

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 2, 2013 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Speaker: It's nice to see our lilies have bloomed for Easter. I'll see if I can last through them.

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of some changes that have been made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they are now outdated: Motion No. 94, standing in the name of the Member for Riverdale South; Motions No. 103, 108, 113, 142, 150, 159, 185, 191, 223 and 224, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin; Motions No. 104, 106, 114, 141, 149, 157, 158, 184, 192 and 201, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake and Motion No. 164, standing in the name of the Member for Mayo-Tatchun.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the 10th anniversary of devolution

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I rise today to pay tribute to the 10th anniversary of devolution of control and management of Yukon's public lands, forests, water and mineral resources. Of these several transfers of responsibility from Canada to Yukon since the 1980s, the most significant was the 2003 transfer that recognized Yukon's system of government as being similar to the provinces.

Since that time, Yukon has had many achievements, including: enacting a new *Forest Resources Act* in 2011 with planning that considers all forest users, strong commitments to the forest industry and a robust suite of compliance tools to ensure the continued vitality of Yukon's forests; permitting five mines and making regulatory improvements to streamline processes and reduce red tape; a new water strategy currently available for public review that will clarify that Yukon government's approach to complex water issues for today's needs and for the future; finalizing the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan* — the first regional land use plan in Yukon; managing the remediation of type 2 mine sites and ensuring environmental protection in the creation of new mines and nine years of strong economic growth. Thanks to our ability to create our own legislation and make decisions in a timely manner, Yukon has been able to move forward and grow quickly, taking advantage of the positive economic resource environment.

Devolution of our lands and resources has meant made-in-Yukon decisions for the good of Yukoners. It has also meant a leadership role for Yukon on the national and international

stage. The wealth of knowledge and experience in employees that transferred to the Government of Yukon has been invaluable in the last decade.

With devolution, Yukon worked with First Nations to implement many aspects of the self-governing and final agreements with Yukon First Nations. Yukon is now a model for First Nation self-government.

Yukon has done well since devolution and, as we continue to fill our commitments and responsibilities to Yukoners in managing our resources, I know that we can look forward to more decades of success moving forward together.

In recognition of World Autism Awareness Day

Hon. Mr. Graham: I rise in the House today on behalf of all members in recognizing April 2 as the sixth annual World Autism Awareness Day.

Every year, autism organizations celebrate the day with the goal of bringing the world's attention to autism, a pervasive disorder that affects tens of millions of people globally. Autism spectrum disorder, otherwise known as "ASD" and "autism" are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development.

These disorders are characterized in varying degrees by difficulties in social behaviour, verbal and non-verbal communication and repetitive behaviours. They include: autistic disorder, Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, pervasive development disorder not otherwise specified, and Asperger's syndrome. ASD can be associated with intellectual disabilities, difficulties in motor coordination and attention and physical health issues such as sleep and gastrointestinal disturbances. Some persons with ASD excel in visual arts, music, art and mathematics. Autism is now recognized as the most common neurological disorder affecting children and one of the most common developmental disabilities. ASD now affects approximately one in 88 children. The 2012 numbers reflect a 78-percent increase in reported prevalence in the last six years. By way of comparison, this means more children than are affected by diabetes, AIDS, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy or Down's syndrome combined. There is no medical detection or cure for autism. ASD is challenging both for the individuals diagnosed with the disorder and the family and professionals providing support. However, an early diagnosis translates to early intervention which can mean a better life and greater educational and social opportunities.

Signs of autism are usually present by three years of age, and it is four times more prevalent in boys than in girls. In Yukon, the Child Development Centre coordinates diagnoses of ASD in preschool children.

Through family supports for children with disabilities, the Department of Health and Social Services supports children with ASD and their families. We provide support and funding for a range of services, including respite care, family counselling, and specialized interventions, such as speech-language therapy and physiotherapy.

On this day, we would also like to recognize the professionals, parents, and caregivers who work so hard in Yukon to ensure that services are available to families and services. I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce two people here in the

gallery today, Leslie Peters and her daughter Genevieve. Leslie is the executive director of Autism Yukon.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Graham: We are pleased to support the valuable work of Autism Yukon in raising awareness of autism. Autism Yukon plays a very important role in providing information and education to families and service providers. We encourage Yukoners to join in the effort to inspire compassion, inclusion and hope for people with ASD and their families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of Cancer Awareness Month

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I also rise in the House today to pay tribute to the men, women and children who work tirelessly at this time of the year to raise funds to help fight cancer. During Daffodil Month, and especially on Daffodil Day, which is April 27, Canadians are urged to wear a daffodil pin as a bright symbol of support for people living with cancer. Daffodils have become the symbol for the progress we see almost daily in research and treatment of various cancers.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, cancer remains the leading cause of premature death in Canada. In Canada, 40 percent of women and 45 percent of men will develop cancer during their lifetimes. Of those, one in four Canadians will not win the fight with cancer. In other words, an average of 500 Canadians per day will be diagnosed with cancer, and of those 500, two hundred Canadians will die of cancer every day.

Lung, prostate, breast and colorectal cancer are the four most common types of cancer in Canada. They account for nearly 55 percent of all new cancer cases. Here in Yukon, the most common forms of cancer are breast cancer in women and prostate cancer in men.

It seems nearly every week we learn that someone we know has cancer; yet there is hope. Just as we all know someone who is dying of cancer or who has died of this disease, we also know of many others who are living with cancer or who are now cancer free. A diagnosis of cancer is no longer an automatic death sentence. This is largely thanks to the dedication of volunteers, friends and family members who donate and take part in fundraising events such as Run for Mom, the Terry Fox Run, Relay for Life and a number of other community-driven fundraising efforts. These are hardcore supporters who believe in the cause and believe in the ultimate cure for cancer.

The closure of the Canadian Cancer Society office here in Yukon was met with disappointment, but committed Yukoners saw this as a challenge, and a community group has now sprung up — much like the daffodils, Mr. Speaker — to continue support and fundraising for cancer initiatives in the Yukon. That's why the daffodil always gives me hope: it represents our determination, courage and strength to fight against cancer and the hope we all share for a future where cancer no longer threatens those we love.

The humble daffodil with its splash of yellow is more than an indication of spring. It's a promise for the future.

Thanks to the Speaker I have a little additional information.

The Yukoners Cancer Care Fund was established at the Yukon Hospital Foundation, thanks to the generosity of the community and the commitment of volunteers who want to see enhanced support for Yukoners facing cancer, to assist not only Yukoners, but their families. The Yukoners Cancer Care Fund is supported by volunteer-led events and initiatives, as well as donations. Monies received for this fund can only be used to support cancer care and cancer patients in and from Yukon.

Application criteria are being developed and the committee hopes to begin offering support in 2014. The fund was established in 2013. Donations to the Yukoners Cancer Care Fund can be made by contacting the Yukon Hospital Foundation by phone, on-line or by mailing the Yukoners Cancer Care Fund c/o of the Yukon Hospital Foundation at 5 Hospital Road in Whitehorse.

Ms. Stick: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition, the Liberal Party and the Independent member to pay tribute to Cancer Awareness Month. All of us in this House have been touched by cancer, whether it's ourselves, our friends, our families, our neighbours or our coworkers. One in three Canadians develops cancer in his or her lifetime, and it is the leading cause of premature death in Canada.

In past years, there have been effective treatments coming from substantial research in the area of cancer treatment. The good news is that survival rates have risen because of this research and development. So while hope for effective treatment and cure is important, we must remember to also look at the preventive side of cancer. Through personal risk-reduction, prevention and survival can be greatly improved. We all know about smoking, obesity, lack of exercise and overexposure to the sun. We know what we can and should do about these things. It requires all of us to make fundamental changes in our lifestyle, a commitment to healthy eating and routine exercise. Timely screening such as mammography leads to early detection and an important factor in the prevention and treatment of breast cancer. If we are smoking, we should make every effort to quit today, not tomorrow, and be very conscious of the harm of second-hand smoke to others. We should practise protecting ourselves from harmful exposure to the sun.

What we don't often talk or hear about are other causes of cancer. We hear little about cancer caused by the mutation of DNA caused by radiation; toxic chemicals, such as benzene; and materials, such as asbestos. These materials have been known to cause cancer for decades. We know about the role of hormone disruptors — those chemicals and pesticides, plastics and pharmaceuticals that mimic natural hormones and cause breast and prostate cancers.

We need to acknowledge the environmental causes of cancer and support our own efforts to reduce chemicals in our environment. Our air, our water and even our foods have changed these past years.

These are all having impacts on our health. I do want to take this opportunity to thank the hundreds and thousands of volunteers, researchers and health professionals, who ensure that Canadians with cancer and their families have access to the highest quality treatment, support and care when stricken. I

include in that group the cancer care navigator program and the chemotherapy staff at Whitehorse General Hospital. As well, I would like to thank the charitable organizations and individual donors who assist in fundraising for the Canadian Cancer Society.

Today we have a new group of volunteers supporting the Yukoners Cancer Care Fund group, who are looking at ways to directly support individuals and families facing the diagnosis of cancer — a big thanks to all those individuals. Thank you.

Speaker: Are there any introductions of visitors?
Are there any returns or documents for tabling?
Reports of committees.
Are there any petitions?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 10 — response

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I rise today to respond to Petition No. 10, which was presented to this House on December 11, 2012. Petition No. 10 asks the government to put in place a territory-wide ban on the planting of any genetically modified seed or the importation of any genetically modified animals in the Yukon. The preamble to the petition identified concerns shared by the petitioners, including their belief that — quote: “... it is very likely that genetically modified crops, once planted, would cause irreversible harm to our natural ecosystems and sustainable farms; and genetically modified animals could cause unknown harm to the people eating the meat.”

In responding to the petition, it is important to first note that the federal government is responsible for the research, registration, and approval of genetically modified seed. There are two major agencies that evaluate genetically modified crops: the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Health Canada.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency assesses the crop's biology and its impact on the environment and biodiversity, the possibility of gene flow and impact on non-target organisms and livestock and feed safety.

Health Canada is responsible for human food safety.

Prior to allowing any GMO crops or animals to be grown, processed and sold in Canada, it is the federal government that assesses the safety of that product being added to our food supply. Once those products are sold in Canadian supermarkets, the Yukon government has no more ability than consumers to tell which products in local supermarkets might contain meat or other products that have been genetically modified.

While the federal government reviews the safety of products, including seeds, before allowing their use, the petitioners' concern about potential impact to neighbouring farms and natural ecosystems does fall partly within the jurisdiction of the Yukon government.

The last time the possibility of farmers growing GMO crops in the Yukon was a topic of significant debate in Yukon's farming community, that debate was quite heated and resulted in the farming community being very divided on this issue.

On the one side were Yukon farmers who were concerned about potential impacts from cross-pollination and spread of GMO crops to nearby farms or to the surrounding ecosystem.

This group of farmers includes those who feel that GMO crops are harmful, or that the science is not settled to conclusively demonstrate that GMO crops are not harmful. This group supported a territory-wide ban on genetically modified organisms.

On the other side were farmers who did not want to rule out the possibility that, at some point in the future, growing a crop that had been genetically modified might improve the ability to grow food locally. This second group generally regards the science as conclusively demonstrating that genetically modified organisms are safe and can have benefits such as improved crop yields.

This group opposed any new territorial restrictions being put on the future use of GMO crops. At that point in time, the prospect of genetically modified crops being grown in the Yukon is largely hypothetical, as it was generally agreed that no GMO seeds were likely to be viable for use north of 60.

As a result, no additional action by government was taken at that time. We believe the appropriate action at this time is for government to facilitate discussions involving groups representing Yukon farmers and the broader farming community to discuss this issue again. It is our hope that Yukon's farming community will be able to come to a broadly shared consensus on whether current regulations are sufficient or whether additional measures pertaining to GMO crops are needed to ensure that the health of Yukon farms and the environment are protected. The Agriculture branch of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources will take the lead in facilitating these discussions.

In closing I want to emphasize the government's strong preference that farmers work together to resolve a difference of opinion and agree to a broadly supported approach that best reflects the interests of all. We prefer to support a community consensus when it is possible to do so.

We appreciate the concerns of everyone who signed this petition and thank them for sharing their views at the Legislative Assembly and with the government.

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take action to transform Yukon's health care system to ensure its long-term sustainability, and to regularly report progress on sustainability and patient outcomes.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the terms of reference for the select committee on fracking must be set by the members of the committee itself and not by the government.

Speaker: Are there any other notices of motion?
Is there a statement by a minister?

This brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: **Select committee on hydraulic fracturing**

Ms. Hanson: This morning, the New Democratic Official Opposition Party sent a letter to the Government House Leader confirming the Member for Mayo-Tatchun as our representative on the select committee on the risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing.

Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, I asked the Premier if the Opposition would be provided with a copy of the draft motion establishing the select committee so that we can provide input into the mandate of the select committee before the motion is tabled in this House. The Government House Leader did not answer my question.

So again, Mr. Speaker, will a copy of the draft motion establishing the select committee be provided to this side of the House for comment and input before it is tabled in the House for debate?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the simple answer to that question is yes. We have no problem sharing a draft of the motion with members of the Opposition and seeking their input.

I appreciate that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has already provided his input to aid us in drafting that, and we will certainly consider his input. Any input as well that we would receive from the Official Opposition or the Third Party, we would be prepared to consider prior to sharing a draft of the motion with them.

I would point out, though, in members' framing this debate that they should be well aware of the fact that any time any motion is brought before this Assembly, there is the opportunity for members to make amendments to it. As the members know, they don't share drafts of their motions with us before tabling them. There is the ability to amend them, but in this case regarding the select committee, we have no problem sharing a draft of it with members prior to tabling it. Since we've received that request from both the Official Opposition and the Third Party, we're happy to facilitate that.

Ms. Hanson: It's delightful to get such a positive response.

Last Thursday the government avoided answering questions on how it would reconcile its bullish comments in favour of developing a shale gas industry — an industry that would require fracking — with ensuring an open, unbiased and credible public process. In his Budget Address the Premier said that the shale gas industry, an industry that would require fracking, looks "promising". The Premier's mandate letter to the Minister of Economic Development directs the minister to promote the development of Yukon's oil and gas industry as an economic mainstay in the Yukon.

How does the Premier reconcile his government's promotion of shale gas, including fracking, and still ensure an open, unbiased and credible public process?

Speaker: Is this a new question? It sounds like a new question to me. I believe the topic of the member's first question was the upcoming motion.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, it was about the process in ensuring an open, unbiased and credible process, so the first part of that was with respect to the mandate. The second part of the open and unbiased process is with respect to reconciling the mandate of the Minister of Economic Development.

Speaker: Okay, I'll allow it as a first supplementary.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: The oil and gas industry has a history in the Yukon and has been a significant part of our economy for a number of years. We've had producing wells in the southeast Yukon, as well as some exploration throughout the 20th century in the north Yukon. That continues to be an interest of ours — to see a part of our diversified economy include oil and gas.

However, in the specific case of the process of hydraulic fracturing, we understand that there are some questions about that, and we wanted to undertake a process that was fair and balanced and included equal representation from both sides of this House to explore those issues and discuss them with Yukoners.

That's why we have proposed the creation of this select committee, and we hope that committee will be able to undertake a number of things, including facilitating a discussion with Yukoners, as well as hearing from both companies that are interested in doing that particular activity, as well as groups on the other side that have concerns with it — and of course to hear from other regulatory bodies outside of our territory that have dealt with this on a first-hand basis. B.C. and Alberta both come to mind as having experience with this particular practice, and I would suggest that in its deliberations the select committee consider hearing from regulatory bodies outside of our borders, as well.

