



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 63

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, November 17, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, November 17, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.
Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Restorative Justice Week

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government in recognition of and to pay tribute to Restorative Justice Week, held globally every year during the third week of November.

Restorative Justice Week offers us the opportunity to reflect on the efforts made to find alternative ways to deal with harm caused by crime.

Restorative justice provides opportunities for those who have been harmed and those who have caused harm to be active participants in their journey for justice, accountability, and reparation.

Criminal actions not only harm victims but also communities and the offenders themselves. Restorative justice is an approach that focuses on repairing and healing the harm caused by crime, grounded in the values of respect, inclusion, healing, compassion, and truth. It promotes offender accountability and responsibility, and it can respond to the needs of victims, families, and communities.

In the Yukon, restorative justice is delivered through the hard work and dedication of members of community justice committees, community justice coordinators, First Nation governments, federal and territorial government officials, families, elders, and individuals who take part in restorative processes. These programs are an investment in the safety and wellness of Yukoners and communities.

While there are restorative justice practices across Canada, Yukon has always been a leader and continues to be. Our government, along with Yukon First Nation governments and community-based organizations, administers many programs and services, including peace-making circles, healing circles, talking circles, diversion circles, parole board pre-release circles, family group conferencing, mediation, pre-charge diversion and post-charge diversion, circle sentencing and providing recommendations to the Territorial Court on interim release and sentencing, Gladue report writing, court support for victims and offenders, court order follow-up and support, probation supervision and reintegration, land-based healing, and community education, awareness, and crime prevention initiatives.

The Government of Yukon has recently committed to the development of an integrated restorative justice unit, which combines the internal restorative justice resources of the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Services. Through the Yukon Police Council, we have also heard that Yukoners want to see healing and working together that can address the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples in Yukon's criminal justice system. Ongoing implementation and increased use of restorative justice options is a policing priority, conveyed to the RCMP in the Yukon this year.

Thank you to all those who hold up the ideals and practices and continue to make Yukon a leader in restorative justice.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Restorative Justice Week in Canada, which takes place from November 15 to 22 this year.

In particular, I would like to take a moment to recognize the success of the Yukon's Community Wellness Court, which began in April 2007. It was created in response to a high percentage of offenders before Yukon criminal courts dealing with issues including addiction, trauma, poverty, mental health problems, and other cognitive disabilities.

When an individual has pled guilty and has been accepted into the Community Wellness Court, a wellness plan is tailored to their needs and includes counselling supports and court check-ins. For some offenders, where there is an acceptance of responsibility as well as a commitment made by the offender to take action, we have seen positive results through this Community Wellness Court, including statistically decreased rates of reoffending.

I would like to thank the staff and professionals involved with this court and indeed across government for their work in building safer communities across the Yukon.

Applause

Ms. White: On behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus, I join in paying tribute to Restorative Justice Week. The theme this year is "Inspiring Innovation". Yukon has been inspiring innovation in justice for decades. At a national conference on justice held here in Yukon in 1991, then-Justice minister Kim Campbell spoke in praise of the work being done by Yukon First Nations to implement their innovative indigenous vision for a return of meaningful community engagement and control of justice matters, suggesting to then-Teslin Tlingit Council Chief Dave Keenan that an administration of justice agreement would be completed in six months — not the first disappointment, nor the last. However, that has not deterred Yukon First Nation leaders and others in the community leading justice counsel and judges from seeking to find a path for reconciliation through a just justice system.

Restorative justice is founded on a vision of justice that heals and restores, and it is based on an understanding that crime is a violation of people and relationships and that justice is served when those most directly involved in an offence are given opportunities to redress the harm caused.

In Yukon, it is based on aboriginal healing traditions. It brings the offender and the offended together in circles of discussion and decision-making, and it involves the community in the justice process. It is an approach to justice that emphasizes healing of victims, accountability of offenders, and the involvement of citizens in creating healthier, safer communities.

Restorative justice is not about excusing crime or letting people off the hook. It's not about forcing forgiveness or even about forgiveness per se. It's not about removing important safety considerations from our communities.

It's not easy to measure the success of restorative justice. The object of stopping an offender from committing future crimes is a relevant goal and can be measured, but restorative justice goes beyond recidivism. It is a life-changing and a community-changing process that prevents future crime and that cannot be counted in numbers.

Clearly, what restorative justice is makes it powerful, and it makes it challenging to put it into practice precisely because it goes against how Canadian and Yukon legal and correctional systems have operated and continue to operate.

The hope found in restorative justice models is that they will foster healthier communities and prevent crime through education, advocacy, and community development initiatives. We salute those working across Yukon to establish innovative restorative justice practices because we know that it is not easy work. To the many volunteers who continue to work toward restorative justice, we thank you. We also thank those professionals whose insight and commitment lends energy to this movement for justice. We hope for the day when Yukon's justice system is truly ready for the systemic changes necessary to expand this humane and productive approach to justice.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling a legislative return — the visitor exit survey report from 2017-18 arising from debate during Motion No. 297.

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

- Are there any reports of committees?
- Are there any petitions to be presented?
- Are there any bills to be introduced?
- Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Hassard: I rise to give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the third-party analysis completed by Gilles Duruflé contracted by the Department of Economic Development as well as all corresponding departmental briefing notes on Panache Ventures.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that the Silver City solid-waste transfer facility stays open.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize that its new agreement with the City of Whitehorse which allows commercial waste haulers to dump waste from outside city limits at the Whitehorse landfill fails to address the need for rates to be affordable and predictable for commercial waste haulers and their customers.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the Leader of the Third Party to meet in order to discuss:

(1) the concerns brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek Centre regarding confidential deliberations of Members' Services Board; and

(2) increasing transparency and improving accountability by making information about Members' Services Board discussions public when it is possible to do so without compromising sensitive matters such as those pertaining to personnel.

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

THAT this House supports partnering with First Nation governments, municipal governments, non-governmental organizations, and members of the public in the long-term planning of health and social services that meet community needs and are culturally safe.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to encourage active transportation to and from Government of Yukon buildings by creating and maintaining proper year-round cycling infrastructure and storage facilities.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Lastraw Ranch agricultural land lease

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise to share with members of the Legislative Assembly and all Yukoners an update about innovative work done by Yukon's Agriculture branch with Megan Waterman and her family's Lastraw Ranch.

Ms. Waterman runs Lastraw Ranch at Bear Creek outside Dawson City. Her family-owned ranch has been producing eggs, chicken, and pork since 2011. Increasing demand for products meant that the farm was outgrowing its location and was in danger of infringing on zoning regulations. To address

this, Megan approached a nearby placer miner last year to discuss rearing livestock on the surface of the claims in areas set aside for remediation. They reached a cooperative agreement, and Ms. Waterman asked the Agriculture branch how she could lease the surface of this land for seasonal production.

In late 2019, the branch began working on a novel lease agreement to allow Lastraw Ranch to use the surface of the placer claims on a seasonal basis. In early 2020, the Agriculture branch began consulting the farm's neighbours and continued consultation with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other parts of the Government of Yukon. On July 3 of this year, Yukon's first-ever seasonal lease for meat production was crafted and signed. With access to additional land through this lease, Lastraw Ranch successfully expanded pork production by 38 animals this past summer.

Lastraw used Yukon's mobile abattoir for harvest of inspected, certified pork, and the entire harvest was delivered to BonTon & Company for butchering and retail sales. As Shelby Jordan, co-owner and butcher at BonTon, noted, in order to achieve food security in our community, a sustainable food network needs to be in place. All Lastraw farmhands were on deck at BonTon, learning the value-added skills to produce food after farming is complete.

Lastraw Ranch's use of a seasonal lease to produce pork for local consumption is a great example of innovative land lease arrangements, cross-industry cooperation, and community support for local agricultural business development.

I would like to take a moment to thank the placer mining family in Dawson for their generous cooperation and the assistance of the Agriculture branch Lands manager, Jonathan Lucas, and legal counsel, Carmen Gustafson, for developing this first-ever seasonal lease.

This out-of-the-box thinking about land use has the potential to encourage new entrants to Yukon agricultural production at a low start-up cost and encourage local food production in keeping with the goals of the new Yukon agriculture policy. As a result of Ms. Waterman's determination and innovative approach, Yukoners will indeed be putting locally raised pork on their forks.

I hope to see more of this kind of creative leasing and land use to encourage more local food production in Yukon in the coming years.

Mr. Cathers: I would like to begin by congratulating the owners of Lastraw Ranch on the completion of this lease agreement and their success in increasing the local production of food. My colleagues and I support the growth of the Yukon's agricultural sector and are pleased anytime that we see businesses take steps to increase the availability of Yukon-grown food. We think that this is positive news and certainly something we are supportive of.

However, the announcement itself should have been made in a different manner, as it is clearly not in keeping with the intended purpose of ministerial statements in this Legislative Assembly. A seasonal lease agreement, while great news to the

people who signed it, is not a major new government announcement or policy change. The Liberal government's infamous use of ministerial statements for re-announcements of old press releases or smaller initiatives such as today's takes time away from the Official Opposition and the Third Party being able to hold the government accountable, including our ability to ask questions during budget debate and to scrutinize the government's actions.

During the last full Spring Sitting, the Legislature had only 4.4 percent of its time to debate two of the largest departments — Health and Social Services and Education. The combined total for these two departments was \$657.9 million — or 45.8 percent of the government's planned total expenses for the year. That sitting, the Liberal government wasted many hours on ministerial statements, almost as much as we had to debate \$657 million of spending of the taxpayers' money.

