Okay, that looks good”, and I can go to a place where you are not following me because it is too far away. I want to know — not necessarily enforcement — sorry, that sounds more heavy-handed — let’s say oversight and monitoring. That is really what I want to know. How does the minister, who signed off on the alternative self-isolation plans — how — and I am not insinuating that the minister should be going to camps; that is not what I am saying. I am not insinuating; I am not suggesting that he goes — although, mining camps are really fascinating — I spent a lot of years in them, so it is not that they are not good places, but I want to know how he is assured that the agreements that are signed are working, and I will follow that up after. I want to know about the oversight and his ability to know that what has been agreed to is happening.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There are a couple of ways in which that oversight happens; I’ll just generally describe that.

First of all, CMOH will be attending. When I’m saying the “chief medical officer of health”, I’m referring to someone

from their office — a health professional will be there and looking.

Second of all, we have made the point of connecting directly with Workers’ Compensation to inform them not only of the general notion of the plan, but the specific notion of the plan. We share the plan across with Workers’ Compensation so that they can inspect to ensure that safety is being adhered to.

I will also say that, from our perspective, we believe that the mines have a vested interest or the workplace has a vested interest in ensuring the safety of their workers. There is the very real possibility that, if they don’t do that, they could end up with COVID or some other illness and that’s going to be a problem for them. They know that; they don’t want COVID there, of course, so they will, I believe, work hard to make sure that they’re following a plan which is going to be safe for their workers generally.

I also think that if they don’t do that and, for example, Occupational Health and Safety goes in there and says, “Yeah, you’re not living up to this plan. Shut ‘er down” — that’s the mine down. There is a lot at stake for them to try to make sure that they live up to it. How do I see that? I have heard of instances of employers who have let workers go because they weren’t abiding by the rules. I think that demonstrates a seriousness around this.

Let me also say that, if there is a worker out there who has concerns — and I’ll get our 1-800 number again — 1-800 for the call centre to express that concern, or our online complaint system, or e-mailing covid19enforcement@gov.yk.ca, and we will work to follow up in a confidential fashion.

When people have gone through this before, one of the questions that they have said to me is, “Oh, I don’t want to use my name.” I say that is okay. They can register their concern and we will check to see if the person wants their name there or not. We want to work with the employees and we want to work with the employers to make sure that those sites are safe.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Chair, I appreciate that from the minister. I know that he has rattled off all that contact information a lot, but perhaps he could send it to me in an e-mail or, if he would like it to be in a more public fashion, maybe he could both e-mail me so I have it soon and then table it as a legislative return in case anyone is looking for it.

It is fascinating because he and I are having a conversation about compliance and oversight in a different way, but I have had this conversation before, having worked in mines, asking about the spill line — such as, how does that work? The reason why it’s important that someone feels comfortable and safe in their ability to report something is that they are also in a really vulnerable position as the employee — right? You don’t want to lose your job. You can have very valid concerns and possibly you can be the person who will stop the spread of something. When the minister said that no one wants to be responsible for COVID — absolutely — but more than that, when we are moving people in without that isolation period, we are moving potential COVID cases into rural communities. That is the concern in this case when I am talking about mine sites.

Just to go back a bit to when we were talking about the alternative self-isolation plans, for example, for building

projects in the City of Whitehorse and the conversation that the minister is going to have with the Contractors Association, will there ever be an opportunity for folks who will be affected by those proposed plans to appeal them? For example, would a subcontractor who was being told that folks were brought to the site have an opportunity to appeal that proposed alternative self-isolation plan?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Just for the record today, I will certainly follow up with an e-mail and with a legislative return, but the call centre number for COVID is 1-877-374-0425. The e-mail is as I just listed a moment ago. The website is yukon.ca and COVID pops up on top.

Just before I move on to the appeal question, I will also share, when I do an e-mail and legislative return, where on the website to go to do an automatic application of a concern — fill out a concern form.

We currently don't have a formal appeal process. This is just one of those things where, as we are standing up these systems, they are still meant to be temporary as we are doing it, but let me acknowledge a couple of points around the notion of appeal. If I hear concerns about a decision that is taken, I will certainly pass those concerns across to the applicants and to those who would be there doing that oversight so that those concerns are known. I am not trying to attribute them to anyone, but I am trying to make sure that, if there is something that is going awry, people are alerted to it.

From our perspective, the primary job of the general contractor or the person in charge of the job site — whether that is a mine or a construction site or whatever it is — their job is to work through these issues with the subcontractors.

While it is not a formal appeal process through me, my thinking is that the general contractor has the responsibility to ensure that the job site is safe, and part of that is through the agreements with the subcontractors. Those agreements are laid out in how workplace safety will be conducted. So, in this instance, even though there wasn't a formal appeal process, to me, I think, that there was effectively an appeal by the subcontractors. Even though I don't think that it went as well as it should have in process, I feel that it yielded the same outcome ultimately.

One of the challenges is that an alternative self-isolation plan is about a two-week period; that's what it is about. So, we don't always have the time — just for a moment, let me give another example.

I've had times when people are coming to try to be with loved ones when they're near the end of their life. You're getting an application that is so time-sensitive. Some of these things you can see coming from further away and it's possible to give them more time, but it isn't always the case.

Just generally, we have not introduced an appeal process. It is my hope that we can continue to work sensitively with people if they have concerns and without having to add another layer to the process.

I look forward to further questions.

**Ms. White:** I don't think that process is a bad thing. I think that when we have safety and stop-gap measures in place — sometimes that's the reason I don't run out of gas in the

truck; it is because the light will come on and tell me that I should probably fill up sooner than later, whereas if I didn't have that stop-gap measure in place, I might miss how many kilometres I had done.

I hear what the minister is doing when he compares, for example, someone coming to visit a loved one at end of life, but to me, it's different from a job site. I'm not saying that there needs to be an appeal process available for all, but there are some concerns. I would have a concern, for example, if I were a subcontractor and I go into this new process — I appreciate that we're changing our process a bit. Now we're making sure that the general will let the subcontractors know that they're applying for this alternative self-isolation plan. I think that's important. So, already, we've strengthened our process. I think that's great.

But if I, as a subcontractor, was concerned about my employees — those whom I am responsible for — I don't think it's the most effective thing to actually have to contact the minister himself. The minister is a busy guy. It would be crazy if he weren't busy at this point in time. That might not make the most sense.

I also know that, if I were a subcontractor who had concerns about an alternative self-isolation plan for two weeks and the minister says, "Okay, I'll just let the general know that you have concerns" — that doesn't work for me. It doesn't work for me for a whole bunch of reasons. I would also point out that, within contracting, there are penalties.

For example, if I was a subcontractor who said, "I don't agree with your plan for when you bring people out of town and I propose an alternative work solution" — and the general contractor says no, and then I say, "Well, what about this one" — and the general contractor says no. Then I say, "Okay, we are not coming to the site for two weeks" — and then the general contractor says, "That will be a \$45,000 penalty because you are going to miss the next deadline" — there is a power imbalance. There is no answer right now. We are talking about things, and I didn't know that this problem existed before I got that first phone call. It's not that I was thinking that this doesn't make any sense. Now I am seeing that there are problems here.

I guess what I am asking is if there is a willingness for the minister to ask his officials to take a look to see if, in some cases — not all cases, but some — it makes sense that there is an appeal ability so that someone who will be directly affected by these plans has the ability to raise their concerns in a way where, for example, they don't get named to the applicant.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First or all, is there a willingness? Yes, let me point to it directly. I am going to be sitting down with some generals and the Yukon Contractors Association, so if I hear from people that there is a consensus about which way to go, then, sure, I will work to try to get that in place. I am certainly open to that conversation.

I take the point that the member opposite is making. I am not going to get there here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly today, but do I hear a suggestion? Yes, I do. I am sure that the officials hear it as well. I will say that the power balance that is out there — when I was talking to the

subcontractors the other day, for example, I said to them, “Hold on now — this is a change. That change, as the general goes to introduce it, provides you an opportunity by which to negotiate against that change.” I am not trying to suggest that they negotiate health, but if there is a cost to keeping workers off-site for a bit to avoid that interaction — or whatever it is — then there is some ability there to negotiate a fair compensation against that and how to deal with the situation in order to make it safe, as it needs to be.

I will just say that, yes, there is a willingness. We have a couple of staff folks who are assigned with this work. They liaise with the chief medical officer of health’s office. They are usually the people who are reaching out to the applicants. That is more likely the place that subcontractors would contact. It is not me directly. I think the member opposite is correct with that, but at times, if there is no recourse, I get those calls just like others in this Legislature would be getting those calls.

It is an evolving process. We are open to that evolution over time. Again, I want to note that the bulk of these are individuals; they are not businesses. There are some, for sure, but they are more the exception than the rule. I will work, as I have said, and talk with the industry to try to find what a good balance would be.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. In my line of work, that is practically a win right there, so I am grateful for that and the conversations that will be happening with the Yukon Contractors Association. When I am talking about this right now, my concern is less about individuals and definitely more about an employer-employee relationship, and that is to do with active job sites, whether they be construction sites or active mine sites, and similar things.

I will just leave that there, and I do thank the minister for that.

There is one thing that I just wanted to mention on the record. My colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, had talked about the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun checkstop on their traditional territory going into Mayo. I actually really want to congratulate them for the supreme effort that they put there. Having seen the checkstops both in Watson Lake and in Mayo, I would have really preferred it if the Watson Lake one looked more like the Mayo one, because it forced you to go through to have that conversation. There was no just driving past. It was incredibly polite; it was lovely. They asked for information. There was no forcing of information. There was a conversation.

I would like to point out that the First Nation had placards for locals far before Yukon government did. They were on the ball. It was quite the sight, so I just want to say that I really supported it because I feel like a First Nation government has the ability to keep their community safe in the best way that they think possible.

We aren’t in normal times, so I appreciate that, in unusual times, they took the actions that they thought were important. There maybe were some lessons for us there about how to divert traffic off a main highway to go through. I just wanted to put that there. There was no question. I just wanted to make sure that I said that I appreciated what happened there.

One of the things that happened with me today when I was not in the Chamber is that I had a conversation with someone — and we’re going to bring this back to probably one of my favourite/least favourite topics in this Assembly, and that’s the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. Mr. Chair, you’ve heard it from me before. I understood the shortcomings when I knew the shortcomings, and I have learned the shortcomings in recent years. They have definitely changed.

There was an order that was made, I think, and extended in July, but it had to do around eviction protection. There are a couple different things. If the minister could walk me through what that eviction protection looked like and when it expired — and then I’ll ask my next questions.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Let me just begin by also acknowledging that the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in also beat us to our placards — or our decals, I think, that we had — but we did beat the feds. We got our decals out first, and then the feds came with their placards. I do want to say, again, that we’ve gone from zero to 60, and even though I think that there is always room for improvement, what I took away from it was a bunch of hard-working folks trying to keep Yukoners safe.

I will also agree with the member opposite that we support leadership at the local level. We think that it’s more responsive and more in tune with the community than a territorial government can be, much the same way that I think we’re more understanding of this territory than, I think, a federal government can be of this place — not because they don’t have wonderful people working. They do, but it’s just that, when you’re there on the ground, you’re going to get it better.

It’s also part, overall, of our collective effort to respond — that this is not just us as a government, that there are governments and a public out there, and everybody is doing their part as best they can. There are maybe a few people who are not, but we’ll do our best to try to bring them along.

The residential support was under Ministerial Order 2020/38. The order, just at a high level, Mr. Chair — if there were tenants who were financially affected by COVID-19 — maybe they couldn’t work or they lost work — it gave them time to pay for arrears. It also gave them — if a tenant was isolating and trying to stay in place, they couldn’t be evicted at that time. That was that ministerial order. I’ll stop there. That was the order. I know where we’re going, Mr. Chair.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that the minister knows where we’re going because sometimes I’m unclear myself where I might take us.

The phone call that I had today — again, it was one of those calls that you get when you don’t know there’s a problem until you get told that there’s a problem.

Imagine being in the middle of a pandemic — so, we’re in the middle of a pandemic — a worldwide pandemic, I’m told, in unprecedented times. There’s other language, but those are the two that I can remember right now. You get a notification from your landlord that your rent in three months’ time — because that’s the notification requirement — is going to go up by 50 percent. So, a 50-percent increase in three months’ time. Mr. Chair, I don’t know how familiar you are with the legislation, but that is totally legal in Yukon. I could double it.

I could triple it. I could say that I'm going to multiply your rent by three. I could say that it is \$1,000 now and, in three months' time with notification, your rent is now \$3,000. It's legal.

You need three months' notification and it can't happen once in the 12-month span ahead of that, but we are in the middle of a pandemic. Other jurisdictions put in place — some through ministerial orders — stop-gap measures so that there could not be rent increases right now because people are vulnerable.

Mr. Chair, if your rent was to go up from \$1,000 to \$3,000, you might have to look for a new place to live. The challenge would be that you would be looking for a new place to live in the middle of a pandemic. Again, I didn't think about this. I didn't see this coming until it came. It arrived today in a phone call. Again, it's not that we can look forward to all situations because that would make us have to be like the Wizard of Oz. Even the Wizard of Oz had shortcomings in the end — right? He wasn't able to see everything. Does the minister have thoughts about tenant protection? I appreciate the “no evictions”; that was really important to me. That was committed to in the spring, but what about this? This situation is totally legal. In the conversation that I had today with the person, I was saying that we could appeal it to the residential landlord and tenancies board, but I need to tell you that we will lose. I don't want to give a person false hope, as what is happening is totally legal. It doesn't make it right, but it is legal. I want to know the minister's thoughts on that.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am going to try to take some time after we are out of Committee of the Whole today to look back across other jurisdictions to see where they are at. I just had a very quick scan to try to see this, and what I can say is that many provinces put in place eviction protection. I believe the member opposite — that there are some that are put in place, some rent controls at the same time, although they might have also been those jurisdictions that had rent controls to start with — so I will look to see what is the norm out there.

I note as well that we put in place some programs to support Yukoners with rental payments, but that still doesn't answer the question that the member opposite has. First of all, the reality lies with our current *Landlord and Tenant Act*, which I think came in 2012, somewhere there. One of the things I will say, underneath that act, is that there is a limit to the number of times that there can be a rent increase by a landlord to once per year. But the member opposite is correct that, with the appropriate notice — if I understand her question — that has been given in this case, that landlords do have the ability to increase rent significantly, should they choose.

To the broader point about whether or not we should do something about that during a pandemic, all I will say today is that I thank her for raising this concern to me, and I will look across jurisdictions. I will also hear from the two groups that I tend to turn to, to talk with about this issue. Number one would be the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition — thinking from the perspective of renters — and the other one would be the Yukon Residential Landlord Association, when I think about the landlords.

I don't have a response today. I hear her, that she is concerned about this, and I thank her for raising it to me.

**Ms. White:** I apologize to the minister. What I was saying was that the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* was passed in 2012 but didn't come into effect until January 1, 2016, which made people incredibly vulnerable all of that time. But the new legislation came into place and people are still vulnerable. I appreciate that the minister has confirmed what I said before, which is that it's totally legal to increase someone's rent — there is no cap to that increase — once every 12 months. But essentially — what this essentially is — this could be eviction via rent increase in this case.

The minister can look toward Manitoba. Manitoba had a stop on rent increases. They just removed it and people now are facing essentially eviction via rent increase. The reason why I wanted to put it out there right now is because the minister, who is in control of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, has the ability to put security measures in place for tenants. It could be temporary. It could be four months, starting December 15; it could be three months, starting December 15. My point is that I'm actually talking to the one person who has the ability to do something about it. He doesn't have to answer me now. He's very good at the computer — much better than me — so I appreciate that he tried to do a cross-jurisdictional scan in the time before he stood up.

I can tell you right now, Manitoba is one; they removed it and people are facing, essentially, evictions due to rent increases. That's an issue that I just wanted to highlight so the minister would be aware so I can plead the case for the one person who could put protection in place to consider it. It could be a holiday miracle; it would be fantastic.

The *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* — I'm going to talk about my favourite — the minister has just mouthed the words, because who would not expect me to talk about mobile-homeowners right now? I'm pretty much a broken record on the issue and I'm proud of it actually.

Mobile homes, as we've talked about, are vulnerable because you can own an asset, but you rent the land the asset sits on. It's important that I use the term “rent”. There's a rental agreement in place. I'm going somewhere with this. I'm going to say “rent” a lot of times in the next little while. You own the asset. Maybe you've mortgaged the asset. If anyone is looking at purchasing a mobile home, I can tell you that it's a lot more complicated than it was a number of years ago.

The fascinating thing with a mobile home — because unlike a car that you have to register because it moves, a mobile home doesn't exist in the world once it's paid for. A mobile home is — what could I compare it to? A toaster. I could sell you a toaster.

You might ask me for a bill of sale. I could give you a bill of sale, and you could own the toaster. But if someone says, “Well, how did you pay for that toaster?” or “Do you own that toaster?” or “What is that toaster worth?” — it is a toaster. It doesn't exist in the world. It doesn't move. You don't have to register it with any kind of government branch. The toaster is an entity on its own. A mobile home is a lot more complex, obviously, than a toaster, but a mobile home, once someone

owns it, doesn't exist in the world anymore. At one point in time, they were registered. I have never been able to figure out what these stickers were that said that they were the City of Whitehorse with numbers on them. For the first number of years, I would take pictures of them and I would try to figure out what it meant.

A mobile home — you pay property tax on it and you do all these things. But under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, you are viewed as a renter. You can be evicted with 14 days' notice. Your rent can increase to any amount once every 12 months with three months' notification. Under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, a person in a mobile home is a renter. I guess that this is my assertion right now. I should have said that this is my opinion, based on the legislation.

Just before I get into the next questions, can the minister tell me if he agrees with that — that a mobile-homeowner is a renter under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** My answer for the member opposite is that, yes, they are renters, although they are specific types of renters. There are some slightly different rules for them, in my recollection. I have never thought of the toaster analogy, but I understand what the member opposite is saying.

The land is rented — or the pad is rented. The physical mobile home is owned. They exist as a renter, and they exist, as well, as a homeowner. It is its own sort of beast, and there are specific rules under the act that differentiate them slightly from other renters, but yes — the answer is yes.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that. If the minister wants me to list all the reasons why they are different — for example, the eviction notice in winter — I can do that. That doesn't help us right now.

The only reason why I'm bringing this up is because — and this is not under the minister's department, but I'm hoping he will be a champion for people in mobile homes because, although I've asked that we change the legislation and I've asked that we strengthen it for the benefit of mobile-homeowners, we haven't. I'm hoping that he can be a champion in a different way, which is the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. The reason why I'm bringing that up is that the Canada-Yukon housing benefit is to help people with affordability issues in housing.

Mr. Chair, when I got elected in 2011, the average pad rent in the City of Whitehorse was \$350 a month. That was the average. Some were a little higher, some were a little less, but \$350 was the average. Now, in 2020, the average pad rent is over \$500. There are all sorts of workarounds. There are loopholes that are used by landlords. If you pay your rent within the first three calendar days, we will give you a \$100 reduction, because you couldn't give someone a \$100 penalty if they didn't pay it in the first three days because that's against the rules. But you can flip it around and say, "If you pay it in the first three days, I'll do a reduction."

If you talk to anyone, everyone has all these opinions about trailer parks. There is all sorts of slang that is pretty offensive when you look at it. The real truth of the matter is that there is a whole collection — different kinds of folks who live in trailer

parks. There are retired people because it's an easy way to own something that's a lot more manageable. The typical mobile home is on one floor, so you may have stairs going up to it but, once you're in, it's on one floor so it's very accessible. I can tell you that, in the last number of years, the number of ramps that have been put into the parks that I represent have grown significantly. Just to the point that I've just been around all the parks this last weekend, and there are a lot more ramps, which means that people with mobility issues are living there.

It used to be viewed as your first "kick your can" at home ownership because it was affordable. You see prices right now, upwards of \$200,000 for a mobile home in a mobile home park — not one that owns the land, so not in a condo corporation and certainly not up the hill in Ingram. It's not Ingram. It's the neighbourhood just past Ingram, but they own the land.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Ms. White:** Arkell.

So, you are renting. When the Canada-Yukon housing benefit was announced, I was contacted by a bunch of folks in mobile home parks, because what was once an affordable place to live — some of these folks have lived in these homes for 20 years, and 20 years ago, it was \$150 a month. It was affordable. It was an affordable alternative for housing. At \$500 a month, you still pay your utility costs. You still pay your electricity and you pay all these things still, but \$500 plus a month is no longer affordable, so folks are applying for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. The first rejection letters have come through — and I know that it is being appealed. The way that they are working on that is through the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. The Minister responsible for Yukon Housing told me that she would have a conversation with the minister responsible for mobile homes, who just happens to be the Minister of Community Services. I just want to know what kind of conversations are happening between those two departments about support for folks in mobile homes.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Just really specifically on the question about the housing program. The criteria are set by CMHC — Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. When it came out, we tried to check in and we checked back, and we were told no, because the criteria weren't there. I think that we heard the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation say this in the Legislature the other day. I think it was in Question Period.

So, we were working to see whether we could get mobile homes in under that. We thought that it was a great thought, and especially noting, as the member opposite does, that mobile-homeowners are renters of the pad.

But the criteria and the rules are not set by us, so we are not able to do that. I think that we have to work to find other supports and other solutions. That is basically my answer here today.

The member opposite talked about how, in 2011, the cost for rent was around \$350 or thereabouts, and in 2020, today, it is about \$500. I ran the math quickly just to see, and that is about a four-percent increase year over year, which is significant. However, if I compared it against housing prices, housing prices have probably outpaced that.

I saw an article just a week or two ago on CBC talking about housing sales across Canada. I was shocked to see what has been going on. What I saw was that the average price increase across all of Canada was about 15 percent this last year. That is huge. Of course, this is one of those challenges that we face as a territory. The costs of housing are significant here. I agree with the concerns that are being raised.

We have looked into this specific program. We weren't able to get a yes out of it, but we will work to try to get it as part of a review of that program as it comes up. We will work to try to find other possibilities. The only small silver lining that I can offer is that some people who live in mobile homes are double renters. They are renters of the mobile home, and then the owner is the renter of the pad. For those people, if they rent the mobile home — as in, they are tenants of someone else who owns the mobile home — they are eligible for the funding program.

**Ms. White:** I think that, although the minister called it a “silver lining”, I kind of call it a lead balloon. I don't know that this is as hopeful as all that. There are more than 800 mobile homes in the City of Whitehorse. They are owned by all sorts of different folks, including many people on fixed incomes, whether they are on pensions or on disability. Back in the day, you could buy a mobile home if you were on disability. You couldn't afford it now. I don't know if I would call it a silver lining; I call it more like a lead balloon, but I appreciate the hope and optimism. I like to infuse things with hope and optimism, but I don't know if that's it.

The one thing that I will put on the floor here is that, when the Yukon government signed on for that Canada housing benefit, they cancelled their own programs — programs that they could have engineered to support mobile homes. It's gone; it doesn't exist anymore. The rent supplement program that was under Yukon Housing doesn't exist any more.

If the minister is saying that the Yukon government's hands are tied because it's a federal program, I'll just point out that they cancelled the Yukon program — the specific one. That's a bit of a disappointment to me.

The minister and I have had lots of conversations over the years about the importance of recognizing mobile homes as a different form of housing and that they're not similar to someone who rents an apartment. They're not the same as someone who rents a house. You own the asset, you rent the land, and you can face eviction. You have to move an asset. In some cases, that asset is not moveable. You have to move that asset. There is no place for it to move. You're caught in this catch-22.

There is actually something happening right now where there is, like, predatory purchasing happening where someone faces an eviction. They try to sell the unit. Because of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, the park can actually say, “No, you don't meet our requirements.” They can turn down people who are trying to sell an asset, and then they get lowballed and offered less than they were trying to sell it for. Unfortunately, mobile-homeowners are in a real catch-22. Until the legislation recognizes them as separate from renters, then that's going to happen.

I'm going to move on because I talk about that a lot. I'm frustrated and I'm sure the minister's not having fun, so I'll go to my other favourite topic — which isn't going to be fun for either of us — which is minimum wage.

Essential workers program — I have to tell you, there was a certain amount of irony, for me, when I got that card in my mailbox that talked about essential workers. You could work in retail. You could work at a gas station. You could work at a laundromat — no, I think the card said “drycleaners” — and it listed all these things that are essential. I believe that they were essential before the pandemic, I believe that they're essential during a pandemic, and I believe that they're essential after a pandemic. I do. I feel like work is valuable. The work may look different for different people, but it's valuable.

The shocking thing, I think, about this program — my assumption is that it's under the Department of Economic Development because that's the minister who answers, but minimum wage is the responsibility of the Minister of Community Services.

What this program identifies is that, if you're on the front lines of a pandemic and you earn less than \$20 an hour, you should qualify for a \$4-per-hour top-up, which can be up to \$600 a month. Over 16 weeks, it's \$2,400, I think — the minister is much better at math than I am — which is a significant amount of money when the decision was made that the minimum wage would stay where it was and not go to the recommended one.

We can talk about the Employment Standards Board recommendation and the increase and tying it to inflation and things, but essentially, it amounted to not increasing it by 25 cents an hour for a low-wage earner. That's \$500 a year.

What I would like to talk to the minister about is the difference between a living wage and minimum wage. The federal government — when they recognized that essential workers — I honestly think initially it was set up for Ontario for people who are working in long-term care facilities because they weren't government employees — because they were patching work together, they were travelling between facilities, and that's how the virus was being transmitted in Ontario. So, the federal government came out with this essential worker top-up program, and then it got spread across the territories and the provinces.

When it got to Yukon, it meant that our lowest wage earners qualified, because people who work in long-term care facilities here are Yukon government employees. It meant that gas station attendants were essential and grocery store clerks were essential. Everyone else who doesn't earn government money, essentially, was essential. Has the government been looking at anything to do with an increase to minimum wage? We recognize now that people are essential and that they need more to live. We're willing to give them \$4 an hour extra. Unfortunately, it's only in six-week chunks, so what happens after the pandemic?

Has the minister and his colleagues been having any conversations about the minimum wage?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, I want to apologize. When I used the phrase “silver lining”, I was not trying to be



insensitive. I appreciate the issues that the member is raising. Generally, this is a good program that we have picked up, working with the federal government, but I take her point that it is not a good outcome for mobile-homeowners.

What I have heard from the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation is that she and her department will work — and I have said as well, and I will say again, that I will try to work with them to find a way to support mobile homes. I don't know if it is this program. Again, we followed that path. We didn't get there, so let's see what we can find.

With respect to minimum wage, I do want to say that, when we first landed here in 2016, it was \$11.13. In 2017, it went up to \$11.32; in 2018, it went up to \$11.51; and last year, it went up to \$12.71. Every one of those was the recommendation that came from the Employment Standards Board.

What I will also note is that, in 2016, the living wage in the Yukon was \$19.12. Then in 2017, it went down and then started coming back up until today — or at least the last time that I saw it, as calculated by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, it was \$19.07. So, actually, our relative distance from the minimum wage to the living wage has been improving.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** No, it was \$8 to begin with, and now it is a \$5.36 difference. Have I got that wrong?

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Sorry, did I miss the last one? Sorry — in 2020, our minimum wage went up to \$13.71. We are currently at \$13.71. The current living wage is \$19.07, and the difference is \$5.36; okay. But when we first started here, Mr. Chair, the difference between the minimum wage and the living wage was \$8. That is a significant improvement.

I don't know any jurisdiction in Canada that is talking about the living wage as the minimum wage. At least how the folks from the Yukon Bureau of Statistics and the Employment Standards Board, when they reached out to me and gave me a report, which I think I tabled here — if you put the minimum wage at the living wage, basically what they are worried about is that you lose jobs. What happens at that point is that people reduce the number of jobs that they have. You need to be careful.

When I look at the Yukon Anti-poverty Coalition's work around the analysis that they do on the living wage each year, they usually provide suggestions at the back about where we should go. Addressing the minimum wage is not their number one suggestion, typically. I think that there are things that we need to do in order to support low-income Yukoners. I continue to work with the Employment Standards Board to hear their recommendations on where the minimum wage goes. Right now, we have the fifth highest minimum wage in Canada, but I hear the members opposite that they believe we should do more.

That more right now is happening during the pandemic. We just had the extension of that wage top-up, but it's not necessarily what the members opposite would propose. I appreciate that and that is fine, but I just want to say that, here in the Yukon, there are a couple of things that we have going for us. For example, the Employment Standards Board has said

to us that we should continue with the inflationary increase each year. I wait to hear from them again if they have new recommendations.

Anyway, I just want to say to all members today who posed questions that I really appreciated the dialogue. I can see the time, Mr. Chair, so I move that you report progress.

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Streicker that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

#### **Chair's report**

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*

#### **The following sessional paper was tabled December 1, 2020:**

34-3-57

*Twenty-second Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees (December 1, 2020) (Adel)*





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 72

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34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, December 2, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, December 2, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Withdrawal of motions**

**Speaker:** Motion No. 356, notice of which was given yesterday by the Leader of the Third Party, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as the actions requested in the motion have been taken in whole or in part.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Today in the gallery, for the tribute to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lions Club, from the Grey Mountain Lions Club, we have Gary Doering. He is the Zone 7 chair for all six Canadian clubs. We have Gord Sutton here, who is the treasurer, and is also with Grey Mountain. He's busy right now collecting money in the raffle that they are doing for the pickup truck. It is also a real pleasure to have Helen Blattner here today. She is our vice district governor for 49B, soon to be district governor of all 49B. Also listening on the radio today are many club members from around the Yukon. Please welcome them all today.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of World AIDS Day**

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would like to thank the incredible work of the department. I would like to also just acknowledge that, in prepping for World AIDS Day and the tribute, the great work of all Yukoners as we look at World AIDS Day. I am presenting today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government.

Yesterday marked the start of Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week in Canada. As we all know, the global HIV epidemic is not over. According to estimates from the Public Health Agency of Canada, there were more than 63,000 Canadians living with HIV at the end of 2016.

We also know that the number of people living with HIV in Canada is increasing and that 14 percent of people living with HIV are unaware that they are infected. This epidemic is also concentrated in specific populations across Canada. About 11 percent of HIV-positive people are indigenous people, although they only represent about five percent of the population. Numbers like these remind us that we need to contribute and continue our efforts to increase awareness and knowledge about HIV and AIDS. We also need to continue to

focus on prevention and education programs, particularly in indigenous communities across the country.

This year, it is especially important that we remember the ongoing global impact of HIV. This is because the HIV epidemic may be accelerating due to the COVID-19 pandemic. People living with HIV may also have an increased risk of poor outcomes when infected with COVID-19. For this reason, the World Health Organization is calling on everyone to rally for global solidarity to maintain essential HIV services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, as the Health and Social Services minister, I call on all Yukoners to challenge HIV stigma and discrimination, which we know still persists in our communities. By showing respect and compassion for those living with HIV, we can improve outcomes and reduce the number of new infections.

In closing today, I would like to recognize one of our important community partners, Blood Ties Four Directions. This organization has been providing HIV education and support since its founding in 1993.

On behalf of myself and my Liberal colleagues, I would like to thank all current and past Blood Ties members, staff, directors, and volunteers for their hard work and dedication to eliminating barriers and helping people live with dignity.

We also would like to thank all our front-line health care workers in Yukon who bravely and selflessly continue to deliver services to HIV and COVID-19 patients and clients and use this opportunity to educate Yukoners to be respectful and kind to one another during this very difficult time.

*Applause*

**Ms. Hanson:** On behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party, I join in marking World AIDS Day, which has been observed on December 1 since 1988, when World AIDS Day was designated as the first ever international day for global health. World AIDS Day is a reminder that, while we are trying to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is still in the midst of multiple pandemics, including malaria and TB. Of these pandemics, AIDS has, over the past 40 years, killed over 33 million people. It is important to maintain our support for communities and countries who, with resilience and innovation, try to maintain their efforts to address HIV/AIDS.

As the World Health Organization says, this is vital because, while we focus on fighting this new pandemic, we must not drop our guard on a twin pandemic that has been with us for 40 years and is far from over.

Despite significant efforts, progress around the world in scaling up HIV services was already stalling before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. That slowing down of progress means the world will be missing the 90-90-90 internationally agreed upon targets for 2020. Those targets had been to ensure that 90 percent of people living with HIV are aware of their status, that 90 percent of those diagnosed with HIV are receiving treatment, and that 90 percent of those people receiving treatment have received viral suppression.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made access to HIV prevention, testing, treatment, and care more difficult. Now more than ever, we need to support the work of local grassroots

organizations here in Yukon, like Blood Ties Four Directions and those working globally to meet these needs. The work of our public health professionals in “normal times” is challenging. COVID has introduced layers of complexity.

As we celebrate the news today of Britain’s approval of a COVID-19 vaccine, a couple of thoughts come to mind about how we here in Yukon and as part of a world community respond. We hear much talk — worry, really — about our access to the COVID-19 vaccine, and yet, 40 years on, there is still no vaccine for AIDS.

Although there have been effective anti-retroviral medications for HIV for 25 years, the majority of the 33 million people so far killed by AIDS had yet to die when those drugs first arrived. Think about that. Annual AIDS deaths continued to go up for a decade, and close to a million people — mostly non-white people — die every year of AIDS.

The statistics show clear racial and economic barriers to life-saving treatments for AIDS. We know that anti-retroviral therapy taken by people who are living with HIV and the drugs that people who are HIV-negative can take as a form of pre-exposure prophylaxis — PrEP — share an important property with vaccines: They curb transmission.

This Legislative Assembly agreed in April 2019 to make PrEP available for free to qualified individuals in Yukon. We have it within our power to contribute to the UN’s sustainable development goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 by acting now on a commitment made by all members of this Assembly.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Lions Clubs International**

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, the Liberal Party, and the New Democratic Party to pay tribute to the Lions Club as they celebrate 100 years of Lions in Canada. On June 7, 1917, Lions Clubs International was born in Chicago in the United States. The name “Lions” stands for liberty, intelligence, and our nation’s safety, but this group stands for much more: fraternity, good fellowship, strength of character, and purpose. In 2017, it marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lions Clubs International, and this year, 2020, marks 100 years of Lions in Canada — the largest humanitarian service organization in Canada and in the world.

The Lions global expansion began in 1920 with the chartering of the border city Lions Club in Windsor, Ontario. There are currently 1,600 clubs in Canada, with over 37,000 members. The Lions Club is a network of individual clubs, united in helping others and improving their community.

Becoming a Lions Club member gives you the opportunity to volunteer locally in your community, make new friends and professional connections, lead projects, and make your community a better place to live — and you have fun doing it, Mr. Speaker.

I will always remember one thing in the Lions Club code of ethics: Always, always bear in mind my obligations as a citizen to my country, my territory, and my community and to

give them my unswerving loyalty in word, act, and deed so to give freely of my time, labour, and means.

The Lion’s Club motto, chosen by way of a contest in 1955 and won by a Canadian Lions member, is “We serve”. This motto sums up the life work of members around the world. The first Lions Club in the Yukon was the Whitehorse Lions Club, chartered in 1951, but over the years, we have seen them expand throughout the territory. The St. Elias Lions Club in Haines Junction, which I am a proud member of, was chartered in 1964. The Lake Laberge Lions Club was chartered in 1969. The Grey Mountain Lions Club was chartered in 1979, and the Fireweed Lions Club was chartered in 1993. Last but not least, the Dease Lake Lions Club was chartered in 1994. These are the active clubs in the Yukon and northern BC today.

In the past, we had clubs in other communities: Watson Lake; Beaver Creek; Northway; Destruction Bay, which was Mount Logan; Mayo; Elsa-Keno, the Mount Haldane Lions; Faro; and the Nisutlin Bay Lions in Teslin.

As I spoke to earlier, when the Whitehorse club — which began in 1951, joining District 49 — later came to sponsor my club, the St. Elias, and many others throughout the Yukon, the Lions Club grew to such a great membership in District 49 that we had to split into two districts, 49A and 49B. I am very proud to say that my club has the largest membership in both of the districts.