As I've said, oil and gas has a long history in Yukon and, of course, will continue to be a part of our economy, but the specific practice of hydraulic fracturing still has some questions, and that's why we've proposed this select committee.

Ms. Hanson: The appointment of the Minister of Economic Development to the select committee on the risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing does nothing to increase public trust in this process. It is clear from the Premier's Budget Address, from the minister's mandate letter, from the minister's own website, that the Minister of Economic Development's job is to promote the shale gas industry and therefore hydraulic fracturing. This is a conflict of interest. The minister who will be looking at the risks and benefits of hydraulic fracturing is the same minister whose job it is to promote the benefits of shale gas and fracking. So how does the Premier reconcile the Minister of Economic Development's mandate to promote shale gas, including fracking, with what should be an open, unbiased and credible public process?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: As was articulated in the previous answers, the whole economy of oil and gas has been around the territory now for many, many years. In fact, we've spoken of the tremendous amount of royalties that First Nations have received from the wells in southeast Yukon — they have re-

ceived in excess of \$10 million. The Leader of the Official Opposition talks about the Minister of Economic Development — I'd also like to point out to the Leader of the Official Opposition that the minister is also responsible for the Department of Environment. I think it's under both of those hats that the minister will be able to sit and clearly articulate the concerns and listen to all the information that will come out there and help in this process.

All the select committees that have ever occurred in the history of this Legislative Assembly have been Yukon Party select committees, short of one.

So, again, it is another example of this government creating a committee, which would consist of an equal number of members from both sides of the House to clearly articulate and move forward with an understanding and public dialogue on this issue that's important to all of us.

Question re: Homelessness

Ms. White: The Yukon Party government appears unmoved by the human cost of homelessness, yet homelessness also represents poor fiscal management. Homelessness adds to the costs of our health, justice and housing programs. A 2008 study from Calgary estimated the annual health care, housing and emergency costs for homelessness. They estimate that it costs \$72,444 a year for a transient homeless person, and it costs \$132,642 a year for a chronic homeless person.

The cost of human suffering cannot be calculated in dollar amounts, but the impacts on our health care system can be calculated.

In order to make our health care system more sustainable, will the government commit to a Housing First approach in Yukon to deal with the issue of homelessness?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As members are well aware, last week, the Northern Housing Conference was held here in Whitehorse, and a number of speakers spoke on a variety of issues.

At the start of that conference I was able to announce that the Yukon government is going to be embarking on a housing action plan in partnership with NGOs, the private sector, First Nations and municipal governments identifying sensible solutions to the housing needs of Yukoners.

We've made tremendous investments over the past number of years when it comes to affordable rental housing for Yukon seniors. On the social side of things, there has been a tremendous amount of work done, and we look forward to building on that work as the housing action plan is developed, but I think it would be unfair for me, at this point, to predetermine what the outcomes of that action plan are going to be. I certainly want to make sure that we hear from everyone and come up with sensible solutions to the housing issues and concerns for Yukoners, no matter where they are on the housing continuum.

Ms. White: It seems that a sensible solution to homelessness might be a housing-first model. A 2010 Canadian study showed that just over one in five prisoners was homeless prior to incarceration. Within the general prison population there is an even greater likelihood of becoming homeless after being discharged. A 2010 study by the John Howard Society of Canada showed that improving discharge planning and provid-

ing transitional housing and supports resulted in fewer incidents of involvement with the police and a lower rate of re-offending. The At Home/Chez Soi project demonstrates that providing housing leads to a greater social integration.

Will the government commit to a housing-first approach with homeless offenders to decrease rates of re-offending and save taxpayers money?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I do not want to predetermine what the outcome of the housing action plan would be. Through that plan, we're looking at the housing categories that are all along the housing continuum. This includes emergency shelters, transitional housing, supportive housing, social housing, the private market rental and, of course, home ownership. We're looking to hear from Yukoners. I know there was a tremendous amount of positive reaction to the announcement that we made, talking to the members of the board of the Yukon Housing Corporation as well as senior officials. We're excited to get this initiative started, put in the time and effort that's required and the hard work that is going to be required to come up with a housing action plan for Yukon that's based on sensible solutions and deliverables that we can meet.

Ms. White: I hope in dialoguing with Yukoners that the government actually goes out and speaks to homeless Yukoners.

The cost of homelessness to Canadian taxpayers is estimated at \$4.5 billion a year. To provide emergency housing to a homeless person in a hospital costs \$10,900 a month; in a jail, it costs \$4,333 a month, and a shelter bed costs \$1,932 a month. In contrast, with a prevention model, the price of a rental supplement is, on average, \$701 a month and social housing costs just under \$200 a month.

These numbers show that the prevention of homelessness saves money and gets better results. From a fiscal management point of view, there is no justification for inaction. When will this government adapt a housing first approach that not only saves money but is also more effective and humane?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I think it's important to note for members that the Yukon Party government, both the current and past one, has invested well over \$100 million in housing for Yukoners through the Housing Corporation. That was \$50 million invested under Canada's economic action plan, a further \$32.5 million of the northern housing trust money transferred to First Nations, and \$4 million of the northern housing trust money is currently being used to build Betty's Haven. We've invested in Options for Independence; we've invested in the youth shelter; there are seniors housing projects built across the territory as well as new ones being planned for Whitehorse and Mayo. There has been a significant amount invested.

When it comes to the housing action plan, I'm looking forward to working with a number of organizations, including NGOs like the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, which I'm sure will provide similar numbers as the member opposite provided, when we're looking for those sensible solutions and looking to make sound investments in housing that address the concerns of Yukoners, no matter where they are on the housing continuum.

Question re: Independent power producer policy

Mr. Silver: As far back as 2007, the Yukon Liberal Party has been advocating for the government to adapt an independent power producer policy, or an IPP. An IPP policy would enable businesses to generate their own electricity. This is something a number of mining companies are interested in doing. They see it as a way to power their own projects. The holdup is the Yukon government, which has been talking about putting a policy in place to allow this for over four years now and there still is no policy. The minister has told this House that work on the policy is ongoing. The government's website says, "We expect to return to the public for review of the IPP draft policy in the coming months." This is something industry and the Liberal caucus have been promoting for a number of years.

When will we see a policy in place?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: What I must correct the Leader of the Liberal Party on first of all is that there is nothing that prevents a mine or other individual or corporation from producing their own power for their own use. There is also nothing that prevents them having an arrangement with a partner that provides the generation facilities, whatever that is through — whether that would be through diesel or liquefied natural gas generation or hydro or other use. Any of these generation models can be done currently.

What an IPP structure would do would facilitate the sale by a private sector company to the public grid, but there would also be an obligation to pay for that. That is why we are looking very carefully at what has worked in other jurisdictions. We have been in discussion with other jurisdictions about what they see as working well with their models and what has not and giving very careful consideration to what the strengths and weaknesses of policies in other Canadian jurisdictions have been — pointing to Ontario as one of the worst examples of what happens when you take this policy too far; the Ontario Liberal Party has created a massive debt that will burden the utilities and the people of Ontario for many years to come.

Mr. Silver: I think we all know what an IPP is; I think what we don't have is an actual policy. We as a territory need to plan better for the future. The Yukon Party has simply failed to deliver here. I wish it were not so, but this seems to be a theme. We are seeing the usual suspect planning on this file, as we have on a lot of other major files and issues.

We are approaching an energy crunch and it is because of lack of planning and a lack of an IPP. A clearly laid out independent power production policy is an important part of planning for the future, but it is still not in place after talking about this for over four years. We are at the precipice of an energy cliff and Yukoners are starting to see a legacy of inaction. When will this policy be in place?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, I must take issue with the comments of the Leader of the Liberal Party. He indicated that we all understand what an IPP policy is. The preamble that he gave to his first question would suggest that the member doesn't understand what an IPP policy is. An IPP policy is about creating an obligation for the public utility to purchase power from an independent power producer. If done right, it

can avoid the public utility having to put significant investment into capital and avoid that cost. If done wrong, it can create a significant liability to ratepayers and to the public. This was done, for example, in the case of the Government of Ontario, which charged into this area, paid a premium for renewable energy and has created a massive burden to ratepayers and the people of Ontario thanks to that Liberal Party's approach to this. We have, as I've indicated, engaged in discussions with other Canadian jurisdictions as well as looking at models that have been dealt with successfully in the United States to determine what approaches seemed to be successful at reducing the requirement for public capital to be tied up, maximizing the benefit, but reducing that risk. I would encourage the member opposite to actually research what an independent power producer policy is, because his preamble suggests that he doesn't understand.

Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I asked the minister about this the last session and received the same excuses — the same line about how hard it is to complete a policy; the same lecture about how difficult it was and how much work has been done. But the public really isn't interested in any of that. They want to see results; they want to see stable power bills; they want to see proper planning done before we go over an energy cliff. Demand is rising; the bills are rising. Part of the solution is an IPP policy that offers increased options to meet Yukon's energy demands in the future. It should have been in place years ago to give these new mines, for example, an option to produce their own power and to sell back extra power to the grid.

Is the government still committed to the policy and can the minister explain the delay in getting the job done?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all, again let me remind the Leader of the Liberal Party that nothing prevents a mine from putting in their own power for their own use. Nothing prevents a mine from having a third party partner provide the energy for sale. We have not received proposals such as the member appears to be suggesting or a beating down of our door for mines to sell power back to the grid. In creating an independent power producer policy, what has been done in some other jurisdictions is the setting of a rate per kilowatt hour and going out for a certain number of megawatts for purchase, but that needs to be considered very carefully.

Would the member pay a premium for this, as is done in Ontario to great failure — if the member is actually interested in listening to the question rather than heckling from the benches? How much would the member pay per kilowatt hour? How much risk would the member take — would the Liberal Party take with taxpayers' money and with ratepayers? What obligation would they put there? That is why we are looking at this very carefully and are in dialogue with other Canadian jurisdictions to hear from them where they think their policies could be improved, so that we do not repeat the mistakes made in other jurisdictions — the most notable and drastic example being the failure of the Liberal Party of Ontario with their policy.

Question re: Genetically modified products and seeds

Mr. Tredger: Yukon farmers face many challenges: competition against southern agri-business, access to markets, and a short growing season. Yukon farmers have worked hard to develop quality, local-grown products for Yukoners. Their efforts contribute to developing local farming capacity and local food security. “Yukon grown” is a valuable brand, but the Yukon brand — our local food supply — is being threatened by genetically modified organisms, including crop seeds like alfalfa.

Will the government commit to immediately taking measures to keep genetically modified organisms out of the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: As a number of my colleagues have pointed out, when we respond to a question, it’s somewhat frustrating to see the members not change their supplementary questions and keep asking the same question that has already been answered. I would say the same thing to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun with regard to the response I gave earlier today to Petition No. 10.

We appreciate very much the concerns of Yukoners who signed that petition with regard to genetically modified organisms. If the member was paying attention at the time, he would note that we committed to facilitating discussions involving groups representing Yukon farmers and the broader farming community to discuss this issue again, while making reference to the fact that the last time this issue was given serious debate in Yukon’s farming community, it left the Yukon farming community very divided on this issue.

I could read my petition response again to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun if he wasn’t listening the first time.

Mr. Tredger: I asked the minister about this previously, as he has been asked many times. We get the same tired answers — how hard it is to talk to Yukon farmers and how hard it is to have dialogue. For over six years now, this government has allegedly gathered information, dialogued and worked with Ottawa on the issue of genetically modified organisms, including seeds.

I’ve confirmed with the organic farmers association. I’ve spoken to many Yukon farmers. No one recalls being consulted. Yukoners in large numbers are petitioning this government and raising their concerns about the health risks, about the negative impact on local farmers and upon our environment. Instead of action, all we get from the minister are commitments to discuss. With genetically modified alfalfa going on sale soon, when will this government act to protect Yukon’s local farmers, Yukon’s consumers —

Speaker: Order please. The member’s time has elapsed.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I am going to read excerpts of my petition response again because the Member for Mayo-Tatchun doesn’t appear to have been listening or appreciate the fact that there was divided opinion within Yukon’s farming community. As I noted, the last time the possibility of farmers growing GMO crops in the Yukon was a topic of significant debate, that debate was quite heated and resulted in the farming community being very divided on this issue. I explained the two sides of

that issue within the farming community; I noted that, at that time, the prospect of genetically modified crops being grown in the Yukon was largely hypothetical as it was generally agreed no GMO seeds were viable for use north of 60 and I said to the member, contrary to his assertions, that as a result no additional action by government was taken at that time.

I also noted that we believe the appropriate action at this time is for government to facilitate discussions involving groups representing Yukon farmers and the broader farming community to discuss this issue again and emphasize the government’s strong preference that farmers work together to resolve differences of opinion and agree to a broadly supported approach that best reflects the interests of all. We prefer to support a community consensus within the farming community, when it is possible to do so.

So I can read that response again and again for the member, again emphasizing the government believes, rather than having a divided farming community on this issue, that the best step would be to get people together to try and get everyone as much as possible on the same page and have a broadly supported position on what the next steps should or should not be in this area.

Mr. Tredger: Feed crops like alfalfa are important to organic farmers and those who want to develop a more sustainable and environmentally compatible agricultural sector. The Canadian Biotechnology Action Network just released a report, which I have for tabling, called the *Inevitability of Contamination from GM Alfalfa Release in Ontario*. The name says it all. The report details how genetically modified and herbicide-resistant alfalfa gets into neighbouring farms and undermines local farmers. It can get out into the land and act like an invasive species.

The minister’s responses ring hollow. They are just words with no action behind them. Why has this government turned its back on local farmers, on consumers and on the environment in favour of big agribusiness and chemical companies? The time for leadership is now.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, why has the NDP turned its back on efforts to build consensus within the farming community on this issue? The Member for Mayo-Tatchun doesn’t have any interest in discussion aimed at bringing everyone on to the same page as much as possible, which is what the government committed to. The members clearly have their minds made up and we see yet again that the NDP only supports consultation some of the time. If they aren’t sure they’re going to like the outcome of consultation, they oppose more consultation.

As I indicated in my petition response, it is our hope that Yukon’s farming community will come to a broadly shared consensus on whether current regulations are sufficient or whether additional measures pertaining to GMO crops are needed to ensure that the health of Yukon farms and the environment are protected.

The member seems to not care that the last time this issue received significant debate within the farming community, it led to the farming community being very divided on this issue. What we have committed to is trying to build consensus and

create a broadly supported approach that best reflects the interests of all because we prefer to support a community consensus within the farming community when it's possible to do so, unlike the NDP.

Question re: Yukon Medical Council resignations

Ms. Stick: Yukoners are not feeling secure about their access to health care. Under Yukon Party management, health care costs have been increasing at an alarming rate and the chronic challenge of recruiting and retaining physicians reached a crisis last week with the resignation en masse of the Yukon Medical Council after a year of unproductive communication between the council and government.

Last Thursday, the government met with the Yukon Medical Association. Can the government tell this Legislature if it has repaired its broken relationship with Yukon physicians?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: I'd like to thank the member opposite for her question and for her ongoing interest in the delivery of quality health care in the Yukon. As the member opposite alluded to, the Minister of Health and Social Services and I did indeed meet with members of the Yukon Medical Association executive last week, on Thursday. All in all, it was a very good meeting. It was a very positive with productive discussion and certainly focused on a way forward in terms of continuing to deliver quality health care.

I can say that both parties recognized the critical importance and the role that the Yukon Medical Council plays in this regard and we are both committed to finding solutions that will enable the proper functioning of the council on a go-forward basis.

