



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Monday, November 4, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2019 Fall Sitting

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

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
Paolo Gallina	Porter Creek Centre
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Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, November 4, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Cathers: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming to the House constituents of mine, including: Yukon Farmer of the Year Sarah Ouellette of Sarah's Harvest; and Brian Lendrum and Susan Ross as well as Jennifer Hall from the Yukon Agricultural Association.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: As well, here today for the Farmer of the Year tribute, I would like to welcome: Anne Savoie who is here with Senior Industry Development Office of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Brad Barton, research technician in the Agriculture branch — and a key member who puts our banquet together every year; Shannon Gladwin, agriculture lands coordinator in the Agriculture branch; and Kirk Price, acting director in the Agriculture branch as well.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Monsieur le Président, s'il vous plaît, aidez-moi à dire bonjour et bienvenue à beaucoup de gens qui sont ici pour un hommage: for FLSD employees — André Bourcier; Coralie Langevin; Laurianne Grenier-Deschesnes; Nancy Power from L'AFY — who, by the way, is hosting Business After Hours this Thursday at L'AFY at 5:00 p.m., I think, and I think that all of Yukon is welcome — Marie-Alexis Dangreau; Jean-Sébastien Blais; Louise-Hélène Villeneuve; Emilie Thibeault-Maloney; Marc Champagne; Madame President Jeanne Beaudoin; Roch Nadon; Edith Bélanger; Stéphanie Nobécourt; Jean-Pascal Ladroue; Hannah Engasser; Isabelle Bouffard; Kim Ouellette; Emeline Brocard; Audrey Percheron; l'Aurore boréale Julien Latraverse; et deux jeunes pour l'hommage aujourd'hui, Miléna Georgeault et Maxime Gouyou-Beauchamps. Bienvenue.

Applause

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

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Farmer of the Year

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Yukon's Farmer of the Year Sarah Ouellette of Sarah's Harvest.

Every year, our Agriculture branch — with the help of the agricultural community — recognizes a farmer based on their accomplishments, volunteerism, good farm management skills, and use of innovative ideas.

Sarah Ouellette is a perfect example of a farmer who shows commitment and passion for agriculture in Yukon, and we cannot think of a better person to honour with Farmer of the Year. Sarah has been farming for six years, and her certified organic operation is currently established at the Lendrum Ross Farm on Lake Laberge.

Her nominators describe a professional, highly skilled operation that not only produces high-quality food, but it is also a place that contributes to our community's knowledge and appreciation of agriculture.

On a small half-acre plot, she produces incredible quantities of quality vegetables, which she sells to Whitehorse restaurants, grocery stores, and the Fireweed Community Market under the brand name Sarah's Harvest. Her production is well-planned and well-suited to her climate and soil conditions. She uses succession planting, row covers, raised beds, drip irrigation, minimal tillage, and the simplest of tools. She uses strictly organic methods, and her farm is certified by the Pacific Agricultural Certification Society.

Sarah is very committed to encouraging and inspiring others to grow food. For the past three seasons, she has trained participants in the agriculture internship program and has worked hard to provide them with a rich and varied experience. She is often joined in her garden by customers and other volunteers who catch her infectious enthusiasm for gardening, the outdoor life, hard work, and good food.

Sarah is very involved in many organizations that advocate and move Yukon agriculture forward. Sarah has been involved with Growers of Organic Food Yukon, the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee, and the Fireweed Community Market. She has been coordinator of the successful Kids on the Farm program. She produced a beautiful, informative booklet on the program, which is headed by the following credo: "Cultivating knowledge, appreciation and awareness of agriculture through experiential learning". I would like to close by reading what one of Sarah's nominators said about her amazing produce: "The vegetables and herbs were always beautiful and tasty. I managed to get enough of her Klondike-sized cabbages to make my winter supply of kraut and a few good pots of borscht with the beets, cabbages, and dill. Once at the market, I saw all of Sarah's carrots scooped up before my very eyes by a visiting chef."

Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of success and dedication that we can all be proud of. Congratulations to Sarah, Yukon's Farmer of the Year, and I wish Sarah all the best in her farming career into the future. To all of those listening today, please continue to support Yukon agriculture, and I hope the delicious food from Sarah's Harvest and many other Yukon producers has a regular place on your tables at home.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Sarah Ouellette of Sarah's Harvest as our 2019 Farmer of the Year.

As the minister mentioned, she operates a farm on the Lendrum Ross Farm, and it's really notable that Sarah not only grows fresh organic produce for distribution to stores, caterers, chefs, and for purchase directly at the Fireweed Community Market, but the quality of that produce is always excellent and it is a great example of Yukon-grown produce and vegetables.

Sarah has also played an incredible role in promoting farming in the Yukon to a younger generation of Yukoners through coordinating the Kids on the Farm Program, which brings students and farmers together on educational farm visits. She is actively involved with the Growers of Organic Food Yukon and the Fireweed Community Market, and she is a member of the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee, which provides advice and guidance to the Yukon government on a number of agriculture and agri-food issues.

I would like to thank Sarah for her continued involvement in and contributions to the agricultural sector here in the Yukon. Her dedication to organic farming and to the industry is a significant contributor to the success of farming here in the Yukon as well as to local food production. The Yukon has great potential for growing more of our own food and through Sarah's hard work and dedication both in growing that food and in promoting the potential to a new generation of Yukoners — it is helping take us down the road to an even brighter future.

Again, congratulations, Sarah, for this well-deserved award and thank you.

Applause

Ms. White: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to join today's voices to celebrate the 2019 Farmer of the Year, Sarah Ouellette — owner and operator of Sarah's Harvest.

Nestled in the gently rolling hills along the north Klondike Highway a stone's throw from Lake Laberge, you can find row upon row of certified organic vegetables. In her acceptance speech, Sarah pointed out that farming isn't something you can do in isolation. It requires a community of consumers who value your product and folks around you who share your vision and are willing and able to help you achieve it.

One thing that we hear over and over in Yukon is how the agricultural community recognizes the challenges and the rewards of farming and supports one another. We often see that in the sharing of land.

After having met Brian Lendrum and Susan Ross through the Fireweed Community Market and other venues, I would suggest that Sarah won the mentor lottery. Sarah's Harvest is located on the Lendrum Ross Farm property. She talked about how, despite retiring, the help and support that she gets from Brian and Susan makes all the difference.

Sarah sells her certified organic produce all over town and was quick to point out that, without buyers, her business wouldn't be booming. During the summer months, you can find her on Thursdays at the Fireweed Community Market behind

beautifully laid-out tables of orderly vegetables and herbs. Her table is so popular that you need to get there early or you might be disappointed when she is sold out of the top sellers. You can find Sarah's Harvest produce at both Riverside Grocery and Wykes' Independent Grocer, which she thanks for giving a small operation like hers an avenue for sales. She also highlighted the importance of the restaurant and catering industry in Yukon for investing in local produce and how that connection strengthens farming opportunities in Yukon.

If anything was clear on Saturday night at the North of 60 banquet when Sarah Ouellette was named the 2019 Yukon Farmer of the Year, it was that Yukon farmers are supportive and enthusiastic of others who are passionate about farming, because she made her way to the stage through a standing ovation of her peers.

Félicitations, Sarah. You totally deserve the break.

Applause

In recognition of National Francophone Immigration Week

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Monsieur le Président, c'est un grand honneur de rendre hommage aujourd'hui à l'occasion de la semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone au nom de tous les membres de l'Assemblée législative du Yukon.

Plus d'une centaine d'activités locales, provinciales, territoriales et nationales auront lieu partout au pays cette semaine. Ces activités permettront de favoriser les échanges et de célébrer la différence qui nous unit.

Le Yukon est riche en accents de diverses origines et possède une communauté francophone dynamique. Nous sommes la troisième région la plus bilingue au Canada.

Je rends hommage à Miléna Georgeault et Maxime Gouyou-Beauchamps à l'occasion de la semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone. Miléna et Maxime forment un couple originaire de France qui contribue à faire du Yukon un endroit accueillant et prospère. Alors ils sont un bon exemple de l'immigration francophone d'ici. Ils dirigent Terre Boréale, une agence de tourisme d'aventure bien établie à Whitehorse.

Miléna et Maxime ont emménagé au Yukon en deux-mille-onze. Biologistes de formation, ils ont d'abord travaillé en protection de la biodiversité. Cette proximité avec la nature leur a donné envie de faire découvrir le Yukon et ses endroits reculés aux visiteurs. C'est ainsi que Terre Boréale a vu le jour en deux-mille-treize.

Le sens des affaires s'est avéré une seconde nature chez Miléna et Maxime. Après seulement trois ans d'activité, ils ont remporté un Laurier de la PME. Ce prix souligne l'excellence de petites et moyennes entreprises francophones et acadiennes à l'extérieur du Québec.

Monsieur le Président, comme beaucoup de Yukonnaises et Yukonnais, Miléna et Maxime adorent le plein air et ont à cœur la préservation de la nature. C'est pourquoi leur vision d'affaires est axée sur une pratique responsable du tourisme. En plus de minimiser l'impact écologique de leurs aventures guidées, ils versent un pour cent des bénéfices de Terre Boréale à la Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative.

Miléna, Maxime, votre contribution au territoire va bien au-delà des retombées économiques. Votre parcours est une source d'inspiration pour les entrepreneurs d'ici et d'ailleurs. Je suis persuadé que votre contact chaleureux et votre passion convaincront plus d'un visiteur à suivre vos traces et à s'établir au Yukon.

Merci à vous deux, à votre équipe et à toutes les personnes immigrantes qui contribuent à la richesse du Yukon. Bonne Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone!

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. White: I have for tabling a government press release dated August 28, 2018, entitled "Whitehorse Legion helps Yukon students learn about service and sacrifice" and a letter dated November 1, 2019, to the Minister of Education from the president of Legion Branch 254 in Whitehorse.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 300: *Act to Eliminate Daylight Saving Time* — Introduction and First Reading

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I move that a bill entitled *Act to Eliminate Daylight Saving Time* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Kluane that a bill entitled *Act to Eliminate Daylight Saving Time* be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 300 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House directs the Yukon government to immediately remove restrictions placed on opposition Members of the Legislative Assembly's access to the Internet by directing Yukon IT services to:

(1) move opposition MLA IT access from behind the firewall; and

(2) provide the same access to the YLA domain as is provided to government Members of the Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House congratulates the Government of Canada on the issuance of the first carbon rebate cheques to Yukon residents.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Royal Canadian Legion Branch 254 and the City of Whitehorse to create a planning committee to find a prominent, convenient, and safe location for a memorial to pay tribute to members of the Canadian Armed Forces who have served our country.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to hold a public consultation about the twice-yearly time change, including asking Yukoners:

(1) whether they want to eliminate the time change; and

(2) if so, whether they want the Yukon to stay on Pacific Standard Time or to spring forward one hour and use that as our new standard time.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to hold public consultations in early 2020 regarding the future of daylight saving time.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: **Lead in drinking water**

Mr. Hassard: This morning, the results of a year-long investigation by more than 120 journalists, nine universities, and 10 media organizations — including *Global News* and Concordia University's Institute for Investigative Journalism — on the topic of lead in drinking water was published.

This investigative report found that hundreds of thousands of Canadians could be consuming tap water laced with high levels of lead leaching from aging infrastructure and plumbing.

Now, these issues have recently come up in Yukon schools as well. At the beginning of last month, we asked the government for an update on the lead testing in our schools and mitigations. In response, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said that they had completed mitigation in 11 schools but that they would not complete work in the remaining 13 until the summer of 2020.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us which 13 schools have yet to be remediated and why there is a delay in completing this work?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Highways and Public Works and Education are working collaboratively to ensure that the drinking water in schools is safe. Education recently tested the tap water in all schools, as lead can be contained in piping and

drinking water fixtures. Lead levels exceeding safe levels were found in 24 schools, as I said earlier this year. Highways and Public Works replaced fixtures in 11 schools and successfully remediated the problem. The remaining 13 schools are underway and they are expected to be completed by 2020. No lead components were used in the repairs.

I look forward to future questions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hassard: As noted in this morning's report, while the water generally contains no lead when it leaves municipal treatment plants, the main sources of the contamination are the pipes that connect homes and apartment buildings or schools, as well as plumbing fixtures that contain lead and lead solder.

While testing has found lead to be a problem in a number of Yukon schools, there are a number of major buildings that the Yukon government owns here in the territory.

Has the government undertaken lead testing throughout the rest of the buildings it owns and operates? If so, what were the results of those tests?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As the member opposite has alluded to, the fact that we have very old buildings in the territory is certainly something we have to be cognizant of and make sure that, when we're dealing with our employees and residents of any of these schools or any of these buildings — be they schools or other public buildings — we have to make sure that the infrastructure we have is safe.

As I've said earlier today, we are working to make sure our schools are safe. Currently, we have fixed the fixtures in 11 schools. The remaining schools will be fixed by next year. They are on schedule and they are being done.

Highways and Public Works is working with Health and Social Services to test the water quality in buildings that are occupied by children and youth that were built before 1990, as these groups are at higher risk of being negatively affected by lead in the drinking water.

Many jurisdictions across Canada are dealing with similar drinking-water issues because of older infrastructure. That is what we heard from the media reports this morning. Of course, this is now a national issue, and we will certainly do our best to make sure that the facilities that are public and that our children inhabit are safe.

Mr. Hassard: The question that I actually asked was about some other buildings that the government currently owns, not just schools. We know that there are certainly some old buildings up on Range Road. There are some old buildings across the river on Hospital Road.

Mr. Speaker, the question was: Has the government undertaken lead testing throughout the rest of the buildings that it owns and operates? If so, what were the results of those tests? Maybe the minister could actually try to answer the question this time.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I said in my earlier response that the safety of people who are occupying our buildings — be they schoolchildren or other people — is, of course, our concern. We have so far focused our efforts to remediate the drinking-water infrastructure in our schools. We have remediated 11 schools. The other 13 are underway, and I expect them to be completed next year. We are also working with Health and Social Services

to make sure that the water quality in buildings that are occupied by children and youth built before 1990 are also assessed and fixed as need be. We are going to continue this effort, Mr. Speaker. This is a national issue. It has come up this morning. There is a story that hit.

Of course, we will continue to work to make sure that the older buildings that we have in the territory — and there are many of them — are remediated in the name of public safety.

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, we finally learned how much money the government actually spent last fiscal year. The Liberals increased spending by a whopping 10 percent over the previous year. That is an increase of \$123 million in a single year. It is right there in black and white on page 3 of the government's Public Accounts. The Premier can try to muddy the waters again with his talking points, but a 10-percent increase in spending in a single year is a pretty big spending increase. Will the Premier explain why he and his Cabinet are spending public money so casually?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is always a great opportunity to un-muddy the waters. The member opposite has a tendency to compare consolidated with unconsolidated — depending on what narrative he is trying to establish. At the same time, the non-consolidated debt of \$5.8 million differs by \$1.3 million from the budgeting deficit that we forecasted of \$4.5 million. The change in the deficit results primarily from higher than estimated revenues of \$32.3 million offset by higher than anticipated expenses of \$33.6 million.

As anticipated during the 2018-19 main estimates, the government's Public Accounts for the 2018-19 fiscal year show a deficit on a non-consolidated basis, but on a consolidated basis, the government's Public Accounts show a small surplus.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to hear from the member opposite. We have a massive debt right now that we inherited from the previous government. We are trying our best to make sure that our Finance department has the scrutiny it needs to make sure that we turn this ship around and get to a small surplus by the 2010-21 time frame.

Mr. Cathers: Well, like I predicted, the Premier is trying to muddy the waters again with his talking points.