You might wonder what we do in our communities and how we give back. Well, there are some of you who will remember the first original swimming pool here in Whitehorse. It was called the Lions pool. It was a highlight for me when I had a chance to go there as a kid coming in from the communities. The Whitehorse Lions Club Internet and TV Auction, the Fireweed Lions Bosses’ Christmas Bash party for small business, the great Mountain Lions vehicle raffle, which I spoke about earlier in the introductions, the Lake Laberge Lions trade show, and the St. Elias Lions Club memorial spring poker run. So, the Lions are responsible for numerous outdoor rinks and playgrounds. The skateboard park in Riverdale was initiated by a local Lions member who saw the need for our youth and worked in the City of Whitehorse to make it happen. We also sponsor many non-profit organizations, groups, and individuals through funding, bursaries, volunteering time, and many more things — the list goes on. When the St. Elias club was chartered in 1964, their first order of business was building a fence at the cemetery. Ironically, that is one of the last things that we were doing last year — still renovating that fence.

It has been a tough year for Lions Clubs here in the Yukon and in Canada because of the pandemic. Many events have been cancelled, which hits organizations hard as events are our main fundraiser. Part of being a Lion is meeting, getting together as a group, and working on projects giving back to our communities. So, Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you that, when things get back to normal, the Lions Clubs will be back eager and strong, ready to serve our communities.

Again, I want to thank those who came for the tribute today, those who are listening, and congratulations to Lions Clubs in Canada on 100 years of service to your communities.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Mr. Hutton:** I have for tabling three documents: the Yukon Bureau of Statistics police-reported crime statistics in Yukon for 2017; the Yukon Bureau of Statistics police-reported crime statistics in Yukon for 2018; and finally, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction fall 2017 Canadian drug summary report on alcohol.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have for tabling today a legislative return based on debate yesterday during Committee of the Whole regarding correspondence between the government and the opposition parties over the spring and summer.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates the newly elected chief of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation Nicole Tom, Deputy Chief Zachery Cochrane, Wolf councillors Tanya Silverfox and Calvin Charlie, Crow councillors Chantelle Blackjack and Toni Blanchard, and elders councillor Shirley Bellmore.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon, under the authority of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, to declare a rent-increase moratorium until July 1, 2021.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the current state of emergency, established under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and expiring on December 8, 2020, should be extended.

**Speaker:** Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Mount Sima snow-making and electrical infrastructure upgrade

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, don't let the rain fool you; it's winter here in the Yukon, and there is an exciting

project happening at the Mount Sima ski hill. Our government, in partnership with the Government of Canada, is investing in Mount Sima's snow-making and electrical infrastructure to help move the ski hill away from its reliance on diesel and support the ski hill's transition to greener energy.

Our \$1.4-million contribution toward this \$5-million project will help to improve Mount Sima's snow-making capabilities in order to make them greener, more efficient, and more reliable for the operational team at the hill. Currently, snow-making at Mount Sima is powered by diesel. The ski hill hauls diesel generators around the mountain to fuel snow-making cannons. With the improvements from this project, Mount Sima's snow-making will be connected to our local power grid so that the hill no longer has to rely on diesel generators for snow-making.

The project will also upgrade the snow-making pumphouse by connecting it to the power grid and will run power up the hill. Not only will this electricity source increase the hill's capacity for snow-making, it will also create new possibilities for LED lights along Dan's Descent. This means that the alpine terrain, Big Air, and base park area can be lit up if necessary, which will extend training hours and allow opportunities for extended events during our dark winters.

To both mitigate and adapt to climate change, we believe that it is important to transition to greener sources of power as much as possible. Mr. Speaker, our government has always been committed to projects that promote greener energy and build healthy communities.

In addition to supporting this project, we are also supporting a variety of projects around the territory that are helping us to save power and move toward more renewable energy. For example, we are upgrading public works buildings in municipalities across the territory with green energy retrofits to help reduce energy consumption. Building a green economy, reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, and building healthy, active communities are cornerstones of our commitment to Yukoners.

We know that our community needs healthy, active, and safe ways to be outdoors more than ever. These improvements to Mount Sima support that. Whether it is through early season training for high-performance athletes or kids camps, or whether it's ski and snowboard coaching or mountain biking in the summer, Mount Sima adds vibrancy to our outdoor community. We are pleased to help the hill improve so that it can continue to be a place where people can be active, have fun, and be outdoors safely.

Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that some work on this project is already underway. We will continue working through next summer with the goal of being done in time for next year's winter season. I am looking forward to seeing the results and learning about what other opportunities these improvements will bring.

**Mr. Cathers:** I'm pleased to respond to this ministerial statement. It is, of course, a re-announcement of a press release from last month.

We support Mount Sima and investment in that pillar of the community. As you will recall, the Yukon Party, when in government, supported the Friends of Mount Sima Society when the ski hill was at risk of shutting down, and that, as well as the work of the volunteers and donors, was key to its continued success. It is important to ensure that this valued resource to our community is able to continue to provide services to Yukoners of all ages.

However, when this project was announced, it did raise a number of questions from Yukoners. This is evident if you go to CBC Yukon's Facebook post about the announcement where there are close to 100 comments questioning the Liberal government's claims that this will significantly contribute to action against climate change. The news release claims that this investment of \$5 million will help to electrify the hill and essentially reduce the hill's reliance on diesel. The minister again highlighted that in his comments today by claiming that this will reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, but, Mr. Speaker, this investment does not reduce the Yukon's reliance on fossil fuels or diesel.

The Liberal government has, every year, continued to expand its use of rented, dirty diesel generators. Increasingly under the Liberals, our electricity is dependent on diesel. Spending \$5 million to electrify Mount Sima sounds like an excellent way to address climate change until you realize that the electricity is increasingly produced by rented diesel generators. We also know that the Liberal plan to rent dirty diesel generators is expected to go on for a decade. In contrast, when we were in government, we met our commitment to increase the renewable energy supply by 20 percent a year ahead of schedule, but the Liberals have gone in the other direction with record increases in diesel fuel usage.

The Liberal government recently submitted a rate application from Yukon Energy to the Utilities Board asking to increase power bills for Yukoners by 11.5 percent. According to that rate application, the government is projecting that the total amount of diesel generation will increase by over 400 percent in just three years under the Liberals. In the YEC rate application, there is \$7.1 million associated with the Liberal plan to rent diesel generators.

So, if the minister could, in his response, tell us how much the Yukon's emissions will be reduced as a result of the investment mentioned in his ministerial statement, that would be helpful.

Let's be clear: We do not dispute the need to improve and make investments in infrastructure at Mount Sima. In fact, we support those efforts as being good for the ski hill. The improvements of lighting will help the hill provide increased services, and we do support that. If snow-making equipment tools and other infrastructure are in need of investment, we think that has merit as well. But the government's portrayal of this as a major action in the fight against climate change raises many questions, and the minister's suggestion that this investment will substantially reduce reliance on diesel and help to reduce our emissions is suspect and worthy of scrutiny.

**Ms. White:** I, like many, have had a long relationship with Mount Sima. I started hiking the mountain to snowboard when it was first being cleared, prior to the installation of their very first chairlift. I remember the trailers that served as the first day lodge. I worked as a lift operator, back in the exciting days of the double-chair, and I think the first and only time I ever spoke at a Whitehorse City Council meeting was about the fate of the mountain when I was in my early 20s.

I have been a season pass holder every year that I've lived in the Yukon since the mountain opened, and I have been riding at Mount Sima for more than half my life.

In 2013, when Mount Sima's future was shaky, the NDP tabled a motion that urged the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse and other levels of government and the Great Northern Ski Society to facilitate a long-term and sustainable solution for funding the Mount Sima recreation area. We have come a very long way since those shaky days.

Mount Sima has improved the infrastructure with a high-speed quad chair. They have cut new runs and continue to work on existing terrain. Mount Sima has placed itself on the map with its creative and innovative ideas. They believe and embody the "If you build it, they will come" mentality. They built an alpine ski jump training facility, and ski jumpers came. They built a world-class jump park, and national snowboard and national ski teams came. They build a world-class big air jump and a triple line, and professional skiers and snowboarders came. They invited para teams, and they came. And then they made snow for early season training camps, and those teams came in spades.

None of this speaks of the work that has been done to utilize the off-season. They build mountain bike trails, and guess what? They came and continue to come, just like all the others who have been invited to the mountain. This reinvention of a community asset has taken dozens of folks years and years to do. Board members past and present, employees past and present, all deserve our enthusiastic high-fives for the hard work.

Sam Oetli is now Mount Sima's general manager, but he has been kicking around the mountain for such a long time that I can't remember a time when he wasn't there, and he had this to say about the announcement — and I quote: "After years of hard work and advocating to all levels of government, Mt. Sima will be moving away from diesel for all our snowmaking and going onto the grid. This is a major leap forward for our facility and will cut our snowmaking greenhouse emissions by 90%. The project will upgrade all our equipment, twinning of our pump system, and lights on our main areas of play. Mt. Sima will cement itself as a national training center for athletes and insure our community will have a feasible, green and amazing facility well into the future." I couldn't agree more. Mount Sima really is the little hill that can.

So, this season, when you're up at the mountain and see a Sima team member, please give them a COVID-friendly high-five, because they are all giving it 110 percent.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to begin by saying that it was great to learn that the Leader of the Third Party was a



“lifty”. I echo her remarks to give a shout-out to all of the staff up on the hill and the board, over the years — the board members who have done so much work to turn the hill around. It is a much more sustainable hill now because of many of the things that we’re talking about. This move — not only does it reduce diesel use, but it will also open up the nighttime. I think that there is a real opportunity here for the hill.

The Member for Lake Laberge was asking me to give information about greenhouse gas emissions reduced. What I can say today is that the general manager of the hill, Mr. Sam Oettli, estimates that they use about 110,000 litres of diesel a year. He estimates that 90 percent of that will be reduced through this electrification — that is 99,000 litres of diesel. I will work out, for the Member for Lake Laberge, what that difference is in greenhouse gas emissions — happy to do that.

Diesel generators for Yukon Energy for backup and peaks totally makes sense because we are an islanded grid. Investing in a whole new diesel plant for the future — sunk costs — or even just moving toward fossil fuels generally — that is not a smart move. The whole of the world is moving away from that, Mr. Speaker. I just saw a report today about the progress toward Paris, around investment in fossil fuels. We actually need to turn in the other direction. We need to move away from investing in fossil fuels.

So, I am happy to work out the greenhouse gas emissions saved and happy for Sima, because this is a sustainable solution that will serve the whole of the territory.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: COVID-19 vaccine

**Ms. McLeod:** Based on initial projections reported on publicly by national media, if distributed on a per capita basis, Yukon would likely see only 3,300 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine in the first quarter of next year. While we know that it is our hope that we get more than that per capita, it is prudent to plan for that eventuality. If distributed on a per capita basis, there will not be enough for every member of high-risk groups in the territory to be vaccinated in the first quarter of next year.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us which group will be at the front of the line?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** What I can tell folks in the Legislative Assembly is that the COVID vaccine will absolutely be the next big shift in the responsibility of the pandemic, as we undertake the most complicated immunization program ever delivered in Canada.

I can also share that we will be working very closely with our federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts on the vaccine planning. Canada has confirmed that there will be enough vaccines for all Canadians over the coming year. As we approach an initial vaccine rollout, I appreciate that there will be different perspectives as to how to move forward. It is important that we continue to work together to keep Yukoners safe and to ensure that the most accurate information from public health officials is shared to members of our community.

This work is quickly evolving. These initiatives and others, as they develop — we will update Yukoners on the work in progress.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Manitoba referred to the issues related to deciding who gets the vaccine first as — and I quote: “... lifeboat time”. His analogy was that there is a limited amount of vaccines or “lifeboats” and governments need to decide who gets on them. Canada’s chief public health officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, stated yesterday that the decision as to who gets first access will ultimately lie with the provinces and territories themselves.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services provide specifics on how the government will determine who is high priority for the initial vaccine distribution?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, planning for the COVID vaccine is well underway. We have teams working on the distribution and storage concerns. We have teams working very closely with the federal government. Obviously, there are specific details that still have to be finalized. This means that the plan has to be fluid to reflect the realities in different parts of the country. We do have to look at vaccine options here in Yukon. I want to stress that our federal counterparts are an important part of this conversation when we speak about fair and equitable access to the vaccine, including key populations who are high risk, such as long-term care residents, elder populations, auto-immunocompromised individuals, health care workers, and indigenous and remote northern communities.

Today, in fact, we have our DM meeting with the DMs of health from across the country. In the next couple of days, I will be meeting with the ministers. I have northern ministers’ meetings as well. I know that the Premier is also meeting with his federal counterparts across the country, so we are working together very closely on this to align with Yukon’s needs.

**Ms. McLeod:** The federal government is purchasing 26 ultra-cold temperature freezers for storage of vaccines. How many of these are coming to Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, we are certainly coordinating with our federal counterparts. Here in the Yukon, we are looking very closely and working very closely with our chief medical officer of health and we are working with Community Services. I know just recently that the Minister of Community Services met with Brigadier-General Carpentier from a joint task force north on capacity for distribution. On behalf of the federal government, they have acquired low-temperature freezers. We have a process in place to acquire that for the Yukon. We have acquired transportation freezers to ensure and enable vaccines to get to our Yukon communities. We have structured a process and we’re doing that in collaboration with our partners, with the federal government. We’re doing that in collaboration between Health and Social Services, Community Services, and under the advice and direction of our chief medical officer of health and the experts who are there to provide guidance for us.

We know, just as a way forward, that we have experts within Health who are there to provide the vaccines and I want

to just acknowledge that. The services will be delivered to Yukoners.

**Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Yesterday, we discussed the relief funding for bars and restaurants. As discussed, the government arbitrarily set the eligibility threshold to be that the business must demonstrate that 60 percent of their revenue came from tourism visitation.

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

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. I want to just say that we're really proud that we were able to get those next programs out the door that are supplementary programs to the Yukon business relief program that are specific to tourism businesses. I'm also really happy to be working with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon.

The 60-percent threshold was based on an adjusted threshold that was established for the Elevate program, which is a program specifically designed with the Yukon University and other partners to help tourism businesses.

By reducing that 60-percent threshold, we were able to open the doors a bit more for bars and restaurants. I want to also let Yukoners know that all Yukon businesses have been supported through the entire pandemic through the Yukon business relief program, which was conducted and delivered by the Department of Economic Development, and also the program that was run through CanNor. All of these programs have remained in place. The new program that we announced this week is another supplementary program.

**Mr. Istchenko:** As discussed, according to yukon.ca, the eligibility criteria for this relief funding for bars and restaurants states that a business must demonstrate that they attributed at least 60 percent of their 2019 revenue to tourism visitation. I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but the last time that I went to a bar or restaurant, they didn't ask me if I was a tourist. So, bars and restaurants are suffering for a whole lot of other reasons, in addition to the lack of tourism.

Can the minister explain why she is making bars and restaurants jump through the extra hoops to get this funding?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** We're not asking anyone to jump through hoops. These new programs that we developed for tourism non-accommodation businesses are for tourism non-accommodation businesses. We do have to have some measures in place to ensure that these programs are going to the businesses that have maxed out the eligibility and that are tourism-related businesses. Those that, through the Yukon business survey in 2019, have shown up to 60 percent of their attributable revenue to tourism will be eligible, so there are absolute measures in place.

Our Department of Tourism and Culture — and I know that Economic Development will be working as well to ensure that businesses that qualify get this help.

There are a number of other programs in place. This is for tourism non-accommodation businesses that have maxed out

their eligibility under the federal program and the Yukon program.

I look forward to further questions.

**Mr. Istchenko:** We understand the programs. It is just that this policy doesn't make sense for bars and restaurants. They are suffering for a whole lot of other reasons than just a lack of tourism. They have done their part to protect their community by adhering to public health guidelines, but this has come at a cost, and now it is time for the government to do its part.

Will the minister just agree to get rid of that 60-percent threshold so that this program will truly help bars and restaurants?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I have spoke a lot about the business relief programs that have been available to Yukoners through the entire pandemic. Again, I just want to reiterate our desire to support our businesses so that they are able to be here when visitation is again safe to happen in our territory. We will continue to work with our partners to identify the programs that are responsive to our businesses' needs. We know that the tourism sector is the first hit, the hardest hit, and will have the longest recovery.

We will continue to work with them. These programs that we announced this week are very specific to tourism-related businesses. Right now, the business relief program — almost all of the businesses that are being supported are tourism-related businesses.

So, we are working very, very closely. These are supplementary programs for those that are maxing out of existing business relief programs and that have a potential of loss. We will help them to meet the needs that they have. We are here to work with all Yukon businesses and in support of tourism.

**Question re: Paid sick leave rebate program**

**Ms. Hanson:** Yesterday, the chief medical officer of health said that, if employees can work from home, they should endeavour to do so, indicating that many recent COVID cases have arisen through transmission in the workplace. The chief medical officer also said that, even if you have mild COVID symptoms, with the exception of a runny nose, you should not go to work.

At the same time, the Premier touted the paid sick leave rebate that is available to employers to cover the cost of providing that sick leave. It sounds good, Mr. Speaker, but the program as it is currently structured is unnecessarily restrictive. Employers can only apply once per employee, so if employees stayed home at the outset of the pandemic for three days and later on needed to stay home for another five days, that employee would only receive the paid sick leave once.

Given the current restrictions placed on the government's paid sick leave program, does the Premier really believe that a person with any of the symptoms listed by the chief medical officer of health is going to stay home and risk losing pay?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am happy to talk about our COVID response on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon. It is a very important subject for all of our citizens, Mr. Speaker.

I want to start this afternoon in my response to this question by going back in history a little bit. On March 18, 2020, the Government of Yukon issued a human resource work-from-home directive intended to get as many employees as possible — taking into account operational requirements — working from home. This was done to limit the density of workers in our workplace to stem the spread of this disease throughout our civil service and hopefully blunt the spread of the coronavirus in the territory. We did this immediately and got almost 50 percent of the civil service working from home.

We are facing a second wave right now. Yesterday, the chief medical officer of health issued a recommendation that, where possible, without affecting service delivery, workers should work, where possible, from home. We fully support that. I will be happy to talk about this issue far more this afternoon.

**Ms. Hanson:** It's cool that the Public Service Commissioner is answering a question that I asked the other day. I was actually asking the question about the private sector paid sick leave rebate program that the Premier was talking about yesterday.

Despite the sick leave description that indicates that it is available for 14 days, the way that this government has rolled it out means that, for a program that is supposed to be there to support workers who do not receive sick pay, the current restrictions are not helpful. In fact, they might actually discourage workers from staying home when they should.

If a worker has a mild cough or any other symptom and gets a COVID test, they are told to stay home until the results come in. With a wait time of four to six days, a person could miss five days of work before receiving a negative result. With a one-time-only reimbursement per employee, there is no future paid sick leave as this pandemic wears on.

Has the Premier directed that the paid sick leave program be adjusted to reflect the real needs and the everyday evolving nature of the pandemic?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** A little bit of background quickly on the program — in response to the economic impacts of COVID-19 on Yukon businesses and individuals and to encourage compliance with the health guidelines, the Government of Yukon launched the paid sick leave rebate program on March 26.

From March to November, just to give a sense of how long it has been used — going back to November 25 — we have allocated \$331,850 in funding and have approved 84 employers. There were some good questions from the Member for Whitehorse Centre during budget debate. As I remember and reflect on it, I think that there were about 150 people who actually used it out of those 84 employers. A very valid question was asked: What are we going to do to ensure that individuals who have used this program still have the opportunity if they have to go back and be tested again?

During that exchange, we reflected upon the fact that the Canada recovery sickness benefit can actually be stacked on top of the program that we're doing. You can have the territorial program and then, of course, you have the federal program. At this point, we believe that, between the stackable nature of both

programs, we'll actually be able to cover the needs of Yukon employees in the private sector.

**Ms. Hanson:** I kind of believe in truth in advertising, so if I think that there's a program that's available for 14 days of sick leave and I can only access it once — and because the epidemic evolves over time — if I take some time at the beginning and then I get sick as this pandemic evolves, I can't access any of the remaining 14 days that one would think would be banked.

What the chief medical officer said yesterday is that, really, the only reason to have any symptoms and to remain working is a runny nose. For anything else, you need to stay home. The way that the government has designed their paid sick leave rebate program makes it very difficult — it makes it impossible — for a worker who is displaying COVID-like symptoms to stay home without fear of losing pay.

Why will the government not adjust its paid sick leave rebate program?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** With the program as it's laid out for Yukoners, we have the ability to stack two programs now that are there. We have that opportunity to stack those programs so people can use them. I think that we have to commend the public servants who helped to build this sick leave program. We have a federal government that essentially used this as a template for their program. I really commend the individuals who have worked on it.

What we've also done as a government and as a department — the three key pieces are to monitor, adapt, and respond. That's what we'll continue to do. We're monitoring, and now we have this stackable program. If we have to adapt, we will adapt, and, of course, then we'll respond. We have done that all along — just as we've seen the minister of tourism come in today and add these supplementary programs onto things we have done.

I think that we have done a good job of ensuring that we shore up the supports that are there. If there are changes that need to be made, we'll monitor, adapt, and respond.

#### **Question re: Government network services outage**

**Mr. Cathers:** As we all know, the pandemic has changed the way that government conducts its business, as more public service employees are working from home. Yesterday, the chief medical officer of health encouraged even more people to work from home, if possible. However, at the same time, the Yukon government network went down for a couple of hours. This means that many employees who hooked up to the network, including those working from home, were affected by this loss. They couldn't access e-mail, they couldn't access their shared folders, and they couldn't print.

With more public servants working from home, how will the government ensure that the computer network does not crash?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As we heard yesterday, the computer crash didn't only affect employees who were working from home, but it also affected the opposition and, actually, all of the government. This was an issue with a server — our servers up on the road — that had an issue with a power shutdown. We're

exploring, and we take it very seriously. This is something that we take very seriously. We want to make sure that we know what is happening, so we're doing an investigation to make sure that this doesn't happen again and that the redundancies that we have built into the system kick in when these types of things happen.

But, Mr. Speaker, we know that when the chief medical officer has recommended that we all take best efforts to get as many employees home as we possibly can to blunt the spread of this virus through Yukon society — this is a very important initiative for this government. We have to look at the public health implications all the time to make sure that our public is kept safe in the face of this COVID-19 pandemic. That is the focus that this government has had since day one, and we will continue to keep the focus — the eye on the ball — and in this case, it's public health and safety.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do have to remind the minister that he and his colleagues have had four years in office. This is not the first time that the government network has gone down in the building, as there was a similar instance a couple of weeks ago. These outages, especially yesterday, also meant that yukon.ca was offline for a portion of the day, which during the pandemic, is a crucial source of information, according to the Premier, and the one he typically points Yukoners to consult.

What contingency or backup plans are in place to ensure that yukon.ca does not go down when the main government network does?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am happy to talk about our record on modernization and improvement of the digital tools that we have at our disposal. This has been a focus of ours from day one, and it is certainly something that is near and dear to my heart. We have a redundant fibre that we have started construction on just this year, going up the Dempster, to make sure that our Internet is robust in the territory. We have taken huge steps to make sure that we have more online services to service our Yukon public. We have made sure that we have more digital services for our public.

Yes — the member opposite is absolutely correct. Yesterday, we had a power shutdown at one of our server sites in the territory — our second site up on the highway. It did shut down the Internet to our government computers for about three hours. I have asked for — and the ICT branch within Highways and Public Works is doing a full investigation to find out the source of the shutdown and to make sure that our redundancies are bolstered so that this doesn't happen again.

We have to make sure that our public service has access to the Internet, and we will continue those efforts.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, the minister told us that improving the reliability of the network has been a focus of his since day one. That is not something to brag about, considering how often the network goes down.

We also understand that there has been trouble over the past few weeks with the Hospital Corporation's computer network. The service has been slow, and e-mails have been touch and go. This is concerning, as computers have quickly become a critical part of health care. With more people working from home, we need to ensure stable access for health care staff.

What is the government doing to improve the hospital's network to minimize disruptions and ensure that it is capable of handling more people working from home?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The date was early in March — I guess it was at the height of the pandemic. The Department of Highways and Public Works and the ICT branch within that department reallocated its server structure and got enough server capacity to have every single civil servant working from home. We got 50 percent of the civil service out of their offices and still managed to get some national-calibre services and supports to our Yukon citizens throughout this pandemic.

This government has a very solid record of providing the tools to the civil service to act and operate within this digital economy, and I will absolutely go to the mat defending the actions of our civil service during this pandemic to get the supports and the services that Yukoners need and that their colleagues within the civil service need. They have performed a heck of a lot of exemplary work to make sure that this society operates in a diffused way throughout this pandemic.

I am happy to talk about this all afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Question re: ATAC Resources tote road project**

**Mr. Kent:** Concerns continue to be raised by those in the mining industry about the Liberal decision to deny permits for the ATAC tote road. The project received a favourable environmental assessment recommendation from YESAB in 2017. In 2018, the minister tied the decision document to a sub-regional land use plan for the Beaver River watershed, adding two more years to the process. When the company first entered the assessment process in 2016, this new process was on no one's radar, so this amounts to the Liberals changing the rules of the game midstream. The minister said that this was a new way of doing business and it was how business gets done. For an industry that relies on certainty, this sends a very troubling message to companies and investors looking to do business in the Yukon.

How can other companies active in the Yukon be assured that the minister won't just change the rules of the game on them as well?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Again, going back to the decision that was made by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, we have a decision that was based on two really key points. The first was that the company did not demonstrate sufficiently in its application the significant adverse environmental and socio-economic effects identified in the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board evaluation and that they would be properly mitigated. The second part is that the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun identified a number of significant adverse impacts that may occur on its treaty rights, including impacts on hunting, fishing, trapping, and its use of the area for traditional pursuits if the project was to proceed at this time. The Government of Yukon agreed with these concerns and determined that the application did not appropriately or sufficiently indicate how these impacts would be mitigated. So, again, that speaks to that.

I think that we are very supportive of a sustainable industry here in the Yukon that, when it is done, takes into consideration

all aspects of our Yukon communities. I believe that we have systems in place here in Yukon that provide a solid approach to making sure that good projects move forward.

**Mr. Kent:** The Beaver River sub-regional land use plan was to be completed in March 2020. We're nine months past that deadline. This morning, yukon.ca says — and I quote: "The planning committee is currently gathering information about the planning area." That certainly doesn't give us any indication of when this plan will be complete. As there are a number of other claimholders in this region that are active now, does the land use plan have to be completed before they can advance their projects? If so, when will it be done?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I can speak to the question concerning the Beaver River land use plan. According to the latest statistics — I think that, since September 22, 2020, the planning committee has held seven online stakeholder engagement sessions to gather feedback on the work completed to date. I know that the parties recently approved a revised work plan and timeline due to COVID-19 delays. I think that anyone who travelled in and around the Mayo area was aware that there were grave concerns in the community by many about COVID-19, and there was definitely a reduction in face-to-face activity in that community since last March.

Again, we still see — includes the following deliverables by winter of 2020: a recommended land use plan; a fish and wildlife harvest regime; and a fish and wildlife monitoring and adaptive management plan.

We are still working in consultation. I believe that the next meeting of the senior liaison team is set for December of this year.

As to the second part of the question, I can't speak to hypotheticals. In a broad sense, what the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources does is that they take each application as it comes, and each one is a unique circumstance.

**Mr. Kent:** So, this plan was supposed to be done in March 2020, before the pandemic even hit the Yukon. We have been hearing from other companies since this decision was made that they will soon be reaching out to potential investors, looking to raise funds to support their projects in the Yukon. They are looking to the Liberal government for clarity on how to get new infrastructure, like tote roads, permitted in the Yukon. ATAC, in their Monday news release, questioned whether the Yukon was actually open for business under the Liberals, and others are wondering the same.

For the minister's reference, their exact quote in that news release was — and I quote: "If this road can't be permitted following a positive environmental and socio-economic assessment decision and years of governmental encouragement to invest in the project, then you have to wonder if Yukon is in fact open for business."

I'll ask again: What assurances can the minister give to the mining industry that they won't endure the same treatment as ATAC did, where the rules are changed at the eleventh hour?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It's always a difficult debate. Part of the statement that was made by the company also alluded to taking potentially a legal path. Of course, that confines the

debate here in the House when you're in government and those overtures are made.

What we've continued to do here is work with companies — a lot of conversations over the last number of days — the same supports that I've offered in my role previously to sit and answer questions from investors, the same way that we have done over the last number of years or to speak with company CEOs. I have felt that our conversations over the last few days with different mining leaders have been positive. I think that we're looking at a very positive exploration season next year based on our meetings that we've seen to date.

This application was submitted to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Each and every day, the question has been asked. I have identified the fact that there have been areas within the application that I believe the technical teams felt did not quite mitigate the items that were there. A lack of understanding from the Whitehorse Centre — a decision made by the technical team within and then moved up.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Speaker:** Order, please.

The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

##### Motion No. 237 — *adjourned debate*

**Clerk:** Motion No. 237, standing in the name of Mr. Gallina; adjourned debate, Mr. Gallina.

**Speaker:** Member for Porter Creek Centre, you still have unlimited time.

**Mr. Gallina:** To recap where I had left off in previous debate on private members' day. I see private members' days as an opportunity to bring forward important topics for debate — in this case, *Our Clean Future* — to help constituents understand what the strategy means to them. It is also an opportunity for other members to offer their insights on this strategy and to share what they agree with, what they disagree with, and where improvements could be made.

I have spoken about what is contained in this strategy — specifically, the four goals that the strategy outlines that will help us achieve Yukon's vision for a clean future. There are targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By 2030, we will reduce Yukon's total greenhouse emissions from transportation, heating, electrical generation, other commercial industrial activities, waste and other areas so that our emissions in these areas are 30 percent lower than they were in 2010.

We are ensuring that Yukoners have access to reliable, affordable, and renewable energy with targets for Yukon's main electrical grid to see 97 percent of electricity to come from renewable sources by 2030. For communities not connected to the main electricity grid, we plan to reduce diesel fuel for electricity generation by 30 percent by 2030 compared

to 2010. In transportation and heating, by 2030, we will meet 50 percent of our heating needs with renewable energy sources.

The necessity to adapt to climate change is not an option, in my opinion. By taking action to adapt to the climate change that we are already experiencing — and those changes yet to come — the strategy identifies ways that Yukoners will become highly resilient to the impacts of climate change by 2030.

As well, Mr. Speaker, this strategy addresses the need to build a green economy by helping Yukon businesses plan and benefit from the transformation to a green economy. There will be support for innovative ideas and the knowledge economy, and it will be easier for businesses, entrepreneurs, and communities to access funding for green projects throughout the Yukon.

I know that there is a lot to unpack when you begin to address the priorities in this strategy, and I know that my colleagues will share more specifics when they address this Assembly later today in debate.

This strategy will only be successful if there is community leadership and successful partnerships. The objectives set out within the strategy were identified as priorities for Yukon by the Government of Yukon, participating Yukon First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, Yukon municipalities, the youth of this territory, Yukon individuals, and key stakeholders in a variety of businesses and non-profit organizations.

We will not meet the ambitious targets set forth in the strategy if there isn't collaboration and buy-in from all of these groups. When I look at how Yukoners engage in development of this strategy, we see a formidable commitment to take significant climate actions and position ourselves to benefit from the green economy.

Mr. Speaker, the commitment to the input of this strategy — a strategy that Yukoners see themselves in — is evident in the “what we heard” document released in May of 2019. Throughout October, November, and December of 2018, there was a comprehensive engagement process that Yukoners participated in. There were public meetings in 14 communities, with 287 participants from Yukon and transboundary indigenous groups. There were youth-specific events, with 44 youth participating from five communities. An online survey received 481 responses. Of those responses, 13 percent were identified as members of Yukon First Nations or transboundary indigenous groups. There were over 80 stakeholder groups that sent letters to Yukon government and 25 stakeholder one-on-one meetings that included businesses, non-profits, and individuals.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners wanted to see an integrated strategy, one that prioritized the areas of affordable and reliable energy. They wanted to see reduced greenhouse gas emissions. They wanted to see increased resilience to the impacts of climate change and a strategy that created jobs and economic opportunities. We see the priorities of Yukoners reflected here in this strategy — an alignment to the four main categories that I spoke about earlier. This is the testament that Yukoners have been heard and that this government takes their input seriously.

Mr. Speaker, the final points that I will reiterate before handing it over to others today are about the action this

government took in addressing recommendations from the Auditor General of Canada in their 2017 report delivered to the members of this Assembly, simply titled *Climate Change in Yukon*. As I have mentioned previously, this was an effort by the Auditor General of Canada, along with all other provinces and territories throughout Canada, to identify how jurisdictions were preparing for and adapting to climate change.

The Auditor General made four recommendations. They were: to create a territory-wide risk assessment to help prioritize commitments and manage the impacts of climate change; that the departments of Environment, Energy, Mines and Resources, Highways and Public Works, and Community Services develop climate commitments that are time-bound and costed and that the commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should indicate the level of reduction; that the Climate Change Secretariat should publicly report in a consistent manner on the progress made on all commitments and expenditures associated with meeting these commitments; and finally, that the departments of Environment, Energy, Mines and Resources, Highways and Public Works, and Community Services should complete their work and carry out concrete action in a timely manner to adapt to climate change.

Mr. Speaker, I'll note that the reason why the Auditor General of Canada made these specific recommendations was because, in the documentation that they were working with to assess Yukon's action against climate change, these were the areas that had not been addressed sufficiently by the government of the day.

The Auditor General was working from Yukon Party action plans and status reports from 2006 to 2011. Through this Liberal government, the departments of Environment, Energy, Mines and Resources, Highways and Public Works, and Community Services have all publicly agreed to the recommendations made in the 2017 Auditor General's report to address climate change. We see today — with the *Our Clean Future* strategy and the actions taken by government departments — that the recommendations made by the Auditor General have been taken seriously and have been acted upon.

A territory-wide risk assessment has been completed and it was done in collaboration with participating Yukon First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, Yukon municipalities, youth of the territory, individual stakeholders, and a variety of businesses and non-profit organizations.

We see commitments that are time-bound, with targets set from today to 2030. These plans are costed and have reporting mechanisms in place, as departments throughout government have identified ways to support the *Our Clean Future* strategy and take action to mitigate against climate change. Finally, target levels have been identified for the reduction in greenhouse gases. The strategy identifies a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 that are 30 percent lower than they were in 2010.

In closing, this is a strategy made by Yukoners for Yukoners. It does encompass a whole-of-government approach to address and mitigate climate change. Finally, it actions on all of the recommendations made by the Auditor General of Canada in the 2017 report on climate change in Yukon.

I look forward to hearing from other members of the Assembly today on this very important topic which impacts all Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** I'm pleased to rise today in speaking to this motion. Ultimately, I want to begin by noting that we support the basic objectives of reducing pollution — including CO<sub>2</sub> emissions — as well as the objective of increasing renewable energy.

There are parts of this strategy released by the government that we do agree with, including that we're pleased to see the continuation of some of the successful programs that were launched during our time in government, including the good energy program and the microgeneration program.

We do have many questions about this strategy. That includes the fact that this is another case of this Liberal government making commitments that sound nice but not identifying the true costs and not really having a realistic plan to actually implement the grand commitment.

We do have many questions about this strategy, including the real costs and what other pollution will result from implementing some of the grand commitments in it. I do have to note that, as I have touched on earlier during debate, while government is dealing with making grand promises, they are neglecting some of the basics that are necessary if we're serious about reducing our territory's dependence on goods shipped from Outside, increasing agricultural production, and so on.

That includes the ongoing problem — that began in late summer and that this government has still failed to take effective action on — of the loss of commercial garbage service for farms and other businesses as well as residential users in the Whitehorse periphery, including in my riding of Lake Laberge. That is something that is very important to the success of our territory's food industry — the ability to have access to affordable and predictable disposal options for waste.