Ms. Stick: Dialogue is important, but we should not be hearing about mass resignations of the Yukon Medical Council. It should have been avoided. The Yukon Medical Council is responsible for licensing new doctors. Yukoners with no family doctors want to know that this crisis will be resolved soon and that it won't happen again.

What we would like to hear is what actions the government will take to ensure that the recruiting and licensing of doctors will resume and that Yukoners will have access to a physician when they need it.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: As I made reference to in my remarks on the floor of the Legislative Assembly last week, the Yukon government has indeed been working with council members over the past year and some on a number of matters of importance to the medical council. Clearly, we recognize that more work is needed. We remain committed to finding solutions that will enable a functioning, effective council on a go-forward basis, and we have committed to doing just that as recently as last Thursday.

So I remind the members opposite that the Yukon Medical Council has been functioning for some 34 years. It has worked very well in the Yukon, as it has in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, and any issues of concern that have arisen have been able to be resolved through dialogue and through ongoing discussion. We, on this side of the Legislative Assembly, are very much committed to finding solutions and continuing that ongoing dialogue.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I rise to identify the motions to be called by government members for debate on Wednesday, April 3. They are Motion No. 367, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, and Motion No. 384, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 53: *Act to Amend the Education Act* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 53, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Kent.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I move that Bill No. 53, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 53, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I am pleased to speak at second reading to Bill No. 53, *Act to Amend the Education Act*. The changes being proposed here today are an important part of what we're doing to help meet this government's commitment to improve student achievement and success in Yukon schools and to increase the engagement of parents and school communities as we work toward that goal.

First, I would like to talk about what we are doing to improve student achievement and success. In 2009, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada completed its examination of how Yukon education delivered educational programs and made recommendations about how the gaps that were found in student performance could be addressed. There have also been other reviews and consultations over the past several years indicating that Yukon education needs to address student performance concerns.

As a result, we continue to examine all aspects of our programming to find ways to improve those outcomes. Providing more instructional time for students is an effective strategy for improving student performance when it is also supported by the implementation of sound educational practices.

Because of this, we are proposing that there be 950 hours of instruction for students in each school year, which is an increase of 15 hours per year. We are also proposing that there be an additional 15 hours per year dedicated to professional development activities for our school-based staff. By increasing the amount of instructional time, as well as the number of hours for teacher training and development, we intend to increase both the amount and the quality of instruction delivered in our schools to support student performance and success.

When we talk about increasing those hours, that proposal would take the number of educational hours from 935 to 950 and double the number of non-instructional hours from 15 to 30. Our top priority, as I mentioned, is student achievement and success, and the bottom line is that Yukon students need as

much time in the classroom as any other Canadian student. Currently, our students are in school for less time than students from most other jurisdictions in Canada, which impacts their ability to achieve and succeed at school. Our students need to get as much schooling as students from elsewhere in the country if they're going to be writing the same university admission tests and competing for the same jobs. So by increasing the amount of instructional time, we're ensuring that students have more contact time with our teachers.

The government and the Yukon Teachers Association discussed this issue extensively throughout the collective bargaining process last year and reached consensus on how the collective agreement can be amended to reflect an increase in the number of hours of instruction each school year. We certainly value the services of our educators and will compensate teachers in accordance with the agreement reached during the 2012 collective bargaining agreement.

Non-instructional days are also important to help ensure Yukon teachers receive the best training opportunities and I'm pleased to inform the House that the non-instructional days that we've added will not affect the overall length of the school year. We will be holding two teacher institutes prior to the two common start dates that are occurring this fall — one in mid August and one in late August, which will be two-day sessions for those teachers who are starting school the following week. We look forward to that process evolving over the next while and of course also having the input of our teachers in developing the content of those teacher institutes.

The second part of this bill that is going to change will help us increase the engagement of our school communities. Under the *Education Act*, the members of each school council are elected every two years in the fall, often in early October, which is a month after the new school year has started. We've heard on many occasions — and I personally have heard on many occasions throughout my time as Minister of Education — from school council members and others in the school community that the school councils are often not able to begin functioning effectively until well into the school year because their members do not assume their duties until after the school year has started.

We have also heard that it can be difficult for a school council to function effectively at the beginning of a school year when there has been a significant turnover of the school council membership after an election. As a result, under the proposed amendments, the next school council election will take place in May 2014 and then each two years thereafter. This is being done so that following each election our school councils will have the opportunity to prepare to function effectively from the beginning of each school year. We will also provide First Nations the opportunity to ensure that their guaranteed representatives are in place for the start of the school year.

This school year, for instance, I was appointing additional school council members and guaranteed reps as late as December — far too long into the school year for those councils to function effectively.

The bill also provides us with the ability to ensure continuity on school councils by extending the term of a member of

the previous school council by up to a year when no member of the previous school council has been elected to the new council. This will be done through the existing council by informing me of their intention to have me do that.

To sum up, the changes we're proposing are an important part of what Yukon Education is doing to provide quality instruction to all of our students and to increase the engagement of our school communities, all for the purpose of improving student achievement and success in the Yukon.

With these highlights outlined, I look forward to further debate on this bill as we proceed with second reading and move into Committee at a later date.

Mr. Tredger: It gives me pleasure to rise on behalf of the NDP Official Opposition to provide some initial thoughts on the government's amendment to the *Education Act*.

The minister has said our priority is to provide quality education for Yukon students. That question ultimately is about whether these amendments bring us closer to the goal. Some of the changes make sense and appear well-thought-out. Some of the changes I have questions about and may be rooted in dubious thinking.

When it comes to increasing the quality of education, I am curious as to why the minister chose to tackle certain things and not others within the *Education Act*. I look forward to Committee of the Whole debate to have a back-and-forth discussion with the minister to get direct answers to my questions and to see if there is some willingness to improve the bill through amendment.

What the *Act to Amend the Education Act* does is increase the hours of schooling from 950 to 980. Currently, the *Education Act* has 950 hours in the school year, made up of 935 instructional hours and 15 non-instructional hours. The proposed change is to increase the number of hours in a school year to 980 — 950 hours of instruction and 30 hours of non-instructional time.

The government's rationale is that Yukon Education's top priority is student achievement and success and the bottom line is that Yukon students need as much time in the classroom as any other Canadian student. Yukon students are in school for less time than students from most other jurisdictions in Canada, which impacts their ability to achieve and succeed at school. Our students need to get as much schooling as students from elsewhere in the country if they are going to be writing the same university admission tests and competing for the same jobs. By increasing both the number of instructional hours and instructional days, we can provide Yukon students with more contact time with teachers.

Mr. Speaker, that was a quote from the government's rationale.

We all want our children to succeed in life, we all want the best for our children, and we want their time in school to be a joyous time to develop a love of learning and to prepare them for the challenges in life, to inculcate values of solidarity, interest in their community and world, and to help them succeed in the world of work, in their family and in their community. The school is an important part of education; however, education is

not solely in the school, but all around us in our community, in our families, with neighbours, in our First Nations, with our interaction with the media and so on. The act says this — it's the preamble, chapter 61: "Recognizing that Yukon people agree that the goal of the Yukon education system is to work in co-operation with parents to develop the whole child including the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, cultural, and aesthetic potential of all students to the extent of their abilities so that they may become productive, responsible, and self-reliant members of society while leading personally rewarding lives in a changing world; and recognizing that the Yukon education system will provide a right to an education appropriate to the individual learner based on equality of educational opportunity; prepare students for life and work in the Yukon, Canada, and the world; instill respect for family and community; and promote a love of learning; and recognizing that meaningful partnerships with greater parental and public participation are encouraged for a high quality Yukon education system..."

The suggestion that we must increase our hours of instruction in order to get better outcomes for students is debatable. I would like to see the research the minister has consulted on this matter because I am aware of conflicting reports on hours of class time. I believe it is the quality of education, not the quantity of education. The suggestion that we need to increase hours in school in order to keep up with other jurisdictions in Canada is again questionable. Educational policy should be based on best practices, on sound pedagogy, rather than a kind of comparative "keeping up with the Jones" race.

In terms of changes surrounding school council elections, what the amendments do is hold school council elections prior to the beginning of the school year, rather than after the beginning of the school year. They would take place in May. Currently under the *Education Act*, all members of each school council are elected or appointed every two years in the fall, immediately after the school year has started.

Again, the government's rationale is that school council members and others in the school system have said that councils are not able to function effectively until well into the school year, because council members, including First Nation guaranteed representatives, do not assume their duties until after the school year begins. When this happens, most school councils and the schools themselves do not operate as effectively as they otherwise could, affecting community involvement, as well as student success and performance.

There may be some value in continuing to have the school council elections — and I'm open for debate on this — in the fall, because that way the school council comes in when the school year has been established. They spend the year getting familiar with the processes before they have to make a lot of critical decisions. If they begin school in September, September is a very busy time in the schools. A lot of critical decisions are made and the school council will be new at that time. So there is a bit to be said on either side and I look forward to debate with the minister on that because I don't think it is as cut and dried as it was projected.

There is a big problem with getting citizens involved in their school council. We've had trouble and many vacancies.

There has been a continuing problem with councils not achieving quorum and not functioning. The changes may make sense — that council be in place before the school year begins. It would be important that some training happen prior to the beginning of the school year and that that training happens in conjunction with school staff and with the school community so that the school council is ready to hit the ground running.

Will these changes result in greater involvement by the community? Again, I think more important than when the school council elections are held is how we treat and how we interact and how we work with school councils. We know that the minister's consultation on the school calendar resulted in many letters from school councils wondering why they couldn't revise the school calendar according to their local needs. That brought out a lot of action and a lot of involvement. I'm not sure it was all positive. If there is a need for greater centralization of control and local needs and local councils are not respected and given a meaningful say, then citizens will drop off councils. Arranging elections at different times will not make a difference. So, while I recognize that this change in some ways makes sense, there is a larger issue and that is that members of the school councils feel that their work is appreciated and respected.

In terms of professional development, the act amendments would enable there to be 30 hours of non-instructional professional development, half of which would be set by the school council and the other half by the minister and the Department of Education. One of the big concerns I heard when I talked to parents, teachers and members of the school community is that parents have concerns about juggling their schedules, daycare and taking days off to accommodate professional development. I applaud the idea of having the professional development occur either before or after instructional hours, rather than embedded within the school year. I think that is a good move forward, and I would have liked to see that it be embedded into the act in some way, rather than at the minister's discretion or the discretion of the Department of Education — that the additional hours be outside the instructional hours.

I am also concerned that the act — and I will discuss this with the minister in Committee of the Whole to clarify it — calls for 15 hours of additional professional development time. I understand that professional development is decided by way of the teachers' contract and defined as such between the Yukon Teachers Association and the department. A more appropriate designation for this might be in-servicing, which would then make it clear what "professional development" and "individually-driven" are and what "in-servicing" and "driven by the department" are.

Another item on that same issue is that the act specifies school staff who are employees within the meaning of the *Education Labour Relations Act*. Such in-services would be invaluable to our teachers on-call or our substitute teachers, especially in the communities where they are relied on to take the place of teachers who are ill or away for various reasons. The more they can be involved in planning and in-servicing and the more they can be involved in the direction that the school is taking, the better it will be for the substitute teaching profes-

sion, for the teachers and especially for the learning of the students.

I would have also looked for — when the act was being amended — something that would indeed address the current situation with on-call or substitute teachers. As I mentioned, substitute teachers are not considered teachers under the *Education Labour Relations Act*. This has been brought up many times. They also aren't considered government employees under the *Public Service Act*. This means they have no job security. They don't get employee benefits. They aren't covered by insurance. Their pay scale is at the bottom of the barrel. Yet, they're expected to be available whenever the government needs them or when a school needs them.

On-call, casual and substitute teachers still do not have the option of joining a union. In an *Education Act* review in 2006, one of the recommendations was that on-call teachers be given employee status. Any school principal could give the minister an earful about how hard it is to get reliable substitute teachers on a consistent basis, especially those with teaching certificates, because this government isn't providing substitute teachers with decent working conditions. This is especially important in rural communities where we don't have as large a base to call upon. So anything that the government can do it should do to improve their lot and improve instruction. I wonder why the minister did not table amendments to the act that will address this inequity.

Finally, when the changes to the act were brought in, they were also brought in a rather confusing manner because they got confused — if not in the minister's view, certainly in the view of the public. The length of the school day is different from the hours of instruction.

What I would have liked to see in this is some change to the length of the school day. I know many communities have looked at having a shorter day. Currently the act defines the number of hours for a school day — I'm not going to get it right, I can tell; 300 and I believe it is 360 hours per — 330, thank you, hours per day — minutes. That would be one long day, my apologies.

That takes some flexibility from local schools. I know one of the considerations that we looked at for Eliza Van Bibber School in Pelly Crossing when I was principal there was to have a shorter day once a month so that parents and staff could go to town to do their shopping and to attend appointments on a Friday afternoon or something that normally they wouldn't get a chance to attend. We felt that this might help in our attendance. I guess my point here is that that kind of flexibility will allow local school councils and local school communities to look at the school day, to examine what might work and what might not work in terms of appropriate time in schooling.

As I said, the quality of education, not the quantity of education, is what gets results. While these amendments will increase time in class and perhaps more time in the classroom — more time with the teacher — will they result in better outcomes? Many of our students are doing very, very well. One constituent mentioned having more days when kids aren't there means they won't be there more days. Will this address an attendance issue?

In my experience as a long-time educator and a school administrator, the best time to learn for students is in the winter when the weather forces us to be inside. Conversely, when the light increases and summer nears, it is very difficult for teachers to maintain the interest of a child who has been cooped up for far too long. I will be suggesting some amendments that we could have followed that would allow for greater flexibility by the school council or the minister.

These are my first thoughts. I look forward to Committee of the Whole debate to ask questions of the minister. Thank you.

Mr. Silver: I'd like to thank the minister for bringing this forward today, and I just have a few comments before we move into Committee of the Whole on this at another date.

I'd like to start with the 15 extra hours for PD and for non-instructional days. These have both actually resonated very well in the education community as long as it's well-thought-out. PD days are instrumental and, as a math teacher in the Yukon in the public schools previous to being in this Legislative Assembly, I was quite spoiled. I can't remember a PD or a professional development day offered in mathematics in over a decade that wasn't critical to my development as an educator. You know, you leave university, you think you know what you're doing, and then you actually teach for a week.

I would like to take this opportunity as well to thank the Department of Education officials in the math department, not limited to, but specifically to Paula Thompson; I couldn't have asked for a better mentor. In other departments as well, whether it be for assessment or other topics, PD is instrumental.

It sounds like the department officials are also working on a non-instructional gathering of sorts before the beginning of the next school year, and this also is generating quite a positive buzz. The changes to the act that pertain to the school council — they all increase efficiencies, and they also increase local engagement. I have no issues as to the logic behind these, and I'd like to thank also the department officials for the briefing and for their excellent explanation and rationale behind these particular changes.

Now, increased instructional time — this has been an issue. This is what I've been hearing and I believe, as well, the department could increase the length of the day, and they could increase the number of days. They seem a little bit more bent on increasing the number of days. Now, I would argue that the quality time in the classroom should be the focus as opposed to the quantity. I could also argue that we teach roughly the same number of hours compared to our southern districts due to the policy on school closure days. Back in Nova Scotia, you could count on at least one week or so of total school closures due to weather. I remember sitting with my brothers and sister and being able to tell, based upon how that snow was falling, whether or not we had a day to slide or not. I'm saying I could argue these things, but is three days of extra work a lot of time? No. Not as long as the minister will continue to commit to listening to local professionals and to listening to parents and teachers, and to address real options for real grassroots attempts to better our individual students as people and as students. It's

hard to see how more instructional days will increase grad rates and we will get into that at the next stage here. I think maybe it might even increase absences. I would actually like to see those rates and I was wondering if the minister could provide that before we get into Committee of the Whole: June compared to November, students in classrooms. When I was at F.H. Collins I would teach my class Access Science outside in June; it was the only way I could get them to come to class.