Today's statement is another example of why the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges needs to establish clear rules for ministerial statements to prevent the government from continuing to purposely use them to reduce the time available for budget debate.

In closing, I note that the Liberal government has done very little to support the development of new agriculture land and is, in fact, threatening the value of existing titled agricultural lots through its new draft wetlands policy, which, in its current form, would undermine the rights and title of existing farms.

Additionally, their lack of action to resolve the loss of commercial garbage service for farms and other businesses in the Whitehorse periphery is causing increased costs and hardship to many farms in my riding, as well as south of town. This is causing problems for many farmers, including some of our territory's largest food producers. Yet, instead of taking action to fix that major problem, the minister passes the buck while farmers struggle without commercial garbage service.

One good news agriculture story does not make up for a lack of action on the commercial garbage service crisis, the wild elk problem, and increased costs due to the Liberal carbon tax. If the current Yukon government is serious about supporting the growth of our agriculture sector, you need to fix the problems caused by government that are threatening its success.

Ms. White: The way Yukon chooses to address food security will continue to define what our future can look like. We see leadership from Yukoners who have turned toward the land for answers, individuals who actively garden at home to supplement their own tables, farmers who produce vegetables and livestock to those working within the Agriculture branch in support.

Anytime that Yukon government is able to support and encourage farming, it's a good news story for Yukon. Learning about the diversity of Yukon agriculture is important, and understanding the diversity of crops, regions, and land availability is all part of a bigger puzzle.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and those in the Dawson region have a long history of farming and addressing food security in

the north, and we've just heard how, this year, an additional piece of the puzzle was added with this first-ever seasonal land lease for meat production. This innovative solution to expand pork production in the Klondike is one that we hope we can see replicated. What a creative way for agriculture and placer mining to work together in an unconventional way. From an apple orchard to a dairy farm, market gardens to a world-class teaching farm, and long summer days, the Klondike is ideally suited for agriculture. We hope that this innovation and creativity continue in our collective efforts toward food security. Congratulations to all involved in this project.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to thank the members opposite for their comments today. This is a good news story and a great example of a one-government approach to moving forward. I do believe — even if the members opposite don't believe — that this is a significant policy announcement. On this side of the House — and if you asked the agricultural community and even the placer community, I would think that they would think differently.

This summer, we released *Cultivating Our Future: 2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy*. It is the result of several years of working consultation with the agriculture industry representatives, First Nations, and the public. *Cultivating Our Future* outlines how the Government of Yukon will support the continued growth of Yukon's agriculture industry and our ability to be more self-sufficient in food production over the next decade.

This out-of-the-box thinking about land use has the potential to encourage new entrants to Yukon's agricultural production at a low start-up cost and to encourage local food production in keeping with the goals of the new agricultural policy. I hope to see more of this kind of creative leasing and land use to encourage more local food production in the Yukon in the coming years.

This story, of course, has a next chapter. The Lastraw Ranch will be using a seasonal lease on their placer claim again next season with plans to raise at least another 42 pigs on what is becoming known to locals as "Fort Pork". I understand that half of that herd is actually already pre-sold.

So, congratulations to Megan Waterman and the Lastraw Ranch. Thank you for the comments from the Third Party.

Concerning the comments from the Official Opposition, I think that the only conflict in the comments is the fact that I think we have had almost 10 hours of general debate so far on the budget here. I know that, this morning, I had a citizen stop me on the street and ask if the entire session was really going to be hearing from the Member for Lake Laberge — although I know we all enjoy that, and I know he preps immensely for that work — but really, it's a divergence from what we heard throughout the summer where the Official Opposition had so many questions about the emergency debate and how we handled that. We're just not getting those questions. So, there's a bit of a conflict in that, but we'll see how the proceedings go today.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Dempster fibre project

Mr. Hassard: So, the Dempster fibre project has been mismanaged by the Liberals. In 2016, the project was ready to go and the Liberal platform even promised to — and I quote: "... accelerate the completion of the fibre optic redundancy project."

In 2018, the Premier said that you can be guaranteed that the road has been picked and the work will be done this summer. Yet despite the promise by the Liberals, they would accelerate the project and, despite the guarantee by the Premier that the work would be done over two years ago, the YESAB application was only submitted in August. The application says that construction is now not expected to be completed until 2025 — just another example of the Liberals being unable to get things done.

Can the minister tell us why the Liberals have delayed this project by almost a decade?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm very happy to talk about this successful project on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon.

The member opposite has mischaracterized the vast amount of work done by this government over the last four years. I take exception to that, but I will talk about the Dempster fibre link. I know that the citizens of the territory are interested in this project. What it's going to do, Mr. Speaker, is actually provide a redundancy to the territory's Internet connectivity, which will allow us to really have a high-tech industry that flourishes in this territory.

That is really what the work of my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, and several others on the floor of this Legislature are really trying to foster and perpetuate, Mr. Speaker. That is really what the foundation of this work is.

We are building this 800-kilometre fibre optic link along the Dempster Highway from Dawson City to Inuvik. It will connect to the existing Mackenzie Valley fibre link in Inuvik and actually help the Northwest Territories as well. In that, it is a Canadian project. We are very happy to be proceeding with this project this year.

I know that already we are doing brush-clearing and preparing the ground for next year — doing the initial work this year. Next year, the job is going to continue. We are going to spend \$3 million starting next year. I am happy to handle more questions from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Hassard: Here is the timeline: In 2016, the Liberals promised to accelerate the project; in 2017, the Deputy Premier had hit the pause button and slowed the project down; and in 2018, the Premier guaranteed that the work would be done that summer. In December 2018, the government released a fact sheet that said that construction would start in 2019. Later that year, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said that the work would begin in the fall of 2019, but fall of 2019 documents sent to the Mackenzie Valley Review Board changed the construction date yet again — this time, to the spring of 2020. They further said that it would be completed in two years. We now have a YESAB application from the government that says that construction will not be completed until 2025.

Why have the Liberals missed every single deadline that they themselves have committed to?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the timeline. I think that there is one important date at the front of that timeline that was missed. Actually, the member opposite, who is asking the question, walked into a business meeting and announced that this line was going to be built. The sense that we got was that he had everything in place. What we quickly found out was that there was no work done. Sorry — I should say that there was a basic report that was done really without any funds identified.

What we did in that first year was meet with our federal counterparts. This project was at the high end from a capital expenditure perspective. It could be as high as \$85 million. Yukoners — from our framework, we are looking at about \$4 million of that. What we also saw with the Mackenzie Valley line in the Northwest Territories were really significant cost overruns. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but I think that the project was approximately \$100 million. It ended up coming in at about \$200 million. I apologize if I am off on that.

What we did see was the importance of ensuring that we risk-manage this and we made sure that we brought this in at the right price. Every one of these lines that have gone through challenging terrain like this, with 1,100 different water crossings and really significant directional drilling underneath the Mackenzie Delta — let's take the time to get it right. Let's ensure we're looking after taxpayers' money. We do have a plan in place, we're doing the work, and we have it funded.

Mr. Hassard: The timeline on this project doesn't paint a very pretty picture for the Liberals. As I said, in 2016, the Liberal platform promised that they would accelerate their project, but the very first action was to put the Deputy Premier in charge. Anyone can tell you that's the last person you want in charge of a project if you actually want to get it done, because the very first thing he did was hit the pause button. Now this key infrastructure project has only seen delay after delay after delay by this government.

Let's walk through the timelines a little more. A 2019 government newsletter on the project states that the construction was supposed to start in March 2020. Well, that was eight months ago and the construction hasn't started. Now we know that the construction won't be completed until 2025.

Can the minister tell us why this Liberal government has yet again missed another deadline?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I was waiting for this day — and for all Yukoners, this is a walk down memory lane of the tone and approach of the Yukon Party of old. You probably remember the nasty approach they took for a whole mandate. What we're seeing today is absolutely the same set of values and absolutely not a different approach. Their leader came out and said they would change the channel. We see today that's not the case. Whether the members opposite are not taking direction from the new leader — that might be a challenge — or they've decided — again, we see them getting upset. I think this has to do with the fact that we've answered their questions and they're taking shots.

For Yukoners who are listening, this really isn't about the question about fibre; this is about personal attacks. We will continue to see this. It's being driven by their chief of staff. I look forward to the next questions here today.

Question re: *Putting People First* report recommendations

Mr. Cathers: This summer, the Liberal government accepted all 76 recommendations in the final report on their comprehensive health review. Can the minister of Health and Social Services tell us what the estimated cost of implementing this report will be to the government?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to take this opportunity to really acknowledge the great work of the independent expert committee that oversaw the work of reviewing health services across Yukon. The comprehensive review looked at very substantial consultation with Yukoners. The *Putting People First* report is a result of significant engagement between the independent expert panel, Yukoners, Yukon First Nation governments, stakeholders, and health care providers.

We have shared the report broadly with Yukoners. We are extremely proud of that work. I think it is an indication of the direction that Yukoners want us to go in. Perhaps the members opposite haven't reflected a bit on what they have not gotten done. We have certainly taken efforts to meet the needs of Yukoners. This is a true fact of reconciliation. It is a true fact that we are looking at modernizing the way we do business in Yukon and looking at supports required for rural Yukon communities that have long been forgotten.

So, our government is committed to consulting and engaging. There are 76 recommendations in the report. It is a path forward to be achieved through continued discussion and engagement and involvement of our partners.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the minister didn't answer the question. Before accepting recommendations in a report, it is very important to understand the implications of those changes. A key tenet of good governance is that, before accepting a major report, you should understand what it will cost.