Last year, despite significant growth in revenue, the Premier and his Liberal government spent beyond their means and added millions of dollars in new debt. They increased overall spending by a whopping 10 percent in a single year. That is not my calculation, Mr. Speaker. That comes right from the Public Accounts. That is according to page 3 of that document, signed off on by the Auditor General of Canada. Not only did the Liberals increase spending by \$120 million in a single year, but they also went deeper into debt. Thanks to the Premier, the Yukon is now \$14.9 million deeper in debt than it was the year before.

Can the Premier explain why he didn't give the Legislative Assembly the opportunity to debate this before he ran up \$14.9 million in new long-term debt?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, Mr. Speaker, again, with our budgetary process, we do all of our budgeting in the mains and

have kept our supplementary estimates very small because we believe that it is important for the record to have an open and transparent accounting process. We are doing more in that capacity than ever before, Mr. Speaker.

The supplementary estimates, as we see, have a small increase of \$20 million in operation and maintenance and also a \$43.3-million increase in gross capital. We have been on the floor of the Legislative Assembly a few times explaining that, when you're in a booming economy and you have low unemployment, there are certain factors that increase the costs of projects, but also opportunities to make sure that we get ahead of the private sector and have the facilities and the infrastructure — whether it be horizontal or vertical — that is necessary to keep this economy going.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier is throwing a lot of words and terminology out there trying to confuse Yukoners, but the simple fact is this: According to their own Public Accounts, signed off on by the Auditor General, the Liberal government increased spending by a whopping 10 percent in a single year — according to the calculation in their Public Accounts. It says that right in black and white on page 3 of the Public Accounts.

When I asked him about it, the Premier claimed his government was — quote: "... trying their best to get their finances back on check."

Mr. Speaker, if you're trying to be financially responsible and balance the books, increasing your spending by 10 percent in a single year is not the way to do that. Avoiding scrutiny of the Legislative Assembly to add millions of dollars in new long-term debt is also not the way to do it. \$14.9 million in new long-term debt and \$123 million in increased spending — that's what the Liberals did last year.

Will the Liberals explain why they didn't tell Yukoners they were planning on adding millions of dollars in new debt to the books before they did it?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I really do appreciate the opportunity to un-muddy the waters that are muddied by the Member for Lake Laberge as far as the changes and differences between consolidated budgeting and unconsolidated budgeting — which he has done in the past as well, Mr. Speaker.

Again, as we put a supplementary budget forward — it's a very small supplementary budget — I would like Yukoners to compare our supplementary budgets to the previous government and they'll see a complete change in the accounting process.

The changes to capital — and we've explained this a few times already, so this is a great opportunity for me to reiterate those changes — was to accommodate land and infrastructure development to meet growing housing demands, to replace outdated and failing infrastructure, and to help communities meet the needs of their residents. The majority of the increases will be offset by recoveries.

Now, as the member opposite takes a look at Public Accounts compared to main estimates, I will take our record compared to theirs when it comes to infrastructure and how upfront the costs are — what the members opposite would say they would actually get out the door for the private sector

compared to what the Public Accounts would actually say that they actually could accomplish.

Question re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre segregation cell

Ms. Hanson: A Friday *Yukon News* article stated that an inmate on remand at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre was left in his jail cell covered in his own feces and vomit for a number of hours. At the time of the incident, the inmate was being held in segregation for being aggressive toward staff and acting erratically. The inmate, who had been prescribed anti-anxiety, anti-psychosis, and attention deficit disorder medication, spread his own feces on himself and on his cell, later recalling that — quote: "... my mind wasn't all there."

Corrections officers removed the man from his cell for a shower. They then returned the individual to his cell and left him there. During this incident, the nurse on staff reportedly told Corrections officials that it was not advisable to leave the man in a feces-covered cell, yet Corrections staff apparently took no action.

Why did Corrections officials return an inmate who was clearly suffering from mental health issues to a feces-covered cell?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I can confirm that the Government of Yukon — that there has been a resolution reached for a complaint that was received. I'm not able to provide any further details, but I will happily share the questions that the member opposite has raised today back with the department.

The Department of Justice has taken steps to change the approach to segregation at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, which includes: putting in place additional oversight and accountability both inside and outside the institution; ensuring that all segregation placements are reviewed by senior officials; creating an interdisciplinary care team that includes health care professionals which is in place to review all segregation placements; developing individual care plans for all segregation placements — each plan includes the rationale for placement and the work that is underway to reintegrate the individual back into the general population, and these care plans are developed and reviewed weekly by an interdisciplinary care team and are intended to reflect the needs of the individual; and finally, ensuring that there is active involvement and monitoring of all cases where an individual is in segregation.

Ms. Hanson: You know, Mr. Speaker, at the time that this inmate was being held on remand, he had not been found guilty of any charges. The treatment that this inmate received and the actions of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre management speak to a serious problem at Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

Officials were told by a medical professional that the inmate should not have been returned to a feces-covered cell. They knew that he was behaving erratically and they knew he had been prescribed a number of medications to treat mental health issues, yet rather than reacting with compassion, they chose to punish him further.

Were the Corrections officials who decided to return this inmate to his cell held accountable, and are the specific steps that the minister outlined to avoid a repeat of this type of treatment at Whitehorse Correctional Centre actually in place, or are they simply being planned?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for her questions and, again, I will share them with the Department of Justice and ask that they speak with the Whitehorse Correctional Centre to get specific responses for the specific questions.

What I want to say is that we have always given direction to work to ensure the safety and security of all inmates and staff. I acknowledge that there was a situation and a complaint was received, and I understand that there was resolution to that complaint and those concerns. I just will say again that the Department of Justice has taken steps to change the situation at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and, again, I will share the questions that the member opposite has raised. They are questions that we take seriously. We will seek to get a response for the member opposite.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, sadly, we have seen this picture before — recall Michael Nehass, or December 2008, when an RCMP officer told Raymond Silverfox to — quote: "... sleep in your own shit."

We, along with many Yukoners, were hopeful when the Yukon government commissioned the Loukidelis inspection report on Whitehorse Correctional Centre. That report made clear recommendations. This government has stated that the amendments to the *Corrections Act, 2009* will mean the end to nightmare scenarios.

The amendments to the *Corrections Act, 2009* provide for continued use of segregation, albeit cloaked under a range of new names. The bottom line: A person who was remanded to WCC before being tried in court could end up in segregation for over 22 hours a day for up to 15 days in a row.

Mr. Speaker, what real differences will the amended corrections act provide at Whitehorse Correctional Centre?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for acknowledging that, based on the Loukidelis report, we have brought in new legislation to change separate confinement here in the territory. We had that report as part of the 2018 agreement with the Yukon Human Rights Commission. We are taking the steps to improve the legislative framework and policies that define and regulate restrictive confinement and segregation.

Our government is changing its segregation practices by incorporating independent oversight and enhancing the availability and delivery of mental health interventions at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

We are mindful that restrictive confinement and segregation should be used as a measure of last resort and may at times be necessary to maintain the safety of inmates and staff in the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

Question re: Energy retrofit program for homeowners

Ms. White: On October 23, the Minister of Community Services made a ministerial statement about a possible program

where homeowners could receive a loan from the Yukon government for home energy efficiencies and then that loan could be applied to their property taxes as a local improvement charge, or an LIC, for repayment.

Currently, homeowners can do the same thing with both the residential well program and the rural electrification and telecommunications programs. Property owners and municipalities may also have LICs applied to their property taxes for surface improvements in front of their homes.

Mr. Speaker, before this announcement — not after the October 23 statement — did the minister speak to Yukon municipalities or to the Association of Yukon Communities about this proposed program?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will have to look back through my notes to see whether I talked directly about this program. I certainly have talked many times with communities across the territory about wanting to try to support all of our communities in support of Yukoners to help them retrofit their homes. We have had many conversations over the years about trying to enable Yukoners so that they (1) reduce their energy costs and (2) reduce their emissions footprint. We are supportive of that over the long term.

Some of those conversations, for example, talk about the differences that these loan programs have depending on whether we as a government are supportive of the administrative costs that go to our municipalities. I expect that we will have many conversations going forward as well because, as the legislation is developed, we will need to work directly with municipalities.

Ms. White: It would seem to us that, before the government started announcing new programs that will affect other levels of government, they might want to talk to those other governments before making those announcements. The domestic water well program and the rural electrification and telecommunications programs are predominantly applied to properties outside of municipalities, so property taxes are collected by the territorial government. It is true that some residents living on country residential properties within city boundaries have applied for the well program, but their numbers are small. A program for energy retrofits, however, could result in hundreds of applications just within the City of Whitehorse, not to mention the other municipalities.

Has the minister considered the implication and the cost to municipalities if this energy retrofit loan program were to go forward as structured? Would it not make sense to mirror existing programs that see the loan amounts tied to a mortgage?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There are a couple of things that I want to say. First of all, not everyone in the Yukon lives within a municipality, so, as a government, we are interested in moving forward on this in partnership with municipalities, but as well for all Yukoners who live across the territory and in many of our more rural areas. Second of all, not everyone has a mortgage, so we are looking for a universal program.

It is a great suggestion that the member opposite has raised. I'm happy to have that in conversation with municipalities and to look at the program to make sure that it is as encompassing as possible for all Yukoners.

In my first response, I stood up and said that, absolutely, we want to make sure that we work with municipalities so that we don't add an administrative burden to them. I think that is what she asked me — whether I would acknowledge that we want to make sure that we don't add an administrative burden to municipalities — and my answer again is yes.

Ms. White: The program as laid out by the minister would see the loan be treated as a local improvement charge that would be applied to the property taxes of the home and would remain with the property. If a homeowner was to sell their home, any remaining loan amount would be transferred to the new owner's property taxes. We spoke to a real estate agent about the implications of such a program and had an interesting discussion. I would suggest that the minister could add the Yukon Real Estate Association to his list of people to talk to.

A homeowner could apply for a loan for a home energy-efficiency upgrade and have the loan applied to their property taxes. They could then sell the home, and the loan would be transferred to the new owners on their property taxes. Hypothetically, a person could make \$50,000 worth of energy improvements, then sell their home at a higher listing price because of those improvements, yet the costs of completing those improvements would still be attached to the property tax.

Mr. Speaker, does it seem reasonable for a new homeowner to pay the costs of the home improvements through both the higher selling price and then pay the remaining loan for those improvements on their property taxes?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: My answer, Mr. Speaker, is yes, it does seem reasonable. The reason is that when you add those charges to the home, the improvements are there and they are being paid back over time. It's similar to a mortgage or a loan. That is exactly how it works.

I thank the member opposite for suggesting that we talk with real estate agents — absolutely. Again, the point that I raised is not whether a mortgage or an LIC is better, just that not all Yukoners have mortgages, Mr. Speaker, and we want to try to make this as universal as possible.

I am happy to take these suggestions, I am happy to work with municipalities, and I am happy to consider it all as we work toward this legislation — and the reason is because we really want to make sure that retrofits are available not only for government buildings, but also for all Yukoners and all Yukon commercial business owners as well, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Canada Remembers commemorative school project

Mr. Kent: On August 28, 2019, the Liberals issued a press release promoting a new initiative to show a six-part documentary film series to Yukon students in partnership with the Royal Canadian Legion. Earlier today, my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, tabled that news release, as well as a letter detailing the Whitehorse legion's dissatisfaction with the Government of Yukon's handling of this project.

The legion secured approximately \$21,000 in cash and in-kind donations to purchase copies of the film series on Remembrance Day to be shown in Yukon schools. As of Friday, with only four teaching days left before Remembrance

Day, this film series has not been distributed to all schools. Obviously, this is hugely disappointing and is made worse by the fact that the delays are due to government.

According to the letter, the legion was given a guarantee that the film would be distributed to schools immediately following the August announcement. When will the government commit to get copies of this film series to all Yukon classrooms?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I thank the member opposite for the question. I will certainly have to look into this situation and the information that was brought to the Legislative Assembly today. I will commit to get back to the member with more information as it becomes available.

Mr. Kent: To quote from the letter that the legion sent to the minister on Friday — and I quote: "Countless hours were spent by volunteers at the Whitehorse Legion in securing the funding and approval for these DVDs so that they would be available this year in time for the weeks leading up to Remembrance Day 2019." The letter also states that the minister's staff confirmed on October 31 that copies of the film were still stuck in the department. This despite the fact that the government had them for quite some time, and in August, in a presentation to the minister, the government gave the guarantee to the legion that the film would be distributed to Yukon schools immediately. In fact, the letter details delays caused by the government dating back to early July 2019.

Mr. Speaker, why did the government make the legion jump through all of these bureaucratic hoops only to delay the release of these DVDs to Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I thank the member opposite for the follow-up question and for bringing this matter to the attention of the Legislative Assembly. I certainly will endeavour to get the information back. I want to say just how important heritage and history is to our Yukon Territory — and sharing those values within our school systems. We are coming to November 11 and we are honouring our veterans. Thank you again for the question.

Mr. Kent: To quote from the letter again — and I quote: "This project has proudly provided students across Canada with historical knowledge and an emotional insight into the service and sacrifice of our Veterans." It goes on to say — and I will quote again: "It was our sincere hope that these documentaries would reach schools throughout the Yukon and inform students this year and for generations of students many years to come."

Mr. Speaker, the final portion of the letter says, "The Whitehorse Legion is very displeased and was saddened to learn of this situation." Unfortunately, this has meant that a lot of students have lost the opportunity to see this film series this year prior to Remembrance Day.

Will the government do a review of what happened in this case to ensure that it doesn't happen again?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the member opposite bringing it to the attention of the Legislative Assembly. Hopefully there is still time to get these videos into the classrooms.

The member opposite acknowledged how many days that we are working with here, but — from the Minister of Tourism

and Culture's perspective and from my own as well — we will make sure that we find out what happened in this particular case and apologize if the ball was dropped. Again, it is an extremely important initiative and we want to make sure that the hard work of the legion is reflected in an educational opportunity for all of our students.

Question re: Watson Lake hospital staffing

Ms. McLeod: At the end of August, the Minister of Health and Social Services wrote a letter indicating that 45 percent of the nursing positions at the Watson Lake hospital were vacant. In the letter, the minister stated that aggressive staffing efforts were undertaken to fill the vacant positions. In the last month, I have raised this issue and pointed out that 45 percent of the nursing positions at the Watson Lake hospital were still vacant. In response to questions from media about the current staffing levels and plans to fill them, the minister said that she could not answer, in her words, “prescriptive questions”. It is now November 4, and according to the Yukon Hospital Corporation's website, 45 percent of the positions at the Watson Lake hospital are still vacant.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister doing to ensure that the Watson Lake hospital is fully staffed?

Hon. Ms. Frost: To clarify, the question that was asked was specific to the Hospital Corporation, and I just want to thank the Hospital Corporation for working with Health and Social Services to address the nursing pressures that we have seen most recently. We are working on addressing them through our collaboration and our collaborative approaches. With respect to the Watson Lake hospital and the current nurse ratio right now, we have 8.9 full-time employees.

The letter was written on August 29 in response to the Member for Watson Lake, very specifically detailing what the ratio was in Watson Lake and how then the vacancies are covered. Presently, Watson Lake has 3.9 FTE vacancies for registered nurses. However, if we are experiencing challenges in the various communities, then we do cover that off. At the moment, as I understand it, we don't have any specific pressures that we are not able to address with all of the resources that we have available to us.

Ms. McLeod: When we discussed this issue last month, the minister said that she can assure Yukoners that we have all of our health centres fully staffed. However, according to a mail-out by the Watson Lake Health Centre, there will not be flu clinics at the craft fair or ambulance station this year due to staffing.

The Liberals' lack of action is having negative impacts on Yukoners. This past year, the minister's strategy to deal with these nursing shortages was to fly in and fly out southern nurses. This is not a sustainable long-term strategy, nor does it seem to be working. More needs to be done to recruit and retain nurses to live in communities.