In the absence of that, what we risk seeing is that, while the government has not acknowledged the costs that are being incurred in other areas if illegal dumping or increased pollution occurs, those are costs that are actually happening here in the territory. Just like in that particular area, with the strategy itself, I have questions about where their commitments may sound nice but will in fact result in increased costs — such as the fact that, in this government's plan to significantly increase the use of electricity under their strategy, at the moment, their plan for producing that electricity involves renting diesel generators and burning diesel fuel. While the announcement may sound green — much like with the ministerial statement earlier today about Mount Sima — the truth may be different from the announcement.

So, returning again to the issue of commercial garbage service for farms, I again have to emphasize to the Minister of Community Services and to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that, if this government is actually serious about supporting the growth of our agricultural sector, they need to address the basics — including working with the City of Whitehorse to come up with a deal that actually provides predictable rates and affordable rates for commercial garbage

service contractors to once again resume providing that service to farmers and to other businesses, as well as to residents in the area.

In a similar area, we have seen that part of this problem is related to the government's imposition of tipping fees. Again, we see this government, unfortunately, making an ideologically based commitment without actually understanding — or acknowledging, it seems — the true costs of that commitment, which include illegal dumping.

One of the things that I am going to highlight in my response is that we agree that reducing pollution is important, but CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are not the only pollution that government needs to be cognizant of and not the only one that they need to take steps on — along with society as a whole — to see a reduction in the pollution that occurs. For example, in the commitments that the government has made regarding its desire to see an increase in electrical vehicles, they have failed to address the issues and the questions of the life-cycle costs of those vehicles, including what they cost to produce — both in terms of the mineral resources and plastics that go into those vehicles — and what happens at the end of life, at the other end of the train, as far as the disposal of that vehicle, the battery within it, and so on.

The life-cycle costs with anything — not just electric vehicles — are far more important than the sales pitch. The sales pitch can sound good, but to sign on to the Liberals' current plan without more information would be akin to walking into a car dealership, looking at a vehicle that is shiny, reading the sticker on the window, hearing a good sales pitch from the salesman, and then signing a contract without reading the fine print. The details are very important, and that includes the life-cycle costs as well as the increases to emissions which will occur under the government's current plans to produce the electricity that is required to meet the ambitious targets set out in the strategy.

Again, I want to emphasize the fact that, when it comes down to the basic objectives, we agree that there is a need to reduce pollution, including CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. We agree that there is a need to take action in response to climate change. In fact, it was a Yukon Party government that came up with the first climate change action plan, as well as the energy strategy launched in 2009 that included a commitment to increasing renewable energy production here in Yukon.

I have to remind this Liberal government that they are talking a very good line when it comes to becoming greener, but when one looks at the actual situation on the electrical grid, if we compare this government's aspirational targets set out in their new plan, we see the government hoping to hit a target of 93-percent renewable energy production. Well, in fact, I would remind the Liberal government that, before their recent actions led to the substantially increased use of diesel fuel to power our electrical grid, if one looks at the Yukon Energy Corporation annual report from 2016 — and I am referring to page 6 of that report, which I can table if members would like me to, but they should also find a copy of it still online on the Legislative Assembly website. According to page 6 of the *Yukon Energy 2016 Annual Report*, in that year — and I quote: "More than

98 percent renewable in 2016 — keeping the Yukon clean and green”. It shows that 98.37 percent of electricity supply came from hydro production in 2016. The Member for Porter Creek Centre and his colleagues, I hope, will understand why I find their goal of hitting 93 percent rather underwhelming. It is still more than five points higher in terms of diesel use to produce the energy than it stood at when the Yukon Party was in office.

It is also notable that, in this so-called strategy that the government has presented, the mining targets are not set.

The emissions targets for the mining industry, according to page 13 of the government’s document, which they call *Our Clean Future* — and I quote: “We will work with industry to set a target for greenhouse gas emissions from placer and quartz mining by the end of 2022 that will see Yukon mines produce fewer emissions of greenhouse gases across their lifecycle for every kilogram or kilotonne of material produced.”

It also says — and I quote: “This intensity-based target will encourage industry to look for innovative ways to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions from mining, regardless of how many or few mines are in operation at any time.

“Reaching these targets by 2030 will put Yukon on the path to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 for our entire economy.”

So, we see there that this area is under the target set — and again, I will quote briefly from the government’s so-called *Our Clean Future* strategy: “By 2030, we will reduce Yukon’s total greenhouse emissions from transportation, heating, electricity generation, other commercial and industrial activities, waste and other areas so that our emissions in these areas are 30 per cent lower than they were in 2010.”

So, again, it is interesting that they chose the 2010 number, and that is in part because they don’t like to compare it to the last year of the Yukon Party government in 2016, because, in fact, the Liberal government has significantly increased the use of diesel fuel to produce electricity. In contrast, we set out a goal in the 2009 energy strategy, which I announced as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources at the time. In 2009, we set out a target of increasing the Yukon’s renewable energy supply by 20 percent by 2020, which, as members will know, is this year. So, 11 years ago, we set out the goal of increasing the Yukon’s production of renewable energy by 20 percent by 2020. In fact, we not only met that goal, but we met it years ahead of schedule.

I am going to quote briefly from a Yukon government news release from August 28, 2013 — “Government of Yukon on track to exceed renewable energy targets”.

“A progress report on the implementation of the 2009 *Energy Strategy for Yukon* has determined that the Government of Yukon is on track to surpass its target of increasing Yukon’s renewable energy supply by 20 per cent by 2020.

“The Government of Yukon is making excellent progress on achieving its energy efficiency targets and continues to take steps to reduce energy consumption, costs and emissions within Yukon,” Energy, Mines and Resources Minister... — and the name of the Member for Copperbelt South — “... said. ‘Increased energy efficiency is the best response to high energy

prices and environmental concerns and will assist us in meeting our future energy needs.’

“Released in 2009, the energy strategy reflects the government’s vision to improve energy efficiency and conservation, produce more renewable energy, meet electricity needs, responsibly develop oil and gas, and make good energy choices. The 2012 Progress Report provides an update on these priorities which are being researched, explored and developed by the Government of Yukon and its partners within the Government of Canada and the private sector.

“Highlighting that the vast majority of electricity generation in the territory comes from renewable sources, the report states that in 2012, 95 per cent of electricity demand was met by renewable energy and nearly 20 per cent of heating demand was met by renewable wood-based heating. Per capita, this is greater than any other jurisdiction in Canada.

“Additionally, the Aishihik third turbine and Mayo B projects have increased Yukon Energy Corporation’s renewable generation capacity by 22 per cent, already exceeding the territory’s target of increasing renewable energy by 20 per cent by 2020.”

That’s the extent that I will quote from that press release, which, for Hansard, is from August 28, 2013, on the government website.

I’ll close my comments on that by noting that this press releases recognizes that, at that point in time, of the energy that was on the territorial grid, 95 percent of that electricity demand was from renewable energy. In fact, once the Mayo B project and the Aishihik third turbine were fully commissioned, we saw the territory get — according to Yukon Energy’s report in 2016 — to the point where 98.3 percent of our electricity was being produced by renewable sources. Again, in contrast, this Liberal government’s goal of hitting 93 percent is rather underwhelming.

The fact is that we have seen this government go down in approach. After spending a substantial amount of money on planning to build a 20-megawatt diesel or LNG facility, the government then has tried desperately to pretend that their project, which was consulted on in this mandate, actually wasn’t theirs after all. They chose to go down the road of — instead of buying diesel generators, they decided to rent them. We know that this is already resulting in \$7.1 million in costs that they’re planning on passing on directly to ratepayers, and according to their estimates for usage this year and in previous years, we’ve seen the government telling us that the cost of their rental diesels is roughly \$13.5 million.

The Liberal government continues to exist in a state of denial. We unfortunately are seeing the same thing with this strategy.

I want to talk about the mining intensity targets some more. In the government’s so-called *Our Clean Future* — which might better be titled “their not-so-clean future” — according to page 16: “From 2009 to 2017 — the period of time for which we have reliable greenhouse gas emissions data for Yukon — emissions from placer and quartz mining have varied from year-to-year depending on the amount of mining activity in the territory. These annual fluctuations can be seen in Yukon’s total



greenhouse gas emissions as well, which is the direct outcome of increases or decreases to mining emissions as well as the indirect impact that mining activity has on overall economic activity in the territory. Overall, mining emissions have ranged from 10 to 15 per cent of Yukon's total emissions over this period."

The strategy further goes on to say: "The year-to-year variability of Yukon's mining emissions makes it difficult to set a maximum level of greenhouse gas emissions from mining to be reached by a certain date. If mining activity were to decrease, total mining emissions could reach the target without requiring any improvements to how mines operate. If mining activity were to increase, the target could become unachievable.

"Unlike an absolute greenhouse gas reduction target, an intensity-based target that establishes a desired level of greenhouse gas emissions per unit of material produced will encourage operational efficiencies regardless of how many or how few mines are in operation at any one time.

"In addition, establishing a tailored approach for mining emissions eliminates the possibility for a substantial change in mining activity to skew our efforts to reduce emissions from other parts of Yukon's economy. For example, if mining emissions were part of the Yukon-wide greenhouse gas reduction target, a significant decrease in mining activity could help us to reach the 2030 target without needing to make as many improvements to our transportation and heating systems."

It is interesting here that we see, on the next page, that it says, "The Government of Yukon will work with industry to set the mining intensity target, or targets, for placer and quartz mining by 2022."

Part of the challenge here is that — while that is, according to the government's report, 10 to 15 percent of the overall picture in terms of carbon emissions — they are planning to set it by the end of 2022. As we know, this will be after the next territorial election. They are leaving it to the next government to actually deal with this issue while pretending that they have set out a realistic plan for reducing emissions. In fact, they are leaving a major sector — one of the Yukon's largest industries — not dealt with.

I am going to refer to a document — the government has, right now, a request for proposals issued by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources in November 2020, which, of course, is just last month. The title of the RFP is: "Request for Proposals: Development of intensity-based greenhouse gas reduction targets for Yukon's mining industry". Also on this page of the request for proposals, for which I will just ask staff to ensure that a copy is provided to Hansard for their reference, it says, "The Yukon government is seeking an experienced and well qualified consultant resource to assist in the development of one or more intensity-based greenhouse gas reduction targets for Yukon's mining industry, and in the identification of tools and measures that may be necessary to successfully reach the target(s) by 2030."

The document itself, in going through this request for proposals, describes some of the terms of the contract early on. It talks about the application of the Yukon business incentive

policy rebates, acceptance of minor and non-material defects in the proposal, and the government's right to make changes to contract terms — all of which raise some other questions, but I will leave those for the moment.

In flipping through this request for proposals, we run into some interesting elements within it. Ultimately, my key point in reading this is that this is a big part — if the government is actually planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we need to understand what the plan is.

It needs to be a realistic plan that includes having an understanding of the costs and its impacts on industry as well as on the public. In the absence of that, it's a nice idea, but it isn't a realistic strategy.

On page 16 of the RFP, it notes: "While this greenhouse gas reduction target will ensure we see a decrease in emissions from transportation, heating and other areas, we also need a plan to address greenhouse gas emissions from mining, which were 10 per cent of Yukon's total emissions in 2017."

Let me read that sentence again: "... we also need a plan to address greenhouse gas emissions from mining..."

The government has themselves acknowledged in their own contract that they don't actually have a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from mining. I'm going to move on to quote further from this. "Consequently, the Yukon government has committed to work with industry to set targets for greenhouse gas emissions from both placer and quartz mining by the end of 2022 that will see Yukon mines produce fewer emissions of greenhouse gases across their lifecycle per unit of material produced."

While we do support the concept of taking an intensity-based approach to emissions from the mining sector, the details of this matter — because, otherwise, we're being asked to sign onto a blank cheque, where the government wants our support for their so-called *Our Clean Future* strategy, but key details have yet to be worked out, and we don't know what that means or what the impact would be on Yukoners.

I'm going to quote further from the RFP where it talks about the description and scope of work. "The Yukon government is seeking an experienced and well qualified consultant resource to assist in the development of one or more intensity-based greenhouse gas..." — reductions — "... for Yukon's mining industry, and in the identification of tools and measures that may be necessary to successfully reach the target(s) by 2030."

It sets out a 10-year plan. I point to the fact that, for a key sector of the Yukon economy — in fact, one of the largest sectors of the Yukon economy, the largest private sector part of the Yukon economy — the government, in setting out a 10-year plan, is planning to wait until two years into that time period before they even get their act together and figure out what the plan actually means for our placer miners and hard rock mines. That means that, while this document sounds nice at first blush, it just simply leaves so many questions that have yet to be answered that government just didn't get the work done on.

It talks about, in this RFP, the total available budget for completion of phase 1 is \$50,000. It raises the question: What's

phase 2? If phase 1 is the focus of that RFP, what is the second phase of the work?

Under requirements, it notes: “The mining intensity targets that are established must: encompass greenhouse gas emissions and production from both placer and quartz mines; encompass greenhouse gas emissions across the entire mining lifecycle from development through to closure and remediation; be set at a level that will be achievable by 2030 while also being ambitious...” and it goes on.

My primary point in identifying this is that this is a very aspirational strategy, but major details have yet to be figured out. It isn't really a plan for addressing either energy or climate change. Again, I do want to acknowledge that there are parts of it that we agree with. We are happy, for example, to see the continuation of the microgeneration program that we implemented. We know that there have been concerns with it, including the fact that the Liberal government capped the program to limit the amount per household that could be produced. We still have yet to hear an explanation of why they did that. Was it because it was an initiative started under a Yukon Party government that was proving to be too successful and the government didn't want to see it achieve greater success because it was someone else's strategy? Is that the reason why they capped the amount under the microgeneration program? Because we have yet to hear a better explanation.

By the government's own admission — somewhere in my stack of papers here — I'm going to reference a legislative return tabled by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in March of last year, 2019, regarding energy supply and demand. That is currently on the Legislative Assembly website. I believe it was tabled on March 18, 2019 — though the document itself, on the page signed by the minister, says March 19 and it also says March 12, but the stamp says March 18. So, it is a little bit unclear when it was tabled, but I think that would have been on March 18, 2019.

As a side note, I have to point out that it's somewhat similar to problems that we recently saw on yukon.ca where it listed three different ages for children for whom the mask-use requirement is mandatory. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, it is a little bit of a sloppy approach unfortunately here.

So, in referring to this legislative return — again, tabled by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and this Liberal government — it noted that, as of January 2019 of last year — it talks about the success of renewable energy generation. Again, in this document tabled by the minister himself, it says — and I quote: “The Government of Yukon is achieving and surpassing expectations on implementing various initiatives and ideas related to energy generation and reducing energy use in the Yukon. We have adopted a multi-faceted approach by promoting renewable energy generation, managing electricity and utilities, promoting energy efficiency initiatives, supporting research and training, and demonstrating leadership in the energy sector.”

It then goes on to talk about — again, I'll quote: “The Government of Yukon's popular micro-generation policy has led to Yukon experiencing high adoption rates for small-scale energy-generation projects. As a result, we have witnessed

major growth and development in locally-sourced renewable energy and a significant boom in our local solar energy industry since the policy was implemented. As of January 2019, there are 218 different micro-generators using mostly solar energy to generate 2,309 megawatt-hours of new electricity annually.”

I'm pointing out that it's not just us saying that the microgeneration program that the Yukon government developed and implemented during our time in government was successful. In fact, the current Liberal minister acknowledged it himself. I would just like to acknowledge as well that, without the work of Yukon government staff as well as the Yukon private sector, the policy we put in place would not have been successful.

But in working with them, the development of the policy and its implementation have been very successful. In the words of the minister, signed off on a legislative return last year, it says — quote: “As a result, we have witnessed major growth and development in locally-sourced renewable energy and a significant boom in our local solar energy industry since the policy was implemented.” The minister also goes on to say in the legislative return: “The high number of solar energy generating systems has established Yukon as one of the nation's leaders in adopting renewable energy.”

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to reference a little later here in this document — I know that there was something else I wanted to draw members' attention to in this here — but I would note that the success of the good energy program that I announced in 2009 has been continued since. We were pleased to see that in this report as well as the continuation of microgeneration. Again, we do have that rather large question of why the government capped the microgeneration program and whether it was simply because they would rather develop alternative arrangements that they could put their own brand on and that they wouldn't have to give credit to the previous government for implementing. If that's the case, I would encourage them to revisit that and have the policy reflect the actual needs of the territory instead of just political vanity.

Returning to the legislative return on retrofit incentives signed by the minister — again, I would note that they were initiatives developed under the previous Yukon Party government — quote: “Our Good Energy program offers a full suite of incentives to homeowners to improve their homes' energy efficiency. Homeowners can start with renovations to improve air tightness and increase insulation levels in their existing residences and get a Good Energy rebate. One of our Good Energy rebates incentivizes switching to energy efficient home heating from renewable sources such as biomass or air source heat pumps. Uptake over the last four years has been consistently high, with 1,408 retrofits completed, largely focused on improving window quality in homes. Collectively, existing homes have saved enough energy to power approximately 205 non-electrically-heated homes for one year. Energy retrofit programs deliver measurable benefits to participants. They relieve pressure on our energy-generation needs, reduce collective greenhouse gas emissions and create green jobs that stimulate the economy.”

Here is another good one — again, I am quoting from page 8 of the legislative return signed off by the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources himself — on page 8 — quote: “Yukoners can take smaller actions to make their homes more energy efficient. Our Good Energy incentives program plays a significant role in encouraging Yukoners to purchase energy efficient appliances and reduce residential electrical loads.

“The statistics for the Good Energy program show that lowering energy use is important to Yukon residents. Over the last decade, Yukoners who have received Good Energy rebates have saved over \$9.7 million in energy costs and prevented 40,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. The energy efficiency incentives are making a significant impact. We have collectively saved enough energy to power over 2,400 non-electrically heated homes for one year. The high participation rates prove that the Government of Yukon’s energy efficiency initiatives are successfully encouraging Yukon residents and local businesses to conserve and reduce their energy use and save money. Building on those successes, we are currently working across departments and with the Government of Canada to expand our existing programs to deliver energy efficiency solutions on a larger scale.”

Again, I want to just repeat part of what was said in the document signed by the minister himself and tabled in this Assembly: “The statistics for the Good Energy program show that lowering energy use is important to Yukon residents. Over the last decade, Yukoners who have received Good Energy rebates have saved over \$9.7 million in energy costs and prevented 40,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. The energy efficiency incentives are making a significant impact. We have collectively saved enough energy to power over 2,400 non-electrically heated homes for one year.”

We are pleased to see the government continuing those programs. We recognize, Mr. Speaker, that there is always room for improvement. While we do appreciate some of the actions that are outlined in this strategy, as I mentioned, there are many questions that have yet to be answered about the true impact of this report.

This Liberal government has a practice of making grand, uncostered promises. This includes the fact that we are already in a situation where — due to the government’s choice to spend a substantial amount of money planning to add a 20-megawatt diesel or LNG facility and then flipflopping and deciding to rent instead of own — they not only wasted millions of dollars on planning, but they have spent — according to their own documents, they are already spending roughly \$13.5 million to date in renting those diesel generators and burning diesel fuel. The government still has yet to tell us what this will cost going forward.

I am going to just briefly refer here to one of the other documents I have — which, again, is a somewhat ironically named “strategy”, much like our so-called *Our Clean Future* strategy — their draft 10-year renewable electricity plan that they released to stakeholders in July 2020. In looking at the plan, we see that despite calling it “renewable”, there is a lot of diesel usage in that strategy.

It comes down to what we might refer to — for lack of a better term — as the “truth in advertising” question. Much like the ministerial statement earlier today, we saw the government claiming that, by investing in Mount Sima and moving it off diesel, that would simply be using green energy. Well, in fact — based on the actual numbers regarding the load for the last several years and the fact that, under this Liberal government, Yukon Energy has been directed to rent 17 portable diesels for this winter alone — if winter consumption is already requiring burning LNG at max capacity and is using rental diesels, then moving a major customer such as Mount Sima onto the Yukon Energy grid will, of course, lower Mount Sima’s own use of diesel fuel and lower the cost for that NGO — and that is a good thing.

However, when government pretends that, overall, it is a major action on climate change, that is simply not factually correct. That is misleading. It is effectively a shell game where the use by a sport facility of diesel generators drops but, because the grid is already burning beyond our hydro capacity, for every kilowatt hour that it consumes energy, there is still going to be diesel or LNG being burned to produce that power.

The minister today, in responding to my response, suggested that he do the math on how many litres of fuel Mount Sima is currently burning and tell us what the overall emissions reduction is, but that is a completely misleading comparison, because the real question is: How much diesel fuel will still be required to produce that power?

Overall, as I indicated earlier, we do think that the investment is a good thing for Mount Sima and we believe that it is partly a positive news story. But the government is deliberately exaggerating just how positive it is and it is deliberately exaggerating and misrepresenting —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just described comments or remarks of mine as being misleading and then just referred to them as deliberately misleading. I think that is contravening Standing Order 19(h).

#### Speaker’s ruling

**Speaker:** I don’t think that I need to hear from the Member for Lake Laberge right now. In my view, what he said was that the government was deliberately exaggerating, which I think is permissible in debate with competing narratives.

The Member for Lake Laberge, please.

**Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, I just want to note that, again — much as with the re-announcement today about Mount Sima — when it comes down to the government’s so-called *Our Clean Future* strategy, the real question is not about what the headline says, but what the actual impacts are on the territory. What are the real costs? What are the real emissions?

With some of the government's moves, for example, to electric vehicles, it raises the real question of whether, overall, we're seeing a net decrease in diesel fuel use, or whether in fact we're simply seeing it reallocated so that, instead of a citizen burning it themselves in their vehicle, in fact, it may be being burned by Yukon Energy and passed on to all ratepayers.

Another problem with that — and another reason that government can argue that they still believe that approach is the right one — but if thousands of people are buying new cars with a government rebate and then the cost of powering those cars — with increased diesel fuel use to create the electricity — is being passed on to every ratepayer, that is also — when it leads to an increase in rates, such as the 11.5-percent increase that the government is currently planning to impose on Yukoners, as seen in Yukon Energy's recent application to the Utilities Board — when those rates increase — if that application is approved — and when the power rates recently increased, it's every Yukoner who pays those costs, and that includes those who can least afford to pay their power bill.

So, it can end up being, in effect, a tax on poor people, and it is potentially going down the same road as Ontario went down, under the Liberals, where we saw them succeed in creating a new term in Canadian debate of “energy poverty” which didn't previously exist in this country. “Energy poverty” was the term coined for the situation faced by Ontario citizens who, as a result of that Liberal government's failed green energy policy, saw a massive increase in their electricity rates, to the point where some people were having to choose between putting food on the table, paying their mortgage, or paying their power bill. Ultimately, that is why, at the start, it's important that everyone understand what the real cost will be, both in terms of the financial costs and other pollution, whether it be increased emissions to power government-owned — or, I should say, Yukon Energy-owned — diesel generators or whether it's related to increased transportation costs or increased pollution, such as that caused by the government's tipping fees that they have imposed this summer.

When somebody is burying their garbage on their property or burning it on their land or dumping it down a side road, that's increased pollution. It might not be the intent of the government's tipping fee strategy — it isn't the intent, of course — but if those are the actual unintended consequences of your policy, it's simply living in a state of denial to profess to believe that those increased pollution costs haven't occurred.

Just briefly on that, I would note that, as a result of the government's increased tipping fees that have been imposed in areas including the Deep Creek solid waste facility this year, I have received more complaints about people burning garbage on their property than I have — easily — in the previous 10 years combined. I do believe that this was not the intent of the government's tipping fees, but the fact that it is happening is something that needs to be acknowledged, just as with the illegal dumping that goes on and the costs that we have seen as well.

Just analyzing and comparing how, with the government's current strategy that we are debating here this afternoon — comparing to their actions to date, we have seen the situation,

of course, that they talk a good game on green energy, but in fact, they are quietly renting 17 diesel generators and planning to rent diesel generators for another decade to meet our power needs. They are talking about increasing the production of renewable energy, but in fact, they are aiming for a legislated goal of hitting 93 percent of our electricity being produced from renewable sources, when the previous government — in 2016, we saw that the total number — according to Yukon Energy's own report, 98.3 percent of our electricity was coming from renewable sources.

So, they are going in the wrong direction while pretending that they are getting greener.

Jumping back to the draft 10-year renewable energy electricity plan that Yukon Energy shared with stakeholders in July 2020 — and again, touching on the fact that, as I noted, the title and the content are two different things — as we see in this strategy, it is called a “renewable strategy”, but if we look, we see not only the increased use of diesel fuel, but increased diesel fuel prompted directly by the actions listed in the government's so-called *Our Clean Future* strategy.

I am going to refer to page 11 of this one that has an updated peak forecast and electrification actions, et cetera. According to page 11 of Yukon Energy's draft plan, released in July of this year — this page shows the updates from the base case for power consumption that was outlined in the 2016 integrated resource plan — or IRP, as it is called on this graph. It shows the number for the 2019 base case with and without the updated 2020 peak. We see that the updated peak forecast on here outlined in Yukon Energy's plan shows the consumption from electric vehicles estimated at 11 megawatts — 11 megawatts to power the electric vehicles. Now, the plan doesn't include developing enough hydro to meet that demand, so where is the electricity coming from? Based on the plans that the government has currently released, it's coming from burning diesel.

Smart heating is estimated to show a four-megawatt increase in electrification and electrification actions are shown as an additional three megawatts. So, we see that it appears that — according to the numbers presented on page 11 of Yukon Energy's own draft plan — there is an 18-megawatt impact associated with implementing the government's so-called *Our Clean Future* document.

It isn't the increased use of electricity that is the problem but how they are producing it. On the one hand, we expect to see a situation where, if the Liberal government were re-elected — which we don't expect based on what we hear from Yukon citizens — based on their plans, if everything goes their way, they would like to be using 18 megawatts' worth of increased power directly in association with *Our Clean Future*, as shown in Yukon Energy's documents. Their plan for meeting that increased 18-megawatt load appears to be largely dependent on diesel.

When the Minister of Community Services, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Minister of Environment, or the Premier rise in speaking to this motion, I would like to them to answer this simple question: What's the bill for that 18 megawatts? How much is that 18 megawatts in increased

demand associated with their so-called *Our Clean Future* document? What is the total impact of emissions? What are the total estimated fuel costs associated with producing that power? The power has to come from somewhere, and their current plan has a lot of diesel in it.

Moving on to the next area here, I want to talk briefly again about electricity. It's interesting that, on page 18 of their so-called *Our Clean Future* strategy, it says — under “Ensuring reliable, affordable and renewable energy” on page 18 of that document — “Electricity”: “In Yukon, historically we have met over 90 per cent of our electricity needs each year with clean, renewable power because of our large supply of hydroelectricity. As Yukon's economy and communities grow, and as Yukoners increasingly invest in electric vehicles and electric heating technologies, demand for electricity will grow.”

It is a brief acknowledgement, with no details in this strategy, of the fact that electric vehicles and electric heating will increase the demand for electricity. It's also notable that there is obviously a political decision made to be selective of the history that they refer to when it says: “In Yukon, historically we have met over 90 per cent of our electricity needs ... with clean, renewable power...” In fact, as I outlined earlier and as shown in the *Yukon Energy 2016 Annual Report*, in that year, the electricity demand was met primarily with hydroelectricity, and in fact, 98.3 percent of our electricity that year was produced with renewable energy — not 90 percent — 98.3 percent.

I would also remind the members — I know they especially like to desperately try to paint themselves as being greener than the Yukon Party. In fact, their fossil fuel emissions record, in comparison to our increase in renewable energy and the result of programs that we implemented — such as the microgeneration program — that have helped Yukoners themselves produce renewable energy — we are very happy to stack our record up in comparison to theirs.

Part of our record includes the fact that we connected the grids. Previously, the Whitehorse-Aishihik-Faro grid was not connected to the grid from Mayo and Dawson. As a result of connecting them, it allows improvements in stability as well as the ability to use electricity from the Mayo dam on the rest of the grid to make use of that energy more efficiently as a result — and, of course, vice versa — and to allow the use of energy from Aishihik during the winter in other Yukon communities. It, of course, resulted in the community of Pelly Crossing coming off of reliance on diesel to being able to depend on the electricity grid, like many other Yukon communities. Those are all things that we are proud to have done and that we think are good steps taken to make the Yukon a little bit greener — but also, we do so.

This is a key factor which the current Liberal government does not appear to share our views on. Everything that we did to improve energy efficiency, to add renewable electrical supply, to connect the grids, and so on was also done with costs in mind — what I have referred to, for lack of a better term, as “considering the two greens”. We need to look at making something greener, but we also need to make sure that it is

affordable. It is important that any plan — any strategy before government is making a decision to take major action — be thought through. Part of thinking it through — a very key part of thinking it through — is understanding whether you can do it. Part of understanding whether you can do it includes understanding what it will cost, and if you don't know what it will cost, then you don't really know if you can do it. That applies to any of these major commitments that we have seen made by the government. We know how they have taken what I previously characterized as their “ready, fire, aim” approach to planning, which we have seen in a case of their decision to shove aside the Salvation Army and take over the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter without having a plan to operate it, without knowing the costs, and, bizarrely, without even going to their own Management Board for approval first.

We know that, to date, the costs of running it are \$4.8 million that they have admitted to, which, of course, is well over double the cost on that facility —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Point of order

**Deputy Speaker (Hutton):** The Minister of Economic Development, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I just want to refer to Standing Order 19(b), which speaks to matters other than the question or discussion, motion, or mandate. We have now veered down the road of the emergency shelter. I don't think that really pertains to this particular conversation.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** I think the minister may not have been listening to me. I believe it was very direct and relevant. I was comparing the government's approach in committing to adopt this strategy to their decision to act the way they did on the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and the fact that neither one of these was costed out before they made the decision. I think it's very relevant to the debate.

#### Deputy Speaker's ruling

**Deputy Speaker:** I do tend to agree with the Member for Lake Laberge. There's a thread of relevance here.

Carry on.

**Mr. Cathers:** My fundamental point in making that comparison is that there's a pattern, and the problem with that pattern is that not only is it not properly being forthcoming with Yukoners about the costs of doing something before the government makes the commitment to do it and says they're going to get it done, but it also leads — if you make a major commitment without understanding if you can do it and commit to going down that road — and actually do go down that road — we see that cost overages happen all the time. I expect that the same thing would happen with the so-called *Our Clean Future* report as happened with the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, where government makes the decision to do it, does it, and then costs keep ballooning out of control.

We know that, with just one facility, the costs have more than doubled. The government won't tell us what the total bill is for that facility, but we know that it has gone from \$2.1 million for the Salvation Army to \$4.8 million that the government has admitted to — and more that we believe they've moved between programs.

In the case of their so-called *Our Clean Future* approach, one of the pieces of very direct relevance is that the 18 megawatts of increased electrical demand associated with this document in which Yukon Energy Corporation estimates — so these are not my estimates; these are the estimates in Yukon Energy Corporation's draft 10-year plan that they shared with stakeholders this summer. According to the chart on page 11, the cost of the electrification actions of the smart heating and the electric vehicles — when you add up the three megawatts for the first one, the 11 megawatts for the electric vehicles, and the four megawatts for the smart heating — again, these are Yukon Energy's estimates — that total adds up to 18 megawatts.

One thing that the government has not answered in their *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy, and a green economy* is what the cost is of increasing electrical production by 18 megawatts to meet those actions and how that electricity will be provided. Again, it certainly appears, based on what we see Yukon Energy providing, that the 18 megawatts is going to include the government's diesels. A plan to keep leasing diesel generators is a very expensive approach to dealing with the situation. It is, in my view, largely living in a state of denial and pretending that you're not investing in diesel long term, so renting instead.

I would also raise the question — when the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — who is also the Minister responsible for Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation — stands to speak to this motion, I would ask him to tell this House whether, in fact, the reason that they are going with the short-term leasing of the diesel generators rather than a long-term lease is to avoid having to go to the Yukon Utilities Board with the proposal of long-term leasing of diesel generators. That is certainly how it appears to me. Due to technicalities in the process, it appears that, if they have a contract of less than a year for renting those generators, they can avoid taking the project to the Yukon Utilities Board and having them review it. I suspect that the Yukon Utilities Board would look at a proposal to rent diesel generators for a decade and laugh it out of the hearing as being a high-cost option that is not in the best interests of ratepayers.

A simple question for the minister: Does structuring the rental contract in that way avoid them having to take the project to the Utilities Board for approval, as we believe it does? Is that the reason government has chosen to go with rentals shorter than a year instead of a 10-year rental contract for a diesel generator, which would be far cheaper than renting it every year and paying the mobilization and demobilization costs?

We should note, in terms of our energy security, that we know that Yukon Energy has concerns about the ability to keep renting diesel generators because that's a pretty small market in North America and the certainty of being able to continue

renting generators every year is uncertain. As well, we know there have been problems in previous years. I don't know the status as far as this year goes, with the condition that those generators have been in when they got them, because much as with a rental car, there is the risk that a rental generator has been treated roughly by its previous users and, when you get it, it may not quite be in the condition you would like it to be in.

It does seem, to me, to be a risky and an expensive approach to providing backup and it also seems to be one that is largely based, it appears, on bypassing the Yukon Utilities Board and avoiding triggering the *Public Utilities Act* provisions that are intended really to keep Yukon Energy and the other utility accountable to the public and to ratepayers. But if government is helping to deliberately bypass that, then those costs can be hidden.

When I touched on the reduction targets, I made mention of the modelling that they've used as well, I think, but it does — again, the variation in the greenhouse gas reduction modelling that they talk about on page 14 of the strategy: “Based on modelling, we anticipate that Yukon's emissions, excluding mining emissions, could increase to 678 kilotonnes in 2030 if we do not take action. As a result, to meet our 30 percent greenhouse gas reduction target by 2030, we estimate that we need to reduce our emissions by 263 kilotonnes. However, forecasting what Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions could be in 2030 is very challenging. Future emissions depend on several factors, including population growth, the economy, and the success of the actions in this strategy, all of which are hard to predict. This makes it very important to track actual greenhouse gas emissions on a regular basis and be flexible and adaptive in our efforts.”

The strategy — we note that, in the fine print, it raises questions about how effective the strategy will be in doing it, noting — quote: “... all of which are hard to predict.”

I would just like to move on to another specific area related to that — or a few other specific areas related to their plan. As I mentioned, it talks about electric vehicles. On page 5, I believe it is, of the strategy — at least, according to the page number that I have here, it talks about what you can do.

“Our Clean Future also creates many opportunities for individuals, businesses and organizations to take part in reducing emissions, enhancing energy security, making Yukon more resilient, and building a green economy through financial support, information and advice. Here are some actions you can take as an individual or business to help Yukon achieve our 2030 goals.”

The strategy talks about — quote: “Make your next vehicle electric with the help of up to \$5,000 from the Government of Yukon for eligible zero-emission vehicles. Or, purchase an e-bike to make active transportation easier. Check out the Good Energy suite of clean transportation rebates.”

As a side note, I note that, below that, when you talk about the total number of actions the government states, they kind of inflate those figures by including things such as this one: “Walk, ride your bike or take public transportation to work, even just 1 day a week.” That is advice that can help, but suggesting that people ride their bike or walk or take a bus is

not exactly a government action, nor is it profoundly new advice. Yukoners are aware of steps that they can take to reduce their own emissions by reducing the use of vehicles.

Another thing I should note in talking about the electric vehicles — when we look at the 11-megawatt increase that Yukon Energy appears to be estimating to meet the government's plan for electric vehicles — and I would note that the electric vehicle number here — I am just trying to find the page here — the Government of Yukon actions and key actions on page 8 of their strategy — one of their key government actions for transportation is — and I quote: “Get 4,800 zero-emission vehicles on the road by 2030. We will do this by working with local vehicle dealerships and manufacturers to establish a system to meet targets for zero-emission vehicle sales, providing rebates and investing in charging stations.”

Next, it says: “Ensure at least 50% of all new light-duty cars purchased each year by the Government of Yukon are zero-emission vehicles.”