So, I will ask again: What is the cost of implementing the 76 recommendations from the comprehensive health review?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I can say is that this question was asked last session as well, and we provided to the Legislative Assembly the breakdown of the report. The independent expert panel was here; they presented to the Legislative Assembly and to Yukoners. I want to just say that, as we look at implementing the recommendations, we will certainly consider all the factors as we move forward. Fiscal responsibility is on the forefront of everyone's minds. Ultimately, we want to ensure appropriate program service supports and modernize the way we have done business — rather than looking at acute responsibilities and acute care, looking at expanding the scope of practice and bringing essential services and supports to all Yukoners where they reside, no matter the circumstances in their lives.

I am very proud of the work of that committee. We will certainly look at working further with our partners. It is a bold vision forward and we will embrace that and work with our

Yukon partners and our stakeholders to ensure that we implement appropriately the recommendations.

Mr. Cathers: The minister still didn't answer my question. Before you commit to major changes, it is good governance that decision-makers do a cost estimate as part of due diligence. Instead, we see this Liberal government again making a commitment without understanding the full costs. This means that they have no realistic plan to deliver it and don't even know if it's feasible to do what they promised to do. The comprehensive health review proposes replacing privately owned medical clinics with government-owned polyclinics.

The Liberals did not properly consult with the Yukon Medical Association before accepting this recommendation.

Why did the government go ahead with this proposal without properly consulting with the Yukon Medical Association or having any idea of the cost of delivering on that commitment?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Taking advice from the Member for Lake Laberge on fiscal responsibilities, I think, is not something that I would consider.

I remind the member opposite that, when I took office, we had the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — the \$14-million facility with no services, no supports, and no O&M expenditures around that. We took over a 350-bed facility — the Whistle Bend facility — that had no program supports and no staffing.

So, with respect to the recommendations that we are considering under the *Putting People First*, I would like to acknowledge the expert panel and their involvement — many, many years of experience — of course, oversight in terms of bringing forward some recommendations, a new way of working, and a new approach to taking population health direction from Yukoners in addressing social determinants of health and looking specifically at reconciliation.

The panel members did not provide an overall costing to the report. Currently, the department is working, of course, on the cost-savings but also looking at how we can better look at implementing the recommendations appropriately to meet the needs of Yukoners.

Question re: Fixed election dates

Ms. White: The government has introduced a bill to set fixed election dates for Yukon and the Premier said that this would bring — and I quote: "... increased fairness, transparency and accountability..." We couldn't agree more. Having fixed election dates prevents majority governments from setting an election date with their own interests in mind.

For some reason, the government bill only takes effect in 2025, and the Premier refuses to tell Yukoners when the next territorial election will be. It seems like the Premier's belief in transparency will only kick in after the next election.

Why does the Premier think a set election date will bring fairness, transparency, and accountability in 2025 but not in 2021?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think I addressed this question yesterday in the Legislature.

We would probably be getting just as much criticism if we curtailed what everybody thought was a five-year term in the last election to a four-year term in this mandate. We would get the same level of criticism from the opposition, so we believe that the most fair thing to do is to change the elections after this term and to join the rest of Canada — other than maybe one other jurisdiction — with fixed election dates.

Ms. White: Last month, the Premier was asked by the media when the next Yukon election would take place. He answered that the decision would be made at least in part by the Liberal Party's election readiness committee. This is a committee of the Liberal Party and, just like any party committee, they are accountable to the Liberal Party. Their job is to do what's best for the Liberal Party.

What concerns the public is that a partisan committee like this one will be deciding Yukon's governance for the next year, so will the Premier tell Yukoners if the timing of the next election will be decided on what's in the best interests of Yukoners or the best interests of the Liberal Party?

Hon. Mr. Silver: This is the second time that the member opposite has said this in the Legislative Assembly. If I was misquoted, then I was misquoted, but I've never said that our party is going to decide the next election.

Ms. White: I am not sure why the Premier is so defensive, because those are his words and they are actually recorded.

First the Premier said that fixed election dates would bring transparency and accountability. Then he made sure that the bill to bring in the fixed election date would not apply to him and only kick in for 2025. What is worse is that he told Yukoners that a partisan committee of the Liberal Party would decide when the next election will be. Mr. Speaker, elections belong to Yukoners, not to the Yukon Liberals.

Will the Premier show transparency and tell Yukoners when the next territorial election will be, or will he leave it to the partisan Liberal committee to make this decision?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, we are not contemplating an election right now. We are busy providing programs and services during a national pandemic — an international pandemic.

The member opposite is saying that I said something that I didn't. I had a great conversation with the media that one day where we talked for about a half an hour about a whole bunch of things. I did mention that we did have an election readiness committee, and they are going through a process of interviewing folks and getting ready for an election, as I'm sure are the two other parties as well. However, the decision for an election is not in their purview.

Right now, we are concentrating on the work at hand. We are concentrating on getting this mandate completed, making good on the promises to Yukoners, and getting us through a global pandemic. We made good on balancing our budget a year ahead of schedule before the pandemic. We have led Yukoners so far through this pandemic. We are hearing great news about a vaccine, and we will continue to concentrate on the pandemic, vaccines, the economy, and the environment,

whereas the members opposite are playing political games in the Legislative Assembly.

Question re: Fixed election dates

Mr. Cathers: Yesterday, the Liberals claimed that fixed election dates will improve democracy by giving voters certainty about when an election will be held. They argued that a fixed election date would take political game-playing out of our system and prevent sitting governments from using the uncertainty of election timing for their own partisan gain. The problem is that the Liberal government doesn't think that this applies to them. They deliberately waited until the eve of an election to table this bill and chose to have their new rules apply to everyone except themselves.

Why does the Premier think that fixed election dates are a good idea and important for everyone except the Liberal Party?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I don't think the member opposite is paying attention to the Legislative Assembly today. I just answered the question. We would be getting just as much criticism from the Yukon Party if we shortened this session from five years to four years. Every single MLA or candidate of the 19 ridings ran under an understanding of the five-year terms. At the same time, we are going to change things, which the opposition — the NDP, the Yukon Party — never considered — going to fixed election dates — and now they're critical of us doing it. We will change this narrative, and we will make it so that there are four-year terms.

Now, if the Yukon Party gets into power and into government again and if they decided that they want to go back to the old way of five-year terms, that's well within their mandate.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the Premier — his government is spinning their tires, and he is trying to spin the words of members in this Assembly.

The Liberals promised fixed election dates in the 2016 platform, but we learned in the briefing on the bill that government didn't actually begin working on it until May of this year. This means that the Premier deliberately held off on the commitment until late in the Liberal term to try to maximize their partisan advantage, which ironically is exactly what they argued is wrong with the current system.

After breaking their promise on electoral reform and using a loophole to accept over \$100,000 in undisclosed donations, this last-minute change to the election rules is just another reason why Yukoners are suspicious of the Liberal's intention.

Why did the Premier and his Liberal government wait until the last year of the mandate to introduce this legislation?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We introduced this legislation because we are making good on a campaign promise. We are setting the fixed election dates on a four-year cycle for the territorial elections in order to strengthen the democratic process. Fixed election dates for elections will support that democratic process and principles of fairness and transparency, and we will be moving into that arena.

The Yukon Party had no interest in having fixed election dates. The Yukon Party even went to the very, very last day possible the last time around to support the prince and princess

and to extend their severance packages by \$29,000 each for those candidates who didn't make it in. We don't think that's fair. We don't think that's transparent. We changed the severance package piece already. We're now changing the elections to set election dates because we believe that's the right thing to do.

Mr. Cathers: Despite the Premier's spin, the Liberal record is big deficits, red ink, and a record of broken promises.

There is a long-standing tradition in the Yukon that changes to the *Elections Act* have been dealt with collaboratively through an all-party committee.

After breaking the Liberal promise on electoral reform and using a loophole in finance rules to hide the source of over \$100,000 given to the Liberal Party, the cynical decision to bring forward legislation in an election year is the latest in a pattern of actions that show lack of respect for our democracy by the Liberals. Yesterday, the Liberals said in debate that it is important that Yukoners have certainty about when elections are held. They argued that this certainty would strengthen democracy and show respect to Yukon voters.

So, will the Premier live up to his words yesterday and answer a very simple question: What is the date of the next territorial election?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, clearly, the member opposite is not paying attention. That question was already asked in the Legislative Assembly. It is very interesting that both opposition parties are so concerned about an election, where we are concerned about running a government during an international pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, we have balanced the budget a year ahead of schedule, contrary to the members opposite's assertions here in the Legislative Assembly. If you take a look at the per-person spending on COVID compared to any other government in Canada, we are at the forefront there. We are making sure that we are accountable for Yukon taxpayers' money, but at the same time, we are making sure that Yukoners are safe. We are here to do business; the opposition is here to play political politics and to ask: "When is the next election?"

I thought they had questions about COVID. I thought they had questions on the orders-in-council. All summer long, we heard: "We need to get back in and talk about these orders-in-council." We offered them an opportunity to come in this summer, but they refused. We are here in the Legislative Assembly — 10 hours in general debate, Mr. Speaker — 10 hours in general debate, not asking questions about the actual supplementary budget, but asking about: "When is the next election?" — and asking every other question underneath the moon.

Mr. Speaker, we are here to do the business of government. The opposition is obviously here to play politics.