Combined between the hospital, the health centre, and the mental wellness hub, how many nursing vacancies are there currently in Watson Lake?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I certainly recognize the importance of health care for all Yukoners. I want to ensure that all Yukoners

are provided the necessary supports. We recognize the important role that nurses play in delivering health care to Yukoners, no matter what community they live in. If a position is advertised as vacant, that doesn't mean that the position is not filled in some capacity where we are providing support.

Currently, the community nurses — as I understand it, as of mid-October — we only had two vacancies for float primary nurses. We have undertaken a number of steps to ensure that nurses are able to reside in our communities. We are working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that we have a recruitment and retention strategy that is collaborative and focused on recruitment pressures, because we have multiple pressures across the government for nurses — that means also our home care support team, the hospitals, and the health centres. There are multiple approaches, and we are not dealing with a one-off. We are now looking at a comprehensive approach to ensuring that nurse recruitment and retention strategies are consistent throughout, and we will continue to work with our partners to ensure that happens.

Ms. McLeod: The minister's August 29 response to concerns raised by the Official Opposition with respect to nursing shortages in the communities, as pointed out — at least in the case of Watson Lake — it does not appear that the minister has taken any action to address this issue. Months later, the situation hasn't improved. In fact, it is getting worse, as the Watson Lake Health Centre has indicated that the flu clinics will be cut back due to staffing.

In the minister's letter, she states that aggressive staffing efforts were undertaken and have been successful in filling vacant shifts through the remainders of August and September, and while not necessary at this time, contingency plans have been developed.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us what those contingency plans are, and if not now, when will they become necessary?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to respond by saying what an honour it is to work with the staff at the hospital and also with Health and Social Services. They are doing an impeccable job in ensuring that every Yukon community is supported in one way or another and that no matter if a position is defined as “vacant”, it's filled by a nurse — either a nurse practitioner or a health care professional. We ensure that happens throughout, and if there is a specific concern from Watson Lake, we will endeavour to work with the Hospital Corporation to ensure that they have their necessary supports. As I understand it, they have not raised this as a major concern, but I will certainly endeavour to follow up with the Hospital Corporation to ensure that we have the supports there.

I want to just acknowledge that we are here to ensure that we provide necessary collaborative care to all Yukoners where they reside in our communities.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Hutton): The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

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. 200: *Second Appropriation Act 2019-20* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2019-20*. Resuming general debate, Mr. Kent, you have 19 minutes and 48 seconds.

Mr. Kent: When we were talking about education matters on Thursday afternoon, we were going through the mandate letters from the Premier to the minister and talking about staff housing. I do want to get back to that. But I want to touch on what I raised earlier today in Question Period with respect to the Canada Remembers commemorative school project.

There was this letter that was sent on Friday, November 1 to the Minister of Education, copied to the Leader of the Third Party, as well as the MLA for Kluane. It was from the president of Whitehorse Legion Branch 254, and it sort of walked through some of the concerns that they have about this DVD series not being distributed to schools, as promised by the government.

In the second paragraph of this letter — and I quote: “It was brought to the Legions attention that these DVDs could not be located in Christ the King School and Holy Family School in Whitehorse on 30 October 2019 by the staff who wanted to use them. It was later confirmed that Selkirk School had also not received their copy. The presentation of this series was made to you at Selkirk School on 28 August 2019, with the guarantee that they would be distributed immediately to all Yukon Schools. This would ensure that Teachers would have these DVDs available prior to the Remembrance season leading up to Remembrance Day 2019.”

Mr. Chair, ironically, the photo op that the minister participated in was at Selkirk School, which is of course one of

the schools that did not have these DVDs. I’m not sure if the Premier can answer this or not but it would be great to know if these are the only affected schools or if there are other schools that haven’t received these DVDs that were promised to them in August.

Again, this letter states that “... in early July 2019, the Department of Education was very insistent that the covering letter from the Legion be completed as soon as possible so that it could be included with the packages. It was decided by the Department of Education after consultation with the Whitehorse Legion that the distribution of these packages should wait until after the official presentation. Due to scheduling conflicts, the presentation had to be delayed to 28 August.” Again, we have established that not all schools received them by that time.

I know that it has been a very short time, obviously, since we talked about this in Question Period, but I am wondering if the Premier has any further information on this situation and what caused the delays. Again, how many schools — beyond the ones mentioned in the letter — haven’t received these DVDs yet?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the member opposite giving a little bit of background as far as the date of the 28th being so pivotal and that being kind of a go-time for the department to be able to get the videos out to the schools.

Again, we endeavoured right away to look into this, and as of this morning, Whitehorse has all received the resources — all the schools in Whitehorse. On Friday, November 1, the resources were hand-delivered to all Whitehorse schools except for Vanier, Whitehorse Elementary, Hidden Valley, and Golden Horn, which received their resources by priority delivery. Priority mail-out to all rural schools as well was done on Friday, November 1. There were a couple of days in transition and this was as result of an error at the department. They are very apologetic for this error. Suffice it to say, as of today, all Whitehorse schools have received their resources and all of the other resources are a priority post as of Friday, November 1.

Mr. Kent: Can the Premier just confirm that these resources have been sent to rural schools? Or were they sent immediately after the announcement in August? Do all schools in the Yukon have these resources? He referenced the Whitehorse-area schools, and I’m just looking for some clarification or perhaps just for him to recommit that rural schools also received these resources as well.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I apologize if the member opposite didn’t hear me, but I also said that all rural schools had priority delivery as of November 1.

Mr. Kent: Hopefully the Premier is able to talk with the minister and the department to ensure that these types of clerical errors won’t happen again, especially since it goes back to July — by the sounds of things — where this was first identified but then waited until the end of August. An administrative or a clerical error at the department has essentially probably cost a number of students the opportunity to view this documentary series this year.

Perhaps I'll just let the Premier confirm that he'll talk to the minister about this issue and make sure that it doesn't happen again.

Hon. Mr. Silver: If these videos were mailed out as of Friday and it is priority mail, it won't take a whole week to get to the communities. I know in my experience as a teacher, a lot of these presentations do happen closer to November 11 Remembrance Day ceremonies. So, hopefully, even though there was an error recognized by the department, these videos will be there in time for Remembrance Day and also for Remembrance Days in the future as well.

The department is very apologetic as far as the late date, but we do hope — now that we know that all of the Whitehorse schools have the resources, except for the ones that I have mentioned and the rural schools — both of the Whitehorse schools that didn't get it right away were hand-delivered, but also, the rural schools have been priority delivered as of November 1, which does give time this week and the next couple of days. We will check in and make sure that the schools do have it in time, and we will go from there.

Mr. Kent: I mean, it is a six-part series as well, so it is too bad that they didn't go out after the news release and the photo op were done in August. You know, making sure that there is a priority put on ensuring that those commitments are made following the photo op and the press release is something that is extremely important. Hopefully this doesn't happen again. We certainly value the work of the legion. It shouldn't be understated that they either put in or were provided with in-kind donations to a total of \$21,000, as identified in the news release — just under \$20,000 in the legion's letter. It is a significant amount of time and volunteer effort that goes into these things. Again, it is disappointing that this mistake occurred this year, and hopefully the department and the minister are able to stay on top of those things going forward.

When it comes to last week's discussions, when we left off, we were talking about the staff housing for teachers in communities. After the government put out their new policy on staff housing, there was a news release issued on Thursday, June 6, 2019, by the Yukon Teachers' Association talking about their concerns with the new staff housing policy. I will quote from that news release. It says, "With growing Teacher shortages in B.C. and NWT, our government has adopted a tone-deaf staff housing policy that will make it even harder to attract and retain Educators in rural Yukon."

Obviously, the news release is quite critical of the government's new staff housing policy saying that three years after — I'm sorry; I'll read another full paragraph, Mr. Chair — I quote: "In 2016, prior to the election, YTA wrote to the now Government asking what it planned to do about the rural housing shortages that effect most Educators wanting to work in Yukon communities. The Government committed to undertaking a full assessment of the needs, and to developing a plan to address the gaps. Three years later, the new staff housing policy does nothing to address the gaps. Instead government has imposed an arbitrary 3 year time limit on staff housing without a plan to increase the supply of housing."

I'm just wondering if the Premier would like to comment on these passages or other passages from this June 6 news release by the Yukon Teachers' Association and let the House know what has been undertaken since then to work with the YTA on their concerns?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the member opposite knows, the 10-year housing action plan — HAP — for Yukon was launched in 2015 and it provides guidance on housing priorities for the territory. A committee made up of key housing stakeholders and partners from across the territory oversaw the implementation and we worked with all stakeholders. Not a lot of change had happened in Yukon housing over the years. It was time to take a look at that policy.

I remember being in opposition and asking at the briefings all the time if we were talking about social housing as an initiative or affordable housing as an initiative and questioning whether or not those policies actually matched up with what the mandate was.

Again, I am happy to have that engagement with the stakeholders to look at a 10-year housing action plan. Lots has happened from that. We have had major investing in housing. But before I get into that, it's important to talk about the community-based action plan — the plan to prevent homelessness — Safe at Home, which was launched in November 2017.

Another example of us doing more when it comes to the whole — the complete picture of providing homes, whether it be affordable housing, social housing, or different types of initiatives therein or working with the private sector to make sure that we're freeing up lots and land — we're continuing to make land available to support the construction of new housing for Yukoners as well. This includes the land development in town here — in Whitehorse with Whistle Bend — but also in the rural communities. For example, the rural land development program is another initiative that relocated to the Department of Community Services in July 2018 — the Land Development branch implementing and integrating land development programming to maintain lot inventories across Yukon to provide private sector development and support First Nations in developing their land for citizen housing.

I would push back a bit on the statement of not working to make more lots and more housing available. We have a \$6-million commitment over two years — 2020-21 and 2021-22 — to the Challenge Cornerstone project, in addition to the funding for the purchase of land and project development therein. We are in the second year of funding for the \$3.6-million housing initiative fund. Also, Mr. Chair, there is \$2.4 million that will flow to Yukon through the northern housing fund under the National Housing Strategy. Under the low-carbon economy fund, there is \$6.9 million for First Nation energy-efficiency programs and \$8.4 million for social/staff retrofits, subject to approval of the agreement with Canada. That funding, again, is allocated on a 75:25 ratio, so 25-cent dollars here for us in partnership with the federal government.

There is \$3.19 million in 2018-19 for the construction of Housing First residences for vulnerable individuals, and we are getting that out the door as well. There are lots of initiatives that

I could speak to. There is a continued commitment of \$1.5 million from the Government of Yukon toward First Nation housing partnership programs for repairs and rebuilds. Mr. Chair, in light of the climate situation as well, we are not only just replacing buildings, but we are modernizing them and making sure that they are built for the new standards of the new normal here in the north.

We have a continued commitment of \$1 million by the Government of Yukon toward the municipal matching rental construction program for new rental units. It is a program that came out the opposition when they were in government after holding on to about \$20 million in social housing for a few years and then coming out with some other initiatives through the Association of Yukon Communities — or at least announced there — for the municipal matching rental construction program. We are continuing on with that. Again, there is another commitment of \$1 million there.

Social housing transformations will re-imagine the supports that the Yukon Housing Corporation provides for Yukoners and will integrate the rent-geared-to-income programs and the rent supplement programs into the housing continuum. We will also consider the ways that the territorial government can influence social and affordable housing by providing funding and supports to our partners in housing.

Mr. Chair, when we're considering working with our stakeholders and getting the information, this is about an opportunity to not only effectively have housing programs that suit each community but also helps us work hand in glove with the private sector and to make sure that we provide housing, and it's really important. I have had the benefit of moving to a rural community in Yukon and having Yukon Housing for me when I was there. But I will admit that, after several years, I was in a situation where I knew that I was going to be living in Dawson for the rest of my life and I wanted to grow roots, but I had a really good deal with Yukon Housing where I had a set amount of money for a house that was three bedrooms — one person — and I knew that the generosity of the government might be better suited to at least take a look at each community's needs and be able to see if we could flex the program better so that we provide social housing, we provide affordable housing, we work with the private sector, and we make sure that we can hopefully cast a wider net when it comes to community housing.

We are currently working to transform our approach to social housing, as I mentioned. Part of that transformation includes the adoption of the term “community housing” which is more reflective of the national housing strategy — so looking to the communities for stakeholder involvement but also looking to national trends, as well as the good work being done by the Yukon Housing Corporation.

Community housing and how it's more reflective of the national housing strategy — that represents a broader range of programs. It removes the stigma attached to social housing as well. This includes changes to our rent-geared-to-income social housing programs for low-income Yukoners and seniors, our rent supplement program, and our rental allowances for the family program.

Again, as we take a look at a whole gamut of housing needs and issues and pressures in all of our communities, making sure that Yukon Housing Corporation can be flexible and can respond to the needs of each community, and by working hand in glove with the private sector and defining “affordable housing”, defining “community housing” — we believe that all these endeavours together make it so that anybody moving to a rural community has more options instead of less options when it comes to either using Yukon Housing Corporation, the private sector, or even First Nation governments — or private sector endeavours, like I said.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate those remarks from the Premier. I'm sure our critic for the Yukon Housing Corporation will review those when it comes to questions that we have later on in general debate about the Yukon Housing Corporation, but I was focused in on staff housing.

There was a new policy announced by the government. The Yukon Teachers' Association put out a news release in early June 2019, and again — I will quote from this news release: “YTA asked hard questions of Government before the new policy was implemented but did not receive a considered response to these issues prior to roll out. The majority of staff effected by the changes are Educators, so we are disappointed to learn the ins and outs of Government's plans via the public media. What we now know is that despite Government's promise of creating a program that will encourage rural Educators to set up permanently, there is no plan or program in place to support the new policy and this publicized ‘political’ goal.”

I will continue with the news release with the final paragraph — and I quote: “What this all means for rural Yukon communities and schools is higher turnover and lower teacher retention. Kicking Educators out of staff housing after 36 months does nothing to fix the shortage of adequate and available housing in Yukon rural communities — it just gives them a good reason to look for a job elsewhere.”

Obviously, not every rural community is the same. Some will have access to market housing potentially, but of course some do not.

I am just curious as to if the Premier has instructed his minister or talked to his minister about this news release, and have they reached out to the Yukon Teachers' Association to address the concerns that they have outlined in this release?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, I am sure that the member opposite can appreciate that it is important for us to take a look at the complete housing continuum when we are talking about issues — whether that be with housing issues here in town or in the rural communities when it comes specifically to housing for teachers.

It is also interesting to note as well that, when housing is not available in a community, the department can provide the employee with improved terms of employment — things like rental subsidies in consultation with the Yukon Teachers' Association. We do continue to work with available resources to assist staff in those rural communities with housing. That is what we can do in the short term while we look to longer term solutions.

When looking at those longer term solutions, it is extremely important to understand the community needs that are broken down per community — in community housing, stakeholder initiatives, and engagement — when it comes specifically to housing for teachers. We went through all the communities. Beaver Creek identified as a community with no private markets. Housing needs for the principal and the teacher — they have been met in the community of Beaver Creek.

There is a teacherage in the school and a department lease agreement for a cabin — so to be able to have that flexibility per community to identify needs and to hopefully work with the community and work with the Yukon Teachers' Association as well to identify short-term and long-term solutions.

Carmacks is another great example. There is a housing shortage in that community. Housing needs for teachers have been met through staff housing or through private housing — again, with that supplementation. Yukon Housing Corporation provides one additional unit for Education staff — but again, having these opportunities through the private sector as well.

My community of Dawson City in the Klondike definitely identified as a community with a private housing market. We want to give shout-outs to organizations like the Klondike Development Organization for the good work that they have done to help in providing housing — taking some pressures off of not only general housing for private citizens, but also taking pressures off for people in government jobs. In Dawson, housing needs for the principal and for the teachers have been met through staff housing or through private housing — but again, either housing directly or through an agreement made to help work with that private sector.