There are a number of questions associated with this. The first one, as the minister will know, is: Where is the power coming from? According to Yukon Energy, it appears to be an 11-megawatt increase, and it looks like they are relying on diesel to meet that.

They talk about ensuring that 50 percent of the light-duty cars purchased by the Government of Yukon each year are zero-emission vehicles. That raises to me a question about the usage. If those vehicles are being used as part of the government fleet, it raises the question of how long the charge lasts in those vehicles. For instance, can a Yukon government employee who has been assigned a zero-emission vehicle from the fleet take that vehicle and drive to Dawson City or Watson Lake without having to stop to charge it? If they do have to stop to charge it, there are a number of questions. Is the infrastructure there? If it is not there, what will it cost to install it? That is not always a simple thing, depending on the availability of the infrastructure that is in place in communities, and it may require additional upgrades before they can simply put in a charging station. There might be other costs associated with taking the energy off the grid and stepping down from the line.

So, there's a question of what those costs are for infrastructure but also if there is lost time from a government employee having to sit, waiting along the way to charge the vehicle. What is the estimated loss of efficiency to government? I have heard it suggested to me by people in the private sector who know more about the range of electric vehicles than I do — the suggestion that perhaps the government, for those types of things, would be better off looking at hybrid vehicles instead of purely electric.

With a hybrid car, if you run out of power in the battery, you can go to the energy produced by the gasoline or diesel engine and continue going instead of sitting off the highway waiting for your vehicle to charge. There are questions, of course, about zero-emission vehicles and the decline in efficiency — at least from some of those vehicles — when operating in colder temperatures and, if there is a reduction in range, what the impact of that is. When those vehicles have to

stop to charge during our coldest times of the year, that is the same time of year when we have the highest power demand already and, at that time, we are already needing to dip into diesel and LNG to meet that electrical demand.

Here is another question related to the batteries. Some of the contents of those batteries in electric vehicles are toxic. What is the disposal plan? What is the recycling plan? How much of those elements will be reused and how much will simply be disposed of? If they are likely to be disposed of, either through government planning for that happening — or perhaps failing to come up with a plan at all — that is a potential problem. There is also the potential problem of, if people have to pay for disposal, people simply choosing to illegally dump vehicles.

We know that this has already been a problem with the government's increased tipping fees — the number of abandoned vehicles along roadsides. There was one in my riding abandoned across the road from the Deep Creek dump. There was another one that was beside the Mayo Road — or north Klondike Highway, if members prefer, but most of us out that way call it the “Mayo Road”. There was another one that was abandoned there that I, in fact, reported to the RCMP thinking that it might have been a stolen vehicle. In fact, after they investigated it, they determined it was just an abandoned vehicle. People are already dumping vehicles to avoid tipping fees. What happens if they do that with electric cars?

Another question — and I thank my colleague for passing it on to me — is a question about the grids in our communities and our subdivisions and whether they have a high enough capacity for people to put chargers in their homes for their vehicles and whether those homes have enough capacity in their breaker panels.

The aspirational targets are a lot easier to commit to than figuring out how it's going to work. As the Premier himself used to like to say when in opposition, the devil is in the details. Well, unfortunately, the lesson that he seemed to take from his own rhetoric in opposition was that this government is almost allergic to providing details or working them out. We are often left with very reasonable questions not being answered. The tendency, of course, of the government in Question Period is to revert to the closest script in their book rather than actually providing us with an answer to the question. Again, as my colleague, the Member for Kluane, passed on to me, there are questions about the capacities of parts of the grid to serve electric cars. What's the cost of upgrading it?

For example, looking at the community of Whistle Bend, when Whistle Bend was put in — as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Community Services will probably require — there was a requirement for a substation upgrade at the time. The cost of that was in the millions of dollars. That was because the existing substations had previously, with most subdivisions, not needed expanded capacity to provide the load, but Whistle Bend was a step beyond it, and so it required millions of dollars in infrastructure to be able to meet the needs of the homes there.

If those homes also start adding electric cars onto their total consumption, what's the impact of that? How many of the 11

megawatts that Yukon Energy says that they think the government's electric vehicle plan will add in demand to the grid — how much of that 11 megawatts will end up in Whistle Bend? How much will be in Copper Ridge? What's the impact on the infrastructure there?

In communities such as Haines Junction, Carmacks, or Watson Lake, if the government is successful in achieving their aspirational targets of adding 4,800 zero-emission vehicles on the roads by 2030, how many of those vehicles are likely to be in each community? Has the government even done the basic work of figuring out what grid infrastructure upgrades would be required so that you don't end up with a situation where you've succeeded in convincing 4,800 Yukoners to buy a zero-emission vehicle and they have hooked them up, but the grid simply can't keep up with the demand and keeps crashing? We have already seen an increase in the unreliability of the grid under this government. If they don't have a plan that has worked out the logistics, it leaves us wondering what those impacts will be.

As I mentioned, it also raises questions. I would encourage the government to actually get up and respond to this point. What are the life-cycle costs of those 4,800 zero-emission vehicles estimated to be? Those include minerals such as rare earth minerals that often are coming from Third World countries. The impacts of mining those metals — or metals from here that are shipped overseas to China or elsewhere as part of the manufacturing process and then getting shipped back here — the life-cycle costs of manufacturing those cars and the batteries and then disposing of them need to be considered.

Lest the ministers try to portray it as us simply not being willing to consider electric vehicles, we are not saying that increasing the number of electric vehicles is necessarily a bad thing. What I'm saying is that we need to understand — and a responsible government would already understand — what the costs of that plan are before making that grand aspirational commitment. That has to include the life-cycle pollution costs associated with building those new vehicles. It also necessarily has to include the consideration of comparing that to what would happen if, instead of just going to zero-emission vehicles, they use hybrids — or simply through improvements in the technology of vehicles burning fossil fuels.

I will just briefly illustrate some of the changes that I, as a consumer and owner of vehicles, have experienced myself — and my own observations in the last couple of decades of what I've seen with the truck that I drive compared to the one that I used to drive and the snow machine I have compared to the one I used to have. That includes that the Ford F150 that I currently have is the same basic model as the one that I had that was a decade older. I have observed that, in that time, the engine got a bit smaller and the total horsepower was increased substantially. Driving the same way, basically, as I did with the one I had before, I notice that I personally get about two miles per gallon better fuel efficiency than I used to get.

In the case of the Polaris snow machine that I have compared to the first one that I had — which was the first one that I purchased personally, in 1999 — I've noticed that it does about four miles per gallon better than the old one used to.

While I'm not suggesting that electric vehicles aren't part of the equation, improvements by manufacturers which have been occurring in fuel efficiency should also be considered, especially in comparison to the question about the total life-cycle pollution costs of electric vehicles.

The government's plan for 4,800 zero-emission vehicles sounds nice at first blush, but when you ask the questions that they haven't provided the answers to yet — what does that mean if vehicles are being disposed of that are currently in use? What's the impact on our dumps? What's the pollution associated with that due to illegal dumping? What is the cost of manufacturing those 4,800 vehicles and shipping them to the Yukon? How much diesel fuel will be burned to produce the electricity for those vehicles? What will be done with the vehicle, including the battery and other toxic parts, at the end of life? The questions are so large that they do overwhelm the commitment itself.

Fundamentally, my point is that, even before the Liberal government decides that they should lock in these actions, they should figure out what those commitments mean — what the total pollution costs are, what the total costs of diesel use are, and how much that will cost ratepayers. It may — if they had actually costed out their plan, in my view — result in a situation where, instead of committing to 4,800 zero-emission vehicles, they may choose to simply improve the fuel efficiency of parts of the government fleet or purchase hybrids instead of zero-emission vehicles for a portion of that — and so on.

Another element that is talked about here in the government's strategy is a commitment to replacing 1,300 residential fossil-fuel heating systems with smart electric heating systems by 2030. Now, as you recall, Mr. Speaker, that is the number in there that — when we look in Yukon Energy's document, Yukon Energy has an estimate that this commitment will result in four megawatts of increased demand. Again, for the record and for Hansard, that is on page 11 of the draft 10-year renewable electricity plan — if we haven't already provided a copy, we can certainly do that.

Again, there's a cost to that four megawatts in addition to the rebates for replacing fossil-fuel heating systems. Again, there are the questions. What is the cost of the power? How much diesel is being burned to do that?

Part of the reason why the government has already seen itself in a situation where it has twice — twice, Mr. Speaker — gone for a rate increase through its government-owned corporation, Yukon Energy, is because of the substantial growth of demand for residential heating for electricity. Adding 1,300 homes on there is going to have a cost associated with it, but in the government document, we see the commitment, but they don't tell us the cost.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, as shown on page 10 and elsewhere throughout the document, key Government of Yukon actions include — and I quote: "... require at least 93 per cent of the electricity generated on the Yukon Integrated System to come from renewable sources, calculated as a long-term rolling average."

Again, as I mentioned, I'm going to continue to be very underwhelmed by that commitment, considering that when this



government took office, 98.3 percent of our electricity was produced by renewable sources, but through the hard work of this Liberal government, they have been renting more diesels than anyone before, and they have increased our diesel use to produce energy at quite an impressive rate. When they face an election at the end, one of the notable things in this government's record is how they promised to be a green government when they convinced Yukoners to vote for them, but in fact, they went from 98.3 percent of our electricity being produced through renewable sources to getting to the stage where they're committing to — aspirationally — reaching 93 percent and, in their documents, citing a rate of only 90 percent being produced by renewable energy.

The commitment also related to that is one of their key government actions of creating a clean energy act by 2023 that legislates our greenhouse gas reduction targets and our commitments to energy efficiency and demand-side management.

The legislation — it just sounds like they were desperate for something to announce in that area — in fact, because of government action or inaction, is one of the most significant things leading to the increased diesel use from producing renewable energy. Creating legislation — when the Liberal government itself bears a lot of the responsibility for the increased use of fossil fuel emissions — that is binding on government is really a questionable use of time and energy because there are other ways to achieve those goals without spending time drafting legislation related to it.

Again, we do acknowledge that there are some good things outlined in this document, but questions remain associated with the cost of it. Before going on to list some of them, I want to talk about the government's record to date and what the impacts of their plans are, as shown in the application of the government corporation, Yukon Energy, to the Yukon Utilities Board for a rate increase that was filed just last month.

They can't try to pretend that we're just pulling these numbers out of the air. We're pulling them from a corporation that reports to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources from their application to the regulator, the Yukon Utilities Board, talking about their predicted revenue shortfall.

I am going to quote from page 2 of their general rate application just filed. On page 2, it says, under "Factors Driving the 2021 Revenue Shortfall" — and I quote: "A rate increase is required for the 2021 test year to recover a \$10.971 million revenue shortfall driven by increased costs and changing load profiles. The Application documents the full range of load profile and cost changes. As reviewed in tab 1, the following key factors are driving most of the 2021 rate increase..." I remind — the government has a direct connection to their energy plan, because one of their actions in government is filing a rate increase, which they have tried to blame on someone else when it, in fact, is picking up the cost of their own programs and their own mistakes.

Again, returning to the document — and I quote: "As reviewed in tab 1, the following key factors are driving most of the 2021 rate increase:

"Capital Costs (37.8% of revenue shortfall): Aging infrastructure drives investments in sustaining capital and growth in peak and energy loads drive investments in new supply. These capital cost increases impact the 2021 GRA revenue shortfall through increases for depreciation/amortization, long term debt costs and equity return.

"Energy & Peak Load Changes (8.4% of revenue shortfall): Dependable capacity requirements caused by peak load growth for non-industrial sales drives diesel rental costs that account for \$3.8 million (34.9%) of the 2021 GRA revenue shortfall."

I am just going to step aside from that for a moment. This is according to the government-owned corporation, Yukon Energy, that says in their application that 34.9 percent of their revenue shortfall is related to diesel rental costs. So, the diesel rental costs that are reflected in this rate increase application are 34.9 percent of their revenue shortfall and a total of \$3.8 million just in the 2021 rate increase.

Returning to the document: "Higher overall loads provide increased revenues at existing rates (\$14.4 million) that reduce the 2021 revenue shortfall by \$2.9 million after considering load-related cost impacts of \$10.8 million for increased long-term average thermal generation fuel cost requirements at 2018 GRA fuel prices (to address increased energy generation) and \$0.7 million..."

Again, the fuel cost requirements that we are looking at here — the load-related cost impacts, as cited in this document, of \$10.8 million for — and I quote: "... increased long-term average thermal generation fuel cost requirements..." So, that is the \$3.8 million that I mentioned for diesel rental costs and \$10 million related to the cost of increasingly depending on either diesel or LNG to provide baseload. This is on page 3 of Yukon Energy's general rate application.

So, there is \$3.8 million associated with running the diesels, \$10.8 million associated with increased use of diesel and LNG, and ultimately, the government — despite having a substantial chunk of their total rate increase for consumers being due to this approach — is planning, with their so-called *Our Clean Future* document, to go down a road where they are going to continue to rent diesel and burn even more diesel fuel to meet their increased energy demand. Yukon Energy's estimates of the cost of this document seem to be an 18-megawatt impact on increased demand.

A simple question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is: What is the cost of renting 18 megawatts of diesel capacity, and what is the cost of running those diesels?

I am going to go back to the document itself here. Fuel price changes relate to 19.4 percent of the revenue shortfall. Higher fuel prices account for \$2.1 million of the 2021 GRA revenue shortfall.

We see as well in this application — "Other non-fuel O&M increases relate to labour (\$1.4 million) and non-labour (\$1.7 million) factors."

Other cost changes include: depreciation rate changes, a \$0.6-million increase; reserve for injuries and damages, RFID,

updates, a \$0.4-million increase; and the new independent power production, IPP, costs of \$0.3 million.

Stepping aside from that, it's notable that, with the new independent power production projects that the government is bringing online, the cost of that is being passed on directly to consumers. This is in contrast to a previous ruling by the Yukon Utilities Board, which we know that the government didn't like, which said that government should pay for the cost of demand-side management programs rather than making ratepayers pay those costs. We know that the Liberals didn't like that. They have set themselves down a course to ensure that all those costs are passed on directly to consumers rather than being covered by government. While I don't disagree with ratepayers paying a portion of the costs associated with various initiatives, there is a point where we, in the past, have chosen to have government fund some of those programs, such as the good energy program, simply to avoid passing them on to ratepayers and having an impact on rate that includes affecting those who are least able to afford those electricity rates.

It's interesting as well that, in connection with the government's actual actions in 2021 on energy as shown in this general rate application, other costs that they've tried to disavow responsibility for include: new supply major projects, which has a \$26.9-million net rate base impact — \$26.9 million, according to supporting documents contained within the general rate application. I'm citing from tab 1, and it appears to be page 1 of that. That includes uprates to two of the turbines at the Whitehorse facility, WH1 and WH4. I don't disagree with those uprates, but in layman's terms, that's replacing some of the technology that is there to create increased efficiency. I don't disagree with the principle of doing that, but the government should be more up front about the fact that it has made that decision and those costs are being passed on to ratepayers.

Other costs that they notably didn't really ever talk about very much — I don't think there was a press release when the current Liberal government decided to add a third LNG engine at the Whitehorse facility, as they did. According to this document — surprise, surprise — "... completion of LNG Third Engine (\$8.3 million)..."

Associated with their added fossil fuel capacity on the system and reflected in their current rate increase application, it includes \$8.3 million in costs directly due to the LNG third engine, and that's just capital costs; that's not the O&M.

We also see again, turning to the next tab, the fact that the diesel rental costs account for \$3.8 million.

Turning to the next page here is yet another spot where we see the diesel costs reflected in the table outlining their total revenue shortfall of \$10.9 million. It notes — surprise, surprise — that the diesel rental cost is shown as \$3.8 million and change, and the long-term average thermal cost is showing as \$10.7 million. All of these are reflected in the rate increase.

Ultimately, with the government's so-called *Our Clean Future* document, as well as with their rate increase and all aspects related to governance, one of the things we're calling for is — tell Yukoners the facts. Don't hide them. Don't pretend that your actions are greener than they are. Tell people the costs.

With *Our Clean Future*, what it should outline is clarity on the financial costs of its implementation and the pollution costs of its implementation.

If the government genuinely believes that it is better to move to electric vehicles and electric homes than to burn home heating fuel or wood in those homes — and instead of using vehicles that are burning diesel or gasoline — then tell Yukoners what the costs are associated with meeting the electrical demand. Don't hide those costs. Don't pretend they don't exist. Don't go back to the same kind of shell game that we saw in the ministerial statement around Mount Sima in which they cite the numbers that Mount Sima is saving in terms of its diesel usage, pretending that it is the net impact in reduced fossil fuel consumption, because that is not factually true.

If you still believe that helping an NGO save costs for a sports facility, reducing their need to run generators, et cetera is a worthy initiative, that's fine, but tell people what the true costs are. Don't cite one tiny portion of the picture, ignore the associated cost increases in other areas, and pretend that Mount Sima's reduction in diesel fuel usage is the territory's net result associated with moving them onto the grid, because that is simply not true. It's a false comparison, and it's one that is deliberately misleading to Yukoners for those who choose to make it.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Yes, the Member for Lake Laberge will refrain from using those two words together. He knows that quite well.

**Mr. Cathers:** I will respect your ruling. I will say that it's misleading to make that comparison and leave it at that.

I want to talk about some other elements contained within the so-called *Our Clean Future* strategy here. As I mentioned, we are pleased to see the continuation of good energy work and pleased to see the continuation of microgeneration and the references in terms of energy production on page 5 — that you can get a rebate when you install a renewable energy system in your home, then generate electricity, and sell what you don't use back to the utility through the microgeneration program. That has been successful.

As I cited, we implemented it; we're pleased that the government has continued it. Their own legislative return tabled by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources demonstrates the success of that in terms of both the reduced use of fossil fuels and the emissions reduction, as well as what has happened for Yukoners who have signed on through those programs.

As I noted, we do have the question of why the government chose to cap that program, and I have heard a question, as well, from Yukoners: Why isn't government looking at a change to the rates as diesel fuel prices go up, considering that the initial rates for the microgeneration program we set were based on the estimated avoided cost of diesel consumption? Since the cost of diesel is going up, is the government going to look at adjusting those rates to reflect the current cost and potentially increase what homeowners receive from providing that power?

Will they look at removing that cap, which is limiting the ability of Yukoners themselves to contribute to the renewable energy grid?

Moving on to the next page of the government's strategy, a number of the actions that are being talked about — most of them are good actions. To call some of them part of their energy and climate change strategy is a bit of a reach when, for example, under "People and the Environment", one of the goals that they are adding to their list of action items under the strategy for climate change, energy, and a green economy is talking about responsible hunting. Now, of course, we support responsible hunting, but as part of their climate change and energy strategy, to suggest that telling people to take an introduction to safe and responsible hunting practices — including hunter ethics, essential gear, firearms safety, and field dressing methods — as part of their climate change or energy actions is a bit of a reach. Suggesting that telling people to read *Hunt wisely* is one of their climate change or renewable energy actions, again, is a bit of a stretch, Mr. Speaker. Suggesting that registering for the Yukon hunter education course is part of their climate change action and energy strategy is, again, a bit of a reach. It is not that I disagree with those actions, but to put them under the banner that they are putting them and to add them to their list of action items is really reaching for it.

It also talks about — just in the introduction to this document — firesmarting. Again, I agree with that, but whether firesmarting is an action related to climate change or energy is a bit of a reach, Mr. Speaker. While firesmarting is arguably a mitigation action related to climate change, it's not a fundamentally new one, and certainly telling people to do it themselves is not new at all.

The document also talks about "Support and sustain Yukon agriculture for both businesses and local families in our communities by purchasing local products and services." As I mentioned previously in the House — but it deserves to be touched on again: If government is serious about supporting the growth of our agriculture sector, they need to take action to get rid of the things that the government has done that are making life tougher for farmers and market gardeners. Those include the fact that the carbon tax has been imposed on farmers and market gardeners and it is increasing their costs, but they can't get a rebate for many of those costs. As we know based on previous debate here in this Assembly with the Premier, when someone goes to buy fencing supplies or food for their livestock, they're paying a carbon tax on that product, but they can't get it back. They can apply for an exemption from the federal government for their own fuel, but they can't get back those indirect costs that some other businesses can get. It is adding to their capital costs and adding to the cost of feeding their animals. The Liberal government's response to this to date has been to stick their heads in the sand and pretend it's not happening. It is happening, and it's increasing the cost to Yukoners.

As well, related to the Liberal carbon tax, the cost of heating a barn facility with propane is something that Yukon farmers, including my constituents, are paying increased costs for, but they can't get them back. So, the government policy is

making farming more expensive. If you're serious, as part of your commitments contained in this strategy — if you're actually serious about supporting Yukon agriculture, then take it seriously, and get rid of the costs that are government-created and being imposed on Yukon farmers.

As members will recall, I have reminded the Liberal government that, through a change in the Premier's own Department of Finance on how they are interpreting the fuel oil tax rebates under the government's legislation, they have reduced the rebates that they are providing to Yukon farmers, including my constituents. It's through a change in policy that, in my view, is actually clearly contrary to the intent of the act to exempt farmers from paying a tax on their off-road fuel use associated with farming activities in the Yukon.

At risk of causing the minister frustration again, their lack of action in getting a realistic, workable deal with the City of Whitehorse that results in resumed commercial garbage service at affordable and predictable rates to Yukon farmers and other businesses affected by it is a new cost of business that occurred this year. If they are serious about their commitment in this strategy to support and sustain Yukon agriculture, then take it seriously. Reach a workable deal with the city that results in this service being restored, because as a result of this — the end effect of that — which is that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources suggested I should just talk to the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Community Services and which seems to just point to the city and say it's their responsibility — is that ultimately, as a result of the lack of effective action by this government in response to a problem that occurred under their watch, it has created a situation where farmers on the Hot Springs Road are expected to potentially take their own garbage to Deep Creek, which is a 40-mile drive, to drop off their garbage, instead of a situation where they could do as they did for years, which is pay a commercial garbage hauler to take it into the city landfill. Ultimately, the government then takes the garbage from the Deep Creek transfer station and hauls it to the city landfill anyway. It is a logically inconsistent outcome, so my message to this Liberal government is: If you are supporting Yukon agriculture, take the problem seriously and fix it.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to move on to a few other areas. There are again some good steps contained within this plan. I am pleased to see the government continue to support community energy projects. I do have some questions about the overall costs of those in some cases.

I'm also pleased to see: "Expand monitoring of concentrations of particulate matter in the air from biomass burning and forest fires to all Yukon communities..." But again, I do have to point out that, when government policies such as the tipping fees and the loss of commercial garbage service result in people burning more of their own garbage at home, it's actually creating a situation that the Yukon Party took action to end — that being smoke from known toxic products being in the air as a result of burning. It was previously Yukon government dumps that used to burn that waste, but if people are resorting to burning their own garbage to avoid the government's tipping fees, it doesn't really matter whether that

toxic smoke is coming from a Yukon government dump or whether it's coming from somebody's property. If it is circulating in our communities and affecting the air quality where Yukoners live, it doesn't matter who produced it — it's a problem.

Just as with the overall plan here, ultimately, we believe that government needs to be realistic about everything that's included within it. They need to better explain the costs; they need to actually know the cost before proceeding. That includes the financial costs and the increased pollution in other areas, whether that be through increased use of diesel to produce electricity or due to unintended consequences associated with the strategy.

We do not disagree with the overall objectives and the four goals that they have outlined on page 10 of reducing Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions. We do not disagree with ensuring Yukoners have access to reliable, affordable, and renewable energy. We do not disagree with the commitment to adapt to the impacts of climate change or the commitment to build a green economy, but ultimately, it's important that there be a realistic understanding of what that all means and all the costs associated with those commitments.

It is somewhat ironic, considering the approach we have seen from other Liberal governments, such as in Ontario, that the reference to building a green economy, on page 4 — they used a dollar sign above a leaf as their icon. That's somewhat humorous, considering the debacles we have seen, such as in Ontario under the McGuinty government and the Wynne Liberal government, where the high costs of green energy resulted in massive power rate increases affecting Ontario citizens.

In contrast, when we were developing the microgeneration program, we deliberately looked at every Canadian jurisdiction and American jurisdictions.

I would like to thank the staff who helped with that work, both in the analysis and the policy development. We deliberately chose a different approach that was based on encouraging the production of green energy, but also doing so in a way that was affordable — and that we had a good understanding of what the potential costs could be as well as the ability — if it grew at a rate faster than we expected — to adjust the size of the program in future years so that we never got into the situation that we have seen — with the Liberal government — such as the one in Ontario get into — where costs have ballooned as a result of their green intentions that have not been backed up with a well-thought-out plan.

I want to emphasize the fact, again, that we support reducing Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions; we support ensuring that Yukoners have access to reliable, affordable, and renewable energy; we support adapting to the impacts of climate change; we support building a green economy. But it is fundamentally important that, before we launch down the road of any specific commitment — especially grandiose ones — that the Yukon government have a good understanding of what it actually costs and that they be transparent with not only the Legislative Assembly, but with Yukon citizens about what those costs are and that they allow citizens to make their own

decisions about the appropriateness of those specific commitments, based on a good understanding of the expected implications of those actions — especially the expected costs — because I think it is fair to say, as I wrap up my remarks, that Yukoners do want to see us take action in response to climate change, including reducing our own emissions, but they also don't want to see a big increase in power rates.

They want government to be environmentally responsible; they also want government to be fiscally responsible, and fundamentally, they want government to be open and transparent with citizens about what the true expected costs are that are associated with any major initiative it implements. They don't want to see a government either knowing the costs and not disclosing them or launching into a big commitment without actually understanding what it is going to take to deliver on it and seeing a situation where, due to “back of the napkin” planning, government gets into a situation where ratepayers or taxpayers — who are usually the same people — are paying the bills for a lack of transparency by government or a lack of good planning by government.

Again, Mr. Speaker, in wrapping up my remarks, we want to see action taken, including those four goals. We believe that Yukoners want to see it as well. But what we want to see — and I believe that almost every Yukoner shares that view — they want to see government be environmentally responsible. They also want government to be financially responsible and transparent with the public about the costs of its initiatives.

**Mr. Adel:** I rise today to speak to Motion No. 237, that this House supports meeting or exceeding the targets laid out in *Our Clean Future* — including the greenhouse gas emissions and renewable energy targets.

Today, over 90 percent of Yukoners' electrical generation comes from renewable resources. That's something that we can be proud of. However, only 26 percent of heat energy is generated from renewables. A large portion of Yukoners still rely on hydrocarbon-based energy to keep their homes and families warm in Yukon.

*Our Clean Future* strategy looks to support local and community-based renewable energy projects, combined with upgrades to the electrical grid and energy storage, to make the best use of our sizeable renewable resources.

Maximizing efficiency will allow us to continue to heat and power our lives with clean energy, even as demand increases and we shift to more electrically focused transportation and heating in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, local and community-based renewable energy projects will create jobs and stimulate a green economy across the Yukon. The success of the strategy requires us to foster new partnerships, share information, and collaborate with all governments, First Nations, organizations, businesses, and individuals. We require the collective effort of everyone to ensure that the Yukon has a sustainable and green future.

The goal of this strategy of government is to reduce Yukon's total greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by the year 2030. That's an attainable goal. It's no easy task, and it will require extensive modernization to our heating systems and

road transportation — which together contribute 75 percent of Yukon's total greenhouse gas emissions. It will also require significant diversified investment in more renewable electricity generation, creating local jobs and economic opportunities for all Yukoners.

Reaching this target is important, as it will inspire others by demonstrating that a remote northern jurisdiction can achieve a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Several lessons have been learned since the last time greenhouse gas reduction targets were set for the Yukon. In the 2012 climate change action plan progress report, 12 independent targets were set for a variety of sectors across the territory. While the targets related to greenhouse gas emissions from buildings' electricity generation were met, the other targets were not or could not be reported on due to a lack of available data.

Since that time, we have made improvements to how we gather and report greenhouse gas data. We know where the contribution of greenhouse gases is coming from in our territory: 54 percent of Yukon greenhouse gas emissions come from road transport; 21 percent from heating; 10 percent from mining; seven percent from aviation; three percent of GHGs are from electrical generation; one percent from industrial and commercial; and four percent from other sources.

It's important to understand which sectors of our economy and community are contributing what percent of greenhouse gas emissions, otherwise, our ability to tackle this problem may not be functionally adequate. We're now setting targets that we know that we can track through available data.

We will also conduct modelling work to help us set greenhouse gas reduction targets that are both ambitious and achievable. To reach 30 percent greenhouse gas reduction by 2030, we estimate a necessary reduction of 263 kilotonnes. For context, a typical passenger vehicle emits about 4.6 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. Currently, almost all the energy we use to meet transportation needs comes from fossil fuels. As a result, transportation by road and air is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the Yukon contributing 61 percent of the territory's total emissions.

Close to 90 percent of transportation emissions come from road transportation, with a relatively equal split between personal vehicles, commercial, and industrial vehicles, including those that transport food, fuel, and other products. One of the ways that this strategy intends to meet these reduced greenhouse gas targets is through incentivized electric vehicle sales. Rebates for electric vehicles are available for Yukoners right now. Whether you're purchasing an electric bicycle for personal transportation or an electric SUV to move your family about, rebates are available to make access to these new forms of transportation more affordable for Yukoners. We recognize that, by increasing the representation of electric vehicles on Yukon roads, we will also be increasing demand-side energy.

The *Our Clean Future* strategy coincides beautifully with the 10-year renewable energy plan previously announced. Collectively, they work together to ensure that the Yukon has a larger capacity for renewable energy generation to support increased green energy technologies and to sustain our growing

population while ensuring that we work toward a cleaner future for all.

It would be a moot point to flood the roads with electric vehicles if we continue charging them using diesel generators because you can't be green on just one side of the equation — it has to be both. Ensuring affordable, reliable, and renewable energy for Yukon remains a priority.

In Yukon historically, 90 percent of our electric needs annually are met with clean, renewable power because of our large supply of hydroelectricity across the territory. As the Yukon's economy and communities continue to grow and as Yukoners increasingly invest in electric vehicles and electric heating technologies, the demand for electricity will go up. That goes without saying, Mr. Speaker, but all but four of our Yukon communities are connected to the same electrical transmission network. Most of the generation and high-voltage transmission of electricity on the main grid is managed by the Yukon Energy Corporation, while most distribution is the responsibility of ATCO Electric Yukon. The four communities that are not connected to the main electrical grid — Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay, Watson Lake — oh, it's five, Mr. Speaker — and Old Crow — are served by four microgrids that have been primarily powered by diesel generators operated by ATCO Electric Yukon.

With our target for Yukon's main electricity grid, we will aspire to see 97 percent of the total electrical consumption coming from renewable resources. Mr. Speaker, this includes electricity used by the mining industry, which is also connected to our grid. For the communities that are not connected to the main electrical grid, we will reduce the diesel use for electricity generation by 30 percent by 2030 compared to 2010 by introducing new, innovative, and creative energy solutions to meet the unique challenges and needs of these communities. This is already happening, Mr. Speaker, with solar arrays being powered up in several of our communities.

To meet the Yukon's electrical targets, we need to invest in more electrical generation capacity. Options can range from wind and solar to hydroelectricity projects to a combination of these or other renewable energy sources. For the main Yukon grid, the Government of Yukon will set a minimum regulatory requirement for the Yukon Energy Corporation to generate at least 93 percent of electricity from renewable sources on average. It will then be up to the Yukon Energy Corporation to determine the best way to meet or exceed this target.

For off-grid communities, the government will continue to work in partnership with Yukon First Nations, communities, and ATCO Electric Yukon to establish community-based renewable electrical projects in order to reduce diesel use for electricity generation by 30 percent by 2030.

Efforts to substitute some of the diesel that continues to be used for electrical generation with clean diesel alternatives — like biodiesel and renewable diesel — will help us reduce our total greenhouse gas emissions even further. These are not "pie in the sky" ideas; they are achievable and necessary to ensure a healthy life and future for all Yukoners for many years to come.

I hope that you will join me in supporting this incredibly bold and important strategy. It sets the tone for what we can

expect from our governments moving forward and how they manage the difficult challenges of meeting the demands of Yukoners, while also striking a balance with our equally important environment.

Mr. Speaker, people and the environment are not mutually exclusive. While the Earth could certainly thrive without us, we could not survive without her.

We must take the necessary steps to ensure that our environments are being respected and that our resources are being used responsibly.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate the motion brought forward today by the Member for Porter Creek Centre, and I thank my colleagues — the Member for Lake Laberge, as well as the Member for Copperbelt North — for their comments here this afternoon.

I wanted to focus in on a few aspects of the document that we're discussing here today. I would note that my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, did a good job of giving a good overview and talking about some of the concerns that he has — and some of the shared concerns that we have — with respect to the situation that we find ourselves in.

The first thing I wanted to talk about is Yukon Energy and the hydro and renewable energy targets that are set. Then I want to talk a little bit about the mining targets and hopefully get one of the ministers who will perhaps get up after me from across the way to expand on what we can expect. It's a fairly vague reference to the intensity targets for mining at this point. Then I wanted to talk a little bit about some of the key performance indicators and the measuring of our progress.

I'm not going to move it yet, Mr. Speaker, but I do have an amendment that I will move to this motion prior to my time elapsing here today.

So, first of all, talking about the total amount of energy supplied by renewable sources — so where we're at right now — for reference, I'm looking at page 18 of the 2019 annual report. It says there that "Running a hydro operation means we need a steady and reliable supply of water. We had enough in 2018 to generate 92% of the electricity needed in Yukon. Liquefied natural gas and diesel generators made up the other eight%".

Then, if you fast forward to 2019 — "Because Yukoners need electricity even when Mother Nature changes things up, we were required to use more LNG and diesel than normal in 2019. Hydroelectricity accounted for 84% of our total energy supply in 2019, with LNG at 15% and diesel 1%."

So, I'm curious as to how the targets that the Member for Copperbelt North mentioned with respect to renewable energy will be met, given that we are currently at 84 percent. Obviously, other factors have come into consideration since these numbers — the Eagle Gold mine that is run by Victoria Gold is on the grid and it has flashed up since some of these numbers have been accounted for, and we're expecting Alexco to go back into production and add further strain to the grid here — which is good news, obviously, from a mining perspective. We're pleased that they're opening and that they're on the grid.

But, again, they will put strain on these numbers of what we're able to generate from hydroelectricity.

So, I'm anxious to hear — hopefully — from one of the ministers across the way — if they get an opportunity to speak — what they're thinking about how we're going to meet these targets that they've set for themselves as far as generating electricity from renewable sources. We have a number of diesel generators rented and deployed — not only in Whitehorse but also deployed in Faro this year — the parking lot over by the Whitehorse Rapids facility is jammed up with diesels and diesel tanks. I'm not sure what it looks like in Faro, but I'm assuming that the yard up there would be the same. We're quite concerned with the trajectory that this government is following when it comes to supplementing our power needs through rented diesel generators.

I am interested to hear from ministers on how they plan to meet these targets while renting diesel generators for the next decade here in the territory.

I do also want to speak briefly to the mining side of things. We are pleased that the document set intensity targets for the placer and quartz mining industry. A quote that I wanted to take out of the document that jumped out at me is on page 13 of *Our Clean Future* — it is just at the bottom right — and I quote: "Mining plays a central role in the transition to a green economy. Minerals are vital to low carbon technologies — from batteries to wind turbines, solar panels and electric vehicles. Meeting an emissions intensity target will help Yukon's mining industry sustainably produce the materials needed for the global green economy."

When you look at the targets that are set, it does mention that mining was 10 percent of Yukon's total emissions in 2017. I think that is obviously a low number. Eagle Gold hadn't opened by 2017, now we have Alexco ramping up again, and then we are going to have off-grid mines like Kudz Ze Kayah and hopefully Coffee come on board before 2030. Again, I am interested in how those greenhouse gas emissions produced by those mines that are off-grid will be generating their own power. Obviously, there is machinery on-site, and there are transportation greenhouse gas emissions associated with these projects as well. I am looking forward to hearing from ministers opposite on what exactly they are planning when it comes to ensuring that mining can continue to play an important role as one of the cornerstone private sector industries here in the territory. Let's say that these targets will be established by 2022, so we will look forward to holding the government — well, I guess there will be an election before then, so we'll have to see what happens in the election before those targets are set, but I am curious as to what kind of activity the government is looking to undertake in 2021, prior to the election, with respect to setting these intensity targets for the mining industry.