Question re: Pharmacare coverage

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, a constituent of mine is having difficulty navigating their pharmacare coverage and getting their medication. I wrote the Minister of Health and Social Services on July 17 about this. That is exactly four months ago. The minister has ignored the letter and has still not

replied. Unfortunately, this means that a Yukoner who has concerns about their coverage for medication has been left hanging for four months while the minister ignores the letter. We are talking about an individual's health care.

So, will the minister agree to stop leaving this Yukoner waiting and deal with this issue today?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, what I would like to say to Yukoners is that, if there are issues and concerns that are brought forward, you bring that to the attention of Health and Social Services and we would be happy to respond to the questions.

We certainly take great care in providing appropriate services to all Yukoners. Health is of the utmost priority, as we just heard in a previous question around the comprehensive health review. That was the objective — to ensure that Yukoners are provided specialized supports and services that they so readily need.

As mentioned by the Member for Kluane, certainly there are many individuals in Yukon who are, during these pandemic times, challenged in getting services. We are doing our best to work with our health professionals. I want to just acknowledge the department for doing such a great job.

With respect to the specific question around the individual, I would be happy to go back to the department and see where that has been case-managed and where the response is. Personally, if I neglected in getting back, I will take responsibility for that, but I will certainly endeavour to seek the information from the department.

Question re: Nurse practitioner staffing

Ms. Van Bibber: In 2012, the previous Yukon government brought in legislation to license nurse practitioners. Nurse practitioners bridge a gap between a physician and the registered nurses at the community health centres. They have all the skills of a registered nurse and can independently provide health care, diagnose illnesses, order and interpret tests, prescribe some medications, and admit people to a hospital.

Across Canada, nurse practitioners are proven to be highly effective. Last Monday, the Premier indicated in general debate that the government is seeking a further \$92,000 this fiscal year to hire a nurse practitioner in Carmacks. Can the minister tell us where we are in the hiring process for this position? Is there a target date for getting the new person in place?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to nurse practitioners, the objective of providing collaborative models and an expanded scope of practice to our hospitals was really to look at ensuring that we provide the services that a nurse practitioner could bring. Historically, we relied on our registered nurses. This is an opportunity and I am very pleased to make that commitment to Yukoners.

The nurse practitioner that was implemented in Mayo — the scope of practice and expansion of that service — allowed us to deliver services to Selkirk as well. The Blackjack inquest, which was a coroner's inquest, recommended that we must look at a scope of practice in the community of Carmacks, so we committed to moving the next nurse practitioner position into

that community. We are working very closely with our colleagues in the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We are working very closely with our communities to identify where we would then bring the next targeted positions, very succinctly aligning with the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report.

Ms. Van Bibber: The health report notes that, of the five nurse practitioners practising in the territory, only one is outside of Whitehorse. We know that person has been doing a wonderful job for the community of Mayo; however, the health report notes that this position in Mayo was only done as a one-year trial.

Can the minister confirm if this position is or will be extended beyond the one-year trial?

Hon. Ms. Frost: With respect to the target date for the position in Carmacks, we've been working with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. The target date for that position is January 1. Of course, we are certainly right now looking to the list of potential candidates and finding the right fit for the community, appreciating the fact that it's an indigenous community predominantly, so we want to ensure that cultural integrity is in effect.

With respect to the future of nurse practitioners in the Yukon, this government is committed to expanding the scope of practice across the Yukon. Ideally, we would like to see that in the future. We permanently funded the position in Mayo. We tried it out on a trial basis and now we've committed to doing that and providing support to Pelly Crossing as well. We will look at the future of nurse practitioners in the Yukon and aligning that alongside the work with physicians and community nurses and other allied health professionals.

We certainly want to ensure that we take into consideration the recommendations that were presented to us from Yukoners and of course from the *Putting People First* report.

Ms. Van Bibber: The health care report also indicates that currently nurse practitioners are not able to practise to a full scope in Yukon due to the lack of hospital privileges. It suggests that these are negatively impacting outcomes for Yukoners.

Can the minister tell us if she is addressing this concern and what specific actions has she taken to do so?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I can confirm is that the physicians from Watson Lake are supporting the nurse practitioner in Mayo.

We are looking at other opportunities. I certainly want to say that, given that it's a new initiative, we have the recommendations that have been brought forward. We will continue to endeavour to look at opportunities and certainly want to look at the supports that we currently provide in our health centres, continue to expand the scope of practice and align that with our mental wellness hubs and align that with our specialist clinics that we're bringing to the Yukon as we look at the advancement of polyclinics and the advancement of our "Wellness Yukon" initiatives. There is a lot of great work happening right now, and we will continue to work with Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that nurse practitioners are able to work to the full scope of practice in our hospitals.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of government private members' business

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of government private members to be called on Wednesday, November 18, 2020. They are Motion No. 236, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North, and Motion No. 237, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 15: *Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 15, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move that Bill No. 15, entitled *Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 15, entitled *Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I just would like to begin by thanking all of the members who stood up to speak here in the Legislature. I appreciated their comments. I think that the debate in the Chamber has contributed to a fuller understanding of how the amendments to the *Business Corporations Act* and the *Cooperative Associations Act* as well as our new *Societies Act* will improve all stakeholders' experiences.

As we stated before, Mr. Speaker, we developed the Yukon's new *Societies Act* using feedback that we received from extensive public engagement, which I was happy to be part of. We also modelled our act after BC's *Societies Act*, and prior to drafting this bill, we took the opportunity to review BC's proposed amendments to their legislation and draft it as part of their own engagement. We looked at some of that feedback to see how we could improve our legislation as well. Where appropriate, we have applied some of their technical amendments to our new act. I spoke about those during Committee of the Whole and also in second reading. We have developed a new set of regulations for the new act as well, so those are now ready.

The prime purpose of the previous bill and this one has been to modernize our new *Societies Act* and to improve certainty and clarity for Yukoners. I am not sure if they are all active, but I think we have more than 800 societies. It's not necessarily well known. Entities created under the *Business Corporations Act*, the *Cooperative Associations Act*, and the *Societies Act* are all forms of corporations with significant similarities regarding their creation, organization, and governance. That is why within this bill we included

amendments that provide consistency regarding incorporators' and directors' qualifications among the three acts.

Mr. Speaker, there is a large focus in this bill on directors' roles and responsibilities because of the legal and financial decisions that they make for societies. Amendments in the bill reinforce transparency with clear reporting requirements, including filing deadlines, contact information, and changes regarding directors. They clarify the use and access to information obtained from society registers and documents. They also provide societies with access to model bylaws if they so choose.

In particular, we looked to try to make our societies and our corporations as inclusive as possible for all citizens depending on their ability to manage both financial and legal affairs.

We are certain that, with these amendments, our new *Societies Act*, supported by new regulations, will provide societies with clear, easy-to-understand guidance on virtually all processes regarding their creation, governance, and operations and will allow them to continue their important contribution to the benefit of all Yukoners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to final submissions.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thanks to the minister responsible for bringing this act forward. The amendment act has been through some very good discussion, and we feel that the language included is clear and understandable. It gives guidance regarding boards' and directors' responsibilities and clears up some qualification guidelines when citizens or Yukoners take on any board position.

We would also like to thank the drafters in the department for their continued work on ensuring that these acts are brought up to date for societies and organizations.

As we said during second reading, we be will supporting Bill No. 15, *Corporate Statutes Amendment Act (2020)*.

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP is supportive of changes that clarify the roles and responsibilities of societies and those on boards, and we look forward to seeing this come into action.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate on third reading of Bill No. 15.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, I thank the members opposite for their comments. I will make sure to pass those on directly to the folks from the legislative counsel office who were doing the drafting and also to the folks from Corporate Policy and Consumer Affairs who have been doing the work to update the *Societies Act*.

Thank you to all the members for their contributions, and I look forward to the vote.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 15 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 15 has passed this House.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Hutton): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

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

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

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

Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I know that the Member for Copperbelt South has 17 minutes left to ask questions, but I've been told that he's waiting for me to answer the questions that he put on the Legislative Assembly yesterday, so I will start down that route.

Most of the questions were answered. He had a few at the very end there. I think there was a question about Mayo community housing — the question being: Why will it take three years to get to a point to spend money on community housing in Mayo?

Mr. Chair, the Yukon Housing Corporation is planning a future community housing development in Mayo; however, at this stage, it is still uncertain what form this project will take as it is still several years out. We are just giving as much information as we possibly can in a timely fashion.

The Village of Mayo has expressed the need for additional affordable housing. The Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation has expressed a desire for a partnership with the Yukon Housing Corporation as well on future construction projects to support ongoing housing needs. As of January this year, the project was still in the very early stage of planning and the scope was not entirely defined. This does not mean that no money was spent on the community housing for Mayo, or that there will be no money spent in the next three years either, as the Yukon Housing Corporation does have recurring capital budgets for renovations, repairs, unit conversions, and energy projects for the entire housing stock, which will include existing units in Mayo.

Currently, the Yukon Housing Corporation continues to maintain and upkeep 32 units in that community for staff and social housing. I believe that there is currently one staff client on the waiting list in Mayo. Future details will become available, and we will share them as we can on that particular project.

There were questions about rural community housing. We responded — basically reiterating several times — that housing renewal — talking about the budget to replace out-of-service units. We spoke about that a couple of different times. The Yukon Housing Corporation is, as we said, currently proposing capital projects in Old Crow, Watson Lake, Carcross, and Whitehorse; however, the communities of Ross River, Teslin, Haines Junction, and Dawson City have also expressed interest for support of their housing needs when it comes to rural community housing. On the specific line in table 6 of the 2020-21 capital plan — specific to that particular budget that they are talking about — the budget for this item is a placeholder, as we said, for future years. We will further define it following more engagement with communities.