Destruction Bay — with not much of a private market, the housing needs for the principal and for the teachers have been met in that area as well. There is a teacherage in the school, and the principal owns their own home in that community — again, every community is different.

Faro — housing needs for the principal and the teachers have been met through staff housing or through private housing.

Haines Junction — housing needs for the principal and the teachers have been met. It's the same thing — either through staff housing or through private housing.

We can go through the list of each of the communities, but what you can see and what I'm trying to relay here to the members opposite is that community-specific problems are being met with solutions, and we are working in coordination with those communities to make sure that we have the housing needs identified on a short-term basis — and also looking to have more of a long-term policy as we continue to move forward in partnership.

Mr. Kent: Can the Premier confirm if there has been some sort of dialogue with the Yukon Teachers' Association about the concerns that they have raised here? I know that he went through a list of several different communities and what is happening in each of those communities. Has there been a conversation with the YTA about the concerns that they have raised here?

I am curious as to if there is any money in this year's budget to either increase the stock of staff housing — so to increase the quantity of staff housing or to improve the quality of staff housing. Because we have heard some complaints about some of the quality of the different units that are located in some of the communities that rely on staff housing for teachers. Again, has there been dialogue to address these concerns raised on June 6 of this year? What is done in this budget or previous Liberal budgets in this Legislature to address the staff housing shortage and the quality of existing stock?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Our government recognizes that staff housing has a role in supporting the recruitment and retention of teachers in Yukon communities — absolutely. We will continue to work within the available resources to assist staff in rural communities with housing. I have identified the work that we are doing community-wide to make sure that we are focusing in on not just a specific area of housing, but a bigger gamut of considerations of how we can best make sure that our communities have housing available for private sector or government employees or teachers specifically.

As the member opposite knows, the 2019-20 estimates for appropriation in capital for housing — whether that be renovative and rehabilitative to existing stock, energy retrofits, unit conversions, or prior year projects — total \$2.2 million in those estimates, and whether I can confirm or not meetings with the Yukon Teachers' Association and the minister — there is always ongoing dialogue with the Yukon Teachers' Association and the Department of Education on all issues related to education.

Mr. Kent: So, a big concern from the Yukon Teachers' Association appears to be the imposition of an arbitrary three-year time limit on staff housing without — and this is from the news release — a plan to increase the supply of housing. A couple of questions for the Premier then come out of that. Does this three-year time limit on staff housing apply across the board in rural Yukon, or is it only in certain communities? I believe that the number he mentioned from the mains was \$2.2 million for housing retrofits, I think, and renovations — but how much of that went into staff housing versus social housing?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I have outlined not only those specific dollars for retrofits and for existing staff — this is completely for staff housing — completely — so that \$2.2 million is just specifically for staff housing. We outlined a bunch of other initiatives to provide housing in the communities. We have gone through the list as well in general debate about — that currently there are 52 teachers in Yukon Housing Corporation staff housing units, seven in Carmacks — there will be eight, but we're getting an additional unit for that particular community. In Dawson, there are six. In Faro, there are three teachers who are in Yukon Housing Corporation staff housing. In Haines Junction, there is one; in Mayo, there are four; in Old Crow, there are five; in Pelly Crossing, there are five; in Ross River, there are five; in Teslin, there are four; and in Watson Lake, there are 12.

Again, when talking about this process — the new teacher housing stakeholder engagement — the Yukon Teachers' Association was in consultation on that process.

Mr. Kent: I thank the Premier for clarifying that \$2.2 million was all for staff housing.

He mentioned 52 teachers in staff housing in Yukon communities. Does he have a figure for what the total inventory of staffing housing units is in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do not at this time.

Mr. Kent: Hopefully the Premier is able to get that number to us before the Fall Sitting rises by either a letter or a legislative return or perhaps later on in general debate over the coming weeks here.

One of the projects that is mentioned in both the 2017 and the 2019 mandate letter is obviously the completion of a new francophone secondary school. In the first version of the Premier's mandate letter to the Minister of Education, it says, "Complete the planning for a new Francophone secondary school working with..." — CSFY, l'AFY — "... Yukon Francophone families, and Francophone and French immersion schools." Then, in the second one, the mandate goal is to: "Complete the French first language secondary school in Whitehorse, in partnership with..." CSFY.

I guess that raises a couple of questions for me: Are the other organizations that were mentioned in the first mandate letter no longer required? Is it because construction has started? Why are they no longer part of the second mandate letter? Aside from CSFY, all of the other organizations that I mentioned are no longer to be involved — according to what the mandate letter says — with this project.

I'm also hopeful that the Premier can confirm the budget. We know that there have been cost overruns on the francophone high school here in Whitehorse. If he can confirm the latest number for the total construction of that project, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the complete amount of units, I don't have a specific number in front of me. I believe that it's around 170. If I am anywhere off on that number, then I'll get back to the member opposite, but I don't have a specific number for him as far as the complete stock.

Mr. Chair, when it comes to the French first language school, it's worth noting at this point that we have budgeted \$19 million from the 2019-20 year to build that French first language secondary school. That construction obviously — if you're driving through Riverdale — is underway and looking good.

The new school and its community space will provide a modern and flexible learning space for students and community groups. The new school is part of the campus model for Riverdale where groups, communities, and cultures can gather and learn and play in a variety of facilities as well. Our government will continue to work closely with all three school communities on the Riverdale campus to collectively implement the new campus model and to ensure that the needs of all students are being addressed.

Mr. Chair, I think, when it comes to the comparison between an old mandate letter and a new mandate letter — and we went through this with a few items the last time we were here in general debate — generally, if we see that there is ongoing progress on those or a completion of the first mandate letters, we want to make a focus on the new mandate letters for visionary new items or items that haven't had time to be considered or completed. Again, to automatically assume that just because there is not a transition — what it is most times is that there is enough progress that we know that it can't be unravelled. These particular programs, initiatives, or policies are already well underway.

I want to touch a little bit, too, on money for staff housing. We are always looking to modernize and to upgrade our existing units. Some of the single-family dwellings are being retrofitted to provide for dual units — again, another way for us to be able to take a look at the stock that we have and the resources that we do have to make sure that our housing units fit the communities in which they serve — the Yukon Teachers' Association — modernizing staff housing policies with consideration therein for possible extensions, if needed, and considering core needs of rural Yukon communities. It is important that we recognize the partnerships that we do have with communities but also with the Yukon Teachers' Association when it comes to social housing.

In housing, there is an additional \$80,000 in Education for rural supports — just to mention that as well. I want to make sure that I get all the information out on the floor in general debate.

Mr. Kent: I apologize if the Premier mentioned it and I didn't catch it, but I am curious about the latest budget number that the Premier has for the francophone high school — how much it costs. We know that it is overbudget, but what are the latest numbers for the school?

Hon. Mr. Silver: At this time, the Yukon government has budgeted \$19 million in the 2019-20 main estimates to build the French first language secondary school. Like I said, that construction is underway. We welcomed the contribution from the federal government of up to \$7.5 million over the three years to support the building of this community space. Those are the numbers that we have now.

As the member opposite knows, this particular project is not in the supplementary budget for an increase at this time. We will be continuing to monitor all of our tenders as they go out the door. Of course, we will come up with appropriate budgeting for all of our projects to make sure that Yukoners know exactly how much money projects cost. In this year's 2019-20 budget, we have budgeted \$19 million for this. As the member opposite knows, based on the tendering, the complete contract was awarded to Ketz Construction in 2018 to construct that new school. From the main estimates of 2018-19, that included \$3 million for the French first language secondary school. The actual expenditure at that time was under that. It was \$2.3 million — almost \$2.4 million. The department is projecting that the expenditure for the 2019-20 year will be \$21 million due to accelerated construction this fiscal year.

Mr. Kent: I am looking for the total cost estimates to build that school. We have talked about this school a number of times throughout the past three years here in this Legislature. I think that the initial budget, including that federal contribution, was \$27.5 million or \$28 million. It's our understanding that, after the construction bids came in and other things were factored in, it went up to \$35.7 million. I think that is the number; I don't have the figures in front of me. I am looking to the Premier to confirm what the total cost to build the French school is. As of right now, is it still at the number that was previously announced? Have there been any increases? I know that, with a design/build, there are not a lot of change orders, but there is the opportunity to have some. Has it gone up, or has it gone down with some of the tariff wars on steel potentially affecting that project?

I am just looking for a number. What is the Premier anticipating the total cost to be of building that French first language high school?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The contract was awarded to Ketza Construction. The number is \$29.6 million, and that is for the construction of the project itself, not including all the extra costs and that. We did speak as well of the \$3 million in the 2018-19 French language school project, yet the expenditures came in under that at \$2.3 million — or, to be very specific for the member opposite, \$2,345,068.

We are projecting that the expenditures for the 2019-20 year will be \$21 million, and that is due to accelerated construction this fiscal year — not some of the things that the member opposite is hedging on, whether it is increased steel prices because of tariffs — and again, the numbers that I have are \$29.6 million for the construction, and the projected O&M cost for the school will be approximately \$850,000 per year, plus there are going to be additional costs for increases in enrolment, if and at what time those increases happen. These are the numbers that I have for the member opposite at this time.

Mr. Kent: The Premier mentioned \$29.6 million for construction and then referenced some extra costs without giving us an amount for those costs. I am assuming that is infrastructure related to the school property — water and sewer hook-ups, paving, and any design work or consultants who had to be hired to support the project. Again, \$29.6 million for construction — and the Premier identified some extra costs. Does he have a number for those extra costs at this time?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite identified correctly the other ongoing costs. Of course, he would know with his experience from being Minister of Education in the past that those would be exactly the extenuating costs that I have identified. Again, those are the numbers that I have right now for the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: Does the Premier have the amount of those extra costs? We identified some of the things that would be factored in, but does the Premier have the amount for what — again, it's \$29.6 for construction. That was the tender that was awarded to Ketza Construction. How much are these extra costs that we are talking about?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I don't have those numbers with me right now, but I will definitely endeavour to get those numbers for the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: I thank the Premier for that. We will look forward to getting those numbers and getting an update. It has been awhile since we were given a new total for the francophone high school and the overall construction costs to do that.

The Premier — when we talked just a few minutes ago about the mandate letters, he said that, if something was in 2017 and wasn't in 2019, that it meant that there was some ongoing progress or they felt there was some progress with respect to that. In 2017, he asked the Minister of Education to explore opportunities to enhance community involvement in school governance. I know that they've talked about additional school boards. In the past, the government has talked about bringing in additional school boards. Is there progress on exploring these opportunities? Perhaps the Premier can explain to us what exactly he meant when he included that key goal in the minister's mandate letter in 2017.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Just to clarify again my comments about the mandate letters — based upon the conversations that we've already had in general debate, I would say that the specific questions that the member opposite had asked me about items that were on previous mandate letters compared to the ones that are on current mandate letters — the trend there with the answers was exactly that — significant progress had been done or those items had been completed — either one — therefore, not being on the new mandates.

That's not to say necessarily that would be the answer for everything. I hope the member opposite didn't take me to say that. If there's a specific — and this is what we're doing now — concern like school governance that the member opposite wants me to talk about, then definitely, we can talk about that importance to this government.

We are committed to enhancing that community involvement in school governance and we are working with Yukon First Nation governments and educational partners to collaborate and to support the success of all of our learners.

We're working with Yukon First Nations to address their educational priorities, including exploring ways for Yukon First Nation governments to assume greater levels of authority and control over the education of their citizens, because they are best placed to understand and to respond to their citizens' educational needs and to direct targeted educational resources and initiatives.

I know through speaking with chiefs and councillors that they had a fantastic trip down to British Columbia to take a look at best practices and some other practices as well. I want to thank specifically Chief Dickson of Kluane First Nation for his involvement on the Chiefs Committee on Education. He had an opportunity to hang back after their meeting and to do more work and to see other schools and how things are happening. We all agree that more involvement from First Nation governments when it comes to the education of indigenous citizens really is to the benefit of all Yukoners.

I keep on saying that, if we get this right and if we use the BC curriculum as well as we can — because there are so many places where we can put in local curriculum, local know-how, traditional knowledge — and developing those courses based upon the communities and based upon how communities have thrived through colonialization and into the future — how we do things in the Yukon differently than other jurisdictions — I really believe that our citizens are going to be well sought after in any post-secondary opportunity that may arise because of the very unique coordinated effort that we can get to. Again, the vital importance of that is to make sure that we have the First Nation governments assuming greater levels of authority, because again, they are best suited to understand the needs and the directives for those citizens.

Our government is working very closely also with school councils and other partners in education through the Advisory Committee for Education and joint priorities and initiatives in education in Yukon, including those related to school governance.

The advisory committee provides advice, and recent discussions have focused in on providing opportunities for students, for student voice in education, for school growth plans, student performance indicators, and modernizing learning spaces in the schools. Again, all this is coming from the first mandate letters to the minister. This committee is continuing to meet during the 2019-20 school year to discuss the recent audit report recommendations and advise the department in its response.

Mr. Kent: I'm glad the Premier brought up school councils because it just allows me to pivot away from the mandate letters for a second and talk briefly about the Premier's introduction of the lobbyist legislation in an earlier Sitting.

We were talking during debate over that bill about school councils and whether or not they were going to be exempt. It wasn't written into the legislation that they were going to be exempt, but the Premier — and he can correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe he gave assurances that would be dealt with in the regulations. Maybe he can give us an update on the development of those regulations for the lobbying legislation and also confirm that, in those regulations, school councils will be exempt from having to fill out the paperwork associated with being a lobbyist.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, I don't believe that anything has changed since the debate in the Legislative Assembly on that bill. The member opposite correctly identified the progress forward. There is nothing new to report based on the thorough conversation we have had from that bill.

Mr. Kent: Can the Premier tell the House when he expects those regulations to be completed — associated with that legislation?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't have that information readily available with me right now. Again, when it comes to regulations, as the member opposite knows, it is a formalized process that involves many departments — in this case, specific to a specific bill that we put forward. Suffice it to say that the department, working with Justice and other departments, is working expeditiously on these files.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that response, and I am sure that we will have an opportunity to follow up with the Premier on that particular issue.

I have a couple of other points from the 2017 mandate letter that I don't believe were transferred to the new one. I'm just looking for an update from the Premier. The first one is to work with Yukon College and the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide for an annual intake into the college's licensed practical nursing program. Again, that is in 2017, not in 2019. The second one is to work with the Minister of Tourism and Culture to engage Yukon First Nations, Yukon College, and community partners in developing an indigenous fine arts program at the Yukon School of Visual Arts. I have a couple of questions on that.

I am assuming that there is still an annual intake into the college's LPN program. Could I just get the Premier to confirm that for us? Also, can he tell us if the indigenous fine arts program at SOVA has indeed been developed, working with the Minister of Tourism and Culture, First Nations, Yukon College, and community partners?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will begin with SOVA — the School of Visual Arts. Our government continues to provide consistent and predictable funding to Yukon College to support the School of Visual Arts in Dawson City and in training artists with the skills and the knowledge that they need to have careers in a very vibrant northern setting. We are working with the School of Visual Arts toward cultural inclusivity programming, with the goal of establishing an indigenous fine arts program as well.

For the 2019-20 fiscal year, the amount budgeted for funding for SOVA was just over a half-million dollars, and the department worked with the college and with SOVA to do some creative work to make sure that the base funding agreements for the core operations of strategic initiatives — which was required for the government to directly engage with the SOVA governance council so we would get a move there. This will facilitate upcoming discussions with the governance council about developing a plan to establish that indigenous fine arts program, and so it is extremely important to make mention of that and the continuing work.