This upcoming year in Robert Service School, we're going back to a one-week March Break, for example. We'll see if this actually changes the number of families who are taking their kids for a two-week March Break. I will absolutely vote in favour of these amendments because I have to give the minister a chance to try something. I have to give him full credit also for his efforts to find solutions for our students and I will continue to do what I can to advocate for these students. I will reiterate my willingness to work with the minister on future policies, directions — whatever he can throw at me.

With all that being said, I look forward to continued debate in Committee of the Whole, and I will put in my support for these amendments at this time.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I thank the two members opposite — the two critics for Education — for their responses in second reading to the *Act to Amend the Education Act*.

I guess I won't get into too many specifics. The details will emerge when we get into Committee of the Whole at a later date. I think there are a couple things, though, that I want to touch on — importantly, the increased number of hours for instructional time. That doesn't necessarily mean increased hours inside the classroom. Instructional time can include many things. It can include experiential learning opportunities. It can include a number of the trips that students do. On one trip, for instance, that I noticed last year when I was in biology class, we each had an old cow's eyeball or an old perch to dissect, and I saw a couple of students ice fishing and dissecting and cleaning the fish, looking at the different body parts.

The changes that we've seen in educational programming have evolved extensively over the past number of years and I look forward to new improvements when it comes to the programming. It's important to note that increasing that instructional time doesn't necessarily mean that students are going to be in class; we're always looking for new and innovative ways to educate our students, and the department, working with the school communities and educators, will continue to look for those opportunities.

The Member for Mayo-Tatchun mentioned he would be proposing some amendments. As asked by the Official Opposition earlier today in Question Period to provide a copy of the motion with respect to the select committee, I look forward to the member providing me advance copies of his amendments as well as a summary of the consultation and everything he heard from the broader school community. When we proposed these amendments, we went out to school councils; we went

out to First Nations; we did a very broad public consultation. There was an opportunity for individuals to comment and look at the proposed changes. We made some changes as far as staggered elections and those types of things as a result of those consultations.

I look forward to the Member for Mayo-Tatchun providing me with that summary of the consultations he has done with respect to the amendments — and of course a copy of the amendments that he is proposing.

There are a number of other issues raised by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun specific to this, other acts that he has brought in and asked about as far as changing those. What we are going to focus on with this is adding hours of instruction and hours of non-instruction to the school year — 15 hours of each. Of course, we'll be compensating the teachers for the additional hours — for the additional 30 hours that they'll be working — on a pro-rated basis. We're happy to invest in our educators and we think that's an important step to improve the quality and the student outcomes that we're getting.

Again, we'll get into some of the specific questions that the member opposite asked, but I guess what we're trying to do with the instructional and non-instructional time is introduce something that will enable us to improve the student outcomes that we're currently seeing.

Clearly, what we're currently doing isn't working, as evidenced by the relatively low graduation rate in Whitehorse of 80 percent and then, in our communities, the average graduation rate of 61 percent. As minister, I certainly want to see those numbers improve.

I think that adding instructional and non-instructional hours is going to be very important. As I mentioned in my opening address, when it comes to the non-instructional hours, we are looking at two teacher institutes. I know the Member for Klondike referenced it in his second reading speech, and that work is well underway. As mentioned, we are looking at mid-August and late August for holding those teacher institutes here in Whitehorse. We are going to be looking at a broad range of activities and opportunities for teachers to come together as a broader community and learn different techniques and different aspects. Although I haven't been involved in the actual planning, I'm looking forward to the roll-out. I'm hoping that — and I would expect that there will be something there for different teachers with different expertise. So, as the Member for Klondike referenced, during his time as a mathematics teacher, perhaps that broader teacher training wasn't available to him. That's what we think we can accomplish with these two teacher institutes. I'm looking forward to their success and building upon them for future years as we look to keep these 15 additional hours of non-instructional time outside of the regular school year.

As I mentioned in my opening address, we don't want parents to have to find childcare or make alternative arrangements for their children when it comes to additional non-instructional days. The 15 hours are currently set by the school council. Just with respect to some of the calendars we've received back, one of the schools has indicated they would like their 15 additional hours held prior to the start of the year as well. So they'll get

all their non-instructional hours out of the way at the start of the year, with no disruption to parents of that school for the balance of the year. That's an opportunity for school councils to be involved in the process and affect the process.

When it comes to the school council elections, I know the Member for Mayo-Tatchun had some concerns with elections in May, but this is something I heard directly from the school councils they were in support of. This wasn't just during the consultation on the *Education Act*. It goes back throughout the past year and a half or so, during my trips around the territory and talking with school councils throughout the Yukon — that it's a challenge for them to get started because, by the time their election takes place and they have their initial swearing-in and orientation and get up to speed with their training, it's often into November.

Elections in May will allow them to attend, perhaps, even the June meeting of the existing school council to get a better handle on what's happening in the school and hopefully the opportunity to have a full council in place and hit the ground running in September. Again, this is something that I know I heard personally from councils.

Perhaps when the member opposite is suggesting his amendments — if there is one amending that — he will also require the summary of the consultations he has undertaken and be able to provide me with that, so I can consider those before we get to Committee of the Whole.

With that, I will conclude my second reading speech.

Actually, just to quickly let members know, I did a quick "instructional time by jurisdiction" summary. I know that most of our closest neighbours are in that 950 hours of instruction. Alberta is 950 hours of instruction per grade for students who are in grades 1 to 9. Students in grades 10 to 12 actually have access to a minimum of 1,000 hours of instruction per year.

In British Columbia, looking at the Stikine school district, which is the closest to us — northern British Columbia — I believe it's 952 hours that they have. The Northwest Territories is higher than us: 997 hours for grades 1 to 6 and 1,045 hours for grades 7 to 12. There is a variety, but I think the most effective comparable for us is with British Columbia because we do teach British Columbia's curriculum and it's important for our students to be able to compete with those students. Many of our students travel out to British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia for their post-secondary schooling and we want to make sure that they have those same opportunities for instructional time — not classroom time; instructional time — so that they can learn a number of things and have access to the same type of quality education that other Canadians are getting.

I just have to emphasize again how important it is that these changes on the instructional and non-instructional hours are only enablers. It's about what we're going to deliver in the classroom and moving ahead with our rural action plan, in discussing the motion brought forward by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin that we'll do tomorrow and some of the opportunities that exist on the trades and tech training and a variety of other things that we need to introduce to our students to improve their outcomes.

This is a step — it's a very important step — and I look forward to having these amendments to the *Education Act* pass and move forward with introducing additional programming that will improve the quality of education for our students.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Order please.

Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Taylor: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Nixon: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Ms. Hanson: Agree.

Ms. Stick: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Mr. Tredger: Agree.

Mr. Silver: Agree.

Mr. Elias: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yeas, nil nays.

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

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 53 agreed to

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Order please. I'd like to introduce a good friend of mine, Anne Jessup, who has stopped by to visit — also, Anne is going to be retiring in another month or so from the Lands branch, where she has been the GIS manager for a number of years — and doing a great job, I might add. Thanks for coming.

Applause

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is

Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 10, *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*.

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. 10: First Appropriation Act, 2013-14

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 3, Department of Education, on Bill No. 10, *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*.

Department of Education

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just before I speak to present the 2013-14 budget for Yukon Education, I'd like to welcome two senior officials who are here to provide me with assistance — Valerie Royle and Loretta Boorse, who have joined me from the Department of Education. I'd ask members to welcome them with me.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'm pleased to say that with this budget, which is the second budget in the Yukon Party's third consecutive mandate, we're continuing our good work in creating a better quality of life for Yukoners by educating tomorrow's citizens so they can contribute to the community and its economy. To that end, we aim to work with our partners in education to: (1) increase the engagement of parents, families and communities to improve student achievement and success; (2) promote a positive, inclusive and responsible learning environment that contributes to the success of each learner and ensures continuous improvement; (3) develop and enhance critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication as foundational competencies to support learning in the 21st century.

We are very pleased this year to continue with the delivery of our very comprehensive strategic plan, entitled *Our Commitment to New Horizons*. It focuses on improving literacy and numeracy, preserving culture and increasing educational achievements for all Yukoners.

The total budget for Yukon Education this year is \$181,340,000. Before I speak to the numbers behind the 2013-14 budget, I would like to thank all Yukoners for their continuing commitment to education. Yukon Education's main objectives are to deliver accessible and quality education to Yukon learners in cooperation with our partners, stakeholders and other public education users and meet the human resources needs of the Yukon labour market. Our vision is for all Yukon people to possess a desire for and appreciation of lifelong learning, a strong commitment to their communities, knowledge, the training and skills for meaningful employment and productive and rewarding lives. You will see this vision reflected in Yukon Education's programs and in our budget. Education plays a vital role in building Yukon's workforce and

economy by developing and enhancing programs and/or resources to meet changing educational and labour market needs.

Now I would like to speak directly to what Yukon Education's plan means in terms of the 2013-14 capital and O&M budget. With a budget of approximately \$181 million, of course, I cannot discuss every line item and ongoing Yukon Education program in this address. That doesn't mean that our solid, ongoing programs and partnerships are any less important than those items that I will highlight through my opening remarks here today.

I would like to begin by addressing the capital portion of this year's budget. The capital budget for 2013-14 is \$34,596,000. The capital budget reflects an increase of approximately 567 percent from our 2012-13 capital main estimates. A capital budget is based on cash flow requirements for each project and, as such, the funding requested each year can change substantially and is based on need. In pursuit of Yukon Education's vision, we are committed to ensuring the educational facilities meet the needs of our citizens and that commitment is very much reflected in this budget.

The single largest component of the capital budget is \$27,206,000 for the F.H. Collins Secondary School replacement. Madam Chair, as all members of the House know, on March 11, we announced that the Yukon government would not proceed with the current design plans for F.H. Collins Secondary School, but I want to assure all Yukoners and, in particular, those who are involved with the school community of F.H. Collins, that this government remains firmly committed to building the new school.

The decision to take another look at the design is based on the fact that the bids were so much higher than the anticipated costs. We'll be reviewing design concepts that have already been constructed successfully and economically in other Canadian jurisdictions, and we will incorporate elements from the previous consultation process to the extent that we can. This funding reflects the original cash flow requirements and will be adjusted accordingly as we move forward with a revised design in the coming months.

Yukon Education continues to follow the recommendations that came out of the report on roof assessments in 2008, which identified deficiencies. This report has resulted in a request during 2013-14 for \$1,813,000 in roof repairs. The two major roof projects that make up a majority of this request are at Porter Creek Secondary School, for which the request is \$1.1 million, and Selkirk Elementary School for \$615,000.

Yukon Education is developing a Yukon public schools long-term facilities plan to address some of our aging infrastructure. Funding for other capital projects to help maintain other public school facilities is also being sought in this budget. For general site improvement, recreation development and soccer field repairs — something that was raised by the Yukon Soccer Association with me and some of my other colleagues — the expenditure we're requesting for those items throughout Yukon schools is \$224,000. That's not just for the soccer fields; that is for general site improvement, recreation development and soccer field repairs. I believe the soccer field number that's being requested is \$25,000 per year, which will allow

us to repair soccer fields on a priority basis and not take too many out of circulation so the Yukon Soccer Association can still access those fields.

We're requesting \$130,000 to renovate the basement of the Nelnah Bessie John School in order to move the Beaver Creek library into that space. Currently the Beaver Creek public library is located in the old fire hall, which is being demolished. This is a win-win situation for Yukon government. The students may access the library during school hours, and we're making the most efficient use of the existing facilities.

For ongoing routine projects, such as school-initiated renovations, various school facilities renovations and capital maintenance repairs, Yukon Education is requesting \$1,766,000. Also under our capital budget, funds are being requested to support our instructional programs. \$1,776,000 is requested to support the school-based information technology program. This funding will be used to purchase computer hardware, software, network infrastructure upgrades, and associated curriculum software upgrades for various Yukon schools, including a replacement of the Yukon student information system.

There is \$435,000 requested to purchase school-based equipment and \$25,000 is requested to continue support for distance education. Where our school populations are small, distance education and technology-assisted learning can help to ensure that students are able to enrol in the courses they need to make their desired transitions to post-secondary education. Video conferencing access is available in schools in all of our communities. The importance of information and communication technologies in education is increasing and video conferencing increases equal access for all of our communities.

This government is also committed in its efforts to address the current labour market shortage and economic potential of the mining industry in the territory. There is \$1.1 million requested to assist Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining in purchasing a mobile trades unit. The mobile training unit will allow for the delivery of dual credit programming at the community level in the public school system that would encourage students to stay in school and provide them with increased skills and stronger post-secondary education and employment prospects upon graduation from high school. The mobile training unit will also provide trades training opportunities for adult students in rural communities to become apprentices or obtain pre-employment skills.

Now I'm going to turn my attention to the 2013-14 operation and maintenance budget, which will see continuing support for several initiatives, as well as support for labour market activities in the territory. Our most important work at Yukon Education is to ensure that all Yukoners have the skills and education they need to support their families and to participate fully in their communities and workplaces. The \$146,744,000 dedicated to Yukon Education under this year's O&M budget will help us to support Yukoners on their journey of lifelong learning.

First I'd like to address the funds Yukon Education is seeking on behalf of Education Support Services. We are requesting \$110,000 for a health and safety coordinator. This

position would support education with clear, transparent and effective policies and protocols for emergency preparedness and workplace safety for all. \$3.13 million is also being requested to continue offering busing services for our students.

I would also like to address the funds being sought on behalf of Advanced Education. As I have mentioned before, Yukon government signed both the labour market agreement and the labour market development agreement with the Government of Canada on July 8, 2009. Those two agreements reflect the Yukon government's cooperation with the Government of Canada to enable education, training and skill development for Yukoners to help Yukoners respond to opportunities and meet our labour market needs.

With these agreements, Yukon employers will enjoy greater flexibility to respond to changes in the local economy and labour markets, because these agreements help train Yukoners to do the work those Yukon businesses need to get done.

The labour market development agreement gives Yukon government the authority to provide support services that help eligible Yukoners to upgrade their skills, get on-the-job experience, find a job or become self-employed. The labour market agreement — the second agreement — is aimed at helping Yukoners find jobs or obtain better jobs. What's exciting about this agreement is that it helps Yukoners who are not necessarily eligible for employment insurance. Over five years, the LMA is bringing \$5,896,000 from the Government of Canada to help Yukon create new career opportunities for our residents.

For businesses to prosper, employers must have staff with the necessary skills. This government is proud to be part of the solution to the skilled labour shortages. Implementation of the labour market framework that began during 2011-12 will continue through 2013-14. For this we are requesting \$251,000. This funding is provided through the community development trust.

The funding will be used for the development of labour market information materials and for a staff person to coordinate the implementation of the labour market strategies with our many partners. In addition to supporting programs under these agreements, Yukon Education works in other ways to expand every available labour pool to assist employers in fulfilling their labour market needs.

The government is committed to reducing immigration red tape and, where possible, fast-tracking immigration applications so that Yukon employers can have access to the workers they need for their businesses and organizations to flourish. Yukon Education also supports learners as they transition from school to the workplace with programs such as the student training and employment program or what's better known as the STEP program and the summer career placement program. These two programs pay students a good wage for summer work and provide them with the skills and experience they need to enter the workforce.