Questions on Cornerstone — we answered most of those. They did ask if Cornerstone itself was putting money toward

this project. Yes, they are putting in approximately \$500,000 as a cash investment from Challenge.

Also, has the Yukon Housing Corporation given any thought to changing the application process for the rent supplementary program? The rent supplementary and the rent-gear-to-income program have the same eligibility requirement criteria. The Housing Corporation has found that the majority of clients prefer to be considered for both programs to help them get assistance, if possible.

Mr. Hassard: I would like to thank the Premier's Deputy Minister for being here today with us one more time. He looks like he is enjoying it every time he gets here.

Just before I begin, the Premier has spoken a few times — and again in Question Period today — about this being a record — having to be in general debate for 10 hours, but I would just like to remind the Premier that 10 hours is not even a full day for a lot of folks in many industries here in the Yukon, so I certainly hope that he is not looking for sympathy in that regard. I can assure him that we probably won't be here too much longer, so he can get his beauty sleep.

I had a couple of questions regarding community banking. I guess, first, this is an issue that has come up in Question Period a couple of times, so maybe I will just give the Premier an opportunity to give the House a bit of an update on where we are at with community banking.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the personal attack from the member opposite as far as beauty sleep goes. I am happy to answer questions. I am just pointing out that, yes, it would be nice to actually have a conversation about the budget at some point.

Approved responses for the community banking — we have talked about this a few different times. We have talked about the different needs in different communities. I don't have much of an update for the member opposite, although we have talked about the fact that there has been a competitive procurement process and the Government of Yukon has a new banking contract in place with CIBC, with the transition to this provider taking place — effective, as we have said — it was through September to October. We encouraged community members to continue checking on yukon.ca for the most current information in that transition.

Mr. Hassard: The last time that we spoke about this issue, Mayo, of course, still had no bank, and I'm sure you're well aware of that, Mr. Chair, as it is your riding. My understanding is that they do now have someone coming down from Dawson to run the bank in Mayo two days a week, I believe. I was hoping that the Premier could have updated us on that and maybe given folks a bit of an idea of where things are going. We still don't know what's going on in Carmacks or Pelly.

I guess — my question that I would ask the Premier is — I know that the Member for Kluane, in particular, and I have heard this countless times — daily. I'm curious if the same issues, Mr. Chair, are coming from your riding or that of the Member for Old Crow. The question to the Premier would be: Have you heard of banking issues from the rural MLAs in your caucus? What are the issues that they are bringing forward? I

know that the issues I have raised with you in Question Period regarding customers not being able to pay bills, not being able to cash US cheques, being forced into online banking — those types of things — I'm curious, Mr. Chair, if the Premier has heard of any of these issues from his own rural MLAs.

Hon. Mr. Silver: We know that there have been some issues with the company itself getting some workers; that's for sure. We do know that Mayo is up and running and operating Tuesdays and Wednesdays each week on a temporary basis until final arrangements are made, and they are working very closely with the development corporation.

Carmacks is now open and operates on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and CIBC is working through the staffing issues that they've had in Pelly. They've had a staffing issue in Pelly — so has the previous bank company — for a while now. They are still very committed to opening by the end of November, so that's good. We hope they can get the staffing that they need there.

CIBC is working with anybody who has issues and getting them up to speed on how the services work. There were issues with the tendering contract; however, what we're seeing right across Canada is a transition of banking companies as well to online banking. So, that is going to be an issue in a lot of communities right across Canada, northern communities and more rural communities, but this is the transition that's happening, not just in Yukon; it's being experienced in other jurisdictions as well.

We do know that bank tellers and folks are helping clients that aren't used to the online banking in these areas to come in and be able to use the computers there at the agencies. There's no requirement for them to buy any new gear or new equipment to be able to allow them to do banking — maybe not the way they used to, but a more modern approach to that.

I myself am getting a little bit used to online banking — you know, being able to send cheques and pay my bills, especially when I spend a lot of time down in Whitehorse. To be able to make sure that my driveway is still getting plowed, I use the online banking services down here in Whitehorse — thanks to the Grenon's for taking up my cheques online. But yes, as I see it, there are two issues here: one is a modernization piece and the private sector helping out the clients to make sure that they have the capacity to learn maybe some new skills or come in and see how the banks are operating, and also the issue that the CIBC had with staffing. Mayo is up and running. Carmacks is up and running. Pelly is seeking an arrangement and looking for a new employee.

Mr. Hassard: It's great that the Premier has now learned how to do online banking, as have I, but unfortunately, this isn't about the Premier or me. This is about citizens in rural Yukon who are unable to do this. The fact that the government put this tender out — the government chose not to work with the Association of Yukon Communities to hopefully ensure that we wouldn't have some of these issues.

So, the question is quite simple: What do we as rural MLAs tell our constituents when they say, "Why can we not continue to do banking the way we've done in the past?" Are we supposed to say, "Well, the Premier says we need to all get on

board and learn a new way of doing things.” As I said, unfortunately, a lot of people in the communities and in Whitehorse are not capable of doing that and never will be, so what is their alternative, Mr. Chair?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, where the look and the feel of the banking experience may be different, the access to basic banking services will continue. This is what I hope the members opposite are telling their constituents. In order to ensure that the customers are able to continue to deposit cheques at their local branch, iPads are being installed so that individuals can now deposit into any of those big five banks or the First Nations Bank of Canada. Agents are able to assist individuals through this process.

I do recognize that change is difficult for people, especially when it comes to technologies, but paying those bills — there are agents there who are assisting those customers. If you come in to do your banking, it will be different from you talking directly to one individual. There’s going to be a bit more technology, but there are people there to help you through that process. With people in place, you will be able to pay your bills. Agents are there to assist customers with paying online or via telephone banking. It’s also important to note that the banking industry is continuing to shift to online banking models. We want to make sure that Yukoners are as up to date as other jurisdictions, as every other jurisdiction is going to these models, especially when it comes to serving more remote communities, whether in provinces or territories. To have the help there and make sure that clients coming in can use the services that are there is extremely important. Individuals without access to technology or to cellphones can access the online banking using the provided iPads in the local branches.

There is no requirement or expectation that individuals will need to buy any new hardware. If members of the community are having a difficult time going through the new process, the good news is that CIBC, the private sector company here, is there and able to help them work through this new system. Again, the feel is different, for sure, and that is going to be a learning curve, but the existing basic banking services will continue in those communities.

Mr. Hassard: Just because everyone else is doing it — that’s not a reason to me. There is an old saying — if your friends jump off a bridge, does that mean you think you should? Why is this government jumping off the bridge because their friends are? You know as well as I do that there are many people out there who cannot do this.

There are issues of people who worry about the security of their money when they’re doing online banking. We have people who are just so uncomfortable with it because they’ve never dealt with something like this in their 60, 70, or 80 years of life and the government put the tender out. The government had the option to say, “Look, whoever has the tender for community banking, these are some of the things that must be kept intact for Yukoners.” I don’t think that it’s fair that the Premier can say, “Well, that’s what’s happening down south and other places in the north are doing it, so we had to do it too.”

I’m wondering if the Premier would reconsider and maybe have someone reach out to the CIBC and try to encourage them to maybe not be in such a hurry to catch up to the modern world.

Hon. Mr. Silver: This isn’t about a lemming mentality. This is about making sure that we have access to banking services in the rural communities, and we do; all the services are still being used.

I remember, as a boy, my first banking account and the processes back then, and the changes that have happened since then are remarkable — completely different from back then. This is a banking institution across Canada, across the States, and everywhere else that is moving to a more modernized fashion. We do understand that it’s difficult for folks who are not used to technologies to use that, but the good news is that it’s there and there are people there who can walk them through that process.

Individuals without access to technology don’t have to buy any new technology. If you’re skeptical of online banking for some reason — I don’t think there’s a reason to be skeptical that you’re going to lose any kind of security by using — I don’t know if that’s what the member opposite is inferring. I do get that people have a lack of familiarity with new technologies. The good news is there are people there to walk you through the process. If you want to deposit a cheque as opposed to passing it to a teller, you take a picture with a camera that’s provided on the iPad and the money goes into the bank. They can walk you through these processes.

I find that whether it’s in a rural community or in an urban community, knowing that you can have access to the most modern technologies as well — I think that’s an important piece. Making sure that Yukon doesn’t fall behind other jurisdiction when it comes to online technology — that might be a consideration as well.

In this contract, the private sector who took on this contract is lending their expertise and lending their hardware to make sure that everybody in these rural communities to whom these banking services are being provided have access to these banking services.

I appreciate that the member opposite thinks that this is not a good thing, but we believe that this is a modern approach. You can still pay your bills. The company that took this responsibility on has the resources to make sure that people have access to the technology. The same banking services will be provided; it is just that the feel and the look is different.

Mr. Hassard: I can appreciate that when the Premier says how things have changed since he had his first bank account when he was a boy. Things have changed — absolutely — but those things changed over time, and the Premier grew with that and learned along the way. I have grandkids who can deposit a cheque now, but I have parents who can’t, because they don’t have an iPhone and they wouldn’t have any idea of how to take a picture of their cheque and put it in their bank account. Then, I guess, on top of that, even to make things worse — let’s take the bank in Mayo. Now we have someone coming from Dawson two days a week. So, you have an elder in Mayo who is going to take their cheque to someone they have never met before and say, “Oh, yes, you’re going to take a

picture of my cheque and put it in my bank account for me”? I’m sorry, but people have a problem with that, and I don’t blame them. I mean, this is not just a simple change; this is a major change. It’s a major change in the way that people do their banking and how they pay their power bills or whatever the case may be.