Again, this is another example. There is continuing work with the Department of Tourism and Culture and the Department of Education when it comes to SOVA specifically. To alleviate any concerns from the member opposite, that work from the original mandate letter is ongoing.

When it comes to the LPN program — same thing. There is an annual intake for the LPN program. So, again, items that were in the initial mandate are continuing to move forward — haven't been dropped — and I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: Just a quick question then for the Premier: the indigenous fine arts program has not yet been developed for the Yukon School of Visual Arts in Dawson City? I am just looking for confirmation.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, we are working with the School of Visual Arts toward more culturally inclusive programming with the goal of establishing that indigenous fine arts program. This work is ongoing; it is ongoing.

Mr. Kent: The Premier will probably be happy to know that this concludes my questions about the 2017 mandate letter and some of the initiatives that are no longer reflected or that I was looking for updates on.

When it comes to the 2019 mandate letter, the second bullet identified here is to: “Complete a strategic framework for early childhood development, initially focused on rural Yukon communities, in collaboration with the Minister of Health and Social Services.”

In the Speech from the Throne, it specifically mentioned K4 and the expansion of K4 into all rural schools and then looking potentially to eventually bring that into Whitehorse as well. When the Premier wrote this bullet for the Minister of Education, is that where the K4 would be developed, or is it found somewhere else — or perhaps not reflected in this mandate letter, but rather just reflected in the Speech from the Throne?

Hon. Mr. Silver: To be very clear, in relation to early learning initiatives, we absolutely recognize that high-quality early learning opportunities contribute to improved outcomes for children in all aspects of their development.

It is interesting. In my experience in education, there are many different numbers in different studies that basically all say the same thing. They may have different dollar values attached, but money up front, early in a child’s education, equals considerable savings later on. As an educator in the Yukon, I can definitely concur with that statement — especially in teaching subjects like mathematics. I have to tell you that those earlier initiatives are worth their weight in gold.

To support young children to be ready to learn and to help families to get there, we here in the Yukon government will expand that early learning programming — and it’s also known as “K4” in the rural schools. Rural families will have the opportunity to enrol their children in kindergarten programs when they are four years old instead of when they are five. These early kindergarten programs are an extremely important step to support young children in rural communities through literacy-rich, play-based learning environments where they can practise their skills for learning and also prepare themselves for school routines. It also helps to alleviate some pressure on some daycares when we have children and youth who are four years old now able to be enrolled in the K4 programming. In the long term, we will be exploring the feasibility of this optional program to Whitehorse schools as well.

Mr. Kent: I think the Premier answered one of my next questions in that last comment where he said that it was optional. I was going to ask him if K4 was going to be mandatory. I don’t even think that kindergarten is mandatory in the Yukon. Mandatory education starts in grade 1. He did mention that — I believe — it was an optional program. He mentioned alleviating some of the pressure on daycares and day homes. Has the minister consulted or will the ministers responsible for this be consulting with the daycares and day homes and their associations, or has that work already started?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, both Education and Health and Social Services — they are continuing to work together to develop the strategic framework for early childhood learning

and development and are focusing first on the rural schools and the communities therein. The objective of that framework will be to provide that stable environment that I spoke of earlier as well.

Again, I did mention to the member opposite that it is at the first stage. What we’re contemplating now is that this is not mandatory — the programming — but an opportunity. The Department of Education and the Department of Health and Social Services are working together to develop that strategic framework. Just for context, Mr. Chair, the government — we’re in the last year of a three-year Canada/Yukon early learning and childcare agreement that provides more than \$7.2 million to enhance and to support early learning and childcare — ELCC — programs in the territory. That agreement ends March 31, 2020.

Again, we mentioned the pressures. Dawson City, for example, has a local daycare, so establishing K4 programming will likely decrease that enrolment of the community’s established child care facility. Yukon Teachers’ Association has expressed some concerns about reporting requirements for K4 and teacher training in early childhood development and assessment processes. This is in collaboration and coordination with the stakeholders as the departments roll this out.

But again, I can’t over-emphasize how important it is — looking at the type of supports that have been developed through the Little Blue Daycare in Dawson and the pressures that they have to compete with other services being provided in Dawson. We are absolutely blessed — just anecdotally, in the Klondike — to have the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in providing a quality daycare experience as well. Little Blue Daycare does so much to make sure that they have equal opportunities. We have a growing population and not all youth can go to one place, so to have that secondary option and a board that is made up of dedicated volunteers — it is great to see anything that can reduce the enrolment there and the pressures on places like Little Blue Daycare.

Again, the departments will continue to explore further collaboration and consultation as we unroll K4 programming offered in most rural schools. For the record, most K4 programs are going to be half-day programs combined with K4 and K5. It’s just a great opportunity to expand our educational opportunities for our rural and hopefully all Yukon students.

Mr. Kent: That goal in the mandate letter says, “Complete a strategic framework for early childhood development...” Does the Premier have any time estimates as to when that framework will be finished?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, just to reiterate the member opposite’s question, the Speech from the Throne that was delivered on October 3 announced that the early kindergarten or K4 will be offered in all rural schools. I don’t know if that was clear when I spoke earlier, but to answer the member opposite’s question, we do expect that before the end of this mandate — that would be the timeline that the member opposite is looking for.

Mr. Kent: Currently, I believe École Émilie Tremblay is the only school in the Whitehorse area that offers K4. I don’t have a copy of the throne speech in front of me, but I believe it

spoke to investigating opportunities to expand K4 into Whitehorse area schools. Would that be done along the same timelines that the Premier mentioned for the rural ones before the end of this mandate, or are we looking beyond the next election?

Again, our commitment to the kindergarten K4 mentioned — again, I believe it is for all of our schools. I'll confirm that, but yes, I believe that the mandate is mandatory — not mandatory. We're looking at the long term right now for that feasibility into the Whitehorse schools. We're focusing on the rural schools right now. We made a commitment to offer that to all rural schools. I believe that the commitment at this point is for all rural schools and all Whitehorse schools, but if I'm incorrect on that, then I will get to my feet as soon as possible to correct that, but I believe it is K4 Yukon-wide within this mandate. Again, this is not mandatory programming — just for the record.

Mr. Kent: Just jumping off on that point that the Premier made, a number of the schools — in particular, in the Whitehorse area — are at or near capacity. When I look through the 2019-2020 enrolment reports, there are currently 22 students in K4 at Émilie Tremblay and then 33 K4 students throughout rural Yukon. The schools that don't offer it — and again, this is off the enrolment reports — are Johnson Elementary School in Watson Lake and Robert Service School in Dawson City. Everyone else offers it. A couple of schools don't have any uptake.

So, it would be expanding that to Johnson Elementary in Watson Lake and Robert Service School, but I'm curious what the Premier's solution is for some of the schools in Whitehorse — Whitehorse Elementary, for instance, which is at 469 students currently, and Jack Hulland Elementary is at 401. We've talked about Selkirk Elementary at 194 in the English stream and 121 in the French immersion stream, and that's growing over time. Then, of course, we've talked quite a bit about Golden Horn Elementary School, as well as the Catholic schools. I'm curious where we're going to find room for K4 in all of these Whitehorse-area schools.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am going to apologize to the member opposite. I didn't catch all of the beginning of his question. I will say a bit about the pressures when it comes to enrolment.

Again, we are at over 40,000 as a population now, and growing. Again, the early French immersion program is extremely popular in all of the communities, and it is offered at Whitehorse Elementary and Selkirk Elementary, as the member opposite spoke of.

With those pressures — and with the programming within our mandate — that is why we are focusing on the rural schools for K4. It is because it is extremely important to move forward on this mandate. Within our mandate, the rural schools are what we are projecting as being capable, but at the same time, we do recognize that there are lots of pressures when it comes to having K4 schools in Whitehorse — all the schools in Whitehorse — by the end of the mandate.

Again, we are working as expeditiously as possible. At this point, we believe that the rural schools, within the mandate, will be able to have the K4 opportunities, but again, the member

opposite identified that there are enrolment capacities in our elementary schools. A trend of increasing enrolment in Whitehorse schools is expected to continue, so that is going to be adding pressure to us being able to get the Whitehorse schools onto that K4 system within the mandate as well.

We are hoping for the best, and we are working with our partners in that. We are monitoring enrolment in all of our schools to help administrators and our school communities to plan for changing enrolment trends, and that is three-pronged — short term, medium term, and the long term.

Some schools have increasing student enrolment, while others have decreasing enrolment. If schools or specific grades reach enrolment capacity, then we will work first to try to accommodate students at their attendance area school, and then we will work with families on a case-by-case basis to place students in another school.

I will cede the floor for a second here just to make sure that I am on the right track to answer the member opposite's questions. I apologize — I didn't catch the first couple of sentences of his question.

Mr. Kent: Initially, I had asked the Premier what the timing of the K4 expansion was going to be.

I will have to review the Blues tomorrow, but I believe he said that they were looking at rural and Whitehorse-area schools in this mandate. I pointed out some of the enrolment challenges and capacity issues. He is now saying that Whitehorse will not be done in this mandate. I am just hoping that he can clarify for me — I think we have established that it is in most rural elementary schools right now outside of Johnson Elementary in Watson Lake and Robert Service School in Dawson, so those would be the two priority areas, I guess, to put it into and then perhaps look for expansion in some of the schools that don't have any students enrolled in that.

That was my question. Obviously, there are some capital projects and some different things that we will be discussing here a little bit later on this afternoon. Can the Premier just clarify that, outside of École Émilie Tremblay — which is the French first language elementary school here in Whitehorse which offers K4 — not all of the Whitehorse schools will have K4 offerings in this mandate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: All rural schools within this mandate — and again, identifying certain pressures, identifying that it would be more complicated to get it out in Whitehorse. I can't, on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, say that we will get it all done in Whitehorse as well. We will make our best efforts. Certain schools have more pressures on enrolment than others. We will focus on those schools that are better equipped to be able to start this programming. We will do our best to get out K4 in the mandate, but to make a commitment to all Whitehorse schools — I wouldn't be able to, in good faith, say that right now in the Legislative Assembly. I will double-back and will talk to the Minister of Education to look at the priorities, to take a look at which schools — and the member opposite mentioned a few as well — would probably be more quickly able to transition to K4 compared to some of the other emerging pressures. We have identified a few here on the floor of the

Legislative Assembly — enrolment and capacity in some of the elementary schools, prioritization, and that type of stuff.

Mr. Kent: Just before I leave this line of questioning, I noted that the Premier talked about the Little Blue Daycare in Dawson City during one of his previous responses. We know that he mentioned during his time in opposition that a Yukon Liberal government would increase funding to that daycare, and I know we asked a question earlier on — sometime within the last three years — I can't pinpoint exactly when — about that commitment. I am just wondering if the Premier can provide us with an update on that commitment. I believe it was \$1 million that a Liberal government would provide to the Little Blue Daycare. I'm curious as to if he can provide us with any update on if that money has been provided or not.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, it has been. In my five years in opposition, I asked many questions about the Little Blue Daycare. When I stopped asking questions about the Little Blue Daycare, I was then accused about not caring about the Little Blue Daycare.

We have been engaging with them since the first year of our mandate. We presented the board with some options that didn't necessarily work for the board and I get it. I understand why. When it comes to the building they are in right now, although they don't own it, they do have a really good arrangement as far as rent. The problem is lots of money goes into that building, whether it be the roof or electrical — you name it — and it's for a building that the Little Blue Daycare doesn't own. Looking at solutions with the Little Blue Daycare is an ongoing process. Again, K4 does help us out with that endeavour. We remain committed to finding solutions with the Little Blue Daycare.

A couple of my suggestions to begin with didn't necessarily fit, which were met with that board at that time — they definitely were happy that we were looking into some suggestions and solutions. But I do have to admit that the pressures are still there with the Little Blue Daycare. There are similar pressures in Watson Lake, these being the two areas that have the not-for-profit daycares.

Again, we're continuing to work with the board of directors, and again, K4 is a very helpful piece of that. We are looking at coordinated efforts as well. We know that we have other stakeholders and other NGOs in my community that might be able to provide us with solutions. I don't have anything to report here today in the Legislative Assembly other than we have been working with the Little Blue Daycare since the first year of the mandate. Certain suggestions weren't necessarily the best ones for the Little Blue Daycare and I appreciate that. I also appreciate that we haven't found a long-term solution yet for the Little Blue Daycare, but again, we are continuing to work with them.

Mr. Kent: The Premier mentioned Watson Lake daycare. Obviously, there are a number of not-for-profits that run daycares throughout Yukon, particularly in rural communities. Has this same level of engagement been taking place with the Watson Lake Daycare Society that the Premier mentions has been taking place with the Little Blue Daycare in Dawson City?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Absolutely; funding has increased to both Dawson City and Watson Lake daycares. We have established a rural daycare strategy to focus on ensuring the sustainability of not-for-profit rural childcare in Yukon, especially when it comes to those two communities. They are at a certain population threshold that does add considerable different variables other communities wouldn't necessarily have. That rural childcare sustainability is a pilot project. It has been developed with the Child Care Services unit and — let's use the real name — Little Blue Early Child Care and Learning Centre — in both Dawson City and in Watson Lake daycares.

Health and Social Services representatives met with both daycares in mid-September 2019. The proposal was favourably received by both daycare programs, and they are now working with Health and Social Services to develop budgets.

Mr. Kent: I thank the Premier for that. He mentioned funding increases for both Little Blue Daycare in Dawson City and the Watson Lake daycare. Does he have the amount of the increase for each of those centres? He mentioned a rural daycare strategy. I don't believe that I've seen that or if it has been tabled. Can we find that on the Health and Social Services website or the Education website? Can he direct us to where we can find a copy of that strategy? I know that we would be interested in seeing that as well.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't have the increases to the direct operating grants or those specific numbers here for general debate today, but I can endeavour to get back to the member opposite with those numbers. Again, when it comes to pilot projects, Child Care Services staff are working in partnership, as I said, with both childcare centres to have these new pilots take effect in January 2020. Both will still recover parent fees for those families using the services and will participate in an evaluation of this pilot program.

These pilot projects will ensure that critical childcare services have stability in Dawson City and in Watson Lake. Child Care Services unit staff — they assisted in fast-tracking — I would say — level 3 designation of an individual in Watson Lake so that they were able to start work right away in that daycare — so very thankful for that as well. That is all I have for the member opposite right now specifically — but good news again — moving forward and having these new pilot projects taking effect very soon in January 2020.

Mr. Kent: The Premier mentioned this rural daycare strategy and then he mentioned pilot projects. Are those the same thing, or are they different? I apologize for the confusion, but I am trying to get a sense of — is there a rural daycare strategy that has been developed, or are there a number of pilot projects that are ongoing? I asked where we could find a copy of the rural daycare strategy. Is it on one of the websites, or will he provide us with one? Then he started talking about pilot projects, so I am not sure if I'm confusing the issue, or if they are the same thing — just being called a different thing.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, the strategy is the pilot project.

Mr. Kent: Thank you. So, the strategy is the pilot project, then. Is that correct? That's what the Premier said? He is nodding yes, so I thank him for that. We will look forward to the outcome of some of these pilot projects or perhaps getting

into them a little bit more as we move throughout the fall here over the next number of weeks.

I wanted to switch gears. I do have some questions on First Nation education, but I will come back to those when I ask about the Auditor General's report and get some updates on the departmental action plans with respect to First Nation education.

I am going to touch now on a few issues that have been brought up by constituents or other Yukoners or constituents of some of the opposition MLAs here.