Of course the government also continues to support Yukon College. The total support for Yukon College is approximately \$22 million for 2013-14. Yukon Education works with the college in promoting the skilled trades as a smart career option and also works with Yukon employers as they develop skilled

trades training opportunities in the workplace. An important part in ensuring the long-term health of our economy involves providing opportunities for Yukoners to gain access to careers in skilled trades.

We also work with Yukon College to ensure they have the support they need to provide the best educational facilities possible for our apprentices. Yukon College is a leader in trades education in the territory and it also offers certificate and diploma programs. It delivers degree programs through articulation agreements with other post-secondary institutions in Canada and Alaska.

\$18,439,000 is requested to support Yukon College for their base operational funding. This increase supports their request to address day-to-day funding pressures and the collective agreement impact. \$474,000 will be provided to Yukon College to continue operation of the School of Visual Arts in Dawson City; \$450,000 is being requested for the licensed practical nurse program. The targeted initiative for older workers provides an opportunity for workers between the ages of 55 and 64 to develop skills to find and retain employment. For 2013-14, \$240,000 is requested to continue this initiative. That amount is fully recoverable from the Government of Canada.

In addition, \$1,088,000 will be provided to Yukon College to support the Yukon Research Centre. I know an additional amount is also provided through the Department of Economic Development to support the Cold Climate Innovation Centre at Yukon College. The Yukon Research Centre is a focal point for research programs that address climate change challenges and opportunities in the north, and it supports northerners to work together to facilitate and coordinate national and international expertise while they work on issues, having not only a northern, but also a global impact.

\$113,000 is being sought for the Northern Institute of Social Justice. This institute provides training and education to Yukoners in a wide variety of social justice fields. It also undertakes research. It was created to address challenges in recruitment, development and retention of a qualified workforce to deliver programs and services with a social justice component.

Now I'd like to speak to a number of initiatives that will support the work of public schools in the 2013-14 budget. I'm pleased to say that the O&M budget for 2013-14 will continue to support and maintain all public school initiatives introduced by this government during its previous mandates. School leaders are critical to school improvement and systems accountability. A Yukon education team has synthesized all available data on student achievement, staff and staffing issues, program opportunity, demographics and vulnerability.

This data has been synthesized and formed the basis for a preliminary rural action plan. This action plan will include enhanced distance learning opportunities supported by a more common calendar — which I'm sure we'll discuss in further debate during Committee of the Whole; three rural hubs, which have been identified to create enhanced opportunities; sharing of resources; specialization of teachers; supports for arts, trades and other specialties; and enhanced opportunities for children to come together in larger groups for program opportunities.

In Dawson City we're exploring the possibility of having a dual credit welding course, something that the trades trailer will allow us to accomplish. We're also working with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to create assessment and credits for First Nation cultural units and are experimenting with an alternate learning model to support at-risk learners.

The school growth process has been designed by a stakeholder advisory committee to encourage and monitor a school improvement process to support individual student success and to ensure system accountability. To support the school growth process, Yukon Education requests \$408,000.

The school growth process is an important means to ensure that First Nations, school councils and community members participate in a collaborative process to identify and address school priorities. The funding we request will support capacity development to ensure that the school growth process best supports student learning. It also supports the \$75,000 leaders in education/innovation fund.

I know that my time is running short, but I'll reconvene my remarks after the members opposite get an opportunity to respond — they have to do with attendance. Maybe with that, Madam Chair, I'll sit down and take questions or remarks from the opposite side, and then when it's my turn again, I'll conclude my opening statement.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his comments.

I'd like to thank the members of the department for their attendance and the deputy minister. I thank them for coming and spending the afternoon with us.

I'm going to keep my opening comments relatively brief in order that we may have more time later to more thoroughly examine the details of the budget.

Before I get into it, I'd like to recognize and thank the school staff and those who support our children each and every day in what they do. Those who tie the shoes and put the band-aids on and help them dress for recess, the bus drivers who take them to school — a large number of people put a lot of time and effort into our schools. It's what makes schools — especially schools in the Yukon — so good. I guess that's the way I could put it. We have a wonderful group of personnel who work in our schools, supported by volunteers and staff. I wanted to recognize that. There may be times when I am critical of the directions we're going in, or of the minister opposite, but my comments are meant to improve the system and to shine light on things where I think we can improve. I hope they're not taken as divisive or antagonistic; they're meant to help the minister and help me in opposition shine some light on ways we can improve.

We are very fortunate in the Yukon to have a history of elders, leaders and people working together for our children.

We have talked about 40th anniversaries, and this is the 40th anniversary of Elijah Smith going to Ottawa and presenting the document, *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*.

The vision, the wisdom and the examples of the First Nations, as well as our leaders in the Yukon government and in our communities who went together and developed the Yukon *Education Act*, have set high standards and expectations, but most of all, they stressed that we must work together. We must

explore together; we must take risks together. Together today for our children tomorrow.

First and foremost, education is about the kids — about the children in our service. Everything we do should be to ensure that each child in our care has the opportunity to learn in a safe and respectful manner, to the best of their ability and according to the least restrictive manner. Each child is unique.

In this process, teachers and school staff are critical. What the department does, what the minister does, what we as observers or legislators do in terms of education all comes down to what happens in the classroom. It's a relationship that develops between the teacher and the students. It's those relationships that we must enhance, encourage, support and develop.

Professional development, days off, planning trips, experiential education — it comes down to the relationship between the teacher and the student. Sometimes that instruction doesn't happen in the classroom. It may be on a field trip, as the minister alluded to earlier, or it may be in the community. It may be at Cub Scouts or Girl Guides. Sometimes the needs of a student can't be met within the classroom environment and so we have programs like Reading Recovery and Wilson Reading. We have tutors and we have educational assistants. We have parent volunteers who work with our children, who support the classroom teacher. Make no mistake, the classroom teacher designs the programming, but the support needs to be there to help them.

We're fortunate in the Yukon to have a number of very supportive programs and developments. We have opportunities for our children, and I applaud the minister for his efforts to enable experiential learning throughout the Yukon. We have a fine example in what happens in Wood Street school, but we must not get complacent. We must ensure that all students have opportunities like that. Classroom teachers know their students and situations, but they need the support and flexibility to provide instruction in the most effective manner.

The third part is parents and involvement of the local school community. Research shows us time and time and time again that parents must see school as important — critical to their children — and schools must see parents and their community as critical to students. Meaning derives from those relationships, especially in communities, but I would say that in all schools the principal is the one who interacts most with the communities, with the school councils and other parties.

Programs like our educational leadership programs are important. It's important to ensure they're effective. I found in my time as principal that many of the interactions were not only from the principal and much of the leadership doesn't begin or end with the principal; it begins with all the people involved in the school community. Whether it's the child taking charge on the playground and showing some leadership or whether it's a teacher doing the same or initiating a parent group, leadership is in many forms.

I say again that relationships must be nurtured with time, support and commitment. I guess in a way that's why the way the school calendar played out was disappointing to me, because it was an opportunity for local school councils to discuss education and be involved in education.

It also showed to me how careful we must be when we make decisions for communities, for children or for staff. We need to be cognizant. Again, if we go back to that prime relationship in the classroom, the closer our decision-making can get to that parent-teacher relationship, the more effective it's going to be, the more responsible it will be and, indeed, the more creative it will be. We continue to lose many of our children, especially First Nation children and especially those in rural Yukon. The performance gap continues to widen, and this is a crisis. It is worthy of our attention and our efforts.

It is worthy to bring all Yukoners to bear on it — to have a concerted strategy to ensure that all Yukoners in every community have an opportunity. Too many of our children are falling by the wayside. The challenge for us as legislators, the challenge for our staff, is to come together and to build opportunities for all our children. The time for talk has past. We must ensure that all our children have an equal opportunity.

I continue to be concerned about the Yukon-wide literacy rates and the need for literacy, not only at a school level, but at an adult level and a community level. As a community, we have talked about Yukon literacy strategies, and we have supported various groups. It's time to move to bring them to move together to accomplish a major reduction in the number of Yukon people who are illiterate. One of the consequences of being illiterate is having difficulty fitting into our workforce. Our workforce is becoming ever more demanding. Our students and our adults need to be able to read competently in order to be able to be effective members of the workplace.

The CEO of Suncor, when he was retiring, talked about the need to do more than hang out help wanted signs to attract local employment. We need to ensure that we have programs in place that help those who are struggling and who don't have workplace readiness skills, just the same as we help those children in our schools prepare for the workplace.

The next part that I want to talk about is the training in relevant skills, trades, our apprenticeship programs and the opportunities presented. I think it's important that we take a close look at how our programs are working: what's working in them and what's not; what students are we missing; what students are we catching. I often recall when I was going to school, we had training in shop. Everyone took some shop training at a young age. Everyone took some food training and home economics training at a young age. A program like that, where we build from the ground up, may be far more important and less expensive than starting at the top.

Our students today need to be exposed to how to manage a household. When you read statistics like how Canadians throw out an average of 40 percent of their food, we need to look at programs in our school that help in terms of how to run a household. Like many things, it's becoming increasingly complicated.

The same thing in terms of exposure to applied sciences, to shop classes — how to fix things, how to work in a house and how to run an HVAC. Those kinds of things — and in terms of a general education at a young age to expose students to that — I think would be invaluable and out of that then we may tweak interest and out of that we can get our millwrights and our red

seal workers and our apprentices because they have an idea of what is involved.

That exposure may be all they need to encourage them to try or to move into a field, or to encourage them to come back to school the next week because their interest is piqued. Whatever strategies we develop, however we come about them, through our consultations, we need to share the creativity and energy of Yukon people. We need strategies that give us clear, measurable goals — goals that are clear, goals that are definable, goals that are achievable and goals that are measurable. We need to develop strategies to evaluate our pilot projects and we need to reset them and try them again.

I applaud the minister and his department for many of the initiatives they've begun. It is important now to take lessons from them to ensure that what we learn is repeated and so that all our students have the opportunity of our pilot projects, or things that are happening here or there. All Yukon students can benefit from it.

That concludes my general remarks. I thank the minister for his efforts and his work and I look forward to a more specific debate.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'll beg the indulgence of members just to allow me to conclude my opening remarks and then we can get into some more specific questions. If I have time after my opening remarks, I'll address some of the aspects identified by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun in his remarks as well.

Where I left off was with respect to attendance. I think it was late last week I shared with both critics opposite the attendance numbers as far as average number of days absent in schools and I have some further information that I can share with members as well. What we're doing with this budget is requesting \$50,000 to improve attendance in Yukon schools. Regular attendance I know everyone recognizes is important for the development of academic and social emotional skills.

The Victoria Gold Student Encouragement Society has been established to provide a source of funding for school-based projects aimed at improving student attendance. If I can speak a little bit about that, school councils, First Nations and communities are currently developing and submitting applications — the application deadline is April 5 — for monies to support varying attendance projects in their communities. On a recent trip to Dawson City, when I met with the chair of the school council there, they were doing a joint submission with the First Nation, the school and the school council. Everything will be different, depending on what community is accessing it. We'll make announcements during Education Week on the schools or partner groups receiving funds for projects. We look forward to making those announcements during that time.

Yukon Education also has other public schools programs to promote successful learning. The Individual Learning Centre was launched in February 2005. The minister at the time was the late John Edzerza. I know he's still very much appreciated for his efforts in establishing that and indeed they dedicated the graduation ceremony to Mr. Edzerza last year. I was able to attend as well as two members of Mr. Edzerza's family. It continues to be successful in providing the flexibility required by some students so they can continue to engage in their lifelong

journey of learning. Our data is demonstrating that more students are staying in school than in the past because of that program and that centre.

Full-day kindergarten and the home tutor program will continue to receive support in this year's budget. These initiatives have proven to be very important and meaningful for people throughout the territory. Also requested is \$80,000 to continue the early years transition program. This program targets prekindergarten to grade 3 students and will help to improve performance in both First Nation and other Yukon children. Funding for initiatives to support the increasing number of vulnerable students will also continue in 2013-14. Also, \$85,000 is being requested to continue an assistive technology software and related training program. This will provide support for students with special needs, enabling an inclusive model for individual education plan goals and objectives to be met.

We continue to receive positive feedback on all of these programs.

The experiential education initiative continues in 2013-14 with \$285,000. This funding provides more flexibility for schools to access experiential and outdoor educational opportunities.

We're also requesting \$142,000 to continue and expand our support of the whole child project. In May 2011, it was agreed that Yukon, on behalf of the three territories, would host the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol secretariat for the period September 2011 to August 2013. This initiative is jointly funded by Nunavut, Yukon and the N.W.T. Our position as lead enhances our ability to respond from a position of cutting-edge research to Yukon's student learning needs. Madam Chair, \$58,000 is requested for the staffing and operational costs for the remainder of Yukon's term as chair.

The Yukon *Education Act* and the government platform commitments reinforced the rights and opportunities for parents to educate their children at home. As of January 2013, 95 students were registered for home education in the territory. The home education program is being managed by a professional educator, experienced and qualified in the field of distributed learning through the Public Schools branch at Yukon Education. Many of the home education students are taking a course or two at a school or are participating in distributed learning courses.

Yukon Education is also committed to improving the outcomes and experiences of our First Nation learners. Yukon Education is requesting \$575,000 to support the Council of Yukon First Nations in their delivery of education support services. This line of funding represents \$405,000 to support the operating costs of the Yukon Native Language Centre and \$170,000 to provide salaries for support staff for education. We continue to have a good working relationship with CYFN, who collaborated with us through the education reform project and the New Horizons initiatives.

This year we are requesting approximately \$1.75 million in funding to support the Yukon First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit at Yukon Education. The FNPP unit is responsible for facilitating the development of appropriate Yukon First Nation curriculum and supporting resource materials. Using

Yukon-based materials is essential to ensuring all students learn about the history, cultural traditions and the important role of Yukon First Nations. The English First Peoples 10 course was piloted at F.H. Collins in 2011-12. A northern literature review was also completed by Yukon Education to support the course that year.

In 2012-13, the pilot was expanded to include J.V. Clark School and Porter Creek Secondary School.

The course was developed in partnership with the B.C. Ministry of Education and the First Nation Education Advisory Committee. In addition, staff are currently working on additional early primary readers reflecting Yukon First Nation people. The First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit has also produced 18 books that are used as part of a guided reading program reflecting the life and experiences of Yukon First Nation people. Consultants from Yukon Education also work with individual First Nations to assist in the development of locally developed curriculum and the accreditation of these courses.

Included in the \$1.75 million is funding for two specific initiatives approved under *New Horizons*. The Southern Tutchone bi-cultural program at St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction has been budgeted at \$148,000. It is currently being reviewed and evaluated. If the project proves successful, the foundation and framework may be expanded to incorporate more grade levels and be used as a model for other Yukon communities. This pilot program is an important milestone for Yukon Education, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and, of course, the school. It brings local wisdom, language and culture to the school's kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 2 classrooms. It supports the preservation of the Southern Tutchone language and culture by integrating it into the classroom. It promotes students' intellectual development and improves their motivation.

The Yukon First Nations experiential program is budgeted at \$115,000 for 2013-14, with funding also provided at the site-based management level of \$90,000. At the Wood Street Centre School, the community, heritage, adventure, outdoors and skills program, more commonly known as CHAOS, is designed to enhance opportunities for First Nation students in the secondary school system. The program is an opportunity for Yukon Education to integrate subject areas and develop the understanding and connections to First Nation knowledge, tradition, skills, values and beliefs and is part of a plan to meet the recommendations we received in the *Education Reform Project Final Report*, the *One Vision, Multiple Pathways* report and the Yukon First Nation Education Advisory Committee's strategic plan.