As I said, Mr. Chair, the Premier is the minister responsible for this contract. I have asked this question numerous times: Why did he not work with the Association of Yukon Communities when they asked? I read their resolution into the record here in the Legislature, but the government chose to just do this on their own and not listen to any rural concerns. Will the Premier — since it is his contract — go back and talk to CIBC to see if they will reverse some of these decisions?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, the member opposite makes it seem like the arrangement with Dawson right now is a permanent thing; it’s not. It’s a temporary patch, and we will get over this situation as well, and the services will go back to normal in that community.

The member opposite talked as well about how things didn’t happen just overnight. Well, actually, again, if the members opposite care to listen — they’re just talking off mic as I’m answering his questions. I do remember the first day that I brought my grandfather in because CIBC in my town just had for the first time the remote ATMs — the automatic teller machines. That was overnight. That was one day they weren’t there; the next day they were there. Yes, at that time, you still could go in and do banking, but the new modernization piece was a new thing and it was right away a new direction and it was a piece of a modernization of the financial institutions.

So, what we see here again is — yeah, it is a change; I recognize that it is a change. I hope the member opposite recognizes as well that, once the staffing issues get dealt with, it doesn’t mean a lack of services; it means a modernization of those services.

Also, it’s not as if we just dropped an ATM in these places and just said, “Fend for yourself.” The company is there. There are people and agents there. Of course, there are some staffing issues, but once we get over that, these folks will help to make sure that the banking that was done in the past continues to be done in these communities. Again, if that is something that we see after the next few years of this service — that this is not providing an ample service or if people are still having problems, well, we’ll have to take a look at that. These contracts aren’t forever and they do get renewed. There will be a process there.

I did say in the Legislative Assembly last time when answering these questions that we didn’t change anything as far as how the government does these contracts. I don’t know if the Yukon Party, when they changed their contracts, was working with the AYC. If they were, then I’ll take a look at that.

Again, we have great conversations on a regular basis through Minister Streicker and the AYC. I’ll ask him if he’s getting questions —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Mr. Cathers, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier just made reference to one of his colleagues by name which, of course, is contrary to our Standing Orders. I would ask you to remind him not to refer to members by their name in contravention of our Standing Orders.

Chair’s ruling

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Silver, do you understand?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think I understand. Yeah, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I don’t do that very often. I apologize.

Again, we can go over this over and over again. The services are in place. There’s the same level of services. You can still do the same things. It’s just a more modernized approach.

I recognize that the member opposite feels that the elderly people in the community will not be able to adapt to this. I believe that they will. I believe that, because the supports are there, you could come in and say that you don’t know about this at all, and people will be there to walk you through it. They will be there to walk you through it for the complete three years of this contract. Again, if there are any issues at these branches, I would love to hear from the MLAs and from particular people. Time will tell as we move forward.

Just for the record, we have agreed — I don’t know what the member opposite has done in the past with the Association of Yukon Communities and bank contracts — to talk with the Association of Yukon Communities in the future, so that is a change. Again, here we are listening and moving on that.

Mr. Hassard: A couple of things there — first, the Association of Yukon Communities part — you know, they brought that motion forward at their AGM in 2014. There were no contracts let on banking services until this Premier was the Premier. We are not asking if he is doing anything different from the previous government; we are asking why he would not work with the Association of Yukon Communities when they brought forward a resolution asking for this exact thing.

The Premier talks about banking going back to normal in your beautiful community of Mayo once they get staffing in place. I think that his “back to normal” is quite a bit different from my “back to normal” or probably the “back to normal” of many of your constituents. He used the example of ATMs coming in when he took his grandfather to the bank. The key difference there is the fact that, if you chose not to use the ATM, you still had the option of walking past the ATM, going to the teller, and doing all of the things you could traditionally do. There is a significant difference here as opposed to the times that the Premier is talking about.

The question I asked twice now — I will ask one more time in case the third time is the charm — is: Will the Premier go to CIBC to ask them to reinstate services the way they were before?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Chair, with the declaration from the Association of Yukon Communities — again, they wrote expressly that they want to be involved. There were no explicit recommendations, though, in that particular year.

Since then, we have agreed to talk to AYC in the future on contracts. I'm not going to make decisions on the floor of the Legislative Assembly when it comes to contracts that have already been tendered.

However, I disagree with the member opposite that this is a horrible new system — in his mind. I don't think so. I think that this is an example of what's happening with all businesses right across the country. CIBC has the contract. They're providing the same level of service but in a different capacity. You can still walk into the bank with your cheques. You can still do your banking that you're normally used to doing. It just looks a little bit different.

Mr. Hassard: It's unfortunate that the Premier thinks that the only thing that has changed here is the way it looks, because that's in fact not the case. It's really, really unfortunate that the Premier refuses to even listen on this issue. This is an issue that is affecting many, many rural Yukoners.

The banker in Teslin right now has almost zero customers because people won't go there to the bank anymore because they can't do things the way they did. For the Premier to say that, well, they are going to get used to it and everything will carry on — again, he's out of touch because that's not the case. If people stop going to the bank, I guess soon there won't be any reason to have a bank in the communities because nobody — or very few people — is actually using them.

The Premier has stood here and said that I said that this is a horrible system — in my mind. I don't believe that I said it was a horrible system. I think there are plenty of people out there in rural Yukon who would say that it's a horrible system. I'm just bringing this forward on behalf of constituents throughout the entire Yukon, not just in Teslin or Pelly-Nisutlin. I'm talking about all of rural Yukon, with the exception, I guess, of maybe Watson Lake and Dawson City because they have had CIBC in their communities traditionally. There hasn't been as much of a change maybe for them as there has been for the other communities and maybe that's why the Premier doesn't think that this is a big deal because people in his community maybe don't see that it's as much of a change as it is for constituents in my riding or your riding, Mr. Chair.

"Every community matters" — you know, I heard that for the first two years, yet as quickly as we come forward with an issue in a community, the Premier says that this is how it is going now — get on the bus or get off, I guess. It is really quite frustrating, and I apologize to all of those rural Yukoners who are having this difficult time because of the fact that this Premier just sticks his head in the sand and refuses to listen.

But, Mr. Chair, there is no point in beating a dead horse, I guess.

I think I had one more question in regard to community banking — well, maybe two, depending on how the answer goes, I guess. Can the Premier tell us when the bank in your particular community — your hometown of Mayo — will be

moving out of its current location and where it will be moving to?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, Mr. Chair, all personal attacks aside, the member opposite is paraphrasing — like I did, so fair enough. I didn't say that you have to get on the bus or that's it — whatever he said. What I am saying is that we are working with CIBC daily to ensure that communication is provided in each community, making sure that folks who are using the banks have access to those services and that each community is also opening their hours and providing those services. CIBC also has committed to work with anybody who has issues and get them up to speed on how the service works, and we are in regular contact, as I said, with CIBC. I do appreciate the member opposite telling me about Teslin — from the bank teller at that place. We will pass this information on to CIBC, if they are not already aware of it, that the member opposite is saying that they have zero customers there now because people —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think the member opposite said "no customers right now" —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: "Almost no customers" — I will check the Blues and just pass that on, so that is great. Thank you for the information from the member opposite.

But, again, the department is listening and responding to any issues as they come up, and if we are finding that people are not coming into the bank, we will address that issue as well, and we will make sure that folks have the access to those open doors in those banks and make sure that, if they have any reservations about using modern technology, we address that and make sure that they have the access that they deserve in those communities.

All shots about my community versus other communities — that is not how we work here.

Every community does matter, and I completely agree with that. Making sure that we have services in these communities is very important to us on this side of the Legislative Assembly.

I don't have an answer for the member opposite right now as far as the current facility in Mayo and when the change is on that. We do know that there are no final decisions there yet, but we don't have any update on that.

Mr. Hassard: That certainly wasn't a shot about Watson Lake or Dawson City. Actually, I think that there are a lot of communities that are envious of Dawson City and Watson Lake right now when it comes to the banking issue, because they aren't having to go through these challenging times.

Mr. Chair, I have one more question for the Premier on the banking. He said that he didn't know when the transition would take place in Mayo. I am curious if the Premier is in negotiations or in talks with the Village of Mayo with regard to the space that they had initially, I guess, hoped to rent to the bank and if that, in fact, is still one of the possibilities for space for CIBC in Mayo.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, CIBC is responsible for the location. I know that they are working with Mayo. I know that

there is no final decision made. I wish I had more for the member opposite, but I don't.

Mr. Hassard: Okay, we'll leave banking.

I have a question brought forward from a constituent, and I am hoping that, if the Premier isn't able to provide us with an answer to this, he can point us in the right direction or maybe have the minister who is able to provide us with the information do that. It is with regard to the business relief fund through the pandemic. I have a couple of constituents who are curious if that is a taxable income.

Hon. Mr. Silver: That tax will be a CRA question. I believe that it is taxable, but that's a CRA question and not necessarily a ministerial question. We could have the Minister of Economic Development, when he's up during debate, to talk about the program itself, but those taxes there will be paid through the Canada Revenue Agency.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that information from the Premier. Once again, I thank the deputy minister for his time here today and previous days.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 205?

Seeing none, we will proceed to clause 1. Clause 1 includes the bill schedules. Among the bill's schedules is Schedule A, containing the departmental votes.