The first one is dealing with school buses. We have touched on this issue in the Legislature before, but it still remains a concern for many parents and there are a number of concerns, but one of the first ones I want to ask the Premier about is — many parents are concerned that, in the event of an emergency, bus drivers and school administrators are unaware which students are on a bus at any given time. This isn't specific to a certain incident or anything like that. It has come up at school council meetings that I have attended and I am curious as to what steps — if any — have been taken to rectify this situation with respect to who parents are to contact in the event of an emergency and how they are able to find out if their children were on a bus or not — particularly after school, obviously. In the mornings, many parents drop their kids off at a bus, especially the younger kids. I am just curious as to if there have been any steps taken to fix this particular situation when it comes to busing.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do recall the Minister of Education on the floor of the Legislative Assembly saying in the past that, if parents do have concerns about busing, they may contact their school or they can contact the Department of Education or even Standard Bus to work on a very specific issue — for example, in the rare event of a student being on the wrong bus.

School staff work extremely well with Standard Bus staff to ensure that students are getting on the right buses. Attendance lists are provided to the drivers and to the schools. I want to thank Standard Bus for their diligence on this particular issue. This is a rare issue, Mr. Chair. But if that does happen, Standard Bus dispatches a call-out to all drivers immediately to address the situation.

Mr. Kent: Just so that I can provide some clarity to the parents who asked me about this — if they are concerned about whether or not their child is on a certain bus, do they contact Standard Bus, do they contact the principal at the school, or is there somebody at the Department of Education? I'm not sure how long, obviously, the staff at schools stay beyond the final bell. I'm not sure how long they are there in the case of an emergency. When I am reporting back to the parents who asked me about this, who is the individual who knows who is on which bus at any given time?

Hon. Mr. Silver: There is a multitude of people to call. Some parents have a stronger relationship maybe with the school administration. Some might want to call the Department of Education. Some might want to call Standard Bus. With consideration of this particular issue — the rare event of a student being on the wrong bus — there are options to make sure that a call can be placed to any of those agencies —

whether it be directly to the school administration or to the Department of Education. Immediately, Standard Bus gets into action with a call-out to drivers to address that situation.

I do have some different information on specific actions outside of this particular issue, but I think that it's pretty clear that there are a multitude of different options for the parents to call.

Mr. Kent: So, just to be clear on this, if I reach out to school administrators or through school councils to school administrators and the Department of Education, as well as Standard Bus — are those the three options? All three of those bodies, for lack of a better term, will know which kids are on which bus at any given time. There is not one point of contact when it comes to this. I guess it is sort of all of the above when it comes to who you want to call or who you should call. All three of those entities will then know which kids are on which bus after school.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I think that I have been very clear on this. If parents have concerns about busing, they may contact their school, the Department of Education, or Standard Bus, and we all work together to address that issue.

As far as what would happen in the case where you believe that your child is on the wrong bus — again, it's a very rare event — Standard Bus dispatches a call-out to all drivers immediately to address the situation. The good news is that, if you don't have the number for Standard Bus but you have a good rapport with your school, that's good. You can use that connection to make sure that the three — whether the specific school, the Department of Education, or Standard Bus — will prompt themselves into action to make sure that the protocol for this particular and very rare event gets immediately put into place.

Mr. Kent: Standard Bus will know — that is essentially what I'm getting from the Premier — but if you have a relationship with the school administrator, you can phone them instead. If you don't know or if you don't have a relationship with either Standard Bus or the school, you can call the Department of Education. That will be useful information, I think, to get out to the school councils. At some of the meetings I have attended, as I said — the situation that the Premier is describing has not been confirmed by the parents on those school councils. It would be great if the Department of Education could reach out through the councils and then to the broader school communities that these are the options for them if they have this concern.

I'm pleased that it's a rare event. I couldn't imagine if it was my son — or the child of one of my family members, friends, or anybody in the community — and something like this happened. What we're trying to do is to just get to the bottom of how this communication or how this line of communication works.

I'll pass on the responses from the Premier to the school councils that I have been engaging with. If there are more questions from that, then I'll be certain to let him know or raise them again as we move through this Fall Sitting.

The next question that I have on school busing — in the event of an emergency, parents of children registered on each

bus should be notified directly to be apprised of the situation. Whether or not their children are on that particular bus at any given time, parents should know when a safety-related issue takes place. Again, this came out of some parent responses to the actions that occurred along the Alaska Highway between Golden Horn and Marsh Lake last year.

Can the Premier either tell us or commit to get the Minister of Education to provide information for us on how parents are notified when an accident takes place?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. As you know, the health and safety of our students and our staff is our first priority, including safe and effective student transportation to and from schools every day. Again, we are working with Standard Bus. We also work with the RCMP and communities to promote safe driving near school buses to reduce the risk along bus routes.

I have to tell you anecdotally that my whole classroom sat above — on the second storey of our lonely school bus in Dawson. I was amazed at some of the practices of some people when it comes to flashing red lights and school buses. This is the type of stuff that should be ingrained in everybody's heads — the importance of yielding to school buses when they have their red lights on and their stop signs on. It's extremely important. I keep on asking myself — I wonder what the rush is when the safety of our students is so very important?

The first priority in any emergency situation, Mr. Chair, including for busing, is to ensure the safety of the students and staff, as I mentioned. We share information with the families as soon as it is safe to do so. That is an extremely important part of answering the member opposite's question. If the parents do have concerns, they may contact the school, the department's student transportation officer, or Standard Bus.

Talking very specifically about operational procedures — and this is important, because there have been incidents in the 2018-19 school year. There were two collisions where a driver hit a school bus at Marsh Lake. In addition, over the years there have been approximately 14 different reports concerning Standard Bus drivers to the RCMP, specifically about cars and vehicles ignoring bus flashing lights. Bus drivers have informally also reported other unsafe driving behaviours.

School buses regularly stop on highways to pick up and drop off students at designated locations. By stopping on the highway, other drivers can see the bus and the flashing red lights from a distance, and all vehicles are required to stop. This allows the bus to take control of the roadway, stopping vehicles in both directions so that it is safe for the children to cross the road. Following incidents, the bus driver first works with the RCMP on scene. They submit company incident reports, which are then shared with the department. The department and Standard Bus then work together on any specific responses or actions, such as outreach with the RCMP. Standard Bus drivers prepare specific incident reports.

In incidents involving school buses, the department coordinates with school bus companies and the RCMP to ensure the safety of the students and to share the current information with parents as it becomes available.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that response from the Premier, but one thing jumped out at me, and perhaps he can confirm that he said this. I jotted it down, but I kind of hope I got it right — that parents would be informed as soon as it is safe to do so. Can the Premier explain what he means by that statement — "... as soon as it is safe to do so"?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think I was very clear in identifying the process. Following an incident, the school bus drivers must first work with the RCMP, so they will do that. They will share current information with the parents as soon as it becomes available, but again, reporting needs to start with the RCMP.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate the Premier clarifying that. So, it is as soon as that information is available after they have talked to the RCMP, not as soon as it is safe to do so.

I am going to ask a couple of other questions. I know that there was a petition response earlier this Sitting with respect to school bus safety that the government gave. We had spoken about the possibility of installing dashcams on school buses to monitor traffic violations, near misses, or accidents involving buses. I am hoping that the Premier can just give us a little bit more information on that. I think that there has been a pilot project with a dashcam on a bus. Has that been successful? Has it led to the installation of these dashcams on other school buses?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What I can share with the member opposite at this time is that the pilot project is underway with cameras being installed on four buses in Whitehorse. That pilot project will be evaluated before the end of the 2019-20 school year to consider the integration across the fleet.

Mr. Kent: Last fall, before the throne speech and the prorogation, we did pass an amended motion unanimously in this House about a number of issues around school bus safety, but one of them specifically dealt with the federal government's role on the issue of installing seat belts on school buses. I am curious as to if there is any progress that the Premier can provide us with — with those discussions that have been taking place with Transport Canada since we passed that motion last year.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the member opposite knows, the Yukon government is part of a national steering committee to identify measures to further improve school bus safety in Canada.

The regulations for physical safety requirements on school buses, including school bus seating and, therefore, seat belts, are set by the Government of Canada, and Yukon school buses are required to meet those national standards. In response to that, we are participating on a national basis. I do appreciate the unanimous support of an amended motion on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. All of these considerations must be deliberated with the national standards and the Government of Canada, and that work is ongoing.

Mr. Kent: Can the Premier tell us when he thinks that the work of the national panel — working on a federal-provincial-territorial level — will be complete and when we will get a response from the federal government on whether or not they will require seat belts on school buses?

Hon. Mr. Silver: With all due respect to the member opposite, of course, with the election and changes therein — Cabinet needs to get sworn in. Hopefully that work has been happening this week. It's hard for me to say right now when that work is going to happen. It is a priority for this government — that's for sure. Initial meetings have happened, and so that work will continue.

Mr. Kent: We look forward to getting some responses to that after the federal Cabinet is sworn in. Perhaps we will have a chance to revisit that in the spring.

The Premier may or may not have an answer to this, but a constituent of mine contacted me with a few questions with respect to school busing. Is there training for school bus drivers when one of the students on the bus has a medical condition, whether they require insulin or perhaps they're prone to seizures or some other type of a medical condition? Is there training, and are those students identified? Obviously, there is a role for the parents here, too, but are those students identified from the department to Standard Bus after the registration? Is there a requirement, I guess, during the registration process for the parents to identify any medical conditions for their kids?

Hon. Mr. Silver: When it comes to the safety of our students, the member opposite is correct. There is a responsibility for parents to not only inform the schools of medical conditions or the need for the use of an EpiPen, for example, but also for sharing that information with those who are providing those services for transportation.

I do know that those conversations fit into the school year and those conversations. I have seen different opportunities for a school council to become involved as well in those conversations about setting certain protocols. I know that, as a teacher, we have definitely gone through personal development days therein as well.

I am not up to speed right now as to whether there is an official policy when it comes to the contracting from Standard Bus or in the transportation of our students, but I will look into that for the member opposite to see if there's a specific policy for the busing of students and whether or not there's an agreement with parents, the school, the school board, and the students to make sure that these things are being considered in the transportation of our students as well.

Mr. Kent: I look forward to that response from the Premier. Again, as I mentioned, this is something that has come to me from a family living in my riding. Obviously, one of their children has a medical condition, and it's to make sure that they are safe from the time they get on the bus until the time they get off that bus.

When it comes to the registration process, I know that, each year, in the springtime, people are encouraged to register, but my understanding from one of the school councils is that, although the forms are online, it is not necessarily an online registration. It's the downloading of a form and you submit it. Some parents have filled out that form in May or when it first comes out, and then by the time the fall comes around, they are still not registered on a specific bus. I am assuming that a lot of that has to do with the clerical work that has to take place — having officials enter that information manually rather than

having it automatically entered. Again, this is something that has come up at school council meetings that I have been at.

Will the government consider moving to an electronic or an online registration system when it comes to school buses so that it can be done in real time and errors can be corrected in real time? Again, this is no slight on the officials in the department who are doing this work, but perhaps this is one of those concerns that the government can address through their e-services projects.

Is it on the radar now, and if it is not, will the Premier consider asking either the Minister of Highways and Public Works or the Minister of Education to consider making that a priority for e-services?

Hon. Mr. Silver: A very good question from the member opposite. Writ-wide in the Yukon government, we are doing our best to modernize systems, whether that be in the Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Education, — or the lion's share of the work being done in the Department of Highways and Public Works. In a whole-of-government approach, they are really quarterbacking and coordinating a lot of these efforts. I do want to give credit where credit is due to the minister and his team in the Department of Highways and Public Works. A lot of work has gone into digitizing and modernizing systems.

In my Department of Finance as well, we are always trying our best to make sure that we have the most modern approaches to the work that we do. It does come with an initial price up front, but the cost-saving, benefits, and efficiencies are, in the long run, hard to argue.

When it comes to registering children, we do encourage families to register their children for the school buses each spring, as the member opposite noted, so that we can plan the bus routes for the upcoming school year. Late registrations over the summer absolutely can result in some adjustments to those bus routes, scheduling, stops, and changes therein the first month of school. The first month of school is, from an administrative perspective, always challenging and it is awe-inspiring to watch the administration in each school adjusting and working on the fly every year, with teachers coming in and students coming in and changes in enrolment. Credit is deserving there as well — what would I do as an educator without the dedicated administrators at the schools that I worked at?

We are working with school councils through the school busing committee on ways to improve that school bus registration as we speak. That does include discussing the registration process and the timing of posting routes.

Again, the member opposite asked about modernization and digitizing that system — we are always looking to improve school bus registration and that process is ongoing. We are getting access to those things, and again, that is an ongoing process — but again, a great suggestion from the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: The Premier touched on the root changes as well, and that was another concern that was raised — where the stops were moved and the parents weren't informed about that. Again, I look forward to following up with the minister either

later this Sitting or into the Spring Sitting to get a progress report on the school bus committee and some of their work.

I just want to touch again on those two accidents that took place on the Alaska Highway between here and Marsh Lake. After those accidents, there were some larger signs that were put up that identified school bus routes. I know the Minister of Community Services — the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — was involved in working on a couple of committees. I think there were some high-visibility vests potentially supplied to some of the kids who were picked up along the highway. All of that seems to have disappeared as we move into the winter months. This year, there's no — I know those bigger signs were used for some of the construction projects out in that neck of the woods, but I'm just curious as to if there's a plan to put in some higher visibility signs when it comes to alerting motorists — especially some of the commercial truck drivers who may not be as familiar or aren't on those roads as much as some of the residents or the school bus drivers — that they are on a school bus route. What happened to some of the initiatives that came out of the Minister of Community Services' meetings last fall? I know that there was a group of concerned Marsh Lake parents who approached him. He opened his budget reply in the spring talking about meeting with some grade 6 students, I believe, from Golden Horn Elementary School.

I'm just curious — it seems like some of the momentum and the initiatives that came from those meetings has disappeared. I hope I'm wrong — perhaps it's being addressed at a different committee — but I'm curious as to what is happening when it comes to alerting motorists that they're on a school bus route and to watch for school buses with red lights flashing, and then the visibility of the students. We have talked about the dashcam pilot project, and we look forward to the results of that project.

Again, I'm curious as to what's happening now on these rural routes — not only the ones south of town, but I think those signs were also in the Member for Lake Laberge's riding after those two unfortunate accidents happened. Again, I'm curious as to an update on what's going on with those discussions as we move forward.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe this has been discussed on the floor of the Legislative Assembly through the Minister for Highways and Public Works and the Minister for Community Services. That increased signage and visibility for bus safety was completed and the digital signage was placed on the highways the week of March 25 to 29, 2019; that digital signage with speed indicators was placed on Wann Road for the first two weeks of school in August 2019. What we're seeing is a changing of those locations and that's a continuing process.

The member opposite also spoke about the safety vests for students. The Minister for Community Services did purchase the safety vests for students in that area and he is working with the parent groups and Golden Horn administration to distribute those vests.

Also, to add to that, Standard Bus offered school bus safety orientation to students in the fall of 2019 — a really great and worthwhile initiative from Standard Bus.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2019-20*. Resuming general debate, Mr. Kent.

Mr. Kent: Just before the break, we were talking about some of the interim measures that were taking place along highways that are bus routes leading into Whitehorse. We mentioned the high-visibility vests. The Premier confirmed that those were provided or purchased by the Minister of Community Services — and also those mobile signs that the Premier said were along the route toward the end of March, but aren't there anymore.

I'm curious as to if there are any more permanent solutions that are being offered by the government to deal with this — to alert, not so much resident drivers — although some resident drivers need to be reminded as well — but especially tourists and commercial drivers — people from outside the Yukon — who aren't as used to seeing school buses and that they are on that piece of highway and that they do stop on the highway. The Premier mentioned some of the reasons — and good reasons — as to why they do some of the stopping on the highway. Nevertheless, that could catch some motorists or commercial drivers off-guard with that, so I'm just kind of curious.