To ensure Yukon students have access to the best possible opportunities to learn aboriginal languages, the government is seeking \$4.2 million to cover the salaries of aboriginal language teachers in Yukon schools and at the Yukon Native Language Centre. This year we are continuing funding to the First Nation Elders in the School program for \$50,000. Elders in the School provides elders with the opportunity to share their cultural experiences, knowledge, skills and perspectives with the school staff and the students and it is jointly sponsored by Yukon Education and participating Yukon First Nations.

This program is integral to bringing the model of traditional learning into the Yukon classroom and making the classroom a more relevant place for all Yukon students. To develop and expand First Nations' curriculum and resources development, including First Voices, we have committed \$185,000 this year. The FNPP unit releases an annual teacher resource handbook of Yukon First Nation education resources in public schools, which is designed to help teachers include a First Nation perspective throughout the curriculum. This is an annual project and is distributed to all new teachers in the Yukon every year.

In addition, \$19,000 is dedicated to train all new Yukon teachers in Yukon First Nations culture during our new teacher orientations in August every year. To provide cultural enhancement programming for Yukon schools, we continue to provide \$250,000 per year in funding. This funding supports a wide range of cultural activities, including activities like carving, moccasin making, beadwork, bison hunts and canoe building.

Madam Chair, promoting and supporting French language and culture is also very important. French first language and French second language education are options available to Yukon students.

Yukon Education remains committed to supporting French programs in our schools. French Programs oversees a variety of French programming. Again, just to list them — French as a second language, French immersion, intensive French, post-intensive French and options plus French.

In recognition of the value of being fluent in Canada's two official languages, Yukon Education completed a comprehensive review of French second language programs to identify how to better support and coordinate programs throughout the territory to ensure equity. A comprehensive four-year French second language program implementation plan is being completed based on the recommendations of the program review and extensive consultations with advisory committees and working group discussions.

\$2,197,000 is requested for Yukon education student support services. In Yukon education, students are provided with support for their learning success based on their learning strengths and learning challenges. Classroom teachers, learning assistance teachers and administrators work together to support students in areas where they require interventions and adaptations to the regular curriculum. I would like to recognize the hard work of my Cabinet colleagues and echo what the Member for Mayo-Tatchun mentioned in recognizing the work of Yukon Education staff for their work in the crafting of this blueprint for learning in the territory.

I'd also like to thank all Yukoners who are contributing to the evolution of the education system with their participation as school council members, committee members and individuals who have provided comments about their needs and aspirations for education in the territory. The government is certainly listening to the feedback. We're engaged with the school communities on an ongoing basis when it comes to education and educational outcomes. We are constantly making improvements

and seeking changes to ensure that the education system reflects the values and goals of all our citizens.

Madam Chair, how much time do I have left?

Chair: Six minutes.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Thank you. Perhaps at this time, with concluding those remarks, I can speak to a couple of the questions raised by the Member for Mayo-Tatchun before we get into a more brisk exchange in debate.

When it comes to our field trips, we are looking to — as mentioned earlier in second reading of the *Act to Amend the Education Act* — increase instructional time, which doesn't necessarily just mean time in the classrooms. We certainly want to look to re-brand those field trips as experiential learning opportunities.

I mentioned some of them before and have talked about other initiatives, such as the bison hunt, or even some of the sled-ed programs that are being offered at some of our schools, where students are fixing up snowmobiles and then travelling. There are innumerable opportunities for experiential learning. So when you hear me refer to those, or the ELOs, it is how we're trying to re-brand and re-focus the message around our field trips.

Literacy strategy, of course — the member opposite referenced literacy. There are a number of initiatives that we're looking at, including funding of the Family Literacy Centre and the development of a new literacy strategy overall. The funding for that strategy is in the Advanced Education budget, but Health and Social Services also has a responsibility for the birth to 5-year-old range or 4-year-old range, depending on when the students enter the school system.

Skills training — again, I agree with the member opposite, in that we need to have opportunities for students to get engaged at an earlier age with some shop programs.

Last year, I think, I visited the shop in Mayo. I don't believe it was operating then, but we returned this year during a recent visit with the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services as well as the Deputy Minister of Education, and there's a program being offered there now. We see those as very positive initiatives. The dual-credit work that we're engaging in with high school students is very exciting. I know we'll have a full discussion on this tomorrow when we debate the motion put forward by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin with respect to enhancing those dual-credit opportunities for high school students who are looking to pursue opportunities as apprentices.

I want to close by touching on the school calendar issue. I have a couple of things with respect to a bit of history around it. I know that last year — I believe it was in February — an initial note went out to school councils about our desire to move to a common calendar. It was also discussed at the spring conference of school councils. There was a presentation by a senior department official on that. I also brought it up in the Legislature during Education Week last year.

There was a question during Question Period from the Member for Klondike asking me about common calendars and expressing his support of those for some of the distance learn-

ing opportunities that would be made available if we didn't have a number of different calendars.

He referenced his experience in Dawson City as a teacher. I closed by saying that I had instructed department staff to begin conversations with school councils so that hopefully — and I mentioned that perhaps as early as this coming school year, which obviously didn't take place — we would have a coordinated calendar among all Yukon schools.

We went to the school councils — the deputy minister, a number of individuals and I held two workshops in early December and at the conclusion of the collective bargaining agreement, we were able to have a better idea of what the hours of instruction and hours of non-instruction would be, or what we were proposing them to be with the amendments to the *Education Act*. We went to the school councils, and then, obviously, after Christmas, there was a substantial amount of pushback. That's why I have to say that it did initially catch us by surprise, just given the fact that in April, not only did school councils know of that intention, but I also informed members of the House of that intention. That aside — that is all, of course, water under the bridge. We worked diligently.

Of course the legislation stipulates that it's my responsibility to set school councils and seek advice from school councils, and that's exactly what we were able to do — involve the school communities, come up with two common start dates that allow us to deliver the teachers' institutes ahead of the school year outside of not being intrusive in the school year — and a number of different options have come forward. Whitehorse of course has always had a set school calendar based on busing issues, but we have given some flexibility to our rural schools to pick one of those start dates and adjust their time to meet what they need. Dawson of course can now be out by the end of May, depending on where they schedule their non-instructional hours that are assigned to the council. So with that again we can get into further discussion. Thank you.

Mr. Tredger: I guess if there is something to be learned from the school calendar, it is that an offhand reference to something as part of a presentation is not full consultation and certainly the school councils I talked to are quite surprised that it had been brought up to them and saw it as a minor part of a presentation.

That aside, I see that the educational leadership program is going to be funded for another year. Does the minister have a report, and can he give us an update on the number of administrators who have completed the program and have obtained positions in our schools? I believe that one of the objectives when it came into being is that it would train staff members or teaching staff who had a propensity or a desire to get into leadership positions. It would train them to take those positions. I'm wondering if he can give us an update. Has the program been evaluated? How many potential administrators have graduated and how many have found employment within our system?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just with respect to the member's question about the educational leadership program and the evaluation and how many — I don't have those figures with me, but perhaps before debate concludes today we'll be able to

get those for him. If not, I'll certainly provide them for him as soon as possible.

With respect to the calendar, to correct the member opposite, initially an e-mail went out to school councils last February. On April 18 on the floor of this Assembly during Question Period in response to a question from the Member for Klondike, I said, "I have instructed the department staff to begin the conversations with school councils so that hopefully, and perhaps as early as this upcoming school year, we will have a coordinated calendar among all Yukon schools."

That was in response to a question by the Member for Klondike. Part of his question to me was, "Currently, it is difficult to share resources through teleconferencing, because school calendars vary so much between districts. Dawson starts three weeks before the Labour Day weekend. I believe Old Crow and Pelly are the third week in August and Whitehorse schools usually start after Labour Day. This means that a student in Dawson would have to wait three weeks before his or her classes start if the teleconference teacher were in Whitehorse ... Scheduled differences are a main obstacle for teleconferencing."

Then his question to me was this: "Is the minister aware of any departmental plans for coordination among rural schools in teleconferencing? If not, will he consider taking the lead on this coordination?"

Again, I responded that the departments were to work with schools on that. I think it's more to the point that the member opposite was getting at.

When I opened last year's school conference, obviously welcoming members from across the territory to that, I certainly did make reference to a number of the initiatives they would be discussing, including the coordinated or the common school calendar but, again, leaving that, of course, to educational experts to get into the details. I believe it was on the Saturday morning that that presentation took place — again, a senior Education official. I think about an hour or an hour and 15 minutes was allotted to that. All members can find a copy of that presentation on the AYSCBC website. If not, I'd be happy to have staff direct them to that.

So just to correct the member opposite — it wasn't just an offhand comment during my open remarks last year. That's, as I mentioned, the early contact with the school councils and me even mentioning it on the floor of the House when it got to the point that it did. We were surprised, but we took quick action, I think, and were able to come up with something that meets the needs of our various communities.

What we've done is to move from 15 individual academic calendars to two common start dates, which allows us to facilitate those two teacher institutes. I guess the other major change is that each student will attend school for a minimum of 180 days per year. Under the old system we had one school in the territory that — I believe — was down as low as 170 days, up to a high of 186. Even on this 180-day minimum, when going to Mayo and speaking to the principal there, it looks like they are going to go beyond that minimum when they set their school calendar. They have asked for additional days above the 180. Again, I think this sets us up as an enabler — such as the

changes to the *Education Act* — to deliver programs in a way that will help us maximize the use of our resources and, as said in my opening response, to mention things such as rural hubs and bringing school students together in a broader community.

I know there is some talk of even having a joint cohort of grade 10 students from a number of communities start in a classroom and work together through the grades 10, 11 and 12 years. I think we have some exciting things coming forward, and I look forward to building on the opportunities of what those two common start dates will allow us to do. We certainly won't take for granted the importance that communities have placed on establishing these calendars. We look forward to working with them and involving them in discussions throughout the coming year as we set future calendars. That's really the goal. I didn't want to turn the clock back a year, but I think it was important to let individuals know where we got to in December and about the good work done, including the good work of the Deputy Minister of Education who went up to the community of Dawson City in January while I was away on personal time and met with community members to answer their questions. That's the one thing I want to ensure all school communities and of course the administrators in the school: we will be taking the lead on the discussions for future school calendars — those common start dates — and try to accommodate the different needs that arose, such as family needs and traditional cultural values and hunting needs. Of course, the most important one is improving those student outcomes.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for those answers. The administrators in our schools are incredibly important. I alluded to that earlier but they're the front people who meet the communities, who work as a liaison between the teachers and the community. They're critical to community and school involvement and interaction, more so in our communities or even of more importance in our communities. They have a pivotal role.

I recently learned that three principals had left their positions since the beginning of the school year and wondered what supports had been given to them prior to their leaving, how their positions were related to the community, what work was done to help those principals in their positions? They were all relatively new in their positions. I guess that's why I was alluding to the educational leadership program. What are we doing to ensure that when we do get administrators into our communities, they have the supports necessary to be successful?

It's extremely disruptive to a school year and to the students and to the community when an administrator does leave during the year. It's not unheard of. I'm wondering what steps the department is taking to ensure smooth transitions, both coming into a community and upon leaving a community, so that they're better able to understand what is going on, to learn lessons from what is happening and to move forward and ensure our students don't have that experience any more than necessary.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I'm going to speak in general about the supports the department is providing as I can't comment, as members know, on individual personnel issues on the floor of the Legislature or anywhere.

Some of the initiatives that we've undertaken to assist all of our principals: we had a former principal and actually a former president of the Yukon Teachers Association, I believe, as a principal mentor, travelling to a number of rural communities to assist principals and provide support where he could. Obviously the role of the superintendents is very important. The Member for Mayo-Tatchun has mentioned that to me on a number of occasions, not only on the floor of this Assembly, but also outside of these chambers. We certainly recognize that and we have tremendous superintendents who work very hard and I'm very proud of the work they do.

We are always looking for opportunities to increase their contact time with schools. Administrators themselves come into Whitehorse four times per year for meetings to discuss professional development. I'm sure they share their individual concerns and look for solutions at those meetings as well. There is an orientation that I attended, not only with the principals but also vice-principals, prior to the start of the school year. I had an opportunity to address the principals and take any questions from them.

It was interesting; there weren't a lot of questions, but as we get more comfortable with each other, perhaps they'll ask me some more and can ask me some of the tough questions they want to ask.

One of the other things that we're looking to do through our teacher institutes — if the *Act to Amend the Education Act* passes — is we'll be able to have some leadership aspects and incorporate them into our teacher institute that will take place prior to the start of the school year. I know a document has been developed for the leadership framework. I don't have a copy of it here but I can certainly provide the member opposite with a copy, or it can be found on our website. It is a new professional development planning process — pardon me, it provides best practices for administration. Then again, with the teacher institute, that will help us with the new professional development planning process for administrators.

There are a number of initiatives we want to undertake to ensure all our principals, no matter where they are, whether in Old Crow, Watson Lake or any of our rural communities, or in Whitehorse, have the supports necessary to succeed.

I do agree with the Member for Mayo-Tatchun; they're an integral part of the school. I'm sure he would, in his experience, also be able to concur with me that they're an extremely important part of the community when it comes to rural Yukon.

Chair: Would the members like to take a break?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Committee of Whole will now come to order. We will continue with general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his answer and for what is happening and the support that is being given to our

administrators. It is much appreciated and I think what we need to do is look at a strategy to ensure that that continuity is there.

As communities transition from one principal to the next, each transition is a change in the school, so I think it's critical that we do spend some time with principals who have been successful in communities, as well as people who are moving into the communities, to find out what has made it successful and not. I'd like to acknowledge one of our principals who is leaving this year — Thomas Jirousek from Ross River, who has been in Ross River since 1990. I can remember when he came to the Yukon. That's 23 years of service in a community and it is quite remarkable.

There are a number of long-standing principals; some of them have just recently retired and some are probably going to retire in the near future. I guess my question for the minister: Has there been a concerted effort on a general level — a systemic level — to learn what was successful for them? And what did they find helped them to stay? Then on a specific level — like for Mr. Jirousek — will the superintendent spend some time in the community to find out who his supports in the community were, who he can rely on, what kinds of things the community expects, how best the new administrator can fit into the community — to pick his brain, as it were, so the next administrator has a good chance for success?

The second part of that question is around superintendents. As the minister mentioned, I do believe that superintendents should be in the schools. They are the window from the department into the schools and from the schools into the communities and from the communities into the department. As such, they play a very critical role. When we have principals coming in or transitioning into a community or out of a community, it's doubly important that the superintendent be in that community to help make that transition as smooth as possible. It's not good enough to send them off to the community and say, "Let me know if you have a problem or if I can help". It's far more beneficial for that superintendent to meet with the exiting principal to find out what makes it tick, what has been successful, what hasn't and to know the members of the community so that the following season, when a new administrator comes, the superintendent can introduce him to the community. They can provide some of that continuity.

Is there anything in place for that? Can the minister assure me that somebody will pick Mr. Jirousek's brain and develop a process whereby the transitions can become smoother and perhaps more successful?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I too would like to echo the member's comments about Thomas Jirousek and his incredible service to the community of Ross River and the students of that community and, indeed, his work at the principals meetings and other areas where I have been fortunate enough to be engaged with Thomas. He obviously has some great ideas and recognizes the unique aspects of learning in Ross River and what makes it work up there. So I would like to thank him for his time in helping educate Yukon students.

When it comes to the transition from all principals, no matter what they are — I won't speak to a specific instance — exit interviews are interviews conducted with those principals. We

all know of course that change is inevitable. It's how we manage that change that's the most important aspect.

There is engagement with school councils and, obviously, engagement with the superintendents during the transition.