The matter now before the Committee is Vote 51, Department of Community Services.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote 51, Department of Community Services.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Community Services

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just to begin, I would like to welcome Deputy Minister Matt King and our director of Finance, Phil MacDonald. It's always a pleasure having them here in the Legislature. I am sure that the members opposite will also pass across their thanks.

When I gave the second reading on the budget speech, I went over, quite a bit, the plans for the supplementary budget with respect to Community Services.

So, just in terms of opening remarks here today, what I am going to do is try to address a few questions that I have had posed to me by the members opposite just to try to get them in the record, and we can talk about whether there is any follow-up to those questions.

First of all, with respect to a question from the Member for Porter Creek North, and I think it was from October 6, but it was a question about the timeline for the development of Whistle Bend. It is a bit of a complicated answer. The simple answer is sometime over the next decade. The complicated

answer is that the city has been expanding, a little bit, its perspective on how Whistle Bend should be developed. My recollection is that it started off with eight phases, but they have been subdividing those phases and adding phases, and now they are scoping up to phase 15. They went through a YESAA process recently, and they are currently in an official community plan process. I even expect to be in a conversation with the city later this week on their work on that process. That will adjust timelines somewhat.

So, the way to think of it is — Whistle Bend has been in development for the past decade or so. We have been accelerating in the amount of development — the investment that we do year over year. That is reducing the amount of time — we are, I think, roughly a little over halfway done — and we're accelerating, but at the same time, the city is thinking of expanding or putting more in and around Whistle Bend. So, I can't give a precise answer, but that is how the department has relayed it to me — is that it depends on how far the city wants to go with the development, and it depends as well on future investments. Will it continue at this pace, or more or less?

Another question that came up was from the Member for Lake Laberge — talking about lapses. So, let me try to provide some background on the lapses. The question was around the \$19.7 million that was lapsed last fiscal year on capital projects.

First of all, I am going to divide it out into both land development and infrastructure. With respect to land development, we have just been talking about it here with respect to Whistle Bend. Our total budget was \$27.1 million for last year in Whistle Bend.

We lapsed under \$8 million — \$7.8 million — and so the total spend ended up being \$19.3 million. The bulk of that lapse had to do with Whistle Bend itself, and it had to do with a couple of things. Phase 6 was tendered slightly later than we anticipated, and that led to some delays for our contractors. The delay was due to — in our development agreement with the City of Whitehorse, there were some late changes that they wanted to see in the design work. That caused us to pull back the timeline somewhat. Then we started to hit weather. You will recall that we had that November snowstorm, and we weren't able to put in curbs — or the contractors weren't able to put in the concrete and things like that. That caused a delay. That was \$5.4 million of the lapse — so the bulk of that lapse.

The member, during Question Period when he was asking about it, said that he was concerned that we weren't getting that money spent. Well, we are getting that money spent this year, and so it is happening. As well, I think it's worth noting that, even with that lapse, our total spend was \$19.3 million.

I looked back over the years — 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 — to see how the Yukon Party did in land development. Over those years, I see that they have a total — the three years combined — of \$11.3 million. That's compared to the \$19.3 million that we got out last year. Yes, there were lapses, but the main story, I think, is that we're investing heavily in land development.

With respect to infrastructure, our total budget for the year was \$75.5 million. We lapsed \$11.6 million. The total spend is just under \$64 million. Where was the bulk of that lapse? It was

really on transfer payment agreements. We've been working — you will know, Mr. Chair — to go to each community. In our conversations with municipalities, for example, and First Nations, we identify their priorities for infrastructure projects. If they ask us and if they want to take on that project, then we work with a transfer payment agreement to give those dollars to that government for them to take the project on. We think that's a great approach. The challenge for us is that sometimes our partners do lapse funds, and we had quite a bit of lapse last year with our partners. Kwanlin Dün First Nation, for example, lapsed \$3 million; Vuntut Gwitchin lapsed \$2.2 million; Selkirk First Nation, over two projects, lapsed \$1.9 million; and City of Whitehorse, over two projects, lapsed just under \$1 million, et cetera. It adds up. Those lapses add up to \$8.5 million. That is the bulk of the \$11.6 million overall that was lapsed.

Again, I ran a comparison. The member opposite is correct that we did lapse some dollars, but the main message that I want to get across — and just a shout-out to both the Land Development branch and the Infrastructure Development branch for how much they are investing in the territory and moving dollars. The total that the Infrastructure Development branch got out the door last year was \$63.9 million. That compares to approximately \$56 million that the Yukon Party did over their final three years. Again, over that one year, we are surpassing three years of investment in infrastructure. Overall, what I want to say is that we really are investing heavily in infrastructure around our communities.

There were a couple of questions that came up yesterday regarding the border. I felt that I had answered them here but, through the media, there were some questions. I am just going to read them into the record as well. This is about border enforcement. The contract in place with the Liard First Nation to provide information and flagging services south of Watson Lake on the Alaska Highway and at Junction 37 is for \$584,000 for five months — from November through to the end of March of 2021. To give an idea of a cost comparison, we contracted out flagging for the prior six months, May to October, at a cost of \$374,000. During that time, of course, we also had an average of nine full-time equivalents staffing those two border sites.

We are going to continue to monitor the number of incoming travellers by road and air, in close contact with the Liard First Nation, the Town of Watson Lake, and the Canada Border Services Agency. We will continue to inform travellers and enforce measures in place under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. We are considering a variety of options at the Yukon's southern border, including video cameras and random checkpoints. We will continue to review the situation to protect the health and safety of Yukoners. I am happy to answer any further questions.

Ms. Van Bibber: I would like to thank the minister for his opening remarks and welcome the staff and deputy minister to the Chamber today.

We were just talking about the different aspects of this very unusual year, especially for the Department of Community Services, because of their involvement in the government's

pandemic response and front-line work — so I want to note our appreciation for all your hard work — and to the staff in the departments. I am particularly aware of the important role that the EMO has played throughout the pandemic and the leadership role that they may have assumed within the government.

Of course, today we will ask questions about the budget and the ongoing operations of the department and issues that a number of the communities have brought forward to us, but I am sure that it will come as no surprise that we have many questions on the pandemic and the government's response to it. I will ask some initial questions, and then we will pass it over to some of my colleagues and they will also have some questions.

When the COVID-19 virus was discovered and was spreading so quickly and the state of emergency was ordered by the Minister of Community Services, the unknowns were very many and the reaction time was, of course, very short — so, acknowledging that the decision-making processes were strained — but we do have questions about those decisions that were made — when they were made and by whom.

Let me begin prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Can the minister remind this House and those listening what the role of the department is with regard to emergency planning and, in particular, pandemic planning?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Emergencies are the responsibility of the Emergency Measures Organization. There are several things that we take as our responsibility. First of all, the overall plan for government — ensuring that we have continuity of services that are provided for the public. So, even in the lead-up before the Arctic Winter Games were cancelled, for example — as we started to see that COVID was not going to be contained overseas in China or other countries and we saw that it was starting to spread — then work was done to update the pandemic plan.

We have a responsibility for unincorporated communities, but we also work to support municipalities and First Nation governments in their pandemic plans, and we also want to coordinate. That coordination happens internal to government and external. On the internal side, it would be across departments to make sure that they are supported. I know that we took the previous pandemic plan and worked to redevelop it to get it more up to speed. I know that, for example, we had even fired up the Health Emergency Operations Centre long before we thought that COVID was actually going to arrive here in the territory. There was a concern that it could arrive in the territory, so the first centre that we got operating was the Health Emergency Operations Centre. That centre works predominantly out of Health and Social Services, but it is supported by the Emergency Measures Organization, the EMO, and ultimately, then, is coordinated by the Emergency Coordination Centre, which then fired up afterward.

What else can I say? The broad goal of the EMO is to make sure that plans are in place to support government to provide the services for the public to keep them safe. That's the broad goal.

Overall, the other side that we fire up is around communications and how we get talking within each of those branches and making sure that we're informing the public. Then finally, we also liaise with the federal government to make sure that — that's probably on a minister-by-minister basis across all of us, but my role would have me talking with Minister Blair about Canada's borders and emergency response.

Ms. Van Bibber: Which department is responsible for ensuring that PPE, or personal protection equipment, is stockpiled within various locations throughout Yukon?

I know the minister mentioned that he worked in coordinating the pandemic plan with municipalities and First Nations. Can the minister please explain the overarching plan for emergency preparedness with them in this regard?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Under the Emergency Coordination Centre, under the plan, there is a subgroup that deals with critical infrastructure. Personal protective equipment, PPE, is considered part of that critical infrastructure. At the highest level, it's the Emergency Coordination Centre. However, Canada worked through the Public Health Agency of Canada to make sure that they were coordinating how the PPE was flowing to each province and territory. They wanted to streamline it down to one single conduit, so we made the choice for the lead — because most of this PPE is dealing with health — to coordinate that through the Health Emergency Operations Centre and in particular through the hospital. That was the main point of coordination into the territory. Then, through the Health Emergency Operations Centre and the Emergency Coordination Centre, it is redistributed out to communities to make sure that we were getting that PPE around the territory to all of the community nursing stations and to the hospitals and also in support of other governments.