As I said, I know that the digital signs have been moved out of there. I don't think the high-visibility vests are on some of the kids anymore — I haven't seen them — so I'm just curious if there are any more permanent solutions to the temporary measures that were introduced last year that were discussed or are going to be implemented.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The Department of Education has been working on its school bus safety action plan for awhile now. They have it broken down into three stages: short-term, mid-term, and long-term approach. We have gone through a lot of the items already, but I will go through some more of those initiatives and actions and also some of the status and the timing, as the member opposite is looking for more information.

One of the actions was the immediate public safety campaign in partnership with Highways and Public Works and the RCMP. That campaign, Mr. Chair, as you will recall, was completed in March 2019. That was a social media campaign. It had radio ads and householder mail as well as sent out. Highways and Public Works did a back-to-school safety campaign in August 2019. The action item on that was to plan for a bus safety awareness campaign in January 2020 after the school holidays, so that is ongoing.

There was another action item — an immediate RCMP enforcement activity, with an RCMP blitz that was completed in early February 2019. That did not result in any significant enforcement activities but was more of an exercise with the

RCMP which was completed in early 2019. That rolls into the public and parent feedback and bus safety committee. That was after the blitz.

In February 20, 2019, Education met with a Marsh Lake parent group and the MLA from beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes to look at a summary of incidents that we talked about already in the Legislative Assembly and proposed some follow-up actions. They discussed future follow-up and integration with school councils in terms of longer term feedback and participation. Resuming the school busing, as well — making sure that Education met with certain council members in different regions to discuss strategies to improve the bus registration process and the timing of posted routes as well.

Education will be continuing with this. They are going to reach out to councils again this fall and they are participating in regular meetings that are ongoing now and into the winter. Again, those participants were RCMP, Highways and Public Works, and Standard Bus. Also, there is a potential for additions from the City of Whitehorse if they so choose, but also Marsh Lake parent groups and educational operations as well.

Some of these action items we discussed already, including the dashboard cameras in the school buses and increased signage and visibility — we spoke about that initiative as well. Communication protocol for emergency incidents — we touched a bit on this, but I want to continue with that. This is working with the schools and the principals to confirm how processes worked and how it was communicated to parents. We spoke a bit about this already this afternoon. Again, an action on that is that letters are to be sent out to schools and to Standard Bus early in the school year confirming and clarifying the roles and responsibilities in addressing school bus emergencies and communications with parents. Also, we spoke a bit about the safety of the bus stops. This is part of our annual process for setting bus routes and stops. We are also working with Standard Bus if there are any safety concerns raised about a particular stop.

This is an interesting initiative as well: We spoke about the school safety vests for students, but also gathering of historical incident data. That is ongoing right now and includes going back two years. This is an ongoing conversation with Standard Bus. Three years of historical incident data was analyzed and there were no specific trends necessarily or locations that were flagged, but the incidents were noticed as being more varied and sporadic, so there is this continuing diligence of not only looking at current issues, but also gathering that historical data. So, it's this year, plus going back two other years.

Those were some of the initiatives on a short-term basis. In the medium term, we have a number of initiatives and actions as well, including ongoing public awareness activities. Building upon those short-term communication campaigns and working with Highways and Public Works to plan for bus safety awareness campaigns following breaks in school, whether that is August or September, January or March to April, that is a continued conversation with Education, Highways and Public Works, and with the RCMP as well.

Also, in the medium term — we spoke about this previously a bit — our participation in the national bus safety committee is looking into bus safety across the country including considerations of seat belts, obviously. We spoke about that earlier as well. As we said, these are initial meetings, but we're waiting to see where we continue that now that the federal government is considering their new Cabinet.

There will be adjustments to specific bus stops and to pullouts, if necessary, as well, in the medium term. The Department of Education has made some adjustments to some stops based on parents' concerns. I'm hearing from the member opposite that he's hearing some concerns as well in his meetings with school councils. Once we have finalized the 2019-20 school year, we will do a further review of stops. If the member opposite has some specific parents who have expressed some issues about not being informed, then please, by all means, if he could send the names or the contacts to the minister or to the Education department, that would be appreciated.

School bus safety in schools with school communities — this fall, Standard Bus is offering, as we spoke about, school bus safety orientation upon request, which is a great opportunity. One last action item in the medium term is research from other jurisdictions about best practices. It's always a good endeavour in whatever your initiative is to take a look at how other jurisdictions deal with things. This will be embedded into the national transportation review of school bus safety and an opportunity just to get feedback from other jurisdictions via this group. The lead on this, of course, is Highways and Public Works.

When it comes to long-term two- to five-year strategy, of course, this would obviously be reflected in the updates to the *Motor Vehicles Act*. I know the minister has spoken a lot on the floor of the Legislative Assembly as to that process, and as we all know, that initial work is currently underway.

Mr. Kent: I know I identified quite a few areas for questioning that I wanted to get into, but I wanted to give the Third Party a chance to ask some questions here this afternoon as well. I'm going to just ask about one more subject area with the Premier. I just want to thank him as well as the deputy minister for answering questions here today.

The last one I want to talk to him about is the after-school programs policy. This is again specific to a constituent of mine who raised a concern. She had her son registered for kindergarten out at Golden Horn Elementary School, and then, with the lack of after-school programming options and with her and her husband's work schedule, they weren't able to make that work. They applied for a transfer to a school in Whitehorse. That was denied, and I'm not sure of the reasoning behind it, but it was denied. So, they actually ended up in the Montessori school and they were able to accommodate the after-school needs of their son that way.

I know it has been a topic of discussion out in my riding for the last three years at least — I'm sure it probably goes back further than that — the lack of after-school programs at the school. I know that other schools have after-school programs, so I'm not sure if there's a consistent policy. If the Premier

doesn't have the answer today, he can get back to me or have the Minister of Education get back to me.

Is there a consistent policy as far as running after-school programs or potentially even accommodating students who can go to some — there are some areas out in my riding that do offer after-school programs, but the students aren't able to take a different bus in the afternoon to get to that programming.

It's causing some challenges for parents who live out in the Golden Horn attendance area — getting their kids into that school. I'm curious as to if there is a policy in place for after-school programming when it comes to Whitehorse-area schools.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the member opposite would be well aware with his experience being the Minister of Education in the past Legislative Assembly, a lot of after-school programming relies upon volunteers and, again, collective bargaining as far as teachers' responsibilities and then how that then relays into the concept of teachers coaching and volunteering their time after their job is done. Every school is going to be blessed in certain areas with volunteerism, whether it be with coaches or with parents or with other community members. There is always going to be a real reliance on that component when it comes to after-school programming.

Again, just anecdotally from the perspective of Dawson City and Robert Service School — we rely so heavily on the recreation department of the municipality of Dawson City and to be able to have another stakeholder like that — that can take on the responsibilities of the gym after the programming — and also the collective bargaining agreements and job responsibilities of the janitorial staff — to make sure that their responsibility to keep the gyms in good condition — also have to be considered as well.

I don't have at my disposal right now a specific policy, but I do know that whatever type of policy there is, the bigger consideration again is: How do we actively invoke the leadership of parents and teachers to go that extra mile to volunteer their time and effort? Again, in a rural community, it is not just from 8:30 in the morning until 3:30 in the afternoon when the school is a vital part of the community. It is from the early, early hours right into the wee hours of the night when our schools and all of our dry spaces in our communities are bustling with activities and helping to make sure that our students have safe places to go and engage in activities — not just curriculum, but past that into different opportunities.

I don't have any specific policy to speak of right now, but again, I would say as well that a lot of the consideration has to do with the availability and willingness of the community to step up and help out in those volunteer roles.

Ms. Hanson: I just wanted to be able to spend a little bit of time looking at some of the financial matters. There are questions that arise and when one sort of gives a quick look — and I am just talking about a quick look in some of the areas in the Public Accounts. I want to ask the Minister of Finance — we look at page 38 — when we talk about inventories for resale and we are talking about land, there are three categories: undeveloped land, land under development, and development land.

I would be interested in the minister's explanation of how the designations are made, how much we are talking about in each of those categories, and whether or not the amounts that are indicated for developed land are costs of development or market-value prices.

Hon. Mr. Silver: When it comes to the inventory for resale, we can see on page 38 two different categories, one being developed land and the other one being land under development. The costs associated here aren't resale — that would be the cost taken on by the government. Land under development — that's the lion's share of the dollar-value figures. Once they become available for purchase or for resale, then it goes into the concept of developed land.

I believe the member's question was: Are those retail prices or costs, as opposed to the cost incurred by the government? I will just get her to reiterate her question if I didn't properly answer it for her. Again, these are the costs of developing land — mostly in the communities, as well, by the way, Mr. Chair — and that reflects the cost to government for the inventories of that resale.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate the answer. What I was asking for was whether or not they were the cost to develop or the market value. I was asking where they were located.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Cost to develop, and mostly rural. There might be some that are from Whistle Bend, but most of this cost is in the rural communities.

Ms. Hanson: I appreciate the answer. On page 43, one of my favourite areas is the yearly increase in environmental liabilities accruing to the Yukon government. I don't say that in a positive way. I question each year and I question again this year that the government has recorded environmental liabilities of \$21,117,000, which is up from \$25,386,000 last year. These are environmental liabilities that occurred on the Yukon government's watch, not previous or historic liabilities.

The question I have is that I have been trying to ascertain — and hopefully the Minister of Finance will be able to shed some light on this — with these 99 sites that are now — and again, that's a number that has grown. So, the statement is that: "The amount of liabilities becomes determinable over a continuum of events and activities as information becomes available. As a result, the actual amount of liabilities to remediate these sites could vary significantly."

Well, anybody in the plain-language world would say that sounds like buzz. So, what I'm trying to get at is — rather than how, every year, we see a lineup of another amount — or in this case, a \$4-million increase — a little bit less than \$4 million — when does the government anticipate actually beginning to do any remediation on these works?

I am separating this out from any discussion of the Marwell tar pit. That is a historic liability that is separate and accounted for. I'm talking about the 99 under our watch, not historic ones like Marwell that are subject to a federal/territorial agreement, which we have talked about umpteen times in this Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, the member opposite did mention Marwell, for example — but again, a lot of the numbers that you will see and the increases therein is when we

do things like the nursing station in Old Crow — so we start doing work there to deal with the environmental situation — or the Upper Liard landfill is another example — also Wellgreen. This is what we're seeing for those particular increases. To the member opposite's point, it's not necessarily historic, but it is some of the work that is currently ongoing on some of this remediation.

Ms. Hanson: I am aware of that, Mr. Chair. What I'm looking for — the accounts will say over and over again that most of these are separated out from those contaminated sites. Highways and Public Works is a great contributor to this list. What are we doing in terms of practices that haven't changed if we are continually developing more highway work camps that have these liabilities?

Separating out landfills is dealt with in a separate section of these environmental liability notations here. There are three paragraphs on that, but the \$29 million that I'm referring to is not that.

While the minister is dealing with that one, there is a second one that I wanted to raise here. It has to do with the note that is made in the Public Accounts with respect to type 2 mine sites.

As we have talked about here before, type 2 is a historic liability of the federal government with the exception of the work that was done at Ketzta mine when Yukon government allowed Veris Gold to go ahead and do some work there and then they abandoned it. My question is: What is the current liability? It says that there has been an assessment. The financial obligation related to the assessment required under the DTA — and we have to determine what the government's responsibilities currently are. So, if there was an assessment done under the DTA that said that there was going to be a liability to the federal government of \$5 million, what is the Yukon government's liability? How is that being addressed? Is the assessment complete? Has the work begun on that remediation at Ketzta?

Hon. Mr. Silver: When it comes to the second question as far as our costs — again, this is all site-specific, and it is going to be based on the agreements with the federal government as far as what our cost-sharing is related to the project. Again, those numbers are based on the specific agreement in each of these particular cases.

The member opposite also asked about highways and how we are trying to make sure, as we move forward, that these environmental liabilities are being calculated and considered. Again, Mr. Chair, as we modernize as a government, it is extremely important for the Department of Highways and Public Works and other departments to be looking at this through a climate lens and through an ability to take a look at the most effective and efficient way to provide the programs and services. In this changing climate, it is always extremely important that, as they spend taxpayers' dollars, each department makes sure that they consider those initiatives.

I don't know if the member opposite needs a particular breakdown specifically to the dollars, but that is what I have for the member opposite at this point.

Ms. Hanson: In fact, what the audit says is that, because of Ketzta being a unique situation, the federal government is not on the hook for the whole amount. Because the Yukon government allowed work to be done there — reopened and reworked as a mine — as some people in this House will recall, there was quite a bit of discussion about proceeding with that — until the Yukon government had determined what Canada's liability was because then it would become somewhat muddy.

What I would ask then — it says that the government's cost, if any, may be offset by the security bonds that it holds. Can the minister tell us the amount of the security bond held by the Government of Yukon for the Ketzta mine?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, when it comes to this specific situation, that work is still ongoing. I don't have anything new to report to the member opposite right now. We continue to work bilaterally with the federal government, and we should have a better indication of the financial responsibility in 2020.

Ms. Hanson: Surely the Minister of Finance knows what the bond is that we hold — that we got from Veris Gold — as securities for the work that they were undertaking there — right?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, some of that has already been used. I don't have an update with me right now in general debate on that very specific question, but that's an ongoing process and an ongoing conversation with the federal government. That money is being spent, with more to report in the new year.

Ms. Hanson: We are talking about the Public Accounts as of March 2019, so that's actually not next year's money; it's this year's money, and the bond has been in place for some time.

On page 57, there's an intriguing paragraph. It sounds like an interesting real estate deal by the Yukon government, but it's all sort of anonymous, so I have asked the minister to clarify what it means. It says on page 57: "During the year, the Government received a contribution of land and buildings from a third party. The government determined that these assets had a fair value at the date of contribution of \$14,500,000 of which \$853,000 was allocated to land and \$13,647,000 to buildings. The government recorded revenue of \$13,300,000..." — because they only paid \$1,200,000. It says it's a contribution, so I'm not really sure how it's a contribution if they paid \$1,200,000 for it. I would be curious to know what the building is, where it is, on what land, and what the third party was.

Hon. Mr. Silver: This pertains to the Salvation Army building.

Ms. Hanson: So, we paid \$1,200,000 for \$15 million worth of liability — good.

Just a question. On page 61 — and this phrase is repeated numerous times throughout the notes to the consolidated statements. It says about land claims: "Between February 1995 and March 31, 2019, eleven Yukon First Nation Final and Self-government Agreements came into effect." It seems to me that March 31, 2019, is about 14 years past when the last one came into effect. As I recall, it was April 1, 2005, but maybe the minister has a different interpretation of this. Why would that

be showing as March 31, 2019, for the 11th of the First Nation agreements coming into effect?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Sorry, we didn't hear what page the member opposite was asking about. So, can I get her to get to her feet and ask the question again, please?

Ms. Hanson: Page 61, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, we do have the page number. Again, if the member opposite can repeat the actual question. Thank you.

Ms. Hanson: The sentence says, "Between February 1995 and March 2019, eleven Yukon First Nation Final and Self-Government agreements came into effect." I just question as to why we would use the date March 31, 2019, when that's about 14 years after the fact.

Hon. Mr. Silver: By using a date that is current, we're talking about as of the publication. If we used a date that somehow was in the past, it might infer something that wasn't correct. But it's just basically saying — you could replace that to say, "Between February 1995 to present day..."

Ms. Hanson: There is a material difference because the effective date is actually when the transfer payments between Canada and the First Nations commenced. It's the effective date of all sorts of various calculations. So, it is quite different from talking about today and then. I'm not going to argue the point, but it is factually incorrect.