I do want to talk now about measuring the progress when it comes to this document. I'm going to jump to page 66 in the document, which is the page that talks about the key progress indicators. It says at the top, under "Measuring our progress": "The Government of Yukon will publicly report each year on the implementation ... The annual progress reports will include..." — status, key indicators of progress, the latest 2030

greenhouse gas emissions forecast for Yukon, and any modifications to the actions in *Our Clean Future*.

I just want to walk through some of these KPIs here and hopefully get a better sense when other members speak on exactly what they mean and some of the baseline data — if there is baseline data for them — and what we're looking to accomplish for milestones as we move throughout the next decade.

The first goal is to reduce Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions. There are two indicators: "Greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, heating, electricity generation, other commercial and industrial activities, waste and other areas." It is looking at a 30-percent reduction by 2030 compared to 2010. I'm hoping to get a little bit more detail around how that will be achieved.

The second indicator under that goal is: "Greenhouse gas emissions intensity of mining." Then, again, we won't even be setting the targets until 2022, so I'm curious what that means, as far as the remaining eight years, with respect to reaching our goal by 2030.

The next goal is to: "Ensure Yukoners have access to reliable, affordable and renewable energy." An indicator is the percentage of the electricity that we use on the main grid that is generated from renewable sources calculated as a long-term rolling average — the target being a long-term rolling average of 97 percent by 2030.

As I mentioned earlier in my comments, in 2019, Yukon Energy said that we only generated 84 percent of our total energy supply from hydroelectricity; the rest was from thermal, LNG, and diesel generation. That's a fairly large leap, especially with Victoria Gold's ramping up to full production and Alexco coming back online.

The next one is: "Litres of fossil fuels used to generate electricity in off-grid communities". It says a 30-percent reduction by 2030 compared to 2010. I know that some of the communities, like Old Crow and others, are working on renewable projects. I'm interested to hear more if members opposite have time to expand on that as far as what else we can expect in the next 10 years from those off-grid communities.

The percentage of energy used for heating that is from renewable sources — they want to see 50 percent of that energy produced by 2030. I'm curious where we are today with respect to that. Perhaps it's in the document, and if it is, I apologize. I'll take another look through, but I'm curious to see where we're going to be with that. A lot of that would perhaps be biomass heating. One of the challenges there right now is that there are only limited areas in the territory where we can get fuel wood and one of those limited areas is actually in British Columbia. Northern British Columbia is talking to one of the MLA for Watson Lake's constituents when we visited a fuel-wood operator here in Whitehorse a number of weeks ago. He was hauling wood as far north as Dawson City from northern British Columbia. We need to identify fuel-wood sources that are accessible and closer to where the markets are and close to all the communities. I know that the Member for Klwane also has constituents who are quite active on the fuel wood and the

biomass side of things — supplying firewood to Yukoners who choose that as a heating option.

Greenhouse gas emissions from road transportation see a 30-percent reduction by 2030 compared to 2010. Obviously, there are small passenger vehicles that would be part of this, but another part is the truck transport industry. When it comes to the mining intensity, I'm curious if the trucks that supply or haul ore from the mines to the different ports — well, obviously with the silver mine and any base metal mines that come on board — and if that will be carved out of that or if that transportation piece will be part of the mining intensity targets or if it's included in this particular target.

Another goal is to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The indicator is a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators that will reflect Yukon's resilience to climate change. The target is to be highly climate resilient by 2030.

Another goal is to build a green economy and the indicator is greenhouse gas emissions per person and per unit of real GDP. The target is a decrease from 2020 to 2030. If there are some metrics around that, I would be interested in seeing those as well.

On that next page, page 67, it goes through a number of areas — transportation, homes and buildings, energy production, communities, people in the environment, innovation, and leadership. Under leadership, the indicator is the number of Yukon government staff who have completed climate change training. I am curious if the minister can expand on that and what type of training that will be for public servants in the Government of Yukon and where it will be offered. Is it something that will be done through Yukon University? If there is some more information on that, I would be interested in hearing it.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I only have 20 minutes to respond here today, so I'm not going to get a chance to go through these other indicators under the areas that I have talked about here. I am hoping that ministers provide some additional answers on exactly where we are with these measurements, the milestones to get us to 2030, and the goals that are set under this particular plan and these particular measurements.

As I mentioned off the top, I am going to propose an amendment to this motion. I do have copies for everyone.

*Amendment proposed*

**Mr. Kent:** I move:

THAT Motion No. 237 be amended by:

(1) deleting the phrase "supports meeting or exceeding" and inserting in its place the phrase "urges the Government of Yukon to meet or exceed"; and

(2) deleting the word "including" and inserting in its place "and provide progress reports to the Yukon Legislative Assembly twice annually on the status of".

I do have a signed copy and I have copies for all members.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, as has been our practice during the COVID provisions, if we could be given a small adjournment to allow members to review the proposed amendment, that would be appreciated.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Thank you. As I have been told by the wise Clerks-at-the-Table, adjournments are — back in my legal career, I think that you would adjourn matters and come back. I think that, if you adjourn matters here, we're done. So, I think it's a recess.

Do members wish to recess for 10 minutes?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** In order to comply with COVID-19 distancing requirements in order to allow MLAs to meet to discuss the amendment, the House will recess for 10 minutes.

### *Recess*

**Speaker:** I have had an opportunity to review the proposed amendment with the Clerks-at-the-Table and can advise that it is procedurally in order. Therefore, it is moved by the Member for Copperbelt South:

THAT Motion No. 237 be amended by:

(1) deleting the phrase “supports meeting or exceeding” and inserting in its place the phrase “urges the Government of Yukon to meet or exceed”; and

(2) deleting the word “including” and inserting in its place “and provide progress reports to the Yukon Legislative Assembly twice annually on the status of”.

I think that, as a result, the proposed amended motion would read:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to meet or exceed the targets laid out in *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy* and provide biannual progress reports to the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the status of the greenhouse gas emissions and renewable energy targets.

The Member for Copperbelt South, on the proposed amendment, you have three minutes and 19 seconds.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate you reading out what the motion as amended would read. Again, I thank the Member for Porter Creek Centre for bringing this motion forward, but I feel that what the amendment I am proposing here today will accomplish is to strengthen the accountability of the motion by “urging the Government of Yukon to meet or exceed”, rather than “supports meeting or exceeding” because, as an Assembly, that is where we have the most power, I would suggest, as far as urging the Government of Yukon to be accountable. The second part of the motion is to “provide progress reports to the Yukon Legislative Assembly twice annually on the status of”.

As I mentioned during my initial remarks, I know that the report contemplates an annual report, but we feel that having these reports to the Legislative Assembly done twice a year will help us track how we are meeting the goals. I did go through a number of the key progress indicators that are laid out in the document and there are some there that are very measurable. I think it would be important for us to have a handle on those and I don't think that it is too onerous to report on the status twice a year. There are seasonal differences as far as the amount of

greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generation, for instance.

Obviously, we hope that the renewable sources take up more in the summer and the thermal backup and load generation is more geared toward the winter months. But again, as the climate changes and as we work our way through to these goals set for 2030, I don't think that it's onerous for the government to report to the Legislative Assembly twice a year.

With that, I'll conclude my remarks and hope that I get to hear members' thoughts on my proposed amendment and that ultimately members of the Legislature will support this amendment to Motion No. 237.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am happy to rise today to speak to the amendment on this motion. I look forward to getting back to the main motion as well.

Let me start — just very quickly, Mr. Speaker — 99,000 litres of diesel reduction from Mount Sima equals 265 tonnes of carbon dioxide reduced. But — as the Member for Lake Laberge pointed out — if you're using the grid, it's not all 100-percent renewable. I looked over October and November — which is when the snow was generated for this past year — and it was 94-percent renewable. If we drop six percent off of that, then we would get 250 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> which are saved through Mount Sima.

The amendment that's proposed by the Member for Copperbelt South has a couple of points that I'm going to speak to. The first one is around how often we get that accountability. I'll note, for example, that when the past government put out its second progress report on climate change on their strategy — which I think was in 2015 — I would have to look back for sure, but there's always this lag between emissions and when they're reported. If I think of that document when I reviewed it — I think that the emissions they reported on were for 2012. There is often a couple-year lag in emissions.

When the Member for Copperbelt South just noted that it shouldn't be “too onerous” — it has not been the practice of governments to be able to get greenhouse gas emissions turned around very fast in the past. I think it should be faster — I think that is fair to say. But to try to suggest every six months — the accounting processes aren't in place that quickly.

My recollection — when we were looking at past emissions and working through those past climate change strategies with the then-Yukon government, the fastest way we found to track emissions was through the Department of Finance, because we could understand, just by fuel taxes, where fuel was being spent, and thus you could account pretty quickly for emissions.

As I try to talk to this amendment, I'm going to take us back a little bit. It's actually, today, exactly 15 years ago, that the then-Environment minister, Premier Fentie, was at the Montréal United Nations meetings on climate change. I was part of the Canadian delegation and part of the Yukon delegation, and there was a strong focus on the north, because we understood — well, we have understood for some time — but we shared with the rest of the world, at that point, how



important Canada's north was, because climate change was impacting us disproportionately. It was so much faster here.

I remember Premier Fentie coming, and we explained to him the reality of the situation. At that time, of course, we didn't have a strategy yet here in the Yukon. We didn't have any targets.

From that, I remember Premier Fentie signing onto the Montréal declaration. I was really happy, because after many years of trying to impress upon the government here how important this issue was, we finally had some movement. Call that 15 years ago — it was the end of 2005, maybe coming back in 2006 — it was a mere three years to get to the first Yukon government strategy in 2009. That is my recollection.

When that strategy came forward, there were some targets, but let me explain what happened at that time. At that point, we were using the Kyoto Protocol, and the Yukon stood up and said, "We have met our emissions targets." I looked around, and I said, "What have we actually done?" They said, "Look, here were our emissions back when the baseline was set, and here are our emissions today."

What had happened was that Faro had closed. Suddenly, we had this great reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and the government took credit for that as though they had done something. We all understood that this wasn't actually something that had happened. It was not intentional to reduce emissions, and you really don't want to tie your emissions reductions to seeing your economy go down, right? That's not a good choice.

We could see at that point that there were some challenges. I worked with the government over the intervening years. I was the manager of the Northern Climate Exchange at the college, which worked on public education and information on climate change mitigation and adaptation. I tried to help them understand where this challenge was. I said to them, "Look, you have some individual actions in your strategy, but you're not even looking at where the biggest emissions are." They said, "Well, where are the biggest emissions?" I said, "Transportation." They hadn't even measured it. They said, "We don't know what we can do about transportation." This was much as I heard the Member for Lake Laberge talk about it — "Well, what if the vehicles don't work in the north?" and "What are we going to do with the batteries? How are we going to deal with them? Where are they going to come from?"

I would just like to let you know, Mr. Speaker, that I just saw a report today that, as of the third quarter of 2020, Norway is currently at 60 percent of vehicle sales being electric vehicles, with 20 percent being plug-in hybrids, and the other 20 percent are fossil-fuel vehicles, including standard hybrids. That is 60 percent. That is a northern country. They are dealing with it. They have it dialed in. So, I think that it is possible for us. Of course, we have different distances between communities — as the Member for Lake Laberge noted — and, yes, there are some things to overcome, but, man, we have to get there.

So, when I looked at the 2009 strategy that was put forward by then-Premier Fentie, I pointed out to them that they didn't have any actions dealing with transportation. They said, "Well,

we don't know what to do about transportation." I said, "Why don't you measure it? One of the first actions should be just to measure it."

Three years later, their first report came out on a sort of redo of the strategy. They had measured it and figured out that roughly half of our emissions come from transportation. I pointed out to them, "Well, that's great, but now you need to do something about that" — to which they said, "Well, we can't do anything about transportation." I said, "Yes, we can" — and I mentioned one great action that was mentioned earlier today in the Legislature, which is around — well, I will leave that action for a second.

Let me go back to what they were going to do on transportation. I said, "You need to do something on transportation. You can't just say there is 50 percent and leave it hanging." They said, "Well, what could we possibly do?" I said, "Well, at least investigate what to do. Put that as your action." So, they agreed and put that as their action. I think that would have been in the 2012 update.

Let me turn to what the best action is. The best action for transportation is to develop the local economy because then you don't have to ship as much stuff up the highway. If you're thinking about where that is best suited, there are two places. One is energy itself — the more you can create local energy, the less you have to transport it up here. The other one is, of course, food. So, the more we can build local agriculture here, the less we're dependent on transportation and the better off we are. That is why I believe that it's good to have local agriculture in this strategy that we have in front of us. In talking with our local agriculture folks, we've doubled it and redoubled it and we will need to do that again.

When the 2015 update came out, which listed the 2012 emissions — by the way, the problem was that the government started saying, "Hey — yeah, we're reducing our emissions." I heard them say that again in the 2016 budget speech. "We've reduced our emissions." I said to the folks who work on climate change, "Which one of these actions reduced those emissions?" "Well, none of them." I said, "So, where did the emissions reduce?" I already knew the answer — and, of course, the answer was that mining was tanking. Well look, if we're going to sit there and rely on mining tanking as our strategy — man, that's not a smart strategy. This is the problem with all of these climate plans — that if you're not careful, you can hide whether something is happening or not because the emissions get measured and it takes a little while to come in — and it also matters when you change governments.

So, what was the main purpose of this motion before this amendment came in? It was around saying, "Hey, can we all agree in this Legislature that we need to have at least these targets or better?" It's not to say that — I listened for two hours or so, I think, as the Member for Lake Laberge talked about the shortcomings of this strategy. Okay, but the motion in front of us — and now not the amendment, but the purpose of the motion was to say, "Hey, whichever government you are, come forward with your individual steps about how you wish to achieve this — but can we agree as a Legislature and as a

territory that we all want to work to achieve these goals or better?”

Now, as I look at the amendment, I think that's lost. The reason is because — and I'm just looking at the wording of the amendment — it's that the Government of the Yukon meet or exceed the targets. I just want to say that the purpose of the original motion was that we all agree, as legislators, that we should do at least this much or more — albeit that many people here would bring different elements to that strategy.

I'm not against progress reports; I'm not against accountability. Twice annually, I have noted, is tricky to be sure — but okay, that's fine. You update it as you can and you bring it forward as fast as you can. I think it is important that we keep informing this House and the public of progress. That is important, but we should not tie it to these actions. It should be about achieving targets, and every government that comes from here forward in time should meet those or should exceed those. That's the whole point.

That's why, as a matter of fact, the notion of bringing in legislation — our federal government is talking about it. In Denmark, I have seen that they brought forward great legislation, and the purpose of that legislation — and the same purpose that we're talking about here with legislation — is: How do we make sure, as governments moving forward over time, that we don't keep sort of pointing fingers one way or the other and that we all work together to achieve this? Because I think that we can agree that we need to move from a fossil fuel-based economy to a renewable and sustainable energy economy. It's the smart thing to do; it's the right thing to do.

Okay, I'll make one other note around the whole mining kind of analogy. I remember when the past government asked me and several other people to be part of a panel to work on setting targets and how to set them for their then-strategies. The challenge was always mining, because you couldn't predict — if mines came on, they would be a big energy use; if they came off, they would be a big energy use. You didn't want to set it up today or in the future — and I argued this hard — you didn't want to set it up that, if mines shut down, the government could claim that they were reducing emissions. That should not be allowed, and that's why we went for intensity targets. That's the main reason.

The second most important reason is because the life cycle of a mine is what you have to measure. It's not the setting up and just the closing of the mine; it's the decommissioning of the mine as well, and we have a doozie in front of us with the Faro mine site.

It's the federal government that will take the lead on reclaiming that and dealing with that legacy. Of course, now, when we look back, we wish that things had been done differently. Man, I hope that we as a government — and any future government — whenever there is a mine — works more closely to make sure that they're not creating some future environmental liability. But here it is — we have Faro. We need to clean it up. It's important. I am using the grand “we” in that sentence, Mr. Speaker.

I noticed an article in the paper some months ago talking about the emissions around cleaning up the Faro mine. When

we talk about intensity-based targets for mines, we don't want to get into a situation where we would say, “Hey, we're not going to clean up a mine because we don't want to break our emissions targets.” We certainly would never want that. We certainly would want to do both — clean up those mine sites and meet the targets. So that's why — with mining in the Yukon, it really is a very cyclical thing, so you would go with intensity-based targets.

What I think the original motion was talking about — which the amendment has lost, for me — is that — what I thought the Member for Porter Creek Centre was asking was if all legislators of all parties can agree — whether or not they agree on this plan and how to achieve it — on the targets so that we can all work to achieve those no matter who is elected into this House.

I think that it is critical that we do a life-cycle analysis. I think that it is critical that we look at the economy, the environment, and the social/cultural at the same time. I think that the individual pieces of the amendment, as they are brought forward, are not wrong. We should have progress reports as often as possible to keep that accountability up.

What I see as different through this amendment is whether or not everyone here is agreeing that we should achieve these targets together. Just in my experience, I have seen too many times where governments have passed the buck on this issue and it has not been dealt with.

It has been kicked down the way too many times, and we're way overdue on moving forward on this strongly and significantly. In the plan itself, I remember when we did the accounting of whether we thought that we could get there from both a cost perspective and a target perspective — and bringing forward those numbers — the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources bringing forward their teams to talk about how to achieve this. They said, “This is how much we think we can get with these strategies” — and we said to stretch it. Stretch it, because we have to be aspirational as a territory. There's a phrase that the Premier has used: “We have to be on the right side of history.” We need to move this and more.

When I listened to the Member for Lake Laberge talk about how he disagrees with this one, this one, and this one out of the package, I thought, “Great. If you do get elected, I hope you will bring something else, but at least let's achieve this together.”

Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the amendment. I think that the original motion is stronger because it's about: Can we all do this together?

**Ms. Hanson:** The motion that was presented earlier today — the NDP was prepared to support it. We have a number of comments about that motion, and I'll make a couple of them in the context of replying to the proposed amendment from the Member for Copperbelt South.

I have to point out to the minister — and I appreciate his passion, his enthusiasm, and his expertise in this area. I would also point out to him that, just as he was at the Montréal climate change conference, the now-Premier and I and the then-Premier

attended the Paris climate change conference. It was in Paris that the international community agreed to set the *Paris Agreement* targets, which were to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, not by using 2010 as the base year, but 2005.

So, yes, the minister has said quite passionately that we shouldn't allow governments to skate and get away from being held accountable — not on our watch, because it's too hard. Quite frankly, we agreed to use 2005. That's the *Paris Agreement* Article 4.4. I can remember sitting and watching in these late-night sessions as those things were being discussed. I thought it was being taken seriously.

I thought that the amendment that was being put forward today does something that government is very rarely comfortable with, which is moving from the passive to the active voice. What it is doing is urging the Government of Yukon to meet or exceed, and it helps to fulfill what the minister just described as the challenge that he, as an expert in this area, faced trying to advise successive governments — particularly one government that was in power for that period of time — to actually do something, or to skate around — to use language. Quite frankly, for a government that likes to stand every day and make statements — being held accountable by actually having to make objective, evidence-based reports to the Legislative Assembly — not press releases, but reports. I think that when the Auditor General's Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development was to next look at the Yukon in the context of the federal-provincial-territorial reports on the environment, it would have a very different take on it if there was that kind of accountability evinced by this territorial government, supported by all Members of the Legislative Assembly.

So, quite frankly, there is nothing substantively wrong with the wording of the motion as it was, but I do believe that actually holding government — whether it is this government or my leader's government or whichever. I have been around too long. We have been talking about this, as the minister talked about — Rio, Kyoto, you name it. We are past all that kind of rhetoric.

If the government doesn't want to have that active approach to it, so be it. Take the passive approach, and just watch it sort of slide again. Maybe by the next time we talk about the next clean energy strategy, the baseline will have moved to — I don't know — 2020 from 2005, from 1992 to 2005, to 2000 and where — where do you want to go? At what point is it not tolerable? I think that we have passed that. I heard the minister say that.

If you want to be aspirational and if you want to be on the right side of history, hold yourselves to account. Let us work together to hold ourselves to account.

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** With respect to the proposed amendment, I'm pleased to rise today. I really would like to acknowledge the Member for Porter Creek Centre for the motion as laid out in *Our Clean Future*, including the targets for greenhouse gas emissions focusing on the vision for Yukon. I would like to take a moment to speak a bit about *Our Clean Future*.

Certainly, on this side of the House, we're very proud of the *Our Clean Future* initiative. The 131 recommendations came directly from Yukoners — input from Yukoners with their vision to a better future.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Well, apparently, the Member for Whitehorse Centre has more to say, but she has had her opportunity, and we will talk a little bit about this ambitious plan. The active approach to look into the future and the plan to meet the targets as defined — I know we have our climate change strategy department, our experts, who will work toward addressing the recommendations.

We've received significant feedback from Yukoners during the public engagement. People responded specifically — we've heard. The member opposite has made note that, historically, we've gone through many exercises and had lots of participation from members of this Legislative Assembly who perhaps have never brought a plan of this magnitude forward with specific targets.

Instead of tearing the plan apart and suggesting that we want to bring it into the Legislative Assembly twice a year so it could be scrutinized — now the government will publicly report each year on the implementation of *Our Clean Future*. We will include the status of each action in the strategy and data on several key indicators, and we will progress toward each of the targets in *Our Clean Future* in these annual reports. The reports will help us to assess what is working, identify improvements, and look toward new opportunities as part of the adaptive management approach going forward. We certainly want to look at the targets.

We know, as long-time Yukoners, for the record, that this strategy is more important now for Yukon than ever before. It's important because of what we are seeing at this very moment here in the Yukon, with the impacts and effects of climate change.

The Member for Lake Laberge droned on and on about garbage burning and how perhaps people will throw things in the river. That analogy and suggestion is so far back — that we have to educate Yukoners and work together to look at reduction of waste, reduction of using plastic bottles that come in here every day — perhaps Styrofoam cups that people bring in here — that's not acceptable when we talk about *Our Clean Future*. It's very important because climate change is happening in Yukon — faster across the north. We know that.

What is the purpose of this amendment? We want to talk about perhaps looking at the main motion and what it was intended to do. The north is experiencing changes before our very eyes. Looking at customary and contemporary practices, looking at what observations are happening on the land with science, making adaptations and measures that address the changes to climate and how we interact with the climate, the collective knowledge, experience, and actions taken with *Our Clean Future* — that was done collaboratively with Yukoners — and establishing a voice for youth as a new venture forward for this government that perhaps wasn't even contemplated historically.

We are proud to have developed this strategy in collaboration with Yukon First Nations, our transboundary indigenous groups, and our municipalities. The Member for Lake Laberge went on about facilities. Well, we are working with our municipalities. We are helping to look at waste and waste reduction. We have put significant resources into energy incentives.

Heating accounts for 21 percent of Yukon's total greenhouse gas emissions. To help to reduce our heating demand, we have to look at expanding energy retrofit incentives, which means good energy rebates. It means that we need to make our buildings energy efficient. We need to modernize, catch up, and keep up. We have resources in our communities — buildings and facilities that are 50 years old. We have put resources in there.

I am not certain exactly who, but one of the members opposite was talking about targets. How do we hit the targets? How do we measure? What are the measurables?

We have identified in the plan — in terms of reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, we know that the project that went forward in my own little community — 189,000 gallons of diesel fuel will be reduced from the grid once that comes online. That's the type of initiatives that we need to look at — small, little communities doing their part to make a difference — measurable outcomes, measurable opportunities to make a difference.

I don't need to go on about our plan that commits to an intensity-based target for the mining industry. My colleague, who is the resident expert, at least in our caucus — members opposite may not agree with that, but in my opinion, he has a wealth of experience and he has been doing this his whole life. This is his career, and we rely on that expertise in terms of historical knowledge and capturing that, articulating that, and helping us to better understand — looking at the initiatives going forward and measurables. How do we work toward a measurable outcome?

Would it make a difference for us to report twice a year here and put that kind of pressure on the department to generate — to report back to the Legislative Assembly — when we very clearly indicated in the plan that we would report on an annual basis to Yukoners?

We would work with Yukoners; we would help Yukoners; we would put investment into alternatives for Yukoners. We are proud to have developed this strategy in collaboration with our partners.

The final strategy that was developed incorporated feedback from all sectors of our society. Because of this collaborative process, the strategy outlines Yukon-wide priorities and ensures that we are all working together to make meaningful changes. Yukoners want us to take action — they want us to take action now. The majority of Yukon First Nations and municipalities have had conversations around the climate change emergency. Some have put in place measures and resolutions that trigger for themselves their own targets. My community has initiated a climate change strategy with a target of 2030 and a vision to reach that target and do every part that they can. It's the same thing with the Kluane First Nation.

We know the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin's community is doing the same thing with their biomass projects.

So we have been listening. Our clean strategy, which includes 121 recommendations, will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Yukon. It will help us adapt to the effects of climate change, enhance energy security, support Yukon businesses and individuals to participate in a green economy, rather than focusing on, "What does agriculture have to do with our green economy? What do hunting and fishing have to do with our green economy?" We want sustainability. We want access to those resources seven generations from now. If we don't deal with that now, we will see detrimental impacts and effects on the animals.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, just yesterday, there was a national debate and a discussion around this phenomenon that we're seeing and the effects that it would have on the Porcupine caribou herd — the fact that it's raining right now in the middle of their wintering grounds indicates that perhaps they won't get access to the very essential nutrients that they need to survive. We've seen the decline historically from impacts and effects like this. So that's why it's important that we look at food adaptations and food security in the north — alternatives. It's not so much about how we adapt as human beings but how we adapt as communities to address — it's up to us to take action.

The four goals that support healthy people, communities, and ecosystems in our territory clearly lay out the actions and the deliverables and the vision that has been put forward for us — the vision of our communities. By reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building a green economy that protects and restores the natural environment, we will uphold our joint responsibilities as stewards of the land while supporting sustainable economic well-being for future generations. It's about the cycle of life; it's about the cycle of the economy.

Yes, of course, we want to address — and a member addressed this earlier — seasonal changes, impacts, and effects. How do you measure that? That's the objective of this clean strategy. We are seeing changes before our eyes. We see things happening. Of course, we want to measure the changes and the impacts and the cumulative effects that happen. That will be done with the Climate Change Secretariat; it will be done with our partners.

Our actions will support Yukoners to continue to practise their traditional activities without being threatened by climate change. That's important when we speak about adaptation. It's important that we take into consideration a vision that sees from two eyes — one from a traditional, one from customary; one from contemporary, which addresses science. It's important as we look at legislative changes as we go forward.

This will support the whole approach to dealing with the spiritual, mental, and physical being of our very nations.

**Speaker:** Order, please.

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

*Debate on Motion No. 237, and the amendment, accordingly adjourned*

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*

**The following legislative return was tabled  
December 2, 2020:**

34-3-48

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 51, Community Services, in Bill No. 205, *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* — correspondence (Streicker)





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 73

3<sup>rd</sup> Session

34<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, December 3, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2020 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

#### Yukon Liberal Party

<b>Ted Adel</b>	Copperbelt North
<b>Paolo Gallina</b>	Porter Creek Centre
<b>Don Hutton</b>	Mayo-Tatchun

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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



**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Thursday, December 3, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.  
 Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of contact tracing team, health care professions, and essential workers

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to acknowledge and thank the health care professionals who have made an invaluable contribution to Yukon's pandemic response. The contact tracing conducted by the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit — the YCDC — as well as work done by the office of the chief medical officer of health and the COVID response unit has been essential in keeping our entire Yukon Territory community safe.

Contact tracing is a key to slowing down the spread of COVID, protecting you, your families, and your community. It requires a special skill set that has been utilized in historical disease outbreaks such as tuberculosis, measles, and other transmissible infections. Contact tracers have a profound level of investigative health science and communication skills, which are paramount to tracking the hosts and transmission rates of the virus.

From the time when a positive COVID case has been identified, YCDC investigates possible exposures, using sophisticated tracing methods. Citizens who fall within all levels of exposure are contacted and advised of the next appropriate action. Tracing potential contacts and providing public health guidance ensures that community members who may have been at risk of exposure are doing their part to stop further transmission. Navigating these complex situations is no easy task, since the person is most infectious in the first three to five days of the infection. YCDC staff work with the individual to help them to understand COVID, support their immediate health needs, and put together the puzzle of the individual's interactions from the previous one or two weeks. That is why contact tracers need to fully identify the potential person's movements and who their other contacts may have been. Often, a person who has just received a positive COVID test will be experiencing many different emotions and it takes a skilled, calm, and dedicated contact tracer to help identify all the pieces of the person's story.

Contact tracing techniques and public exposure communications have been and continue to be conducted in the most timely and diligent manner by our essential YCDC and

community nursing staff. Their swift and effective efforts ensure that Yukoners are contacted and provided with the most accurate and recent information about their situation. They work hard to determine not only from whom they got the virus but who else could be at risk of getting it. The YCDC's precautionary tracing measures help to ensure that members of the public are able to receive the support that they need regarding possible exposure, allowing Yukoners to make the best decision for themselves, their families, and their communities going forward.

During these challenging times, services like contact tracing have a big impact on the mitigation and support systems that continue to serve our community well. It is one of the single most effective tools in the investigation, identification, and containment strategy to reduce the ongoing spread of COVID-19.

Thank you to the following nurses at the Yukon Communicable Disease Centre who make up our contact tracing team: Angie MacNeil, Chris Cash, Darlene Lewis, Griffin Brunger, Jan McFadzen, Janelle Greer, Jean Fraser, Jessica Jobin, Lori Strudwick, Cathy Stannard, Michelle Caws, Rachelle Wallace, and Stephanie Combs.

Thank you also to the medical office assistants who play a huge role in records management, as well as answering all the phone calls and supporting the nursing staff: Angela New, Brandi Raymond, and Melinda Hagblom.

I would like to also say mahsi' cho to the nurses from the communities, as you help provide backup surge support to the YCDC team when there are huge numbers of contacts to follow up with. In a territory of our size, the work of one individual can and does make a difference. We are a strong and resilient territory. With the help of our health care professionals and the teams, I am confident that we can get through the second wave by being proactive and continuing to be supportive to one another.

Mahsi' cho.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to everyone working on the front lines and behind the scenes to keep Yukoners safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. I appreciate the opportunity to stand in the House today to say thank you to the contact tracing team and to a long list of Yukoners who deserve our appreciation and gratitude.

We have teams of people managing contact tracing, answering inquiries, providing information and test results, figuring out logistics, and enforcing orders. We give our sincere thanks to them as their job descriptions have certainly broadened over the last seven months. They truly deserve all of the appreciation as their worlds have been turned upside-down and they have very stressful working long hours and I'm sure are carrying the worry home, as jobs don't always stop when one finishes their shift.

To the health care workers and EMS workers administering tests daily on top of their other regular duties, we thank you for your continued dedication and for your

adaptation to the ever-changing landscape. Mobilizing to perform COVID tests at a carwash was unexpected, but this pandemic has been so unpredictable. Thank you for your support.

To the staff and nurses at the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit, thank you for your continued work informing and educating all of us. It's not an easy task keeping test results and information flowing. You are doing an amazing job keeping Yukoners informed and keeping transmission levels down.

To all of the health care professionals at the hospitals and community nursing stations, nursing staff, physicians, lab staff, and all of those in positions that support health care for Yukoners: Thank you for going above and beyond in your care of patients. This is a trying time for the world and Yukoners, but especially for those in the health care field. We have heard from health care professionals who are facing backlogs of patients and procedures. Wait times can be frustrating, and I'm sure that we have all heard a story or two. We might personally be affected by delays in procedures. Know that your health care teams are working to the best of their abilities with the resources that are provided to them.

To those who work directly with our most vulnerable Yukoners, the staff and health care teams at our continuing care centres: We applaud the efforts that you are making to ensure a healthy, safe environment for residents every day, all day.

To those who are in the field of education, to teachers and EAs, administrators, staff, and paraprofessionals: Thank you for your continued dedication to our students and their education and safety.

Thanks to all of our essential workers who have been providing services to Yukoners from day one, working directly with the public to ensure that our daily needs are met in as safe a manner as can be — some work in our many stores, from groceries to hardware, providing customer service, and keeping shelves stocked. Others provide custodial services to businesses and public buildings to ensure a safe environment for the patrons. Truck drivers drive long distances to move goods in and out of our territory. Thanks to all of the owners, operators, and staff who keep the doors open and allow us to access necessary goods and services — bus drivers who transport our kids to school and those who provide transportation to the public.

I'm sure that we have missed many, but please know that it is unintentional. We know that Yukoners are the most giving people and helpful to one another, especially during these trying months. Yukoners are continuing to prioritize safety within their communities, and that deserves our special appreciation.

As we head into the holiday season, be mindful of others, and don't hesitate to thank those who might need an extra boost in their day. A simple thank you can make such a difference. Let's pray that the criticisms are few and that the thanks are plentiful.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Words aren't adequate to express our thanks to all of those who are working on the front lines of this pandemic — to those who are standing in the eye of the storm. Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do, for the compassion you show and the support you offer in times of fear. Thank you for the sacrifices that you have made in support of others, from missing time with family and friends — maybe the occasional bedtime story — and putting your own needs behind the needs of others.

Thank you for your efforts to maintain our sense of normalcy in times that are anything but normal. Your capes may not be visible, but we all know that we're being supported by superheroes. Through your efforts, our friends, neighbours, and communities are that much safer, so we thank you.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I have for tabling, pursuant to section 23(2) of the Yukon *Housing Corporation Act*, the Yukon Housing Corporation's annual report for 2019-20.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House recognizes the tragic natural disaster in Haines, Alaska and encourages Yukoners to show their support for our neighbours during their time of need.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Nunavut to address problems with respect to insurance, including:

(1) commercial insurance rate increases of 30 to 50 percent for northern Canadian businesses, particularly in the accommodations sector;

(2) rate increases for condominium corporations on condominiums; and

(3) cessation of service to northern Canada by many insurance providers.

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

THAT this House congratulates Keith Byram, Jack Cable, Bess Cooley, William Klassen, Dr. Sally MacDonald, Agnes Mills, Doug Phillips, Gertie Tom, Ron Veale, and

Frances Woolsey for their induction into the Order of Yukon for 2020 for their demonstrated excellence, achievements, and outstanding contributions to Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to recognize the unique challenges of the north by making COVID-19 vaccines available to the three territories on a higher than per capita basis.

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

THAT this House expresses its solidarity with residents of Haines, Alaska and urges the Government of Yukon to participate in relief efforts, both financially and otherwise.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Government employees working from home

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The health and safety of employees and all Yukoners has been our top priority since the beginning of this pandemic. Back in March, the public service reacted quickly to the threat of the pandemic, and in line with the advice of Yukon's chief medical officer of health, employees were directed to work from home wherever it was operationally possible.

The public service did an exceptional job moving quickly to ensure that all employees had the technology and other necessary supports to work from home effectively. When Yukon moved into phase 2 and 3 of *A Path Forward: Yukon's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions*, the territory moved through the process of gradually reopening. The Yukon government public service followed suit with direction to employees to begin a slow and gradual return to the workplace.

As part of this gradual return to work, many new health and safety measures and precautions were implemented to support employees. We are continuing to adapt and enhance safety measures in all workplaces as the situation evolves, in accordance with the advice and recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. Many employees have continued to work from home since March while many have been eager to return to the workplace. Our Yukon government is a large organization with varied operations among our departments. It is important to recognize that many of our employees cannot work from home, as they deliver critical and essential services to the public from the official workplaces.

As a result of the unique nature of the work carried out across departments, there is inevitably going to be some variation in the number of employees working remotely across departments. Looking at the organization as a whole, in late March, approximately 50 percent of Yukon government employees were working from home, either full or part time. By late June, that number was 34 percent, and on November 16, 11 percent of the Yukon government employees were working from home, either full or part time.