I agree with the member opposite — that we need to ensure that superintendents get to spend as much time as possible in our schools and working with the deputy minister and Yukon Education officials. We're working toward freeing up their time to be in schools so that they're in the office across the river as little as possible and out in the schools, where we know they're needed and they're most effective. So that's what we're doing. Obviously, there are some times when they'll have to be in the department, working on some initiatives, but we want to make sure that their time is well-used and they spend as much time in the schools as possible.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that. One idea that has worked in the past — talking to a number of administrators who were around then — is the idea of placing a superintendent in a rural community. I know it was very successful when the superintendent was based in Dawson City.

If nothing else, on their way to Whitehorse, they were able to stop in at the various communities on the way. As any administrator will tell you, whether it is a school, business or whatever, I think it's particularly an education talking to the superintendents and the principals. There is always something to do in your inbox, but again, if we can go back to what is important, it's important that the principal get out and away from his inbox and spend some time in the school, just as it is important that we set up situations where the superintendents can spend time in the schools and in the communities as well.

As a suggestion, I would ask that the minister take another look at instituting one of the superintendent positions into a rural community. I know that Dawson City in the past has worked very well. As I said, what it allowed was that when the superintendent was travelling to and from Whitehorse, he or she — there was a he and a she in my time, anyway — were able to stop by the schools and get to know the schools much better. Much of a superintendent's time, as the minister to alluded today, is spent in the department and in Whitehorse.

It's critical that they get time in the school communities, not only to visit with the principal, but also to check with the staff to see how they're doing, to get a sense of things that are happening there and to spend time in the communities and such. I would ask that the minister consider putting a superintendent in one or two communities and look at that as an alternative.

While we're on principals, does the minister know how many principals will be leaving? I see we brought it up and talked about it last year, but it has been an ongoing issue. When principals are leaving, the positions are advertised very late into the year. I know that we know a number of principals are leaving. It is already April. In order to involve the community in the hiring of a principal, as is required by the *Education Act*, it would be important that that process begin now in terms of developing the process for the school councils so they're aware of what their role and responsibilities are in the hiring of a new principal.

It should be obvious that the advertising should be out now, because if we're hoping to attract people who are qualified — who are looking to make career changes — they're going to want to have an idea whether or not they have a job long before the end of May. We have often made the mistake of leaving it too late; we're hiring administrators in May and June. Many people have already taken other jobs or are reluctant to leave their current job because of commitments they've made. So as we mentioned last year, and the minister committed to, earlier is better than later. I'm wondering where the hiring for next year is. How many positions are we anticipating? When can we expect to see advertising in the paper and when can school councils expect to be involved in the process for developing interviews? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just a couple of questions there to address. The first part of the member's question was with respect to superintendents in communities.

In the previous response, we referred to Mr. Jirousek and his impending retirement from Ross River. There is also another senior person leaving the department, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Christie Whitley for her work as ADM of Public Schools. That position is currently being advertised. I believe it closes April 15. So recruitment is underway and I would certainly want to ensure that the new person in that position has the opportunity to deploy their resources. Of course, the superintendents, I believe, report directly to the ADM of Public Schools, so ensuring that that new person has the opportunity to deploy the resources as they see fit, I think, is very important.

When it comes to principals who are leaving — I think the member opposite referenced the role of school councils. Of course, they play a very important role in the hiring of principals in each individual school. My understanding is that the recruitment process for principals for next year will also begin on April 15. But as far as how many we need to have, we need to receive formal notice from the principals.

I guess this goes back to some of the change-management issues. We want to make sure that we work hard at the transition and try to recruit the best possible people for the schools no matter where they are in the territory and work with the school councils. We know that change is inevitable and through our exit interviews and a number of other initiatives that we want to undertake, that's how we want to make sure that we get the right people in the right places. As far as how many we'll be looking to recruit for next year, it won't be known until we receive notice. We certainly aren't in the business of insisting that our principals retire, but some will be moving on to retirement or other initiatives and we thank them for their service to Yukon education. We thank anyone who is involved with our public schools for their service to the Yukon Territory. Until we have formal notice, we won't know exactly how many individuals we'll be looking to hire for this fall.

Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I'm going to sub in here for a few questions. I'd like to thank the officials for their time today. I'll be brief with my questions.

I'd like to start with the *Yukon College Annual Report, 2011/12*. On page 5 of that report, section 5(b) reads: "Yukon

College will develop and implement a long-term capital plan that identifies future requirements for land, buildings and equipment.”

My question: Is this government policy for all departments? Is this a specific plan for the college, or is it department wide? Is Yukon College going out on a limb for planning for future development? In the department at large, is there a capital asset replacement plan that looks into the aging of buildings and saving money each year for some kind of long-term plan for replacement costs?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I thank the Member for Klondike for the question. With respect to Yukon College, one of the things we committed to in our platform was to ensure we made land available for the expansion of the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, as well as a possible expansion of the student residence. We’re still looking beyond that, so they can have some certainty beyond just those smaller expansions. We’re looking at a broader piece of property through the college endowment lands. I know that was discussed earlier in this Legislative Assembly. I believe it was in last spring’s sitting, or perhaps even that shortened sitting we had immediately after the election. Again, that is a Yukon College report, and I would refer the member opposite to the college and the report that was tabled.

When it comes to the public school facilities, what we have right now is a draft long-term facilities plan. We’re awaiting some other aspects, such as the seismic analysis. What we’re looking to use that document for — and I think I spoke about this in the fall, where it will be developed sometime during this fiscal year. I’d like to bring it forward to the Legislature during this fiscal year, as well, if everything goes as planned. It will identify the schools that are nearing the end of their life. There are a number of schools that were built — some of our older schools are in Whitehorse. Whitehorse Elementary, of course, is among our oldest schools — then Selkirk Street Elementary School and Christ the King Elementary School came in. Takhini Elementary School is of the same vintage, I believe. Even parts of Johnson Elementary School in the Chair’s riding are there too.

That’s what we’ll do; that’s what the Auditor General, I think, asked us to do — it was to come up with a long-term facilities plan including replacement and capital maintenance. That’s what I’m hoping to be able to provide to Members of the Legislature in this fiscal year. If I can’t meet those deadlines for some reason, I’ll certainly endeavor to provide it early in the following fiscal year.

Mr. Silver: Thank you to the minister for his response.

In terms of F.H. Collins school, early in the new year the minister quoted in a press release from two independent estimates. I was wondering if the minister could provide the cost analysis from these two independent costs estimates that the government referenced in determining the cost estimates for F.H. Collins original build that is now scrapped.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I think that that is a question better answered by the Minister of Highways and Public Works when it’s his turn up for budget debate.

Obviously, as the client department, we look to the expertise in Highways and Public Works to manage the contracting aspects and the actual construction aspects, so I would refer the Member for Klondike to the Minister of Highways and Public Works during debate on his department to answer that specific question.

Mr. Silver: I know that there may be an issue with sensitive information inside of those documents, but I was just wondering if the minister has available the cost estimates — just the raw numbers themselves from these two estimates?

Hon. Mr. Kent: Again, I’m not, obviously, stalling or anything like that. I just think it’s important that our ministerial responsibility — the Department of Education is the client department. We look to Highways and Public Works to provide the contracting expertise and the construction management piece, so again, I would refer the member opposite to the Minister of Highways and Public Works when his department is up for debate with respect to that question.

Mr. Silver: I’m going to assume that means I’m getting a guarantee from the Minister responsible for Highways and Public Works on that one. Okay. Thank you, I appreciate the answer.

Moving on, this is my final question for now. I have a question on the July 20, 2012 draft agreement respecting section 17.7, education provisions as set out in *The Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Self-Government Agreement*. The purpose of this agreement is to set out the mutual commitments in education between the Government of Yukon and the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in government. On October 25, 2012, Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Council formally endorsed this July 20 draft agreement. It is my understanding that the draft agreement has not yet been formally endorsed by the Government of Yukon. The minister has spoken in this Assembly of a partnership with the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in. After meeting with Chief Taylor and the Education department at Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, all would agree that this partnership would be best acknowledged through a commitment from Yukon government to enter into this particular agreement.

I would not agree, after my meeting with the chief and council, that they actually consider what they have going right now a partnership; whereas they do believe that they’re working closely together. The word “partnership” would be bound and determined, based upon a signing of this agreement, in their opinion.

This agreement will recognize Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in’s jurisdiction for the dividing and sharing of responsibilities for education, based on *The Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Self-Governing Agreement*, and it will strengthen the work that Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in and the Yukon government are doing to achieve Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in education objectives. It may be the first of its kind in the Yukon, Madam Chair — a significant move for Yukon to acknowledge and to support the First Nations self-governing agreement jurisdictions in the areas of education. I would just like to give the minister a chance to respond to that.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Maybe what I could talk about a little bit are some of the aspects of how we are partnering or cooperating with Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation on a number of

initiatives. For this year we are looking at some dual-credit trades training in Dawson City, along with THFN, Yukon College and Robert Service School. They are exploring the feasibility of the dual trades welding course, and that trades trailer that we've recently ordered obviously has the capability for welding, so perhaps that could be delivered as early as this fall.

We're expecting that trailer to be on site here in the Yukon in September and there may be some opportunities to offer carpentry dual trades in January 2014 in Dawson City if the welding course is delayed for some unforeseen reason. There's alternative programming similar to the Individual Learning Centre but different in the aspect that it's offered within the Robert Service School. We're looking to implement short- and long-term solutions as appropriate. There's a staffing position that will support the alternative program pilot from January to May and we'll look to review the project and perhaps, if it's successful, continue it this fall.

One of the other things I'd like to highlight is THFN's resources on the residential school experience they've developed. The First Nation Programs and Partnerships unit has a workplan with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation to develop a teachers' guide for the book that is entitled *Finding Our Way Home*, to be piloted in the fall of 2013 for grade 10 students. Those are just a few of the initiatives we're undertaking with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and the community of Dawson City. With respect to the specific agreement the member referenced — the July 20, 2012, draft agreement on 17.7 — my understanding is that it's currently being reviewed by the Executive Council Office Land Claims and Implementation Secretariat. Perhaps I'll get an answer back to the member at a later date or even when Executive Council Office is up.

I hate to punt you on two consecutive questions, but I've had to refer you to a couple of different departments for the answers to your last two questions.

Mr. Silver: I would just urge the minister responsible for Education: As he's looking for initiatives and direction as far as increasing graduation rates, increasing inclusion of First Nations in the classroom, this is it. Section 17.7 of this self-government agreement is the bread and butter of all that work. I urge him to expedite this process. It has been awhile in the process from the original inception of the idea to the mailing back and forth. We can go over those timelines if you want, but more importantly, I just really am urging the minister and his department to take a serious look at this and expedite the process.

I'm looking at the individual CELCs who are working at Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in right now. I'm looking at the people they have hired within the department to run the independent learning centre. This is a win. This is guaranteed win.

I'm looking at the types of students that they're attracting and I know that this, being grassroots and developed by people on the ground floor who actually know what is most important for the students, is a win for this department. I'd just like to conclude with that.

Thanks for your time, Madam Chair, and thanks to the department officials for being here today.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just quickly in response again, I know that it's an important agreement to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and it's something that I will look to meet with the Premier on in his responsibility for Executive Council Office, to see if we can expedite that agreement and continue the great work and great successes that we've had with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and other First Nations. Just one of the other initiatives that I would like to highlight is the memorandum of understanding that we've recently concluded. My understanding is it was a bit of a long time getting it through to where we were able to sign and get Canada to sign, but I think the First Nation Education Summit that occurred here within the last couple of weeks was very successful. I know there has been a follow-up meeting requested between the Grand Chief and me — and some of our senior officials — that I believe is being scheduled right now to determine how to best move forward on the action plan for that — coming out of that summit that is envisioned in the memorandum of understanding. Again, some great and positive things that we are doing with First Nations, but absolutely more work to be done and we really need to focus on those outcomes and close the gap that exists not only between the graduation rates, but the labour gap that exists between First Nations and non-First Nations here in the territory.

Mr. Tredger: I'd like to talk a little bit about the Individual Learning Centre and its very successful and proactive way of reaching out to a lot of students who have fallen through the cracks. Has the department examined the program and found out what the keys to success are and talked to the principal, Mr. Bennett, and discussed ways that he could use extra support?

I know last year there was mention of a couple of pilot projects. I haven't seen a report on how they went and what successes they had and whether they are being continued this year or not. In terms of the ILC itself, over 100 students are currently attending it, which is quite remarkable. Many of these students have, as I mentioned, fallen through the cracks, and haven't been extremely successful in school, and I'm wondering whether or not the minister would consider counselling services there? We're often looking for ways to reach hard-to-reach students. I'm sure a full-time counsellor there would go a long way toward helping them as they struggle through. I would also suggest that it's a prime opportunity for inter-agency support to work together. I wonder whether the Minister of Education has talked with the Minister of Health and Social Services about ways they could combine and deliver services to those students together.

Those are a number of questions around the ILC. We do have an opportunity there, working in conjunction with the principal, to look at things like how we reach those students so not only are they successful in school but so that it's carried beyond that. As the minister is aware, they're an extremely high-risk population.

So it's an opportunity for inter-agency work, an opportunity for counselling, and an opportunity to spread whatever is working there to other schools and how the pilot projects are working. A final part to that is, when I look at many of the rural

schools, they have very small high school classes, usually multi-grade.

I wonder whether the format that is used at the ILC in terms of delivery of curriculum and the pedagogy that is used in doing that — whether that can be transferred or whether that has been looked at — transferring that to rural communities in rural high schools. Currently, the schools are trying to replicate what is done in large classes in large single-grade classes and single classes. They're trying to replicate that with one teacher and multi-grades, presenting a certain amount of difficulty.

I would like to hear what follow-up steps the minister is doing on that. What kinds of supports is he looking to add to the Individual Learning Centre? What kind of communication has he had with the staff there as to what might be transferred to other situations?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I think when it comes to the ILC here in Whitehorse — I mentioned it in my opening remarks and thanked the late Minister John Edzerza for his role in establishing that ILC. I had the opportunity to attend the graduation ceremonies and listened to a number of students and spoke to some students at that event last year.

A couple of the keys to success of the ILC are that it is individual learning. There's flexibility for students — we provide bus passes for those students as part of our program that we started last year with the City of Whitehorse, so there's some independence and some opportunity for them to get to the school, depending on their individual needs.

I think that it's the success that we've seen at the ILC in Whitehorse that led us to launch the two pilots in this current school year — Old Crow and Dawson City. Again, they're in their first year. They just started in 2012-13, so I think it would be a bit premature to launch a full evaluation of the programming, but that said, we've had some encouraging results and comments coming in. Again, with respect to those programs, we'll wait just until they get a little bit more traction under them to evaluate their success.

But given the populations, it shouldn't take very long to look, in answer to the Member for Klondike, at the alternative learning opportunities in Dawson City that have been presented. Again, there are alternative learning opportunities in Old Crow because I believe it is housed within the school there as well, so it's not a stand-alone building where this education is being delivered. It's being delivered in the school, but to those students who perhaps aren't successful in traditional learning environments or even not successful in travelling to bigger centres to take their education.

The member opposite talked about some of the smaller class sizes in the high schools and perhaps combining some of those rural high school students into one class or one cohort, but what we're looking at as part of the rural action plan is to come up with some rural hubs. We are looking at perhaps as many as five communities and establishing a grade 10 cohort across those five communities and offering an opportunity for them to learn together and to graduate as a cohort.