So, the notes — the consolidated statements again are as of March 31, 2019. On page 62, there is reference to — there are ongoing discussions between the parties — so this is the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon and the Yukon government with respect to the ongoing matter that was in the court starting in 2009. It sounds, the way that it is written — this discussion about how to address the \$1,954,000 — so has there been a successful conclusion to those discussions in the last number of months since — so six months since these — well, prior to this, it would have been done. But as of March 31, there were discussions ongoing. What is the status of these discussions, and does the Minister of Finance foresee a termination date to those discussions?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The CSFY and the Yukon government are working together to support the learning needs of the French first language students effectively and in accordance with section 23 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Significant progress, Mr. Chair, continues to be made toward resolving lots of outstanding issues. We are very pleased to have started building the new French first language school at CSFY's preferred location in Riverdale.

Our government is working with CSFY to resolve this matter in a very fair, constitutionally acceptable, and cost-effective manner without the need for future court proceedings.

Again, I don't need to go through the background of this particular situation. We know that there was a lawsuit in 2009 and that CSFY sued the territorial government alleging that the government was failing to meet its obligations under section 23 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The CSFY requested numerous court orders designated to increase its management and control of French first language education in Yukon and to expand French first language educational facilities, including

building the new secondary school for francophone students and increasing funding to the CSFY.

There have been ongoing settlement discussions. Rather than returning to court, the Government of Yukon and the CSFY have held settlement discussions to attempt to resolve all of the outstanding issues without further litigation. It has been a good partnership, including the construction of the school, as I noted. Also, we did sign a letter with CSFY — a letter of agreement regarding the process for resolving outstanding issues. It was a full gamut of issues — whether it be full and final release, francophone secondary school shared use and opportunities therein, school board governance, and a list of issues. I don't have anything new to report as far as any other timelines other than to say that there are ongoing settlement discussions.

Ms. Hanson: On page 80, there is a line that says, "Expenses are recorded on an accrual basis. Transfer payments are recorded as expenses when authorized and recipients have met eligibility criteria."

So, can the Minister of Finance confirm what that means vis-à-vis Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services Society? On page 183, that may —

Hon. Mr. Silver: For the Public Accounts, that amount was recorded as an expense.

Ms. Hanson: Okay. We will come back to that. On page 113, on resource revenue — mineral, oil and gas, and forestry — the actuals for that category are down \$292 million from 2018.

Could the Minister of Finance provide a breakdown as to where the big deviation was from the year previous?

Hon. Mr. Silver: If the member opposite would like to turn to page 221, those numbers are reflected more in-depth here with taxes and general revenues.

There is a whole list of items for the end of the year of March 31, 2019, including the mineral resources fees, permits, royalties, mapping, publication, and charting. There are a whole bunch of different items. To be able to speak to the trend or lack thereof or the reasons from year to year — I wouldn't necessarily have that information in front of me right now, but I will get back to the member opposite as to the comparison from year to year — as far as those Public Accounts.

Ms. Hanson: Actually, page 221 in the Public Accounts that I have is "Yukon College Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements", and it is Capital assets.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. Hanson: I heard "221".

We will review those breakdowns and we will look forward to getting that information from the minister.

I just wanted to make sure that I have not missed any of the areas that we have been looking at.

There are a number of areas — a curiosity is where there is nothing in the main estimates, nothing in the supplementary estimates, and then suddenly there is an expenditure, and it does go through quite a few areas. The Minister of Finance and the MLA for Klondike was talking earlier about his riding, so I would just be curious as to the background for the City of Dawson — nothing in the main estimates, nothing in the

supplementary, and then there is \$88,085 for development, planning, and OCP. I have heard a lot about how the government does a lot to plan — and I just picked that one up because it was on that page, but I can pull out a number of other ones if the minister is interested, and I will. I am just curious — did these come up as a result of discussions or what? Page 175.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would say that these would all come based on emerging priorities, based on the communities.

Ms. Hanson: Can the minister explain — \$301,500 actual for the Yukon Gold Mining Alliance — the purpose of the contribution?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Can the member opposite confirm which page she's on?

Ms. Hanson: Page 176, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm not sure why that particular amount has tweaked the interest of the member opposite, other than to say that this is just a new contribution — this was part of the contribution agreement that would have been happening with this particular agency. If there is a specific reason why she is interested in the numbers — whether it's high, low, or if there is a particular part of that number. Again, this is just an ongoing contribution from an agency that does some very good work in working and promoting the Yukon mining industry.

Ms. Hanson: That is precisely why I would ask the question, because if it's an ongoing thing, it would be in the main estimates. If there was revision, it would be in the supplementary estimates. There's nothing indicating that it was in the main estimates; it is just in the actual expenditure. I am questioning this: If it wasn't in the main estimates, how was it budgeted for and why is it suddenly being reported?

I ask a lot of these questions — these are largely non-governmental organizations, and there has been much pressure placed on a certain sector of the non-governmental contributions. I want to ask questions about how and under what auspices some non-governmental organizations get more money than they initially asked for — or was not budgeted for at all — and others are under great constraints. It's a matter of getting a sense of how decisions are made with respect to contributions to non-governmental entities.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I could hazard a guess that sometimes we do change service providers for particular initiatives. Again, here in general debate, I don't have the very specific answer to that question other than that there are different reasons why these numbers would be appearing here in the schedule of other government transfers.

When we take a look at the actual mains, the Gold Mining Alliance on page 7-13 is listed as an estimate of \$397,000 for the 2019-20 year. The actuals from 2017-18 are less than that, but again, it is estimated at just under \$400,000 in the mains. Again, specifically why this item of \$270,000 is showing up in the schedule of other government transfers — I will get back to the member opposite.

Ms. Hanson: Well, it's good if he gets back to me about the \$270,000 for Western Canadian Music, because that is also not budgeted in — we are talking about the Public Accounts for the previous fiscal year. I am not asking about the mains because I'm presuming that, if you funded it last year, you have

some basis for funding it this year. For 2018-19, there is no mains or supplementary estimate for that entity, and it just suddenly shows that there was an actual amount of \$301,500.

If you don't have it in one — if you haven't put it in your main estimates — the question is vague. You beg the question: Where did you get that amount from? What's it for? You just don't pop money into the Public Accounts.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, if you take a look historically at the funding for the Yukon Gold Mining Alliance, the forecasts and estimates for 2018-19 were zero amounts, and the actuals for 2017-18 were around the \$300,000 mark. So, there hasn't been necessarily a consistent ask or an ongoing funding particularly. The estimates for 2018 and 2020 are at just under \$400,000. It could have been that certain initiatives were earmarked to stop or other ones were earmarked to begin.

Again, specifically why it's showing up as the \$270,000 in the schedule of other government transfers — not something I have in front of me as far as a specific answer, which is what the member opposite is looking for, but I will get that for her.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Chair, the point that I am attempting to make is that it doesn't show in his main estimates for the last fiscal year. I would expect that, if the government has made a contribution to an entity, they would have put it in the main estimates. That's simply my point and my question as to why it doesn't show there.

That is the Yukon Gold Mining Alliance at \$301,500, and you have Western Canadian Music at \$270,000, so maybe somebody made a decision at the end of the year that they are going to contribute to that, but they didn't put it in the main estimates. Either there is a planning framework for the Government of Yukon and they have a way of accounting for the money, or it just sort of shows up at the end of the year. That's what I'm trying to get at. I had some confidence that the Minister of Finance was setting in place a mechanism and a regime for planning how expenditures are made. One of the reasons why we go back to look at the Public Accounts is to say, "Against what was planned, what were the actual expenditures?" This doesn't give me any confidence in those two areas.

The reason why I'm asking the questions, as I said earlier, about non-governmental entities receiving funding — I note that the Yukon Chamber of Commerce had the main estimates of \$75,000 and then, in the supplementary, they got another \$75,000, so in total, they got less at the end — it had \$136,000.

But my question still is about why an entity would be receiving close to 40 percent more over what the main estimates were when other non-governmental entities have not been receiving that — particularly when the chamber of commerce had made a public statement at their annual general meeting that I attended for about four years, which was to move off government operational support. I'm curious as to why — this reversal in the trend by both the government and the non-governmental entity, the Yukon chamber.

Hon. Mr. Silver: We do the best that we can with the information we have when developing the budget for the mains. I believe that we have been doing a much better job in doing that and making sure that we have less money going into

supplementaries. Do we get it completely right? No. For public accounting reasons, that's why these numbers are being shown here. Extra funds that — specifically when it comes to the chamber — I believe have to do with the low carbon committee on climate change policy.

Again, we will prepare as much as we possibly can with the information that we have as we go into the budgetary session, but we do experience certain pressures and certain issues during the time, and we have to make sure that those numbers are accounted for. That's why we're seeing certain numbers in the government transfer schedule.

I concur with the member opposite when it comes to the chamber — yes, they did make that commitment, but again, we are adding certain money because of advice that we were looking for, for the low carbon committee on climate change.

Ms. Hanson: Fundamentally, you can't have a number at the end of the year if you didn't budget for it. Otherwise, it speaks very poorly of how decisions are made. I will leave it there, but we will be coming back as we see other ones.

A non-governmental entity, the Yukon Chamber of Mines from the Economic Development department, gets \$25,000 in one place, and then we flip over, and they get other contribution dollars — whereas I look at other non-governmental entities — they get static, static, static if you go back year over year. How is it determined that some are more deserving than others?

Can the Minister of Finance — all of this budget — since we're not talking to the departments in this process — in Yukon College transfer payments, there's an education assistant certificate program that was intended to be delivered, but I don't know and can't tell from this whether or not this program was delivered — on page 177.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Sorry, we didn't know what page the member opposite was talking about — so again, it's under Education. I believe she's talking about the funding programs. Can she be more specific? Which one?

Ms. Hanson: I was referring to the education assistant certificate program at Yukon College on page 177.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm going to have to push back a bit on the member opposite talking about poor accounting. Again, we do make the best decisions we can with the information that we do know at the particular times — whether it comes to the low carbon committee on climate change policy and our ability to engage with stakeholders, including the chamber, on extremely important initiatives. I don't know if the member opposite would have us say to them, "Well, we didn't know about this at the time, so we're not going to budget appropriately" or if we could figure out a way of moving forward. Again, there are a lot of moving parts when it comes to budgeting. It's a massive department and sometimes we do see the Public Accounts having to make the discrepancies — the differences — and show the actuals and to do that proper accounting — again, part of that process.

We are moving with the information that we have. When it comes to the Yukon Gold Mining Alliance now getting funds — they are getting funds in one agreement versus the past. There were multiple projects that happened at different times. I would say that this is probably a better way of doing it. But

again, with new agreements that are now in place — in the first part of our mandate — to deal with the agreements and signing under past governments — we don't get things perfect. Sometimes we do have to transition, and we do our best to make sure that the accounting is done as appropriately as possible.

The Department of Finance, working with all the other departments — again, we don't get it perfect all the time — but we put as much financial scrutiny as possible into these decisions. To suggest that we are not doing our job — I will take a little bit of pushback with the member opposite when it comes to that, but I will continue to answer her very specific questions here.

When it comes to specific funding on Yukon College — Yukon College is not offering that program anymore. The department is looking for other opportunities to support the training of EAs. Again, we very much appreciate the efforts of Yukon College to train more EAs.

Coursework often wasn't available to the students and very few people graduated from the program. Again, we are always looking for initiatives to work in partnership with Yukon College when it comes to very important work — especially when it comes to training more EAs. I can attest, Mr. Chair, that the work that the EAs do in the classroom is an extremely important endeavour.

Ms. Hanson: I don't question the importance of the work. I am questioning the fact that, in Public Accounts — what we are supposed to be able to see is that the government budgeted for something and that they revisit it when they do the supplementary estimates. Where the flag goes up is when there is no main estimate, there is no supplementary estimate, and then there is an actual amount at the end. Where did that come from?

That is what I am asking the questions about. When I look again on page 177, there is nothing, nothing, and then \$25,000 for the Yukon Chamber of Mines. Then I look at page 180, and there is nothing, nothing — it is standard operational funding, which makes sense for the organization, but there is just blank, blank, and then there is a project for \$30,000. So there is nothing that indicated that there was any planning for that in either the main estimates or the supplementary estimates. So we have two blanks on page 177 and another two blanks on page 180, for a total of \$55,000 — and those are material when you start adding it up.

I look again, you know — curious when nothing was estimated in the main estimates or the supplementary estimates for something called "Nickel Creek Platinum Corporation". Now, it's not a huge amount of money. It's \$14,000, but one would think that if the government was going to put money into Nickel Creek Platinum Corporation they would have put it in the mains or the supplementary estimates, because they have at least two opportunities to update this Legislative Assembly. That's what this is about: providing the information to both the public and all Members of the Legislative Assembly. That's our job. That's our job, to hold government to account for the expenditures made on our behalf and on all citizens' behalf. So, this is not vexatious. These are solidly based questions based on what the Public Accounts process is and the main estimates.

The more I see blanks and then see a number, then that's a problem. I'm raising the question to try to get a sense of how the government is planning or budgeting with the resources that we have.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, if we have opportunity to have the information for the mains, it would be in the mains and it would be discussed in line-by-line debate of those departments. If not, and if it is in time for the supplementaries, then again, those would be the practices that we would use. We maintain an AA rating with our accounting processes, and we get that from the review with the Office of the Auditor General because we do the most due diligence that we possibly can. If we can't put things in those budgets, then obviously they have to show up in the Public Accounts.

Again, we have an excellent rapport with the Office of the Auditor General when it comes to how we do our accounting. We are making sure that our main budgeting exercises are happening in the spring as much as we possibly can, with smaller endeavours for supplementary estimates.

The member opposite is seeing that there are some dollar values that don't get reflected in either and do show up in the actuals. We're endeavouring to get back to her the information that she desires on that. But again, I wouldn't chalk this up to some kind of financial mistake or non-due diligence. This is exactly what happens and we do need some flexibility. Sometimes it's not just us who are responsible for why — when you're working in partnership with other governments or working in partnership with other NGOs or organizations, there is absolutely reasoning. To say that there is a trend — I wouldn't necessarily say that there is a trend. I would say that the trend is that we're seeing more dollars being accounted for in the mains, less in the supplementary budget — therefore, allowing our public servants to be freed up to work on other important initiatives and programs and services for Yukoners.

Yes, over time — and this isn't something new with this government — over time, you will see in the actuals that there are other dollar values that haven't been accounted for, and it is absolutely important that those numbers show up in those.

To say that there's a trend, I disagree; to say that there's not enough financial scrutiny, I would say that there's more financial scrutiny. Again, we catch what we can in a timely fashion. I would say that we do need a little bit of flexibility, and you will see some actual dollars that come out in the schedule of other government transfers from time to time.

Ms. Hanson: On page 182, there's just a curiosity. There are other transfer payments from the Department of Finance. This one is to the Toronto-Dominion Bank for rural community banking. Can the Minister of Finance give the House the information as to how many of these rural banking arrangements are in place? Is the arrangement with the TD bank a multi-year contract or what are the arrangements there? If it's a multi-year contract, does it come up for review or renewal? How is it assessed?

Hon. Mr. Silver: There's another reason why you would see something in transfer services. In the past, the practice was to put this in contract services as a value, but as it turns out, it's not a service for us as a government; it's a service

for the communities. So, to correctly account for this, it should be in transfer services. That's why you'll see the discrepancy and that's why you'll see a change in accounting processes.

We just added Carcross, so I believe now it's in every community.

Ms. Hanson: So, the question I had, since we're spending \$436,695 — \$437,000 on this — the question was: Is it done by contract? How often is that contract reviewed or let?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The answer is yes, it's by contract, and I believe that it is a 10-year contract.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 200, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2019-20*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Mr. Gallina: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek Centre that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

The following document was filed November 4, 2019:

34-3-18

Canada Remembers — Commemorative School Project, letter re (dated November 1, 2019) from Joseph R. Mewett, President, Whitehorse Legion, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Education (White)