Over the last two weeks, as of December 2, this number has gone up to 13.7 percent. We expect this number to continue to increase in the coming weeks. The Public Service Commission is currently developing additional guidance following the chief medical officer of health's December 1 recommendation for employers to increase the number of employees working from home, where possible. We expect that to be issued no later than Friday.

Within the Government of Yukon, some positions are well-suited to working from home; others are not. Departments have successfully and safely managed their workplace within the parameters of the guidance provided, displaying an exceptional level of professionalism while continuing to deliver the services that Yukoners depend on. As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, we will remain nimble and adjust accordingly, continuing to ensure that Government of Yukon workplaces are safe. We will continue to prioritize the health and safety of all public servants and ultimately all Yukoners while maintaining the exceptional service delivery that is characteristic of this public service. We will continue to learn from this experience as we further develop a long-term approach to working from home for the Government of Yukon that will endure well beyond this pandemic.

**Mr. Hassard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to reply to this ministerial statement today. The Yukon Party Official Opposition believes in taking necessary measures to keep all Yukoners safe while adjusting to the realities of the pandemic. That, of course, includes working from home.

In March when the pandemic first hit, Yukoners quickly adapted to this new reality. Employers put in guidelines, and employees, when they could, worked from home. This meant learning some new technologies so that they could keep connected with their co-workers, employers, customers, and the public in general.

All employers and employees, both in the public and private sector, functioned as they could through the spring and summer. As we got into the fall, some of those folks were able to get back into the office, but we knew that the reality was that they could be working from home again.

As the minister has just indicated, more public service workers are indeed shifting to a working-from-home environment again, with the Public Service Commission issuing new guidelines shortly. However, I have to mention that, with the new reality of working from home and new technology comes the issue of connectivity. Suffice it to say, you can't really stay connected with your co-workers and your employer if you don't have solid, reliable computer or cellphone connectivity, both with in-house computer networks and overall Internet connection.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, it was disappointing to hear the Minister of Highways and Public Works chuckle yesterday when asked about recent issues surrounding the government's computer network. How can the public service work from home when they do not have a reliable government IT network?

That also includes other government-related services, such as the Hospital Corporation. When asked about a specific computer network issue concerning the Hospital Corporation, the minister did not even mention the Hospital Corporation in his response. He instead touted the Dempster fibre line project.

While he can talk all day about the Dempster fibre line, the reality is that this redundant line, a project that has seen years of delays under the Liberals, is not helping Yukoners today. In fact, Mr. Speaker, YESAB documents indicate that the line will not be complete and operating until 2025. I sincerely hope that the pandemic will be long over by then.

The minister says that the government is working on a long-term approach to working from home that will endure long after the pandemic. We look forward to scrutinizing this long-term approach when it is released, but for now, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up by saying that I hope all Yukoners, including those who are working from home, remain safe in the coming weeks and months.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission for his statement today regarding the actions being taken by this government, as the employer of over 5,000 Yukoners, to follow the advice and direction of the chief medical officer of health regarding safe work conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are also pleased that the statement comes after persistent attempts by the NDP, including as recently as this week, to get the minister to articulate how Yukon government, as the single largest employer in Yukon, has adapted to the evolving demands of both the continued provision of services across the wide spectrum that Yukon public servants do every day on our collective behalf, as well as finding means of protecting the health and safety of not only those front-line workers whose jobs necessitate regular contact with others, but also sought to understand how the minister has acted to ensure that the directive that he authorized in June regarding working arrangements during the pandemic was being implemented across the public service.

We recognize that many public servants work in settings where they do not have regular contact with the public. As the impact of COVID in the Yukon has evolved to the point where, as we said yesterday, the chief medical officer of health has advised Yukoners to work from home as much as possible — stating that, if you can do so without disrupting workflow or service to others, please work from home. That is a pretty broad parameter for the minister to work within, and we will be interested to see the guidance that the Public Service Commission will be providing tomorrow to Yukon public servants with respect to work-from-home arrangements.

I note the minister's comments about adapting to work-from-home arrangements based on what was learned when the pandemic began. Can the minister indicate whether or not the Public Service Commission, following the lead of other private and public sector employers across the globe, has done any surveying of the 50 percent of Yukon public servants who, he indicated initially, worked from home to determine what the experience was like — what worked, and what did not?

Equally challenging is assisting management in the public service to grapple with their management responsibilities. When structuring and leading a workforce that is working remotely — for managers, it can be hard to understand what remote workers are going through, especially if they themselves have never worked remotely from home before. What tools will the Public Service Commission be working to develop with the public service management to assist them to adapt to these changed arrangements?

I hope that the minister recognizes that, for many people, jumping into managing remote teams due to the pandemic is a baptism by fire. Many of the skills that people have mastered in an office setting do not translate directly to managing remotely. Again, this is where working-from-home surveys can help ensure a smooth transition as well as necessary ongoing adaptive measures required by both Yukon government management and employees to make remote working effective and efficient for all involved.

We look forward to regular updates from the Public Service Commission with data indicating the number of public servants working from home, remotely, and the adaptive measures or assistance offered to facilitate work-from-home arrangements, along with regular updates from a survey of both employees and management.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions for many. If we can use any of the experiences of the past nine months and the coming months to create new remote work standards of excellence, there will be at least one positive outcome of the dire circumstances that we all face together.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the opposition members for their questions, comments, and support for this ministerial statement this afternoon. I will tell the Member for Whitehorse Centre that we have indeed surveyed our employees. We will continue to do that, and we are working toward more permanent work-from-home rules and procedures for the Yukon government that will serve us well beyond this pandemic.

Over the last three weeks or so, we have seen our caseload double. We have all sacrificed so much over the last several months to keep our territory and our friends, families, and neighbours safe. We cannot let things get out of hand now, certainly not on the cusp of a COVID vaccination program.

We have to shore things up. We have to take a look at what we're doing and be more considered. We have to continue with the "safe six", wear our masks, and, yes, start to limit the vectors of exposure. That means limiting the number of people with whom we interact. Part of that is getting more people out of our offices to work from home, where it is possible. This is what the chief medical officer of health is recommending for the Yukon. He is doing that because, from a public health perspective, it will play a role in slowing or stopping the spread of this virus. It will take some load off of our great contact tracing operation, and it will keep our loved ones, friends, and families safer.

I have asked every department and corporation in this institution to look at their workforce with a view toward public

health. Who can work from home in the name of public health? That is the lens, Mr. Speaker. It is not about convenience or who is great to have on hand in the workplace. It is about: Who can I send home today to do the job that they have been assigned? How do I do that? What do I need to do that, and what do they need to do their jobs? How do I get that done? — and then doing it.

We are already well on the way to success. We know what needs to be done. In the early days of this pandemic, the Yukon government sent 50 percent of its workforce home. We deployed tools and refined them over the intervening months, and we slowed the pandemic. It works. It was cited on the news this morning as one of the reasons that Ottawa is bucking the trend in Ontario, bringing its daily cases from hundreds or thousands to just 45 a day — a huge accomplishment. We are trying to stop our own daily case count, and we can do it. This is one of the tools that we are going to employ.

This year, the Yukon government was again named one of the top 100 employers in Canada by Mediacorp, and this is relevant because of the context of this year's criteria. The list was drafted with an eye to how employers have innovated to provide support for employees in communities throughout the pandemic. Mediacorp said that the best employers are better prepared to move quickly in response to a rapid challenge like the pandemic. The top employers made a difference with their employees and their communities.

While a few government agencies were named, there was only one government named — ours — the Yukon government. It made the list because of its responses to the pandemic — its commitment to its workers and its community. I want to thank the hard-working civil servants for all that they have done through this public health crisis, and I ask these professionals, once again, to cast an eye to their business to see who can be tasked with working from home in the cause of public health to blunt what is hopefully the last wave of this global illness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## **MOTION OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY NO. 2**

### **(Standing Order 28)**

#### **COVID-19 vaccine distribution to the territories**

**Mr. Cathers:** I request the unanimous consent of this House to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity pursuant to Standing Order 28 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. The motion reads:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to recognize the unique challenges of the north by making COVID-19 vaccines available to the three territories on a higher than per capita basis.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is fairly simple. We want to send a united message to Ottawa that we believe that rural and remote parts of this country cannot be treated the same as urban centres, and this is particularly true in the north. We have asked a number of questions about the plans being developed here in the Yukon for the rollout of the vaccine once it arrives. We have asked these questions on behalf of Yukoners who are seeking this information and want to better understand what will happen

in a few weeks when the federal government begins providing vaccines to the territorial government for distribution.

While these are important questions, and we will undoubtedly be asking more in the coming weeks, we recognize that the procurement and supply of the vaccines themselves rest in the hands of the federal government. We also recognize that the Premier is meeting with the Prime Minister and premiers regularly and that he has been clear that the Yukon's position is that different considerations need to be given for rural and remote parts of the country, especially the north. This is very much in line with the position that we in the Yukon Party have put forward on behalf of Yukoners for many years. The per capita funding is inadequate in the north due to factors including our large land mass and sparse population.

In a pandemic, our health care systems in the north have very limited surge capacity to handle an outbreak if one occurs. We believe it's important that Yukoners speak with one voice on this issue on the national stage and that unanimously passing a motion will help the Premier make the case to the federal government that we are united across party lines in support of the health care needs of the Yukon, NWT, and Nunavut. That is what this motion seeks to achieve.

**Speaker:** The Member for Lake Laberge has requested 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: Haines, Alaska natural disaster relief**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Yesterday, we saw some truly scary imagery come out of the community of Haines, Alaska. The mudslides there have destroyed homes and, tragically, people are missing. The people of Haines are our friends, neighbours, and family, and despite the current COVID border restrictions that have sadly split us up, many Yukoners regard them as part of our community.

Has the government reached out to the government of Alaska to see if they require assistance in dealing with this emergency? Will we deliver help?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I really do appreciate the question from the member opposite. We've been having conversations internally here. It started with the Minister of Highways and Public Works early yesterday reaching out to Commissioner MacKinnon of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. I know that EMO has reached out to the Department of Homeland Security as well, in Alaska, to offer our assistance. This offer was, as you can imagine, very well appreciated. They are working back and forth right now, and they will let us know if they want to take us up on our offer.

We have a mutual aid agreement with Alaska, as members opposite know, and any request for support would be coordinated through EMO. The US Army Reserve has several trucks en route to Haines, and we will escort them through, as

the highway is currently closed due to icy conditions, and we are monitoring that situation as well.

I just penned a letter this morning to be sent out rapidly to Governor Dunleavy. Suffice it to say, Yukon will be there for Alaska.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 vaccine**

**Mr. Hassard:** If distributed on a per capita basis, Yukon would likely only see 3,300 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine before March. Yukon needs a plan to prioritize this, because if distributed on a per capita basis, there will not be enough for every member of high-risk groups in the territory for the first quarter of 2021.

Alberta has publicly released details of their plan to prioritize the initial vaccine doses, and their plan indicates — and I quote: “Those vaccinated in Phase 1 include long-term care and designated supported living residents and staff in those facilities, on-reserve First Nations individuals over age 65, seniors aged 75 and older, and health-care workers most needed to ensure workforce capacity and who are most likely to transmit COVID-19 to those at greatest risk.”

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us when Yukon will publicly release a similarly detailed plan?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I appreciate the question from the member opposite, and I know that the Minister of Health and Social Services has much to say on this topic as well.

In general, the COVID-19 vaccine is absolutely going to be the next big shift in the responsibility for the pandemic, as we undertake the most complicated and complex immunization program ever delivered in Canada. It is a relief to see vaccines on the horizon for this virus. We have been challenged in many ways, and we’re making it through to a light at the end of the tunnel.

We are working extremely closely with federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts on vaccines. I’m in conversations, even today, with the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada and Minister LeBlanc. Canada and other provinces have recognized the unique needs in the circumstances of the north. We have been pushing that envelope extremely at every turn, at every meeting, at every FPT conversation — particularly when it comes to delivering health care in general, but the vaccine as well.

Proportionally, the territories have the highest health care costs in the country. Communities throughout the north are spread out over hundreds of kilometres and we are generally small and rural and often in remote and isolated areas. There are active conversations right now underway on the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine and these discussions are looking at rollout plans and priorities for all Canadians. We are pushing northern, rural, and remote as a priority for this government.

**Mr. Hassard:** The government has claimed that there is a plan for the vaccine rollout, but so far, they have kept it secret. The government needs to show more urgency in getting a plan for vaccine distribution and rollout developed and released publicly. Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam has stated that the decision as to who gets first access will ultimately lie with the provinces and territories.

This morning, Saskatchewan announced that their detailed plan will be released next week. Yesterday, we asked the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide their plan on how the government will determine who is high priority for the initial vaccine distribution, but the minister didn’t answer.

Can the minister at least tell us when Yukoners will be told how the Yukon government will prioritize the initial vaccines?

**Hon. Ms. Frost:** I would be happy to speak about the vaccine. The member opposite has suggested that we don’t have a plan. I want to say to Yukoners that we need to remember that we just gave a tribute to our staff. The staff that we have and the management at Health and Social Services are well-positioned for the mass delivery of vaccinations. They have been doing it for many years throughout the annual flu vaccination campaign.

To give some perspective: In the first four weeks of our mass flu clinic this year, 12,468 Yukoners were vaccinated. That is more than a quarter of the territory’s population safely vaccinated in one month. I would like to hold up that team within Health and Social Services for the incredible job they are doing and the incredible job that they continue to do. We know that we have a team and an organization that is well-established and have the expertise to deliver vaccines in the territory. What we do not know yet is which type of vaccine — or perhaps vaccines — that the Yukon will be receiving. This will be further informed by our rollout.

**Mr. Hassard:** I actually said that the government claims to have a plan, but they seem to be keeping it a secret. This morning, the Saskatchewan Health minister told national media — and I quote: “... I want everybody to know: We in Saskatchewan are ready to go.

“As soon as the federal government is able to start delivering the vaccine to us, we will be ready to deliver that to Saskatchewan people quickly and safely.”

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services tell us if Yukon is similarly ready to go?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** What I just heard from the minister was a yes. What I just heard was a record number of vaccines deployed for the flu vaccine just in the last couple of months. What I’m hearing from the minister is that we do have the plans to make sure that, as the news comes out about vaccines, Yukon will be ready for distribution.

If it’s a flu shot or a vaccine for COVID-19 — very similar processes. We are in a very good place right now. We will share information as it comes out, as far as vaccine planning. We have been pushing on a national level to make sure that northern, rural, and remote communities are at the forefront of vaccines, but I want Yukoners to know that what they need to do right now is to still practise the “safe six”.

We are not out of the woods yet, Mr. Speaker. We need people to hold on. It’s like holding your breath when you can still see the surface of the water. We’re there, folks. We just need you to be a little bit more patient and to make sure that we’re still maintaining our “safe six” and also still maintaining our humanity — being kind to others, being respectful to others. That’s really important at this time, and we will be announcing

the vaccine rollout when we have all the details and not a second beforehand, but right away.

**Question re: COVID-19 pandemic rent freeze**

**Ms. White:** Housing is critical at all times, and even more so in the middle of a pandemic. Yukon laws offer little to no protections for tenants. There is absolutely no limit to how much a landlord can increase rent once every 12 months. In the middle of a pandemic, some tenants are facing hundreds of dollars in rent increases. This is unacceptable, and I hope that the Premier and his ministers agree.

The good news is that they have the power to do something about it under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. Will the government immediately implement a rent freeze until at least next summer to ensure that no tenant loses their home in the middle of a pandemic?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We have used the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* to put forward measures to protect renters during the pandemic. If they are affected by the pandemic, they are not to be evicted. That is the rule that we have put in place. The member opposite is looking for more support. I thank her for bringing forward this suggestion. We will happily look at it. I said that during debate on the budget just recently.

I also want to note, though, that I am getting mixed messages from the members opposite. They have criticized, for some time now, ministerial orders, but in the two times that they have stood up in Question Period to ask me about ministerial orders, it has been to please introduce new ones.

So, I appreciate that the members opposite are looking to keep Yukoners safe; so are we. I thank them for their suggestions.

**Ms. White:** In Ontario, Doug Ford has passed a rent freeze for all of 2021. I know it is hard to grasp, but Doug Ford's Conservatives have done more than this government to protect tenants from rent increases during a pandemic.

Yukon tenants deserve more. There are no circumstances that justify a rent increase of hundreds of dollars a month. The fact that Yukon laws allow rent increases without any sort of restriction shows that this government is not standing up for tenants. This government has had four years to change the act and to put a cap on rent increases, but they haven't. Because of their inaction, some tenants are now facing hundreds of dollars in rent increases, and there is nothing that tenants can do about it. People risk losing their homes in the middle of a pandemic.

Does the minister think that it's fair that tenants have no protection against unlimited rent increases? If not, when will he do something about it?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Actually, I think that we did something about it in April. I will look back to try to understand what the timing was, but we did bring in eviction protection. That was out of debate and discussion here in this Legislature. We did bring it in April. I think that, just shortly after that, I stood up with the Minister of Economic Development to talk about support for employees — to give them additional support — and so we have supports that are out there now.

I appreciate that the members opposite are looking for more supports. As I have said previously, we will happily take

a look at that. Right now, I think that we acted quickly, and we will continue to protect the health and safety of Yukoners.

**Ms. White:** I think that the minister will find that the eviction clause was negotiated by the NDP when we were asked by the Premier to pass a budget with very little debate.

I asked a very simple question, and I would like the minister to answer it directly. Does he think that it is fair that tenants have no protection against unlimited annual rent increases, especially during a pandemic?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** As I have often said in this Legislature, when we are here to work to protect the health and safety of Yukoners, we appreciate suggestions from all sides of the House. So, let me acknowledge and say thank you to the member opposite for the New Democrats' role in bringing forward that suggestion. Maybe she could thank us for bringing it in quickly. We did it right away.

Do we care about Yukoners and protecting them and about keeping them safe, well, and housed during a pandemic? Yes, we absolutely do.

**Question re: Transitional housing for female inmates**

**Ms. Hanson:** Yukon women continue to face a lack of real support when leaving the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. For years, women who are released after serving time at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre or transitioning from federal jails have not had the option of going to a halfway house. For some women awaiting trial, this means that they have to remain in custody because there is no option available to provide proper supervision.

In August, the government issued a request for expressions of interest for a 24/7 supervised housing option for women transitioning back into the community or involved in justice matters.

Can the minister tell Yukoners where the plan for a new women's halfway house is at, nearly four months later?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I can advise the House that the Department of Justice is exploring options to establish dedicated and supervised community housing for justice-involved women in the Yukon. We know that it is critical that justice-involved women have access to structured and supportive housing and gender-responsive, culturally appropriate, and trauma-informed services as they make their transition back into the broader community.

As such, we are in the community conversation phase of this project, discussing potential location and program models for the provisions of a 24/7 supervised community housing program. We're working with several stakeholder groups and other orders of government in that conversation. I will happily go out and speak with the department to get a timeline and bring it back through a legislative return for the member opposite.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for that response, Mr. Speaker, because women involved in the justice system don't have access to the same supports as men do. That's now — and has been. This means that some of them have to spend more time in jail simply because they are a woman. This is blatant discrimination.

The lack of a women's halfway house also undermines the objective of rehabilitation that is supposed to be the purpose of our justice system. Halfway houses are an essential part of a safe and supportive transition back to the community.

So, until the Yukon has a women's halfway house that the minister has talked about now beginning to work on, what is the government doing to address the lack of support for women transitioning back into the community today?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Even though I have risen to speak about it here today, I will note that the Department of Justice has been working on this for some time. I will find out when that work began, but we know that, earlier this year, on May 1, the John Howard Society began operating a 24/7 supervised housing program for justice-involved men. That was after the ARC was closing down. That centre opened up. I think that there was initial conversation right at that time. I had some conversations with the Minister of Justice about making sure that we are also looking at women, to support them. We agree that this is an important service. As far as I understand it, the Department of Justice has been working toward this.

I am happy to get more information for the Members of the Legislative Assembly on this important program, but I would just like to say thank you to the Department of Justice for the work that they've been doing to support those folks coming out of being in the corrections system. We want them to integrate well, and this is a great way to help them to integrate back into society.

**Ms. Hanson:** It would be a great way if it was applied equally to men and women. Unfortunately, there are no supports being provided to women.

Mr. Speaker, a building located on the property of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre was once utilized as part of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre's women's living unit. It was a residence for women in custody and offered them a separate living unit where they participated in a variety of life-skills programs that enabled them to transition back into the community. Elders were encouraged to visit and offer programming. With the completion of the new Whitehorse Correctional Centre, the building then became Takhini Haven, a group home for adults with intellectual disabilities. Currently, it stands empty and has been empty for quite a while.

Has this building been considered as a halfway house for women? If not, why not?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I rise to say thank you very much for the question. I am happy to turn back to the Department of Justice to get an update for this House. I have indicated that the Department of Justice has actually been working over the summer to find adequate supports for women. I will say that we have been in conversation with the Challenge Disability Resource Group, with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, with Safe at Home, and with the women's transition home and Betty's Haven.

I think that, through these discussions with our partners, stakeholders, governments, and subject matter experts, it will help us to come up with a support system for the unique needs of justice-involved women in the Yukon. I'm happy to get an update for the members of this House on that good work.

### Question re: COVID-19 exposure notifications in schools

**Mr. Kent:** The government stated that, in the event that someone tests positive for COVID-19 in one of our schools, they will not notify everyone who attends that school, including the staff. This is neither open nor transparent. Parents, students, and staff deserve to know if there was a positive case in their school.

Will the government reverse this decision?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. I appreciate that there are some continued questions and concerns from the school community and from the members opposite. The school operational plans are unique to each school. They were prepared by the school community, with the guidance of the office of the chief medical officer and with support from the department. These operational plans also cover how a school will respond if staff or students develop symptoms of COVID-19.

If there is a confirmed case, the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit will identify and directly notify anyone who has been in close contact with that case. They will provide direction on who should stay home and self-isolate. A confirmed case will not necessarily mean that a school will close. Again, the YCDC will provide the direction on who needs to stay home and self-isolate.

Again, we're following the recommendations and guidelines of the chief medical officer, and we will continue to do that. I look forward to further questions.

**Mr. Kent:** Last week, we asked the Minister of Health and Social Services if the government consulted with the Yukon Teachers' Association before making the decision to not notify the entire school community if there is a positive case in a school. The minister did not answer the question at the time; however, since we asked that question, we have seen the YTA come out against the government's policy on this. The president was quoted in the *Whitehorse Star* as saying — and I quote: "I want solid information to be shared because I think our school communities deserve that."

The YTA also correctly pointed out that, despite the government trying to clamp down on information, the rumour mill will go wild regardless. Of course, this could lead to further problems, including misinformation. So again, I will ask the government if they will reverse the policy of not notifying the entire school community of a COVID-19 case.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** We will continue to work with the chief medical officer of health, as I have stated, and the department will support the school communities in their unique operational plans.

If there is a confirmed case, Yukon Communicable Disease Control will identify and directly notify anyone who has been in close contact with that case. This will provide direction on who should stay home and self-isolate. A confirmed case, again, will not necessarily mean that a school will close. The YCDC will also determine who needs to be notified within the school community, while still ensuring the privacy and security of personal health information.



I want to just repeat that — ensuring privacy and security is absolutely vital in this situation. You have to really look at the fact that this is a very small jurisdiction and our children and families deserve confidentiality — as we all do. The Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit will notify parents directly if their child has been exposed — as well as the school administration — on a confidential basis.

I just really hope that Yukoners hear that message directly.

**Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kent:** So, it is unfortunate and disappointing that the government is leaving this to the rumour mill to determine. Of course, this could lead to further problems, as I mentioned, including misinformation. Parents, students, and teachers have a right to know if there was a possible COVID-19 exposure in their school. Perhaps an individual in that school is immunocompromised, or someone in their bubble is part of an at-risk group. These individuals should have all of the information necessary to make an informed decision about whether or not to go to school.

Last week, we asked the Minister of Education if she consulted with school councils prior to the government deciding that they would not notify school communities.

So, can the minister confirm today if school councils were consulted in advance? If not, has the minister asked school councils for their opinions on the policy since?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Yukoners need consistent leadership and accurate information. Referring to our system as “being left to the rumour mill” is really irresponsible, I think. It’s irresponsible for the members opposite to be talking about our system in Yukon to keep Yukoners safe. We just did a tribute to the good work that is being done in this territory to keep Yukoners safe. It is absolutely irresponsible for the members to be making those statements.

We will continue to work with our chief medical officer and we will keep the privacy and confidentiality of our students at heart. We’ll continue to work with science; we’ll continue to work with good evidence; we will continue to keep Yukoners safe.

Again, Yukoners need to know that any information that they need, they can find it at yukon.ca. I know that the school community is making every effort to ensure that all parents and children are well-aware of the COVID-19 plans.

#### **Question re: ATAC Resources tote road project**

**Mr. Kent:** So, the mining industry and the service and supply sector continue to raise concerns about the Liberal decision to deny permits for the ATAC tote road. Now, despite the minister’s best efforts to throw the department under the bus, the buck stops with him. The project received a favourable environmental assessment recommendation from YESAB in 2017. In 2018, the minister changed the rules of the game and added two more years to the process. As I pointed out yesterday, changing the rules midstream creates uncertainty. This decision is going to have a devastating impact on the Yukon’s reputation as a safe place to invest. We’ve already seen the Yukon drop as a favourable place to invest earlier this year, according to the Fraser Institute report.

What is the minister doing to salvage Yukon’s reputation as a safe and good place to invest?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First of all, concerning the first comment that was made by the member opposite, I support the good work of the department. I absolutely understand that, at the end of the day, as the member opposite said, the buck stops with the minister — absolutely. I think that there is an application that we’ve talked about a lot this week. The technical team inside the department made their decision. I stand behind that decision. I do understand that part of the job, and I support the good work. They are hardworking people.

This sector — as much as you’ll hear from others — has been active over the last number of years. You can see it in their exploration numbers. You can see it in the opening of new projects. All of that takes a tremendous amount of work.

I do know a little bit about having to take on the communication piece. Coming into this job, there was a lot of work and salvaging to do.

We were coming out of a recession, and we had gone through a massive number of legal cases. What we were being asked, as we went out to mining conferences, was: Was there going to be some stability between relationships?

People felt, within the industry that — whether it was bankers or investment boutique firms — that was key. I have been down this road before, and I think the stability that we have now is leading to investment.

**Mr. Kent:** So, the Beaver River subregional land use plan was to be completed in March 2020, prior to the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. We’re nine months and counting past that deadline. This morning, yukon.ca says that the draft plan won’t be ready until March 2021, with the final plan to be determined.

Once again, we see this minister over-promise and under-deliver on timelines, with no end in sight for the completion of his plan. There are a number of other claim holders in this region who are active now and are looking for answers. I’ll ask again: Does the land use plan have to be completed before they can advance their projects, and if so, when will it be done?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Just as of last week, we had a number of conversations throughout the geoscience conference with many companies. We’re always open for conversations with them. Our office can have those discussions. We’re probably not going to have them through the conduit of the critic for Energy, Mines and Resources, but we would always be open to having those discussions directly.

Overall, I think it’s important to say to the industry and to those who are looking to invest — I know this week, there’s another company that just formed and they are doing really well — a lot of investment into them. Tomorrow, they’re going to be announcing sort of their work on the stock exchange — a brand new company in the Yukon focused on mining in the Yukon, and it basically has been built around a commitment to the Yukon in trust.

Again, just a couple of quick things — for anybody who is out there, please engage early, often, and consistently. For those folks out there, building relationships on a people level is so important. Follow through, of course, for any of the companies,

on the promises they make with their stakeholders and for them to be patient.

Those are just some things that I would like to share today for any of the companies out there that are working — again, patience being the key piece as well.

**Mr. Kent:** I'm not sure if the minister heard the question, but I asked about the Beaver River subregional land use plan and when it would be done and if those claim holders have to wait until it is done to advance their projects.

So, we have been hearing from many companies and investors since this decision was made. The company most affected by the minister's decision has seen a 20-percent loss in their share price since Friday. The minister has said that all is well with the investment community, but we are hearing a much different story. Companies and investors are looking for a stable and predictable permitting process and this minister has thrown that out the window with his new way of doing business.

The big concern is that this project actually received a favourable environmental assessment recommendation in 2017, only to be denied by the minister just this last week.

So, what assurances can the minister give to the mining industry that they won't endure the same treatment as ATAC did, where the rules are changed at the eleventh hour?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think it is important, as well, just to remind members opposite that — when you think about projects moving ahead in that particular region, the things that come to mind are the two mines that have opened over the last 24 months and that are employing people in that particular area. When it comes to folks who are working there, they are advancing those projects — I think that those folks are going to continue to advance their projects. They are going to continue to spend dollars and they can do that work.

Again, some of the notes that I just shared as answers to the last question as well — those are really good pieces of information and they actually come from the Yukon Chamber of Mines. For anybody — please, the Chamber of Mines has a mineral engagement and consultation tool, and it talks a lot about ways to engage. So, I think that folks should reach out to that.

You know what — we will continue to have conversations. We are seeing companies open in the Yukon. We are continuing to see investment. My sense is that we are going to see very extensive exploration next year. Also, I have service sector companies calling me now and saying that they need 40, 50, 60, 70, 120 people — so those are all things that indicate that we are going to continue to go in the right direction. I know that our reputation will continue to be there, but it has to be built on ESG models, and that is what we are doing here.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel):** Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

### **Women's Directorate — *continued***

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am just waiting for the officials to come in. We have Hillary Aitken today. She is the director of the Women's Directorate, so I am happy to have her join us today.

Before we get into further questions from the members opposite in the debate today, I just wanted to follow up on some of the — where we ended the last time was talking about the COVID-19 phone program. One of the questions that was on the floor was regarding lessons learned. I wanted to just give a bit of information in terms of that before we get into the other questions.

We recognize, of course, that the unplanned suspension of this program was disruptive, which was never intended. The program was created in order to respond to emergency needs. It was therefore designed without the necessary time to address all the risks. We have learned that, although we need to respond quickly to emergency needs, we also need to make sure that we take the time to put in place measures to mitigate those risks.

The Yukon Status of Women Council conducted an evaluation of this program in August 2020 by talking directly to 22 women who had received the phones. The most frequently identified uses of the phones, as identified by respondents, were: to stay in touch with friends — 100 percent; family — 90 percent; followed by education — 45 percent; then working — 27 percent. This initiative has certainly illustrated the need for ensuring safe and reliable access to phone and Internet

usage. However, the evaluation results also illustrate that, although there is a need for Internet access, affordability of basic phone use remains a barrier for many.

As a department, we have also learned that we have community partners who are ready and willing to identify problems and work together with us on solutions. We always need to make sure those relationships are well-defined, with clear roles and responsibilities.

I was so pleased to hear that the Yukon Status of Women Council successfully received funding from the Red Cross to operate a phase 2 of the program as of November 9. They are providing vouchers for cellphone plans and data. They have also employed a technician to provide support to women with their phones. Although this program did not operate exactly as planned, it is not a small accomplishment that 325 women now have access to a phone that they didn't have only a short month ago. The steps that we took helped this phase 2 of the program to get off the ground. I'm thankful to those organizations in the community that continue to provide support to women who need it.

Now I'll open for questions.

**Ms. McLeod:** I want to welcome the official back to the House this afternoon.

When we left off, I had been asking the minister some questions regarding the cellphone program. After the program was suspended in June, the minister said that the plan was to reinstate the service to the phones, but only to provide them with calling and texting capabilities with no data attached. Can the minister confirm that this was done? What was the cost per month for the service?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** The phones were suspended for a couple of days, starting on May 29. All of the phones were reinstated by June 3. It was during that period. So, some were reinstated before June 3, but all of them were reinstated by June 3. The cost per month for the phones, as I stated previously, was \$40 per plan. When they were reinstated, they were reinstated for phone and text.

**Ms. McLeod:** So, the cost, as the minister said, is \$40 per month per phone for calling and texting capabilities. If there was a measure of data that was included in that, what is the additional cost to provide that?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** The total cost of the phone program ended at \$115,000. As I previously stated, the original amount per month was \$40. I will have to get back to the member opposite on whether there was a reduction there, but the total cost ended at \$115,000 for the program.

**Ms. McLeod:** I take it, then — and I thank the minister for the clarification — that the original contract was \$40 per month, which included phone calling, texting, and data.

Does the minister anticipate that this program will continue — and until what time or date?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** As I stated in my opening comments, our program ended at the end of July — July 31. The Yukon Status of Women Council has received funding from Red Cross to operate a phase 2, so this program has been in place as of November 9. They are providing vouchers for

cellphone plans and data. They have also employed a technician to provide support to help women with their phones.

**Ms. McLeod:** It is good news that the program is continuing, but I will take it, then, that the program is no longer in the hands of the Women's Directorate and is now centrally self-funded through the Status of Women Council.

Does the minister know if the plan is going to be expanded to include any more individuals who require access to a phone? I presume that it will be necessary to know how women are to access this program if indeed it is going to be expanded.

I'll just let the minister comment on that, please.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, this program is now completely under the Yukon Status of Women Council, and it remains their responsibility. We know that the equipment that was provided — the 325 phones — are the property of the women who receive them. I do not have all of the details on whether new equipment is being provided at this time, but that's something we can certainly find out. We can return to the Legislative Assembly with that information.

**Ms. McLeod:** I would appreciate that information. While the minister is speaking with the Yukon Status of Women Council, perhaps we can find out what the outreach is going to look like and how this program might be expanded. One of my questions in all of this is: How many rural women have been serviced by this program? What kind of continuing outreach goes on to attract them to apply for this program?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** We will return with the details of the current program. When we established the program, it was the Yukon Status of Women Council that did the direct outreach to those who were in need of this program.

The Women's Directorate at no time had access to the folks who were receiving these phones. Part of our partnership was to provide the funding through the Women's Directorate. The Yukon Status of Women Council had the direct contact with folks who were receiving — they were the ones who determined who got the phones. I certainly can get a breakdown in terms of how many were from outside of the City of Whitehorse. Our other partner on this program was Northwestel. They provided the equipment and the set-up of the phones.

**Ms. McLeod:** We've talked over the past number of weeks about unintended consequences related to COVID-19 restrictions. One of the major concerns is the increase in situations involving domestic violence. Aside from the cellphone program, have there been any changes in supports for those who may be experiencing an increase in violence in their homes?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Yes.

While I'm speaking to this, I would like to thank all of the shelters that have continued operating during COVID-19 — Help and Hope for Families Society in Watson Lake, Kaushee's Place in Whitehorse, and the Dawson shelter. These services continued. They made the adjustments that they needed to in order to ensure safety and social distancing.

We also had the sexualized assault response team that was established in March 2020. The sexualized assault response team was implemented in Whitehorse and was expanded and

improved services available to victims of sexualized assault, including emotional, medical, and legal supports. Key components of this program include a 24-hour, confidential, toll-free, Yukon-wide support line for all victims of sexualized assault. Victim support workers are available for after-hours support on weekends and a roster of on-call physicians specifically trained to support victims of sexualized assault.

That was an additional service that came into effect just prior to the pandemic starting. We have introduced it in early March 2020, so that has been in place. I also know that all of the not-for-profit organizations that work to provide services to folks who are experiencing gender-based violence — all of the supports and resources that they needed to operate were provided. There was additional funding to those organizations provided through the federal government also.

One of the items in our supplementary budget is the safe ride program, so additional funds were provided for safe rides through taxi services. Those are some of the additional supports that continued on during the pandemic and were enhanced — and also the new sexualized assault response team.

**Ms. McLeod:** The minister referenced SART, and this has been a program that has been in development for some time — certainly predating the pandemic situation. I'm happy to hear that it's underway.

What I would like the minister to comment on is how outreach for SART is being done and how it is assisting women and others in rural Yukon. The minister has referenced the safe taxi transportation for those who need it here in the city. I'm wondering — I mean, not every community has taxis, of course, so are there other supports that are in place for rural Yukoners that would compare with this initiative that is helping folks in Whitehorse?