Rather than having all the students from all the high schools — high school-aged students in a community like Faro or Carmacks or Mayo form individual classes in those schools

— we're looking at some of the opportunities for all those students to come together as a group and move through school together — move through their high school years together. We think there are some great learning opportunities and perhaps some increased outcomes and being exposed to different learning environments — experiential learning opportunities, as well, are a big part of that. That's where we are looking to move with that and with the establishment of rural hubs at the high school level. Again, much of this will be made more apparent as we move through the rural action plan. I know I committed to the Member for Klondike and the Member for Mayo-Tatchun to review that plan. Once we are in a position to have that dialogue and have some meaningful input from members opposite, we'll move with that. We are not quite there yet. I know I mentioned to the member opposite and the Member for Klondike that perhaps in January or February we would be there, but it's not at a point now where there is an opportunity for them to view it and engage in dialogue with me and senior officials on it. It's not something that I've dismissed or abandoned; it's just a little bit delayed.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his answer. In many of the rural schools, there is only one class for high school students. They aren't segregated. It would be interesting to have further discussions about a rural hub. I think — more so than discussing it with myself or the Member for Klondike — current staff and communities be involved in those discussions, and I would encourage the minister to do that. One part of the ILC question that — I guess I asked too many questions at once, or something, but I was concerned about the students who attend the ILC because they are extremely high-risk students. They are really making an effort to turn around their lives, and quite successfully — and hats off to those students. Some of them just need a different learning environment. Some of them need more support than that. I do think it is an opportunity for Health and Social Services and Education to work together to provide a supportive net to help ensure these students not only succeed in the classroom, but further on.

Maybe I'll just leave that and see if the minister has considered that before I go on to another question.

Hon. Mr. Kent: I know that among all colleagues and all departments in the Yukon government, we're looking for opportunities to partner. I can certainly take up what the Member for Mayo-Tatchun asked with the appropriate ministers — in this case, the Minister for Health and Social Services — with respect to the particular question that he asked.

One of the opportunities that we see Education being able to deliver for our students is on the career counselling side of things — whether those students are in the ILCs or perhaps even some of our other more traditional learning schools. Given the fact that education has all the labour market data and those types of opportunities, we're looking to have a career counselling workshop as part of the upcoming teachers institute — the two that I mentioned in the House here today. That's one aspect that I think we can take control of, but with respect to the member's question, we're always looking to enhance partnerships.

I know we're working closely with Health and Social Services on a number of initiatives. I mentioned the literacy strategy. The literacy summit that we had in December, I believe it was, was co-sponsored by my department and the Department of Health and Social Services. It was the *New Horizons* piece. We're also looking to cooperate and are actively cooperating on some early learning initiatives and how we can coordinate those initiatives, so there is some great work already being done by our two departments and we'll certainly add this to the list and see if there are ways that we can explore that and provide some of the supports that are necessary to students, no matter what school they are in, including, of course, the Individual Learning Centre.

Mr. Tredger: I apologize. I guess I was getting a little ahead of myself. I was under the false impression that the pilot schools for ILC learning had occurred last year, but I guess I got a little excited about the possibility. I'm glad it's going this year and I look forward to the lessons learned from it.

I'd like to move on just a little bit to dual credit. The minister has mentioned that.

Does he have a breakdown on the number of students who are taking dual credit courses who are university bound or are taking college credit courses, as well as the number of students who are involved in skills and trades? Does he know whether those numbers have increased over the last year? I believe this is the second year of the program. What kind of uptake do we have on that?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I don't have the exact numbers for that, but I know they're not as great as we'd like them to be. We just started this in late 2011 or perhaps early 2012. We made the announcement with the college that we would be offering them. They are more centred around the arts courses or university transfer courses. What we're looking to introduce as part of the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining — and I know we'll have a good opportunity to talk about this tomorrow afternoon during private members' day, but also the dual credit in the trades. That's where we're looking to perhaps get a little bit better uptake. But again, I think it's too early to tell. I certainly don't want to judge what we are trying to do here with the university transfer courses too soon.

I think it's important to just give it a little bit more time and we'll see if we can continue to get a better uptake year over year, as far as that goes. I think it's another important programming aspect that we can offer our students as they move throughout the education side of things.

But again, where I'd like to shift the focus for dual credit is to the trades — or maybe not shift the focus, but add dual-credit trades training as soon as we can, starting, of course, with the dual credit welding that I talked about as a possibility for Dawson City for this fall.

Mr. Tredger: I encourage the minister to continue that path. I'm a strong believer in making that transition from high school courses to college or to university courses as seamless as possible. I found when I was in Pelly that when I could get high school students intermingling with college students, they learned from each other and it was beneficial for both. We

hadn't invented the term "dual credit" at that time, but it seems that's what was occurring.

This leads me to my next question. The Education department has announced a Yukon College mobile trades trailer that is going to be in place in the fall. I have a number of questions around that but, since we sort of led into it with this, will there be the possibility for rural students to do dual credit training through that? Has that possibility been looked at? Will rural high school students be involved? Will rural staff be involved? I assume there will be a rotation when the trailer comes through the community and spends one, two, three months or whatever it is there. Will the opportunities be afforded to high school students as well as college students? Will high school staff be involved in it, whether there will be options for not necessarily advanced courses, but maybe some introductory ones, maybe even students as young as in grades 6, 7 and 8, where they're forming their ideas?

There's a lot of potential in such a trailer. I know people in my community are excited about the possibility and I hope the minister is considering many of those ideas, options and ways to involve school students.

Hon. Mr. Kent: We're very pleased and excited to contribute \$1.1 million — I think the estimated cost is \$1.8 million — to purchase that. The balance, of course, will be funded by CanNor to purchase that mobile trades trailer for Yukon College. Again the idea behind it is to make trades training available throughout the territory. What that is envisioned to do is help both government and industry in its efforts to address the current labour market shortage, and economic potential of the mining industry in particular, in the territory. What has been found is that trades training is difficult to deliver outside of Whitehorse due to the lack of adequate training facilities in our communities, particularly for the mechanical trades that are in demand in the growing mining industry. The mobile training lab would also allow for the delivery of dual credit programming that would encourage students to stay in school and to provide them with strong job prospects upon graduation. It's going to provide trades training opportunities as well for adult students in rural communities who aspire to become apprentices or to obtain necessary pre-employment skills to secure employment in the mining industry.

The success of the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining and the work that was done on the proposal is by the multitude of partners who were involved. The proposal for that centre wasn't something that was driven by just a few individuals; it involved industry; it involved First Nations; it involved industry NGOs and Yukon College and department officials, not only in Education but also Economic Development and Energy, Mines and Resources. There is a very substantial list of individuals who participated in the development of that. The key for us is that we're looking to train individuals to meet the labour market needs that are identified by industry. That's where we were successful in our efforts with the Government of Canada in that they announced during their budget speech that they would be supporting the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. Many of the individual ministers to whom we spoke leading up to Yukon Days in Ottawa and also our time down

there were appreciative of the work and the opportunities to train Yukoners for Yukon opportunities, and indeed, train Canadians for Canadian opportunities.

With respect to the mobile trades trailer, it is really for the benefit of rural Yukon. Yukon College will own the asset and will deploy it to the communities as necessary, based on demand, the programming requests from the community campuses and how we feed in as the Department of Education on the dual credit piece through Public Schools.

I think there is an opportunity for this trailer to perhaps even be on-site at some of our producing mines to provide individuals who are currently working there with enhanced skills to upgrade their position and earn even higher paying jobs at the different mine sites. We're very excited about our commitment to this trades trailer and our commitment to the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining.

Mr. Tredger: I'm still not clear how much education students will be able to benefit from this, especially at high school and younger ages, but I look forward to this as the plans for this trailer roll out. I agree with the minister that there is a demand for it and I would encourage them to work closely with Yukon College so that all communities can benefit from it.

It's critical that we find a way to reach and involve our students at a young age in skills training and advancement and developing the aptitude and the interest in the trades. I heard the Department of Education will be spending \$1.1 million and NRCan another \$700,000 and that the trailer will be available for September 2013. If that is indeed what is expected, then I would hope that planning is now taking place as to the deployment of the trailer and where it will be deployed. I agree with the minister it's important that skilled trades training be delivered in the communities.

I'd also like to know if this project was tendered. Were there discussions with the building trades council in Whitehorse about this trailer? I know they have indicated their interest in new trades training facilities, both mobile and stationary. We'll leave it at that.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Again, this trailer will be designed to help those high school students with dual credit training in mechanical trades.

I know the one trailer we have ordered from the supplier in Ontario is set up and equipped. It's expandable to almost 1,000 square feet, I believe. I can have the name of the company — or the member opposite can find the name of the company and easily go on their website to take a look at what these trailers will offer. Yukon College also has available the two mining simulators. I believe one is actually being deployed to the Minto mine to enhance the training opportunities for individuals who are currently working there.

With respect to how it was arrived at, there was an extensive process in developing Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining.

It involved a number of individuals, as I mentioned, from a wide cross-section of the community, and that was something they had identified as an opportunity to help deliver that training outside of Whitehorse. As I mentioned in an earlier response, one of the most prohibitive things to delivering the

training outside of Whitehorse is the lack of adequate training facilities in our communities, so again the one dual credit piece that is being contemplated is for welding in Dawson City. We look forward to working with the college to ensure that that trailer is deployed to other Yukon communities that have road access so that similar training can also be undertaken in those communities. I know many of the aspects and one of them is welding — there are millwright opportunities, there are electrical opportunities, and there is one more that I can't recall at this time.

With respect to whether or not this was a public tender, it wasn't. It was a question that I asked of the college at the time as well. What they explained to me is that the supplier is the only supplier that provides this specialized equipment. That is again a question that I asked at the time and that was the response I got from Yukon College when they were looking to make this purchase. There wasn't an opportunity to tender it because it is highly specialized equipment that is being provided by a Canadian firm. I believe they are located in Mississauga.

We look forward to its arrival in September and how we can best deploy it to meet the needs of all Yukoners and be as fair as possible with having the trailer travel to different communities to deliver on the training aspects that the college has identified as well as the training aspects that we identified for dual credit opportunities in our high schools.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you for that answer. I appreciate it. Since this will be for high school students — you mentioned the lack of an adequate shop and food preparation facilities in the communities — I know that the department has been working on that and the minister referenced a course that was being given in Mayo. Some of the concerns that were raised last year around the facilities in the rural communities were the number of visitations to set up the shop, the sharpening and maintenance of tools, the liability when you have a teacher who is not a trained shop instructor in that.

The minister I'm sure is struggling to resolve some of these issues. Can you give me an update on that? You mentioned there was a course offered in Mayo. How many other schools now are offering such courses? I think of rural schools in particular. How successful has the program been in delivering these services and how many rural students now have access to ongoing shop and food preparation courses? When you say a course was offered in Mayo, was that a year-long course or a short, pilot-project kind of course — or did it fit into a prescribed curriculum? I guess what I'm looking for is an update on the program and where we're at with it and how soon rural schools can expect regular shop facilities.

Hon. Mr. Kent: Just to clarify, when I spoke to the difficulty in delivering trades training outside of Whitehorse, it is due to the lack of training facilities particularly for the mechanical trades that are in demand in the growing mining industry. I think that's important and that's one of the reasons that we've moved to purchase this mobile trades unit.

I know the member opposite referenced a couple of things with respect to shops throughout rural Yukon. Of course, we've hired a departmental resource — I believe he's a former shop

teacher from one of the local high schools — to act as the trades coordinator. I think that is his title. But he has been visiting a number of the shops and talking to the shop teachers. I think we've had WCB assessments completed in most if not all of our shops across the territory.

I've had the opportunity to poke my head in a couple of them during my school tours and take a look at the facilities that they've got, most recently, in Mayo, where — again, I'll have to get back to the member opposite with the specifics to his question. It was a very informal tour that I was on with the deputy minister and the principal and was actually joined by the — pardon me, it was the president of the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works.

We were just doing some community tours while we were there making the announcement on the Mayo seniors facility and poked our heads in there and saw a number of projects. When I mentioned it earlier, I didn't have the specific details the member is looking for on that project. I'm not even sure at what grade level it was at, but if it's important to the member opposite, I can look into it further.

There are a number of different opportunities for shop training for some of our younger high school students throughout the territory and how we proceed with that is important. An important part of that is the trades coordinator that we can provide.

Before I sit down, I know the member asked a question prior to the break about the educational leadership program. Some of the numbers I've been able to get from officials. I take this opportunity to thank them for being so responsive in providing them. Six of the graduates of the educational leadership program are now vice-principals or principals. There was no intake in 2011-12 due to a low number of applicants.

The 2012-13 program is for all vice-principals, and it is starting this month. Hopefully, that provides an answer to the question the member opposite asked prior to our break.

Mr. Tredger: I'm wondering if the minister could share a report from the trades coordinator as to what has been accomplished in the past year. I wonder if he can also provide us with a school-by-school report of what facilities are available in each school and whether or not they're being used to deliver curriculum. How is he staffing those positions in order that students are able to benefit from those kinds of programs?

Hon. Mr. Kent: We can pull that information together. I'm not sure if there's an official report from the trades coordinator, but if one does indeed exist, I can certainly look to provide that for members opposite. We can also look into the shop facilities on a school-by-school basis. When it comes to the staffing allocation formula — what we can do to identify what kind of staff we have in our rural schools. This is one of the things we are looking to enable with the two common start dates to the school year — perhaps to be able to share resources among rural schools that are in close proximity. I know I spoke to the Member for Klondike about a trades hub in Dawson City. That may or may not work out, depending on how the common start dates shake down, but I think there are some real opportunities for sharing of resources, particularly in rural

Yukon, where perhaps it doesn't make sense to have, in this instance, one full-time shop teacher assigned to one school. But there could be opportunities for that individual to travel between schools. It speaks to that enabling that we're looking to do by increasing our instructional hours and looking to bring our two common start dates in our calendars a little bit more in alignment so that we can deliver that type of programming outside of Whitehorse.

Mr. Tredger: Could the minister provide us with the number of students who are enrolled in skills classes this year? Has there been a trend over the last few years for the number to be increasing, decreasing or staying the same? We have talked in the House here quite extensively about the need to involve students in the programming. We should be seeing a corresponding increase in the number of students enrolled in applied arts courses. Could the minister make that available, please?

Hon. Mr. Kent: I know there are a number of initiatives that were undertaken to increase the number of students who are involved in skilled-trades training. Obviously the great work of Skills Canada and YWITT — when the Minister of Economic Development and I were at the graduation ceremonies for the Introduction to Mining Operations, one of the students — her tuition for that program was sponsored by YWITT — and, after completing that program, she is now off to work at one of the mines in the Yukon.

Tremendous things are being accomplished by organizations such as Skills Canada, YWITT and others that are involved in trades training and bringing those opportunities to Yukon students.

One of the things that I think is exciting that the Department of Education is doing is with respect to our Yukon excellence awards. Members will know that in the past we've based our Yukon achievement tests, or the YATs, on an Alberta model for grades 3, 6 and 9. We discontinued that this year and replaced it with B.C.-based assessments for grades 4 and 7. Historically, students have been able to access Yukon excellence awards based on the grade 9 YATs and the B.C. provincial exams.

The number of mandatory exams has been decreasing over the past number of years, as well, at the provincial level. So students currently in grades 10, 11 and 12 have grade 9 marks that can be used for those excellence awards. What we're looking to do going forward is to also include opportunities for Yukon excellence awards in multi-disciplinary areas such as technology, fine arts and applied skills, as well as First Nation studies. That's something that we'll be looking to introduce this year. There are a number of initiatives that the department and the NGO sector are undertaking to improve the involvement of students in our skilled trades.

Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Cathers that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 10, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2013-14*, 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. Cathers: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.