I'm looking for — I recognize the minister said that some additional funding has been provided to groups within Whitehorse. I'm wondering if additional funding was provided to, for instance, the women's shelters throughout Yukon to help them provide additional supports for women.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will start in terms of the questions around the SART program and then I will go into some of the additional supports and resources that were provided to shelters.

Again, the SART program was introduced and, yes, it was under development for some time. I worked alongside my colleagues at Justice and Health and Social Services to establish this new approach to assisting folks who have experienced sexualized assault. This was established in March of 2020, so it was just before the pandemic started. It has been an important resource for women and/or anyone experiencing sexualized assault.

Again, the components of the SART program are: a 24-hour confidential, toll-free, Yukon-wide support line for all victims of sexualized assault; victim support workers are available after hours and weekends; and a roster of on-call physicians specifically trained to support victims of sexualized assault is also part of the program. Agencies work closely together to ensure that services continue throughout the pandemic, with some modifications, where necessary, to

accommodate public health measures. The numbers of victims reaching out to SART agencies during the pandemic have been a little bit lower than we had thought and lower than the same time period in the previous year, which reflects national and international trends.

While I am speaking about SART, I will go through this a little bit — right now, we are moving into evaluating SART to determine what is working well and what gaps remain. We will be talking to agencies involved in SART as well as other community agencies that support victims of sexualized assault.

Once SART is fully implemented in Whitehorse, we will be working with communities to create a model that works for them. We acknowledge that, of course, communities have unique needs and are different from Whitehorse and we will work together to address those challenges.

I just want to make sure that I covered all of the components of the SART. I mean, we can continue talking about it a bit more.

In terms of additional resources to shelters — the shelters received \$25,000 per shelter from the federal government to enhance — and, again, all of the supports that we normally provide to our shelters were all provided under our transfer payment agreements. Additional dollars were provided through the federal government to the shelters directly. In the communities, the shelters do have mechanisms to assist women to get to the shelter, if they need that. We have provided some resources, as well, around the safe ride program in the City of Whitehorse.

In terms of additional funding — women and gender equality — which is where the funding was provided initially for the \$25,000 in the first round — there is also a second round of funding that is being worked on right now for organizations working on gender-based violence. This will be a total of \$45,000 per organization.

**Ms. McLeod:** So, the additional funding that the minister just referenced — is that included in this supplementary budget, or is that something that we can anticipate seeing in the spring budget?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I have to clarify my previous comments. I made a mistake in terms of the \$45,000. This is a new fund of \$45 million to organizations that work on gender-based violence. The details are still being worked out around the distribution of that funding. That would be, I believe, for the new fiscal year or sooner — I'm not sure. We will get more details on that, but that is something that was just announced and is being worked on right now.

**Ms. McLeod:** The minister referenced a review of SART that is being undertaken. My last question today is regarding when that review will be finished, whether or not it will be shared, and who it's going to be shared with.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** The evaluation is internal; it's an internal evaluation of SART. It's working with the implementation committee, which includes a number of partners outside of government as well. At this point, there is no plan to publicly release that document. I would be happy to share. It will help us to determine what's working and what

isn't working and to make the necessary improvements to it, as it is a new program.

In terms of the completion date, the data has now been gathered. It will be completed within the next couple of months. I will be happy to come back or provide information to members opposite. Of course, if there are changes to the programs as a result of the evaluation, we'll absolutely be sharing that publicly.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister and the officials here today, possibly for the first time in the Chamber — very exciting.

Before we get started today, I just wanted to take a minute to really focus and offer my congratulations to all those who were involved in the creation of the sexualized assault response team, the SART. Words will never be adequate to say how important that is for people in the community.

I know that there are always growing pains at the beginning of things, but what we've signalled to folks experiencing this kind of violence, this kind of trauma, is that we hear you, we see you, and we'll do a better job at supporting you. I think that's really important. I appreciate that very much.

Something that just recently came out — and by "recently", I think it came out yesterday, dated December 2 — is the "Gender-based Violence in the Territories, 2018". I'll just ask if the minister can nod if she has seen the document. Excellent.

I was just checking, Mr. Deputy Chair, before I ask questions about it, very specifically, because it would be very unfair to ask about a document that someone hadn't seen.

It's dated for 2018 and it is about gender-based violence in the territories. The reason why I just wanted to bring it up right now is that the shocking truth is that Yukon — this is not an award that I think we would want to lead — leads in all three territories for percentages of both men and women over the age of 15 who have been the victims of physical or sexual assault. That is disturbing on so many different levels. We know that we have a violence problem in the territory. This has been long and ongoing.

I wonder if the minister had any thoughts. How is her department taking this information, and how will that get turned into action?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question. We are aware of the report by Statistics Canada, entitled *Gender-based violence: Sexual and physical assault in Canada's territories, 2018*. We're currently reviewing the data. The report demonstrates the reality faced by victims of sexualized and physical assault in Yukon. We share concerns about the high rates of violence that Yukoners are reporting.

The Government of Yukon has been working to build more options and services to support victims of violence. As I've stated today, in March 2020, we launched the sexualized assault response team, which focuses on consistent and coordinated front-line response and on individual victim's needs, options, and choices.

In May, through the Department of Justice, we launched an independent legal advice program, which supports victims to access confidential legal advice so that they can make

informed choices about their next steps. Support is also available for victims of sexualized and physical violence through Victim Services.

A victim can seek support before they decide to report an alleged offence or even if they do not want to report the offence. We encourage victims to contact Victim Services. We can explore options with the victim based on their circumstances, help them make a safety plan, and access safe housing if they need it. Victim Services is independent of both the Yukon RCMP and the Crown.

I have worked closely with Victim Services in my previous life and when I was the director of justice for Kwanlin Dün and also in the work that I have done in other Yukon communities, particularly Watson Lake.

In terms of other responses to gender-based violence, specifically against women, we have been working for some time to support the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The work that we have done around Yukon's response is significant, and we're preparing, at this point, to release the final strategy for Yukon.

There are tremendous actions within this strategy. The Yukon government has worked closely with Yukon First Nations, Yukon indigenous women's groups, and family representatives to finalize changing the story to upholding dignity and justice. Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy — the strategy outlines four main pathways to guide our action and response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. These pathways are strengthening connections and supports, community safety and justice, economic independence and education, and community action and accountability.

I have been a co-chair of the Yukon advisory committee. We met with partner stakeholders to finalize the Yukon strategy, and we are preparing to renew the 2016 declaration of the Yukon regional roundtable.

We're also working with community partners to host a gathering of family members of MMIWG — sorry, that's past.

The action plans that are coming out of the Yukon strategy are going to be significant and will really and truly change the story. This is a long-term strategy. There are 31 action plans within that strategy that will address safety issues, but also really look forward in terms of — when we did the strategy, we really looked at everything. We looked back at truth and reconciliation. We looked at all of the 231 calls for justice, so this is significant. The implementation of this strategy — although it is really focused on indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit plus — we know that it will change the story for all women through the implementation of the actions taken within it.

**Ms. White:** What work is the Women's Directorate doing to support the announcement that was made by both the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services toward the creation of universal childcare? As the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate working toward women's equality issues, childcare is a barrier that is unfortunately faced by more women than men in their ability to re-enter the workforce. What involvement does the Women's Directorate have in that?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** When we work toward these types of initiatives, we work with a one-government approach. *Putting People First* was an initiative that our entire government supported. That is certainly one of the recommendations of *Putting People First*. The Women's Directorate and my role as Cabinet minister have been absolutely in support of that strategy.

That is something that is reflected also in the strategy for changing the story to upholding dignity and justice for Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy. That is one of the items that is reflected in that strategy. So, again, looking at a one-government approach, we certainly are in support of it.

When I put on my other hat as Minister of Tourism and Culture, I reflect the same there. This is going to be a huge part of opening up opportunities for women to either re-enter the workforce or to enter for the first time, perhaps, or to go to school — so, absolutely in support.

I was talking to a young woman the other day — she is a mother of five children and she said to me that universal childcare will allow her to dream again. That was very moving to hear that reflection from that young woman. The Women's Directorate is absolutely in support. When we look at the one-government approach, we will be embedding the *Putting People First* recommendations throughout all of our work because it is vital, it is important, and it is going to help create healthy, happy, thriving communities with a people-centered approach.

**Ms. White:** Those are all the reasons why the Liberal government shouldn't delay on universal childcare. We know that the federal government has just announced that it is going to go into a five-year study. I feel like we are past that; I hope that we are past it, anyway — especially in Yukon.

Because we are talking about issues that affect women, does the minister have any information on the timing of the midwifery regulations and when we will see those in place?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Our government remains committed to moving forward with the integration of funded and regulated midwifery services in Yukon's health care system. We're very thankful for the ongoing support and time given to this work from physicians, the Community Midwifery Association Yukon, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, among others. Successful implementation of midwifery will take the support of all of our health care providers, and we look forward to continuing the work with them.

One of the key components of the integration of midwifery is to ensure that Yukon midwives are able to hold full privileges at the Whitehorse General Hospital, and the minister responsible is working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to make sure that this happens.

We have heard from physicians, midwives, and experts across the country that midwives holding full privileges is really key to ensuring that Yukoners using midwifery services have access to continuity of care and to ensuring that midwives are able to work to their full scope of practice.

We are taking a phased approach with the integration of midwifery services in Yukon, with the establishment of full

midwifery services in Whitehorse as a first priority. Once the program is up and running, we will then look at how midwives can best practise services in Yukon communities.

I know that, while the pandemic situation resulted in some delays in the work, the minister is happy to be moving forward with the key recommendations from the Canadian Association of Midwives, which is to hire the necessary expertise to help move forward with the integration of midwifery into Yukon's health care system.

I would really encourage the members opposite to bring this forward again when the debate for Health and Social Services resumes in the House.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. If she had any influence on when Health and Social Services might be called up for supplementary budget debate, that would be fantastic. If she could put in a pitch for me to get the breakdown of the \$34 million that we have been asking for, that would be great.

I'm going to move on to the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues — or YACWI as it is often called. I think that it's important to note that this is legislation that was brought forward initially by Margaret Commodore. She was the first aboriginal Minister of Justice in Canada. Despite what we've heard in the Chamber, she was indeed the first female Minister of Health and Human Resources in Yukon. Since then — including our current Minister of Health and Social Services — that brings it up to four women who have led that department. That's awesome.

I have questions about YACWI and its direction, because there has been a lot of confusion in the community recently about what's happening with the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will start by acknowledging Margaret Commodore. She blazed the way for a lot of us and she is somebody I hold in high regard and have known my entire life. She was very, very close friends with my family, so she was part of my life always as I grew up in the territory. To see an indigenous woman in the Legislative Assembly was something that I — to be here today and to know that folks like Margaret blazed that trail for us is incredible. I have very high regard.

I know the history of YACWI and how it came to be and that it was Margaret Commodore who started this and it was very vital at the time. We value the advice of the recommendations that the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues has provided to the government since its inception in 1992.

However, much has changed in the last 30 years. The scope and capacity of the Women's Directorate and the community organizations have also grown and our understanding of gender has shifted as well. I think about the changes that happened. Self-government happened in the last 30 years. We have a number of self-governing First Nations as well.

In terms of gender-equality seeking groups — they have expanded in the territory. In recognition of this, I have worked with the council members to review the function and focus of YACWI in the current Yukon context. Although COVID-19 has impacted our ability to gather as a large group, revisioning

continues, with input from women's organizations and the LGBTQ2S+ organizations.

We are also continuing to advertise and recruit for new members who will bring expertise and representation to this council, always encouraging Yukoners who are passionate and working toward gender equality to consider putting their name forward.

The work toward revisioning continues. We currently have a contractor in place working with YACWI and other partners and stakeholders to work toward a revisioning of YACWI in Yukon's current context.

**Ms. White:** Just some questions: Does the minister believe that we have reached the point in Yukon where women are equal to men? Do we have the same opportunities? Have the barriers been removed? At this point in time, are men and women on equal footing in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I think that the dial has moved, but we're not there. I don't believe that we are there. I believe that there still is a need for an advisory committee such as this, but revisioning is necessary at this time to reflect the current scope and capacity of the Women's Directorate.

Again, community organizations have grown and understanding of gender has shifted. So, we are looking to work with the current council and other stakeholders throughout Yukon to work toward some changes to the mandate of this council and to strengthen it. That is really the goal — to strengthen it into Yukon's current context, not taking away the focus on women and women's equality — because I do believe that we absolutely do need to have that focus now and into the future — but we also need to expand our capacity within this advisory council to look at the other equality issues that we have in our current context in Yukon.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. The reason why I ask is — I guess, a bunch of different things. I spent a lot of my time for the first number of years talking about the importance of gender-neutral washrooms and the importance of accessibility and being able to say if we use the bathroom. But what my friends always told me is that it wasn't about them taking away accessible washrooms for people with disabilities; it was about building better washrooms so that they could access them as well. I say this because, if we talk about YACWI — Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues — I would say that there is just as much reason to have a Yukon advisory council on gender issues where we could have a bigger table or a different table with different issues. I say this in terms of, right now, I believe that there is a lot of cross-pollination that would happen between issues that affect the LGBTQ2S+ community and the women's community, but also where they diverge and are quite different.

What I was taught about the bathroom issue is that it was really important that we didn't take away from one equity-seeking group to give to another equity-seeking group. What we really needed to do was to make sure that we had enough of both.

Has that come up as a conversation when we are talking about changing either the makeup or the direction of the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** At this point in Yukon, we have 14 women's equality-seeking organizations. We have three LGBTQ2S+ organizations, and then we have YACWI on top of that. I want to just highlight some of the changes that have been made federally. Within the last two years, the Status of Women Canada made the shift to change their mandate to focus on women and gender equality. They changed their name and their mandate to be inclusive of the LGBTQ2S+ community, and it has been a successful change that we're seeing. I think that women and gender equality can live together.

It's really difficult for, I think, any minister coming in to ensure that you are able to meet with — and ensure that you have the perspective of — all of those organizations. I think YACWI, being more reflective of our current state in Yukon and our current context, would be helpful to any minister in the future. Making some of these adjustments now will strengthen it, and I do think an advisory body like this can be inclusive of women and other gender equality.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. When can we expect to see legislative changes for the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues legislation coming forward?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** We're working with a contractor to do this review. If legislative changes are required, I would be working with our Cabinet Committee on Legislation to have any legislative changes brought onto the legislative agenda. I would want it to happen very quickly if legislative changes are needed, but I have to work with my colleagues. The chair of that Cabinet committee is the Minister of Justice.

**Ms. White:** Is the minister planning on changing either the title of the Women's Directorate — whether it's the title, whether it's the action — are there larger scale changes planned there?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** There are a lot of things under consideration right now. Again, I work with my colleagues at the Cabinet level. Those are matters that, when we have a final report and we make some decisions on possible changes, we would be having those discussions at the Cabinet level. I'm not the only one who would be making that decision if that were one of the options put forward. I would be working with all of my Cabinet colleagues to do that if that was the path forward.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 11, Women's Directorate, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*?

Seeing none, we shall 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 11, Women's Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11, Women's Directorate, 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 11, Women's Directorate, 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 \$2,696,000 agreed to*  
*On Capital Expenditures*  
*Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to*  
*Total Expenditures in the amount of \$2,696,000 agreed to*  
*Women's Directorate agreed to*

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Deputy Chair:** 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. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

### **Department of Energy, Mines and Resources**

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will share a few comments at the start concerning the Energy, Mines and Resources supplementary budget. Before I start, I want to welcome the officials. Deputy Minister Paul Moore is here, as well as Assistant Deputy Minister Shirley Abercrombie. Both have spent many hours in here over the years on budget debate. Again, thank you for being here today and for the work that you folks do.

With Energy, Mines and Resources, it's important to just touch on the fact that folks can imagine that, between our last days in here in the spring until now, the teams have really had a tremendous amount of pressure, and folks have really risen to the occasion in a number of areas.

Some of our staff were requested to help with some of the work on borders and we are lucky to have folks who are very talented and understand that work. They have spent time ensuring the safety of Yukoners. As well, early on, there was a lot of discussion and hours spent on trying to ensure that — especially in the mining sector — there was activity happening both in placer mining and with exploration.

Again, the staff are really doing a lot of work directly with exploration companies, as well as reaching out to the companies that support those industries and also directly with the producers — Minto and Victoria Gold at the time — and also on the placer side. So, there was a lot of back and forth work with people providing good client services and working with other departments to ensure that people could move forward. I think, in the end, what we saw was a delay in our

season on the exploration side, but then the ability for folks to get out in a really long season where people are still actually undertaking exploration. As of last week, there were still at least one or two companies that were going to try to extend into mid-December.

On the placer side, we have seen what has turned out to be a record year for production. A lot of that work was made possible by the folks inside our departments, which we will just touch on in a second. Even the ability for the Yukon Geological Survey and minerals to work together and raise the Yukon mineral exploration program to ensure that we have had the most money in there — that has really led to a lot of reach to more grassroots exploration programs this year. We will go through them and have the opportunity to touch on particular branches and the work that they have done, but really, a lot of folks have really been stepping up to do the good work on behalf of Yukoners.

So again, Mr. Deputy Chair, I rise to present the first supplementary budget 2020-21 for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has an important role in regulating the responsible development of our natural resources. It is a diverse department, covering the mining, agriculture, oil and gas, land, forestry, and energy sectors. The total appropriations for this supplementary budget are \$1.1 million. This is an increase of about two percent to the department's 2020-21 O&M budget of \$63.4 million.

While some operations of Energy, Mines and Resources have been affected by the pandemic, the budget has essentially remained the same. The only change to report in the supplementary budget is a \$1.1-million increase to the funds available through the Yukon mineral exploration program. This increase provided additional support for mineral exploration projects for the 2020 field season, as part of the Yukon's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Expenditures for the Yukon mineral exploration program have increased to a total of \$2.5 million, from \$1.4 million in funding to applicants for 2020-21. This additional investment contributes to the economic recovery spending that will support mineral explorers and enable the location, exploration, and development of mineral projects for the remainder of the fiscal year.

As I mentioned before, the budget for Energy, Mines and Resources has been largely unaffected by the pandemic. We were able to maintain our programs and services at a level to meet the needs of the public and maintain our regulatory responsibilities throughout this exceptional time.

This concludes my remarks for the first supplementary budget 2020-21 for the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and I open the floor up to questions from the opposition.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate the minister's opening remarks. I too would like to welcome the officials and thank the officials who provided the briefing to us as well on the supplementary budget and as well officials from the spring who briefed us on the mains. As many know, we didn't get a chance to touch on Energy, Mines and Resources in the spring, so I won't have



very many questions about the supplementary budget, but I do have some policy and overall budget questions related to the mains.

I do congratulate the minister on enhancing the funding to the Yukon mineral exploration program. It has been around for a long time. I think that it goes back to the early 1990s when that program was put in place by a New Democratic government. It has since been enhanced and it has changed somewhat over the years, but it certainly provides good seed funding to projects and helps some of those projects to hopefully eventually develop into working mines here in the territory.

Before I ask some questions — I don't think that I will get through all the questions I have today, but I will turn the floor over to the Member for Whitehorse Centre at around 5:00 p.m. so that she can get some questions in, just in case we don't get a chance to get back to EMR.

I just wanted to go back to Question Period today and the series of questions that I was asking about the ATAC project. In the minister's final answer — and obviously, having not seen the Blues yet, I can't quote him exactly, but he did reference a service and supply company that was hiring — I believe that the number was up to 150 people. I'm wondering if he can provide details to us in the House on which company that is, what kind of business they are in, and when they are looking to hire all of these individuals.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'll identify the type of sector that they are in. That will probably lead the member opposite to know who it is. They are in the drilling business. They do drilling across the Yukon as well as in other jurisdictions. It's a great Yukon company.

Part of the dialogue with this particular company — I think it is even as high as maybe 100 people. They are quoting for the season. They always try to maximize the local labour force that works with them, but because they've grown to be a global company, from time to time, they're in a position where they're reaching out — and some of their staff are located in other countries, and they have brought those individuals to the Yukon when there has been a need. They have reached out and have asked to work with us. Really, it's not my role as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, but it also comes into play around the role as minister responsible for immigration. I've requested a meeting with Minister Mendicino at the federal level so that he's aware of this.

This also encompasses other areas of Energy, Mines and Resources — agriculture. Last year, we were in a position where we had some pressures because of COVID-19 and border restrictions and we weren't in a position to move some folks in. For anybody in the Assembly and those listening, if you've watched, there have been a lot of conversations about this across the country. It has been highlighted on different news outlets in the last number of days — more on the agriculture side. It's something that we have to really think about now.

We did receive a letter from the Chamber of Mines talking about — what's the plan by the Yukon government going into the next season? We get into challenging conversations, and

certainly we did this week. The reality is that we do have a lot of companies that we have sat with, and they are looking to commit pretty significant money next summer.

What we've said, in each and every meeting that we've had concerning this — and the deputy minister and ADMs were in meetings with me during the Geoscience Forum. We did them virtually. We spoke with companies and asked: What does the potential spend look like for your season? How many people do you believe you would have here, or how many people would you have to bring from another part of, potentially, the country? Are you thinking that you may need to do an alternative isolation plan for your exploration program? If you are, we would really like to work with you early on that.

February is the date that we have set to say that we would love to see people's plans early — and that's really about talking to industry, too, and the chamber. We want to make sure that we have the room and capacity within the Yukon to be able to provide the isolation — potentially in Whitehorse, if that's what happens. We also want to make sure that we're supporting all of the companies and that we're communicating that through the chamber. I know that the chamber will, in turn, ensure that the service sector folks also know what's going on so that they can tool up accordingly.

Drilling company — I think the member opposite probably knows who I'm speaking with. Feel free for them to reach out. They might need less folks, but there are numbers that have been sort of shared. I think that it was just a fair indication of what we hear is happening.

On the service sector side, more folks are — at least some of the folks whom we have talked to have said that, if they get the amount of work that they have quoted to date, it's going to be a really significant season. Part of my concern, as well, is that the "golden triangle" in northern British Columbia — as they call it. They have raised an exceptional amount of money as well since late spring, and there are already phone calls coming in from BC as well, because they look like they're going to have a pretty serious season.

We want to make sure that Yukon companies are supported and that they know the work that they have so they can be working in the Yukon, because there are going to be a lot of pressures from different jurisdictions as we go into it.

I'll leave it at that.

**Mr. Kent:** I have a few friends in that business, so I'll be able to reach out to them and get a sense of which company that is, but I have a good idea, based on what the minister told me, so I appreciate that.

At the briefing this fall for the supplementary budget, one of the questions I asked was about the EMR staff working from home. I am just wondering if the minister can confirm, by percentage numbers, the staff — the officials at the briefing gave me an idea of how many were working from home at the height of the pandemic — sort of March and April — and then how many were still working at home in October. So, I am just wondering if the minister can — I apologize, I left that sheet of paper in my office, so I don't have it with me. I am just wondering if the minister can confirm those numbers and what the percentage right now is of EMR staff working from home.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** During the pandemic — officials are just sharing some numbers with me here. We were looking at — about 60 percent of our staff were working from home at that time. Going back to our October numbers, we were looking at about 20 percent at that point working from home. I also can endeavour to get numbers for November, but hopefully that will give an indication. I think that we probably stayed on that same track throughout November — at least through the month of November — at 20 percent.

**Mr. Kent:** The next topic that I want to discuss and dig in on is with respect to land use planning and local area plans and some of the zoning efforts that are going on out there, as well as questions about the land lottery process that the minister was part of an announcement with — earlier this week or last week — the Minister of Community Services and the Mayor of Whitehorse.

The first topic that I want to touch on is the Beaver River sub-regional plan. As I mentioned in Question Period earlier today, I did find a fall 2020 update on yukon.ca, under the Beaver River planning process. The phases, as they are laid out here — there are phases 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. By the looks of things, phase 2, which is a background report, was completed in October 2020. Phase 3, which is the planning framework, also was completed in October of 2020. I guess maybe I'll just leave it at that before I get into the other aspects here — just to get the minister to confirm that both of those milestones were reached and completed in October of 2020. Again, the first one is a background report and the second one is a planning framework.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, those two pieces have been completed. As we touched on today in Question Period, the next senior liaison meeting — which is very similar to the structure from regional planning where there are representatives from both the First Nation as well as the government — their next senior meeting is in December. I don't have the exact date, but I can endeavour to get that. It is between now and Christmas. I have it now; it is December 14.

**Mr. Kent:** Then we will move on to phase 4, which is an analysis and draft plan — completion for January 2021. There are five things that are outlined here in the work plan as part of that. So, I just wanted to check with the minister to see if the planning commission and the senior liaison committee are on track to get that completed by January of next year.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'm just going to go through a couple of points, and I'll touch on a few different pieces of work, as well as what the member touched on.

As we spoke about today in Question Period, we're continuing to work with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to develop our land use plan, as well as a fish and wildlife monitoring and adaptive management plan for the Beaver River in our agreement. We also touched on — the plan was tentatively scheduled to be completed in spring of 2021. There has been lots of discussion today about delays that have occurred.

This work informs all of our work, including our access management plans. The Beaver River land use planning committee, which includes representatives from both the First

Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun as well as Yukon, is advancing this work. Since September 22 — and I did touch on this earlier this week — the planning committee has held seven online stakeholder engagement sessions to gather feedback on the work completed to date.

The parties also recently approved a revised work plan and timelines due to COVID-19 delays, which include the following deliverables by the spring of 2021: a recommended land use plan; a fish and wildlife harvest regime; and a fish and wildlife monitoring and adaptive management plan. So, that was the spring of 2021.

**Mr. Kent:** I just wanted to make sure I have this straight. This phase 4, which is the analysis and draft plan — it says the completion is in January 2021. Is that now bumped to the spring? I'll let the minister clarify — or I'll ask the minister to clarify when he's on his feet.

Then phase 5 is the final draft plan — completion March 2021. Then obviously that will be sent to the parties. It looks like there is another opportunity for the public to review the plan — and NND citizens and stakeholders — and then, I guess, it's submitted to the parties. That's under the task list there.

Then the final plan is to be determined by the parties. I am just hoping — the minister mentioned spring of 2021. Is that when he is anticipating that the final plan will be done — that phase 6 will be done?

Again, just to clarify, is phase 4 — the analysis and draft plan — scheduled for January 2021? I think this update was just uploaded to the website a couple weeks ago. I'm hoping that it's still current.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Deputy Chair, I think it's still consistent in the sense that the work that has been identified for January — those two pieces — are on pace to be done. The spring is the other piece which I just touched on, which is the adaptive management and the fish and wildlife monitoring, as well as the fish and wildlife harvest regime. That work is in the spring.

I think what I am going to do — just to make sure I'm giving the most accurate information; I want to make sure that I bring back a legislative return to the member opposite. I want to make sure that this is — as we all know, this is an extremely sensitive topic. I want to make sure that the information I provide here is accurate. So, I will get back with the officials.

But, as of right now, we're still looking for those deliverables in January. It has been shared with me that they are on pace and we're looking at the spring on this new plan. December 14 will be the next senior liaison committee. I want to be able to provide to the Assembly the date for planned completion as well, as the member opposite asked.

**Mr. Kent:** That will be great. If that information that the minister gets from his officials is different from what's presented on the Beaver River land use plan and agreement work plan fall 2020 update, it would be helpful, I think, to update that information there.

One of the other products of the work plan that is identified here and that is still on the website is the road access management plan. The minister mentioned a couple of other

products — the fish and wildlife harvest regime and the fish and wildlife monitoring and adaptive management plan. Both of those were scheduled for completion in March 2021, but the road access management plan is identified in this document as well and is scheduled for completion in March 2021.

The tasks identified were to review the draft road access management plan, meet with stakeholders to review requirements, make modifications, and finalize the plan. Obviously, everyone knows what happened late last week and into early this week with the denying of the permits for the road into the ATAC project. Is this work still underway? What can we expect to see in the road access management plan that is identified here to be completed by March 2021?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First of all, it is key to understand that all of the pieces of work that we just discussed here concerning the recommended land use plan, the fish and wildlife harvest regime, the fish and wildlife monitoring, and the adaptive management plan are key components of being able to build out the road access management plan. Those pieces are all feeding into that process. There has been no change in our approach to working with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun on this. It all stems from the signed agreement that we have with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to start this process.

We are still doing that work. That component is still a key piece of deliverables, coming out with these other ones, in the spring of 2021.

**Mr. Kent:** So, all of these other products that are listed here — the fish and wildlife harvesting regime, the monitoring and adaptive management plan, as well as the road access management plan — are still being developed in spite of the denial of permits that happened earlier this week or late last week? Is that the case? That road access management plan, which I believed was specific to that tote road into the ATAC property — is that work still underway, and can we expect a product on that in March 2021 even though those permits have been denied?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Again, the pieces that we have spoken about — all of those key products — all work into the key items of a road access management plan. My understanding is that those pieces will be done by the spring. They would then be feeding into that work. So, in my legislative return, I will identify the time period that we are seeing to complete all of those components. That should be able to give the members opposite a good sense about — we'll also identify what the time period would look like to feed that work into a road access management plan. I'll put that in a legislative return.

It's also key to understand — and the member opposite is aware that, when you're into any process like this, you have other partners who are at the table with you. You work together, and there's a committee that defines what they believe to be a timeline that is workable and doable. In this case, during Question Period last week, I strayed away from getting into too much about COVID-19 and what we have dealt with — I touched on it — but I think that, for most folks, it's important to share with the Assembly all of the consultation that we are required to do.

When you are doing permits and work through Energy, Mines and Resources — whether it's issues around land, minerals, or you name it — it usually triggers a conversation that has to happen with affected parties. It has been a really legitimate challenge, since May, for officials. Sometimes the consultation is done through different platforms. We had a lot of folks who wanted to ensure that — sometimes we were asked to push that consultation off to a larger time. In some cases, we were asked to not move through a process at all, and so we did our best with folks to use other avenues to be able to get that consultation work done.

Through a lot of this, you can imagine that we're in a position where — it was difficult. There were legitimate delays that we had to deal with in order to try to make sure that we were respectfully engaging and fulfilling that.

When you look at the change in this work plan, I would say that, pre-COVID-19, when we looked at this work, there were times where we were off of the timeline — I would say that — but I also believe that, since March of this year, it has been really difficult.

Again, I want to make sure, when I come back, that the information we are sharing is accurate, and we'll have our team go through what is listed by the committee, and then we will cross-reference that with this. As well, on December 14, when the senior team gets together, if there is anything discussed at that particular time, we will. I have spoken to the Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and we have had discussions over the last week. We are still moving to complete the work that we have set out to do.

**Mr. Kent:** Recognizing that we are in the back third of the current Fall Sitting and some of these timelines will have passed before we reconvene in March, I am just hoping that the minister will commit to — if the Legislature has adjourned for the Fall Sitting — if he will just get that information to us — and I am assuming to the Third Party as well — via letter, if that information doesn't get to him before the conclusion of the current Sitting.

I am curious as to if the minister has any idea on how much money has been spent to date with this plan. Then just one other quick question on it is with respect to the delays — when the minister — just on the tail-end of PDAC in 2018 — came back and did a ministerial statement on this effort and this sub-regional land use plan, he did at the time say that it would be completed in two years. So, we were expecting it in March 2020. I am curious as to if he has any idea or reasons that we ended up delayed by a year. Obviously, the bulk of the work, we had expected to be done prior to the pandemic — but recognizing some of the pandemic challenges, a lot of that shouldn't have been in place in the lead-up to when this plan was to have been concluded.

So, there are a couple of quick questions: How much money has been spent to date? Does the minister have any idea why there were delays that pushed this out at least 12 months, by the look of the work plan that is on the website?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** To date, we have — externally, from a funding perspective — provided \$325,000 to Na-Cho Nyäk Dun for this work. As part of that return, we can go back and

take a look — there are definitely costs, of course, associated with having your own staff — from both Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Environment — work on this. Both departments have played a role in this work.

I was questioned on this previously — I believe in Question Period, if I remember properly — and that was really about last year having a portion of money that we normally would have allocated toward the YMEP program. We moved that money — I believe the number was \$200,000, and I will go back and confirm that — and that money was moved and provided to the Yukon Geological Survey, which they then, in turn, used for data collection as part of this sub-regional planning process.

I can tell you again, since the execution of the 2018 agreement — so \$325,000. I will endeavour just to get a sense of what our costs are internally as well, and we'll bring that back.

**Mr. Kent:** The second part of that question was with respect to the delays over the initial two-year time horizon — if the minister has any idea what led to those delays.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I want to sit down with some of the officials who have worked on it. I know that there has been — a lot of the comments and concerns that we've seen — whether for this work — and in public meetings, we've seen a lot of different comments. So, I think it's a highly sensitive undertaking.

I think as well, in some cases — when we're working with different First Nation governments — and I definitely don't want to speak on behalf of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, but I do know that First Nations like Na-Cho Nyäk Dun have a tremendous amount of pressure on them right now. Every time there is stuff happening there — you have a lot of exploration happening. You also have Alexco, which has been getting ready to ramp up, and then you have Victoria Gold.

Most First Nations — and I think it's fair to share with Yukoners — I don't know the full complement of their team there, but I know that folks get pulled in the same as our folks. People look at the Yukon government and I think they believe there is probably unlimited capacity in different branches to do work. That's not the case. When things in a particular sector are fairly busy, you're in a position where people are getting pulled. That is partially from my understanding, but I think that it is prudent for me to sit down as well with folks not just from Energy, Mines and Resources but from Environment as well to try to get a better sense of all of the things that have played a role in slowing this process down to what we had anticipated for the first timelines early on.

**Mr. Kent:** I look forward to getting that information either by legislative return or by letter, depending on the timing of it arriving.

I will leave the sub-regional land use plan for a second, but I do want to touch on a few things with respect to the ATAC situation. I am sure that the minister has heard from companies and organizations about their concerns on what this is going to do to the investment climate here. I certainly have, and others have as well, but I do want to talk specifically about a comment that he made during one of the Question Periods this week. I

think it was the first one on Monday when this was raised. It was with respect to the ability for the company to resubmit, so I am looking for a few more details from the minister on that.

When he said that he could resubmit their plan and — I don't have the exact quote with me. But the plan wasn't done and they could resubmit — exactly where in the process would they resubmit to? Was the minister thinking that they would go back to the start of the YESAA process, resubmit, and do work there? Or is there some other advanced stage in this process where they could resubmit? I am just curious about what the minister was referring to when he made that comment during Question Period on Monday.

While the minister is conferring with officials — I did find the Hansard from earlier. I will just quote it: “Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to make a note that the proponent that has applied for this application, which has been noted here, does have the ability to improve their application and apply for this. This is not a full stop on this. They do have that opportunity.”

That's the quote that I was referring to.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** My understanding — and previous to making those comments and speaking with our officials — is that, really, the other piece of it was to ensure that the company had the opportunity to go back and speak with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. That was one of the items that I touched on this week.

My understanding was that — very sensitive. There have been some discussions publicly on the legal piece, and I know that the member opposite understands this well and has been through those types of things. My sense was that they could look at submitting an application that met this now.

The other thing that I have not said this week as we have been questioned — one thing that comes to mind is that, when I started in this job, I still remember having an opportunity — I was with the deputy minister of the day, and we were in Toronto at a meeting during the PDAC conference. There was a former federal politician there as well as some legal — and it was just getting out and branching out to talk to the legal firm and the investment firms.

Part of that legal firm — they do a lot of work in the mineral sector. So, we were there and having a discussion with them. One thing that was said to me in the meeting was — we have talked to the previous folks who were in the last mandate. I don't know if it was the member opposite or some of his colleagues, but what was said at that time really struck a chord with me. We were told that, at the end of the day, the Yukon was going to be — and this sector was going to be — supported. What I learned from this was that, when a particular sector means so much to your overall economy, there's a real responsibility, and inside the Legislative Assembly, you can debate, things can get heated, and lots of things can get said.

But at the end of the day, you want to make sure — it affects so many people, as the member opposite touched on — the service sector — whether it is drillers or their supply chain, it provides so many jobs. It is always important to support that.

The reason I bring that up is because, as the member opposite has said, there are a lot of people reaching out. I think, you know, part of what I was asked today was: What are you

doing to ensure that the overall sector out there — there are lots of questions. I think that one thing that is important — and I touched upon it in my comments this week — is that when we go through YESAB — when anybody does — and there are final recommendations that come out on that work, part of the obligation is that you have to be able to meet those recommendations.

The member opposite has probably as strong — or stronger — an understanding of that than anybody here — because it is my understanding that he spent time in the beginning days being at the executive level — I think, if I'm right — and he can confirm that or not — but, yes, he understands the process very well. I think that is important too — to say to folks that there are times where — and I am not just speaking specifically to this but just in general — where there are decision documents that come out from the Yukon government and there are recommendations that come from YESAB that help define that. There are certain things that you have to do — for any folks — they need to understand that.

That is part of the system and I think probably even under — I don't know of any instances now, but I think even in the previous mandate, there were times when YESAB came out with what would be called a negative decision document or negative recommendations, and then the government of the day overturned that and said, "No, it's a go." So, there are things that happen and I think that all of us have an obligation — like I said today, I stand by the decisions that were made, but at the same time — just anytime, I think, that we have an opportunity to sit down with folks and talk about how the industry works. So, as you can imagine, you don't really have an opportunity within responses during Question Period to talk about that.

I will leave it at that. I probably missed the back end of that and I will just ask the member opposite to touch on it and I will get back up and answer it.

**Mr. Kent:** I apologize if the minister answered this question — but again, that quote that I read into the record from Hansard on Monday was that it's not a full stop and they can resubmit. I'm just curious as to where in the process they would find themselves if they were to resubmit. Do they have to go back to the initial submissions to YESAB and the adequacy and a lot of the work that they put in on the front end already?

The minister is right, I was on the YESAB. It was a while ago, though. I'm not sure if there were changes to the process or how YESAB would handle something like this.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** My understanding is that you can still go back and apply to the process — and I mean based on the environmental assessment that had been previously undertaken — so, not asking folks to go back again now.

What I can do — and I'm extremely cautious on anything on this particular topic after what has been said publicly — is I will ensure that I work with the department. As part of our response to any questions that we haven't fully answered today, we can clarify that. That's really going back and reaching out to the deputy minister and others to go and speak with folks who deal with the permitting side of things. That's what I was alluding to, as I understood it, from my questions on our processes.

**Mr. Kent:** In this planning area, there are some other claim holders. It's not just ATAC that has claims in there that don't have all-season road access. Obviously, there are claim blocks throughout the territory, as well, that don't currently have road access, but are showing some very promising results from their drilling and exploration programs.

I'll just go back to some of the questions that I have asked the past couple of days in Question Period with respect to other claim holders in that area. Do they have to wait until the sub-regional land use plan is done to get a sense on whether or not their project can proceed? Everybody, obviously, is exploring these areas with the hopes of getting to a point where they can develop a mine. For those who don't have road access, this really jolted them — this decision earlier this week.

They have shareholders to answer to and investors that they're trying to attract. That was one of the questions that I heard from a couple of companies that I have talked to this week. Is there an opportunity, if you have a claim block that doesn't have road access, to get a road into it? Because this decision earlier this week is sending the message to them that it may not be the case, and they are feeling some pressure from their boards and their shareholders and potential investors.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Although that question may seem that it would warrant a simple yes or no, it's broader in the scope of what you have to think about.

First, it would depend on what class of project you have. If you're running a class 1 or a class 3 or more, that's the first piece. Of course, that would define a level of activity that you could do.

I think that what the member opposite is alluding to is that you have had advanced exploration, it has looked promising, you have done feasibility work to understand that there is some real promise there, and you are looking now to move toward the next increments in development.

In all of those cases, it depends. When you think about a class 3 licence — we have been really focused on the conversation this week around the tote road. You would have to go back to find something as substantial as that application — you would have to probably go back to the early 1990s, and you would be probably talking about the road to Kudz Ze Kayah. That was done in a class 3. The Member for Watson Lake probably knows better, but it's 22 kilometres long — something like that — versus 65 kilometres.

So, in the last 30 years, that is sort of the record. That's why there has been some focus or some attention to it, because it has not been the standard.

I would say that folks who are advancing projects should continue to look to do that work.

Probably between the member opposite and me, I think we can have a sense from talking to folks where they are at in the development of their project. I would urge folks to make sure that they reach out to Energy, Mines and Resources to have a good understanding of what the next steps are. Most folks do, or they have good technicians who do. Again, make sure that, wherever you are working, you are sitting down with that First Nation, having a discussion about your project, and continuing to work through building a good relationship there, especially

if your sense is that you are making a long-term commitment to that project, you are there, and you want to continue to get to know the community.

Other than the one kilometre off the road, which was where there was a staking moratorium put in place while this process was underway, that was the only limitation within that area. Now, we continue in some places to have governments respond to us. They want to see further work done. Depending on what you have to do — in some cases, you want to advance your project, so you will apply to us. You might have to go through an environmental assessment process. That might lead to a series of recommendations, of course, and then we have an obligation as well. YESAB would go out and consult. That would feed into their process. Then we would go out and consult, if it is a permit, and if it's a QML, then we are going out to an even bigger consultation and a series of them. Depending on whether there is a water licence required — because, in that area, there is more substantial placer that has happened as well and some bigger operations. There are people who have been there a long, long time and there is exploration as well. There are all kinds of different activities under the terms of minerals, we'll say, that are happening.

Maybe if the member opposite wants to specifically share exactly what type of advanced activity he has in mind, then I could maybe better speak to what it would be. Again, with an overall theme, I think that folks still just need to move through the process as they have previously in this particular area.

**Mr. Kent:** When it comes to this specific situation now — I know that the minister has referenced here today, and then a couple of times during Question Period on this, the importance of building relationships, First Nation engagement, and showing your commitment to the area and that you're there for the long haul. When it comes to ATAC, I think that their first discovery or initial claim staking was in 2007. They have a 13-year history there. They have an advanced project. Obviously, in the early stages, it was air access and still is. What they were looking for was to put in a single-lane gravel tote road to support their exploration activities — and obviously help with the costs and perhaps get more metres of core in the box.

When other companies that are perhaps newer to the Yukon or aren't in that advanced of a situation then see permits for a tote road denied to this company, I think they wonder what it will mean when they get to that point where they want infrastructure or some sort of infrastructure to support their exploration.

Maybe the minister can expand a little bit on some of his comments today and earlier about engaging with First Nations and showing that you are there for the long term, because I think that a company like ATAC that has been here for 13 years — the expenditure that they've made on that project is over \$100 million during that time. They are obviously serious about the project and what they want to accomplish there.

As I said, other companies that are newer to the Yukon but are seeing some exciting results on their projects — whether it's in that area or other areas of the territory — are legitimately concerned with what they saw happen earlier this week.

I'm curious as to what the minister would have us say to those companies when it comes to what they have seen happen to ATAC with this single-lane tote road into their project.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** This week during Question Period when we had discussions and I touched on really — what we would say is essentially information that we would share on protocols for any company. So, I want to make that clear. I probably should have gone down and adjusted the comment, in the sense that — I mean, what I was getting at this week — I think that for anybody who is working, that is what we need to do. I think that the member opposite puts out appropriate facts on this — long, long history with the company working in there. So, I'm not saying that the folks weren't in it for the long haul on this particular case; I am just saying in general that we are talking about all kinds of different companies, and I was really reflecting upon the previous — speaking to the last question. So, I agree.

I have attended events that have been hosted in Mayo by Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and the company that we are talking about was present and played a big role in those events, and they have, again, over the years, also been supportive of all the folks up there and that particular project.

So, I think that it is important to identify the fact that I am not getting into — I am not going to speak about the relationship between this particular company and Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. I'm privy; I leave that to those parties. I think anybody — and I know the member opposite would say the same thing — when we are talking to folks who are new to the Yukon or who are looking to invest, we are really wanting them to get to know the folks and the areas that they are working in. Some folks do it really, really well, and it makes a big difference in how they build their relationship. Other folks don't put as much time and work into that.

I mean, today, what I reflected upon during Question Period was that the Yukon Chamber of Mines had gone out and done a lot of extensive work on really trying to help industry, and so this is not a topic that I am pulling together that is not a relevant topic. This is a topic across the country that we have talked about — if not the world. In that case, there were some really key things that were laid out by the Yukon Chamber of Mines in that work.

They pulled together a group of technicians, some who had been leaders in the industry, others who are policy people, an Order of Canada recipient, an indigenous leader — and that helped as well. They went through that. It talks a lot about that consistent relationship-building.

That term about building people relationships — that came directly from the Chamber of Mines. I've seen folks really embrace that.

Again, for clarity and for the member opposite, I'm not going to get into a discussion or analyze the relationship with the company that we have talked about today. That relationship is there. For any companies that are coming into the Yukon, in general, I think all of us would say to make sure you get to sit down with people and have a good understanding.

Most First Nations — or a good number of First Nations — have built their own guide that you can go and get, which

will give you a sense of how they want engagement and what engagement should look like. That is also good for companies to reach out to their lands office and get that work.

Part of what we're discussing is we're trying to ensure that — I mean, there is an intent — and I'm sure that, in the later questioning today, we'll switch and talk about it with the Member for Whitehorse Centre — but we're trying to look at the entire regime here and have a very collaborative effort on how we provide governance and put permits out. Really, that's an advantage as we move ahead, because you'll hear the Yukon Mining Alliance — which has really been amplifying this message lately — but also, you're hearing it from the investors that are out there. I touched on it — I didn't do a great job today of getting into it and didn't have a lot of time, but it comes back to this concept of ESG financing.

I was at a mine ministers conference a few years ago, and it was touched upon — the concept — and it was new. At first, it was the minister of the day from British Columbia — Minister Mungall — and she was talking about some meetings that she had just had with global mining finance representatives in London, England, and their real interest with BC was, "Where are you at on ESG? What is happening? Are your environmental processes strong? Are they adequate? On the social side, are you ensuring that companies, when they come in, are providing appropriate opportunities? Are they respecting people from those communities? What does that look like?" What does it look like on the governance side, either from the standpoint of the territorial government or how the territorial government works with the First Nation governments?

We continue to have those discussions with investors and bigger players. As of late, we have been trying to do it every couple of days in a call with folks. All of this is extremely important for anyone who is in this role as we go forward. British Columbia is reaching out to us and talking to us about it as well. They really want to position themselves.

All of those key things and all of the things that we have talked about — the engagement, the environmental assessment process — environmental assessment happens and there are recommendations made. Then you have to sit down and ensure that the recommendations made are then communicated to the folks who need to meet those recommendations if they are part of the process that you go through. All of that is key.

Anyway, I think it's important that we reflect on that. I hope that, in the first part, I touched on it and answered the question from the member opposite.

**Mr. Kent:** I am going to move on from that topic. I am sure that we are not finished with it before the end of the Fall Sitting, but I will just move on this afternoon in the remaining time that I have left before I turn it over to my colleague from Whitehorse Centre. I have quite a few issues, so I am hoping that Energy, Mines and Resources comes back before we are done this fall.

I have just a quick question on the Dawson regional plan. I am sure that my friends in the New Democratic Party will have more questions about this, but I am curious about the appointee that recently resigned. Has he been replaced? If so,

who has replaced him? If not, when can we expect that individual to be appointed?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There have been lots of discussions to date. We have reached out to at least one individual to see if they are interested. We have collected their bio from them. What we have done to date is that we have worked with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to try to identify an individual and then have a discussion with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in about it. Where we are at in the process is that we are confirming that the individual whom we have reached out to is interested. The next step is that we will provide that information to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and then we would look to move to a point. We know that it's important to get that done as quickly as we can here. That's where we're at in the process at this time.

**Mr. Kent:** I gave the minister a heads-up about this before we started here today, and this is a constituency issue for me. I did send a letter to him on November 24. This was with respect to the Golden Horn development area regulation zoning committee. A number of residents in this area got together and put together a zoning committee. They appointed a spokesperson for the committee and have, with the assistance of the EMR lands branch, sent out questionnaires to members in that part of my riding.

What I was looking for, with respect to this letter to the minister, is whether he would have his officials in the lands branch convene a public meeting to talk about this. I've heard concerns from some citizens out there about the zoning committee, its role, and the questionnaire that was distributed. I think that there has been enough feedback for me, as well as the zoning committee spokesperson, that we both came to the conclusion that the lands branch would be best served by convening a public meeting. As I said, this letter went on November 24. I'm wondering if the minister has an update for me on that and if there will be a favourable response to convening a public meeting for residents out there, whether it's a virtual meeting or perhaps multiple meetings in person.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It's just important to talk about the breadth of what's happening from a local area planning perspective, because our folks in Land Planning have been extremely busy. The Government of Yukon collaborates with First Nations in Yukon communities to create local area plans. I know this is zoning. I'm not going to take too much on this — but just a bit of background on what's happening out there.

Local area plans are to ensure orderly development. We help to resolve competing land use issues and consider broader public interests. We are working on local area plans for Marsh Lake, Alaska Highway west, Fish Lake areas — just to name a few. In development of local area plans, residents are able to participate in decisions about the future use of land in their communities.

Of course, we always want to make sure that people in those communities have a chance to help define what is going to happen and what those activities look like.

We prioritize planning where population growth and land development pressures are greatest, and we are developing plans for areas without planning or development controls and

in areas as required by First Nation and self-government agreements.

In this particular case, I am going to be open to the member opposite: I haven't read the letter yet. I have made note of it for November 24. What normally would happen is that my team — the folks I work with — would, first of all, take a look at that letter and reach out to the department.

I know that, just before starting this afternoon — at lunchtime — I had four or five different letters that I just have to go through and read. It might have already been addressed. If it hasn't been addressed, let me take a look at the letter, let me get a sense from the department of what they know about this zoning group, and I will make a commitment here that we will respectfully look at what is being requested, see how we can sit down — first, I guess, the commitment that I could make is: Let's sit down with the community that has put this time together. We may not get to exactly where they want, or maybe we can support it, but I think that making a commitment to listen to what they are thinking — it seems to me from the member opposite that they have already put a lot of work into this piece and these concerns. We can definitely consider that. The only thing that I would say is that we might do it as a virtual meeting, of course, because of the current situation — but we'll certainly have a chance to reach out to them and understand what they want.

**Mr. Kent:** I think that, when the minister gets a chance to take a look at the letter and the response that the department prepares for him, he will get a sense of where they are at in the process. I think that they would be looking for a public meeting. A lot of the groundwork with the committee has been done, and then they are looking for a public meeting and further direction and work by EMR lands branch.

The minister mentioned a couple of local area plans, and I'm hoping he can give us a status update. He mentioned Marsh Lake and Tagish and I believe Alaska Highway west. Marsh Lake goes back quite a few years. I think work had started during the previous mandate, and I think that work started on Tagish during the previous mandate, and then the Alaska Highway west plan was — discussions were started during the previous mandate, but that work was initiated by this minister.

I'm just curious as to where we're at with Marsh Lake and Tagish and then if there's an update on the Alaska Highway west work.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Just in preparation to answer that question, I want to make sure that I'm clear. Updates on — I know that there was Marsh Lake that was touched on. I can go through a series of these, but I think that's the question — more just status updates on all of those? Yes?

**Mr. Kent:** Yes, I'm just kind of looking for a sense of where we're at with Marsh Lake — if it's close to being signed off. I know that work on Tagish is happening concurrent to the work on the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area — I think that is what it's called — and I'm looking for any updates that he can give us there, as well as an update for my colleague, the Member for Kluane, on any work progress with respect to Alaska Highway west.

I will leave it at that for the minister to answer. I thank his officials, and once the response is done, I'll turn it over to my colleague from Whitehorse Centre. As I mentioned, hopefully we will get a chance to have EMR back, because I have a number of other questions about prospecting, placer, regulatory and mineral development strategy, infrastructure, abandoned mines, and other things — there's energy and forestry. I have lots of additional questions, but I thank the minister for his time here today and the officials, and look forward to the answer to that final question.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'll start with Marsh Lake. In the summer of 2016, the Marsh Lake local area plan steering committee recommended a plan to the Yukon government and Kwanlin Dün First Nation. At that time, Carcross/Tagish First Nation had some concerns with the plan. I think they wanted to potentially see their settlement lands incorporated. It was a bigger change in scope. The member opposite would probably remember that from his time overseeing that work.

In April 2020, Yukon government, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, and Kwanlin Dün First Nation signed an addendum to the terms of reference for the planning process that recognized Carcross/Tagish as a party to the plan. We went back and identified those concerns from 2016 and then brought the other nation into it.

The governments are meeting regularly and anticipated an approved plan — so for the member opposite, an approved plan by March 2021. An approval process does include a public consultation on the final draft plan.

I think that part of it too is there is an agreement to ensure that the draft plan — which has been some concern — is consistent with the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan. I know that we've been back and forth a bit on that — just ensuring that those things are consistent.

As well, on the Tagish piece — again, a little background for folks listening to budget debate today. Since 2014, the Government of Yukon and Carcross/Tagish First Nation have worked collaboratively with the steering committee on a local area plan for the Tagish area. This is further to the First Nation self-government agreement.

At this point, the draft plan is currently under review by both governments. There has been — from my memory — quite a bit of public conversations about this and some public consultation. I know that there has been an interest, as well, from the First Nation. They are moving and they want to be able to look at some land development as well. I know they are contemplating that as they look at the plan. There has been — just to make sure — two separate planning processes and they're aiming to achieve a well-balanced and seamless approach to this to these two plans. That's the update on that one.

We also have Mount Lorne and Carcross Road — I just want to answer the questions that were put forward and then have the Member for Whitehorse Centre — but also Teslin, West Dawson, and Sunnydale — there is a tremendous amount of planning — as well as Fox Lake.



Fox Lake was another one where, since April 2012, the Government of Yukon, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and Kwanlin Dün have been developing a local area plan. Then, really, between 2012 and 2018, it kind of slowed. Then the steering committee prepared a community visioning report to inform the development of policies in the community and hosted a public meeting on October 4, 2018, to update the community on the process.

The governments met again in 2019 to develop and review land use concepts and policies and the draft local area plan. Then, in the spring of 2020, the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council requested that the planning processes for the Fox Lake area be put on hold until further progress was made on Shallow Bay, which we have also touched on here.

There's a small portion of that which falls in the traditional territories of Little Salmon Carmacks as well as Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

For the Member for Kluane — and I think that I have received letters from the Member for Kluane on this. A memorandum of understanding for the planning process was signed — and this is the Alaska Highway west local area plan — in 2017 between the Government of Yukon and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. In 2018, the Government of Yukon and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations reached consensus on a steering committee for the development of the plan.

Part of our challenge was that some of the committee members expressed that they were no longer available to participate in the process, and that always makes things a bit difficult. There have been quite a few applications, and there have been some concerns identified around the Canyon Creek area. That has also been part of the discussions here.

The Government of Yukon is working with CAFN to review and update the MOU and develop a new administrative reserve agreement, which also includes Canyon Creek. That's some of the work that has come out of it — still moving on the first phase of the planning process involving the collection of background information prior to moving ahead with that. Once the steering committee is established with those groups — after some of those individuals have left, a planning consultant will be hired to facilitate the local area plan.

Again, Carcross, as well as Fish Lake — there has been a lot of bilateral communication on that, mostly from Kwanlin Dün First Nation. We have had a number of things happen there. We have worked directly with Kwanlin Dün on individuals who have some structures that maybe were built not exactly where they should be, certain activities — recreational activities, things like that.

Again, we are undertaking it, so there is a lot. Shallow Bay was touched on. It is a tremendous amount of work that those folks are undertaking. I am happy to update, follow up on the letter from November 24, and endeavour to set up a meeting with the folks in Mount Lorne.

I would open things up now to the NDP for questions.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the Member for Copperbelt South for providing me with the opportunity to ask a few questions. As you can anticipate, when there is half an hour, there are a million questions that need and want to be asked. I will

attempt to work my way through them systematically, but there will perhaps be some overlap with the member preceding me.

At the outset, the minister indicated that there had been a record production year for placer gold. I would appreciate it if he could provide us with the projections for the number of ounces of placer gold that have been produced in Yukon in 2020 and the anticipated return to Yukon for that, as well as the value of the minerals extracted under the *Quartz Mining Act* and what the anticipated revenues to Yukon are for the same.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will start with the placer portion of the question. In 2020, over 82,600 ounces of placer gold were exported from Yukon, with an approximate value of almost \$165.6 million. This represents a 15-percent increase in gold production and a 43-percent increase in value of production, compared to 2019.

I will go back and look. I believe that what the member opposite is referring to is the royalty. I will get that number for the member opposite; I don't have it right now. We have had lots of discussions about this. One of the things that is important is that this particular season of all seasons, what I think about is the dollars that were spent in Dawson City and Mayo — which is a bit of a different story. I would have to clarify this, but I think the companies may have purchased items from there from their grocery stores and others. But more importantly, what we heard in Dawson City this summer is that it would have been a really difficult year because of the elimination of the tourism economy if there wasn't the money being spent from the industry.

We'll probably have a more spirited dialogue around royalty numbers because we're dealing with legislation that's very old. We've heard it from a number of businesses and not just in Dawson City where you're seeing that direct impact of foods being procured or people purchasing fuel or whatever — all the different ancillary impacts that happen, but also in Whitehorse. Companies that are supplying machinery were having very, very significant years. That could be machinery that is being used for either placer or it could be machinery that's being purchased and used on exploration around the quartz side. I will leave it at that concerning it and I will owe a number on the royalty side of what the Yukon received.

When it comes to the quartz mining, we would be looking at the production from two mines — one being Victoria Gold. I don't believe, to date — it might — but I would probably work with Energy, Mines and Resources and the Finance department to take a look at this last year. We may have it. I can give the numbers on ounces.

Since pouring the first gold bar which — we're going to talk about Eagle Gold mine — produced almost 39,000 ounces of gold by the end of June 2020. We're looking at moving to full commercial into the summer — so it's announced. That gives a bit of sense. This last year, they would be doing the analysis of that, and I will make sure that I get that back to you. Alexco is just moving toward this.

Then, on the other number that the member opposite is wanting and I will endeavour to get is what is the production value coming from Minto Mine. I'll see if we have that particular number. From the start-up in October to the end of

December 2019, Minto processed about 104,000 tonnes of ore — 2.27 percent produced copper — so 6,436 tonnes of copper concentrate. It continues to increase from month to month. I have that number. The difference between that one — I will endeavour to get the value on it, because normally, from my understanding, what will happen is that we will identify the value from Minto — the Finance department will calculate the royalty, and then the entire royalty will then be sent to Selkirk First Nation, so it is different. The Yukon government doesn't play a role and because it is category A lands, the entire royalty — as I remember, back when those calculations before are made.

I will come back and get the royalties that would come from placer, as well as the royalties that would be going to the Yukon and any other one. I also will have to look to see — I think, early stage, when there is a new project or new mine being built — I don't know the period of time; I have to go back — I don't have the calculation, the methodology, here because I think some of the initial investment is there, and then they start to move through to the royalty piece. So, a bit of information there, but still, I will have to get the other.

**Ms. Hanson:** I thank the minister for that. There are a couple of points that I will make in response, but I'm sure that the minister is aware that the federal government passed the *Extractive Sector Transparency Measures Act* in 2015. It was certainly the subject of a lot of conversations at various Roundups that I was at.

The purpose of that act was to: "... implement Canada's international commitments to participate in the fight against corruption through the implementation of measures applicable to the extractive sector, including measures that enhance transparency and measures that impose reporting obligations with respect to payments made by entities. Those measures are designed to deter and detect corruption..."

I raise this only in terms of what it does do, because under ESTMA — whatever they call it — it's actually pronounced with this acronym — it is only most recently that I have been aware of them publishing the amounts and figures. So, there are figures available for Yukon. For illustrative purposes, to come back to the point that I wanted to make, here are the reports for Victoria Gold from January 1, 2019, to end of December 2019: royalties, zero. They paid money to the Yukon Energy Corporation for their power-purchase agreement — so they have to disclose all this — and they paid money to the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun for exploration access fees and environmental position fees. This is all disclosed.

In the previous year, from March 2017 to February 2018, they paid zero in royalties and paid a much smaller amount for a power-purchase agreement and a small amount to the Yukon for the bridge replacement that we have all been across.

Then, the Minto mine reports — in 2019, that year, they indicate that they paid almost \$2 million in royalties to Selkirk First Nation and some taxes to the Yukon government. In 2018, they paid some taxes to the Yukon government. They paid the Yukon government, according to their reporting — and this is why I think it's interesting, because I understand clearly that it's settlement A land and I understand that the royalties flow

to them, but I point this out for illustrative purposes only. I'm sure that they will correct their reporting to ESTMA, but they indicate that they provided \$4.285 million to the Yukon government for royalties and \$1.7 million to Selkirk First Nation for royalties, in addition to which there were some fees for the Yukon and some fees in excess of \$100,000 to Selkirk. Then, in 2017, they indicate that they paid \$16 million of royalties to the Yukon government and \$2,700,000 in royalties to Selkirk First Nation.

My point in raising those numbers is that, regardless of the fact that they're flowing through to Selkirk First Nation, more power to them. We have been undergoing — I don't know how many times, how many years, we have had this conversation. I love the fact that the yukon.ca website finally says that royalties are not a tax and that they are a return to the Yukon citizens. They are actually quoting the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel on just the fact that this is a right to the Yukon citizens to get some return on their non-renewable resources.

When I first came here, I can remember being a social worker, wandering around Dawson City in 1978 — 42 years ago. Gold then was \$35 an ounce; the royalty fee was 37.5 cents an ounce. Today, when I get that calculation back, it's still going to be based on that 37.5 cents, and I have heard repeatedly in this Legislative Assembly and around that one of the reasons why we can't increase it — and I almost heard the minister going there right now — is that it is the equivalent of the family farm. Well, I can tell you that most farmers across this country are paying a lot more taxes than they were in 1906.

I guess my question to the minister is: How long do we wait before we begin to get a return on our non-renewable resources that is commensurate with the value?

So, a 43-percent increase in the value of the placer gold taken out — and the costs did not go up 43 percent. When gold is valued at \$700, you are making money. When gold was valued a couple of years ago at \$1,000 — \$1,500 to \$1,900 US this summer — how much is lost income?

The other part of the question is — again, when you wander around as a young, naïve newcomer, there is always the insinuation at the Pit or someplace that there is the official exported amount and the real amount. Does the minister have a sense of what the actual value is of what is produced? How does he ascertain that? How does he confirm what is actually extracted of these non-renewable placer gold resources? How is that determined?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There are some points within the question that I can answer; others would be more difficult. There are some technical pieces that I am going to reach out to the department to get.

First, I would say that I appreciate the comments from the member opposite. I think that the bigger question, which is a perspective, is around — you have seen this increase in value. This year was a particularly good year. Again, I am very pleased with the fact that we had the ability to have that placer activity. It really did, in many ways — for the local business folks and when you talk to the grocery store owners directly in Dawson and others — have a positive impact.

When it comes to the question as it was voiced here — and I'm not going to say that I agree or disagree. In the role that I am in here, looking after the department and having the responsibility to be the regulator, I am just going to say that I think the bigger conversation about how you're going to deal with a return to Yukoners from the extraction of a non-renewable resource is a great question. That is why we undertook a mineral development strategy. I have my views, and the member opposite has hers. We all have our views about this, but it was really important to try to get the biggest conversation that we have had the opportunity to have with Yukoners.

Going to each one of those communities, whether it's Beaver Creek, Dawson City, Mayo, Watson Lake, or you name it — let's get that first-hand understanding about what positive things are coming from the industry for them. Are there particular impacts that we are not aware of? Are those positive or negative impacts?

I think that the work that we're doing right now — and for the member opposite, I think that we're going to see some really clear messages through that work, and we have a "what we heard" document. Everybody's views are melded down in that. It could have been a lot longer, and I think that they tried to just keep it in themes. That is where I think they went.

What we have coming very quickly here is a first draft from an independent panel. I think that the members opposite who have had an opportunity to meet with those folks know that they have been extremely aware of the importance of the work that they're doing, and they know that they need to keep the work very transparent to be accountable to all Yukoners.

On some of those bigger questions, we're going to get some direction, and we're going to get it from Yukoners. That's what I think is going to be really important.

I feel that we're going to have some sense in the new year about what happens around these conversations — as the member opposite said about the royalty structures, what people are getting back, and what people want to see in communities.

When it comes down to the technical part of it — I want to have a deeper conversation with the department — how do you identify and come up with that number in the placer sector of what is being extracted and then exported? When it's exported, the concept is that this is where it's monetized, as I understand it. I'll come back with that one.

I can't speak to the other pieces of declared or undeclared. I won't get into that piece, but what I will say is that we'll come back with how we calculate our numbers. I do think that the mineral development strategy is a place where we're going to get a lot of perspectives, but I am really looking to and trusting those individuals to bring to us a sense of what Yukoners are thinking. There will be all kinds of different perspectives, but some of the big themes about what the majority of Yukoners — how they feel about specific areas and points within the mineral sector.

**Ms. Hanson:** I appreciate the minister's comments. I really do hope that there are a number of strategies and processes underway at the moment, and I hope that this is not one of the ones that just slides right through and we have

another mandate where we haven't made the substantive changes that Yukoners deserve.

Last weekend, I watched some of the hearings of the Water Board on the Indian River wetlands. I think that it was on the Tuesday, the afternoon session, which was largely devoted to presentations by Yukon government officials. It was begun at the outset — set the stage — by a senior government official — closed at the end.

I guess I was kind of surprised. Preceding the Yukon government's presentation, there were presentations made by a number of First Nations — in particular, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, which has made repeated requests. We were looking at the YESAB site a number of weeks ago. There were a number of applications for placer mining in the Indian River wetlands. One example was a 2016 letter from Chief Joseph basically saying, "Don't — we do not want to see additional mining going on in the Indian River wetlands. It should not be allowed."

I was surprised that, after the quite graphic descriptions of the level of activity — graphic in the sense that, if you look at the photos that were presented by government representatives — at the end of it, when they were asked what changes they anticipate — or any changes that they anticipate — in terms of government policy, the answer was that there were none. The government representatives indicated that they had no plan to utilize section 32 of the *Waters Act*, which would allow them to direct the Water Board to hold off on issuing licences until an evaluation of planning is carried out. It was just like this notion that, even though there were going to be a number of days of hearings by this Water Board, Yukon government's here, but we're really not here, so it's the opposite of the engagement process that we hear repeatedly from the Yukon government. We hear you, we engage with you, but we're not doing anything. That's not what I heard the government saying that they intended to do when they got elected.

Why would Yukon government be present at the Water Board hearing and say that they have no intention of making changes to the policies or recommending those changes?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'm going to start by just touching on some conversation about the management of the wetlands in the Indian River watershed. The reality of the comments that were made and the interventions that were made by folks — a very broad group. The Government of Yukon, behind the scenes — we have been working with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the placer mining industry on the revised policy and guidelines for protection and reclamation.

I think it's fair to say that the officials were there and were giving interventions — and as witnesses — but we have put a tremendous amount of time — human and financial resources — to work with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. That started very early on in our mandate. So, the member opposite is correct — you said that you were going to move to work through these things. That resolve has never subsided. We have always, from the early points — to work on — we ended up working on a final policy, which is underway. The Government of Yukon established an interim approach for mining and reclamation in the Indian River wetlands. We sat down.

I'm going to be respectful of the question. There were comments made there. What I will share is that, early on — I have to go back and look through my calendar and notes — at the time, a very well-respected legal mind in the Yukon, Mr. Dave Joe, I believe, sat in my office. Our Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — we worked directly with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. There was an agreement that was put in place, or an MOU, early on to work between both governments on something that was extremely sensitive. Over a period of time, we continued to work together on that interim approach, which is important for us to talk about. All parties were moved in good faith to do that work. We had put some funding in place. I can go back and take a look, but it was a fairly substantial amount, and that was structured where our team and their legal teams talked about how we could work together.

It was in January 2017. It was weeks into this responsibility, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Government of Yukon signed a memorandum of understanding to work collaboratively to resolve the Indian River wetlands issues. This includes our commitment for the two governments to develop reclamation guidelines for placer mining in the Indian River.

In November 2018, we discussed an interim approach for the protection and reclamation of the Indian River wetlands. I was there this summer. We were there at a number of different locations, taking a look at what reclamations had happened and at other areas that still needed them. Part of that was continuing to collaborate on wetlands research by undertaking a multi-year study of our wetland water function — the value of the Indian River wetlands — to inform future policy management decisions and develop a single wetland reclamation guide. Then our options for interim protection were discussed. We did not get to an agreement, but there was a tremendous amount of work and research done on that.

Again, we went back and continued to do the outreach, and then the interim approach came into effect on January 15, 2020. That included the following components: avoiding mining wetlands wherever possible; no mining in bogs; and looking to leave 40 percent of our fens intact. That was our interim approach. The requirement is for a wetland protection and reclamation plan that is approved by a regulator, following a consultation with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other affected First Nations.

That is the work that we have done. Those are some of the key pieces that we brought together. I feel that the folks did a very good job across government to identify and go through that.

I will touch on — I don't know if I will do justice to it — the question about the wetlands. That is what led up to it.

We went into the Yukon Water Board's public hearing piece. That, again, was on the issue of placer mining wetlands, which is important and complex. It is complex because, when you take into consideration the percentage of production that was coming from the Indian River, which is very significant compared to all production — when you look at this as a complex issue, which it is, it doesn't matter what your perspective is, there is so much on the line from all parties and

their views on this. Again, we provided information on how we could continue to work with our partners and stakeholders to develop and refine our approach to managing the impacts.

So, we have all that work that was done, sitting with the technical teams from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in — and then looking to tweak, if necessary. Our approach has been at the multi-pronged, broadest level. The forthcoming Yukon wetlands policy will provide an umbrella framework on how we can make stewardship decisions with respect to the importance of the wetlands, and that's the bigger piece of work through the Department of Environment.

I'm going to leave it at that because, before we finish, I want to give it back to the member opposite. I probably didn't get as deep into that as she would've liked, but it was a bit of background.

**Ms. Hanson:** It is unfortunate that we don't have more time to discuss this because it is a really important and serious issue.

So, there's a forthcoming wetlands policy — great. Hopefully, it happens before the whole of the wetlands has been mined. I'm wondering if the minister can juxtapose the policy approach that his government is taking to the passage today by the federal government of legislation that mirrors a private members' bill that was introduced a few years ago by Romeo Saganash, which was basically to give recognition to UNDRIP.

I understand that, on November 12, there were federal-provincial-territorial conversations about that, including First Nation and aboriginal leaders.

If you are talking about recognizing all of the principles in UNDRIP, then I'm finding it difficult to marry that with a process that says, "Well, come to the table and we're going to keep you occupied, but in the meantime, we're just going to continue doing our business as usual. We haven't changed our mode of operation. We're not going to change any of our policies." How does that fit?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will leave the latter part for now.

Concerning UNDRIP, I saw, early this morning, the tabling of the legislation. We've seen some work done on that in British Columbia.

I think that, seeing the time, I will move that you report progress.

Before that, I think that it will take a few coffees with the Member for Whitehorse Centre, if she'll be open to that, before I'll get into a discussion about UNDRIP and how that will apply to this. This is a very significant piece, and I have a lot to understand and look into before I'm able to answer the question that was posed today.

I want to thank the folks who were here today, Deputy Minister Moore and Assistant Deputy Minister Abercrombie. Thank you, as always, for your good work, and maybe we'll be back here together before the end.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### **Chair's report**

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

**Speaker:** This House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow, Friday, December 4, 2020, pursuant to the Order of the House adopted on November 9, 2020.

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*

**The following sessional paper was tabled December 3, 2020:**

34-3-58

*Yukon Housing Corporation Annual Report — for the year ended March 31, 2020 (Frost)*