That, and how we work with municipalities, is all coordinated under the *Yukon Government Emergency Coordination Plan*. Part of what I think the other question was from the member opposite was about how we work with other local governments — municipal and First Nations. On top of working to keep our services going in order to make sure that residents were safe, we worked very quickly to try to engage and inform our communities and to support them throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, so we created a community outreach team. They have been in place since March with two groups in support of them — one was the Community Affairs branch, which is part of Community Services, and another was the Aboriginal Relations branch, which is part of Executive Council Office — to assist both municipalities and First Nations by providing information, answering questions, and supporting citizens in their communities throughout the Yukon. This team also coordinates with industry and other government departments to try to get information into those communities to make sure — they are sort of a go-to team. If there is information that is needed, they will go out and find it from wherever they need to get it back to them.

I recall that, when we started, in the first week, there were — I have to remember. I am not sure about the first week, but

within the first couple of weeks we were at three meetings a week. We might have been doing them right after each of the livestreams, or before. There were so many meetings. I just have to say that, at first, we had, at minimum, three meetings a week. Later on, maybe a month in, we went down to two, and maybe a couple of months in — once things got, sort of, mostly worked out — we went to one meeting a week, but we would bump it up whenever there was a specific issue that was raised. Sometimes there would be specific concerns or questions and we would do an additional meeting on top of those, so that was how we coordinated with those other orders of government.

Ms. Van Bibber: I thank the minister. So, all of the PPE that was rolled out to all the communities — and I think I heard him say that everyone had adequate supplies and provisions — PPE and other supplies — for the pandemic. Was there adequate training to go along with all of the supplies that were arriving on doorsteps, and who was giving that training?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I didn't say that there were adequate supplies. I do think that there was adequate supply, but there were a lot of questions at first from communities about the protocols around how that PPE should be used — for example, N95 masks. If you are using them as per the protocols that we had established, everything was great. If you were, on the other hand, asking everyone to use one every day, then, no, you were running out. I think that there was a significant supply in the territory and it was what we believed to be enough to keep us all safe, but there was a learning curve as well as we went through.

There was a range of training that happened. I know that there was training — for example, some of our community nurses were doing training within the communities. We had EMS doing training for EMS staff across the territory, so it really depended on which group we were dealing with, but there was not just training — and I even recall here in the Legislature, back before we adjourned, maybe on that last day — we were answering a question about the protocols for keeping our teams safe. I indicated that, yes, we indeed did have protocols around COVID-19 and, in fact, we had, at that point, already updated them — I think that it was seven times.

So, throughout the pandemic, we continue to update the protocols as the science changes, as the epidemiology changes, as the phases change in which we are in, and the criteria in order to keep the public safe. I would say that training is still ongoing because the pandemic is not a stationary thing. It's not a "one and done" — it's an evolving thing. We continue to evolve our training as needed to accommodate those improvements and issues.

Ms. Van Bibber: Can the minister tell us what role the federal government plays in this type of preparation along with the territory?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The federal government's role was multifaceted. The Premier, for example, spoke with the Prime Minister and met with other premiers to talk about broad strokes. I know that I met with several counterparts. I've already mentioned Minister Blair and folks who deal with emergencies. We met often. Each department met with counterparts nationally.

Now, we're doing that for a range of reasons. One is to keep lines of communication open so that we're all sharing what's going on in each of our jurisdictions and so that we can hear from other jurisdictions and can understand where there are critical pressures and where there are solutions that are being used and found to be successful. We were working pretty closely with our counterparts, not just federal but across all jurisdictions.

I hear Dr. Hanley talk about that. For example, there is a network of the chief medical officers of health. They meet to discuss, and they have teams that are pulled together to address specific issues and look at them from a range of perspectives.

Those meetings were similar in the sense that, in the early days of the pandemic, we would have sometimes a couple or a few a week and then later on it went down to fewer. Now, typically, it's more one a month.

We've also had one-on-one meetings, for example, with Minister Blair because we would have very specific questions and concerns about our Alaska-Yukon borders and how we can coordinate with them to make sure that we're keeping Yukoners safe. For example, Americans were in transit, either south to north or north to south. For example, we met with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the City of Dawson to discuss the Top of the World Highway and that border crossing. Based on the input that we got from the community of Dawson, from both orders of government, we made the recommendation back to Canada not to open that border crossing because we didn't want to open up a second route through the Yukon for Alaskans or Americans in transit to or from Alaska. Those are examples of how we coordinated with the federal government.

Ms. Van Bibber: I would like to now turn to the early days during the pandemic. Can the minister discuss how government's response evolved from observation to action and ultimately to your first declaration of the state of emergency?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have a full spreadsheet that I kept at the time about significant milestones. I'll highlight a few of those. I'm happy always to go deeper as members wish.

We cancelled the Arctic Winter Games — I believe it was on March 7. We got a presentation from the chief medical officer of health, or the acting chief medical officer of health, who came in and explained that, because there had been a community transmission in Canada, it changed everything for us. We never thought, even at that point when the chief medical officer of health was presenting to us — her description was that we didn't anticipate getting COVID here, but that we would need to isolate a team — if there was one athlete on a team who got something like a cough, we would need to isolate that whole team and their chaperones. Suddenly you realize that, well, we could maybe handle one team — two teams.

As soon as you got more than that, it was just going to be overwhelming. We didn't think that COVID was coming here at that point. We cancelled the games on March 7 and, within a week, things had changed. I think that the Legislature reconvened on March 9, but it was early in there. At that point, we still didn't know, but we started putting precautions in place. I remember having very early meetings with the chief medical officer of health, Health and Social Services, the Health

Emergency Operations Centre folks, and our own Emergency Coordination Centre folks to just begin talking about what we would need to do if this did become a pandemic here in the territory.

The state of emergency got declared. I want to clarify for this House that it was not me who declared the state of emergency. That is an order-in-council. That comes from Cabinet. That is where the decision for a state of emergency comes from. Once a state of emergency is declared, then I have the authority to put in place ministerial orders.

Again, I will say in this House that I am happy to answer any questions about them. All of them were there to protect the health and safety of Yukoners and to make sure that our society functioned as best it could in the face of a pandemic. I have the authority to put those in place, but I also had the opportunity to speak to Cabinet and get their direction on each of them.

That was the lead-up to March 27 when the first state of emergency was called. Even between the Arctic Winter Games and the state of emergency, we had the Health Emergency Operations Centre up, and we also had Dr. Hanley, or the chief medical officer of health, declaring a public health emergency. That allowed for certain rules to be put in place, so it sequenced pretty quickly between when we first understood that COVID might be coming here to when we ended up with the state of emergency.

By the way, I will just say for everyone, out of interest's sake, that after the games were cancelled and the Arctic Winter Games made the choice to refund those people who had purchased tickets, the Arctic Winter Games got a note back from one of those people asking for a refund who said, "Good thing that you cancelled the games because the person who was coming turned out to have COVID." I won't say from where, but they turned out to have COVID, from outside of the Yukon, and they would have been here and would have discovered it right in the middle of the games — when the games were scheduled.

Overall, everything leading up to the state of emergency was to make sure that we were prepping and, from the state of emergency, it was to support immediate measures. I have said in this Legislature that the three main things that the state of emergency got for us, and still gets for us today, are: isolation requirements, border controls, and enforcement. Those three things are there under the authority of that state of emergency. The whole notion is to support immediate measures in support of a public health response, and it communicated to the Yukon the seriousness of what was coming and what we still see here today.

Ms. Van Bibber: When the initial lockdown occurred, can the minister explain how various professions, occupations, and workplaces were identified to be shut down or not shut down? Was that something done by Community Services, the chief medical officer of health, or some other department?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I want to describe it in two ways, Mr. Chair. First of all, all of the departments — and those calls that I was talking about with municipalities and First Nations — that conversation was happening all along to try to provide feedback about where there were critical government services

being provided — or critical services being provided across the territory — and where there were concerns identified, but it was the chief medical officer of health's role to talk about the health risks. In my conversations with him — the way he identified it — it was really about the safety of citizens and whether you could maintain safety. We knew right away, even back when the Arctic Winter Games were being cancelled and it was being explained to us — and still, at that point, said it was unlikely that COVID even comes to the Yukon. But they referred to it as “shoe-leather medicine” — meaning that it is not a bunch of technology. It's about washing hands, keeping one caribou apart, making sure to wear a mask if you're going to be too close, being conscious of not congregating, and keeping our community safe by getting it down to essential travel. That's how they described it to me. It was just about practices that we would all need to take as the public.

In terms of which businesses, it was based on the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. It depends on whether it's before the state of emergency or after, because some of those — and I would have to go back and check the historic record, but the first orders were brought forward through the public health emergency as declared by Dr. Hanley. Afterward, we moved to the state of emergency, which allowed for the broader rules around border control and isolation requirements.

I just want to be careful with this term “lockdown”. There were businesses to which we said, “You need to close.” But the territory did continue. For example, yes, we closed schools, and, yes, we closed restaurants, but we kept grocery stores open. It was never a lockdown as in there was nothing happening. I would categorize it more as restrictions where, at first when we had more uncertainty and significant concerns about the risk, those restrictions were stricter. As we moved through phases and were able to establish those protocols to keep Yukoners safe, we were able to relax those restrictions

Ms. Van Bibber: Can the minister tell us how the department interacted with the federal departments once the Yukon state of emergency was declared?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. Van Bibber: Not a problem. Can the minister tell us how the department interacted with our federal counterpart once the Yukon state of emergency was declared?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, we had regular federal, provincial, and territorial calls on public emergency but also, in my case, infrastructure — there was a range of calls that we had. I know that ministers of health had regular calls. I know that ministers of tourism had calls, ministers of natural resources and energy, mines and resources had calls. Each one of our groups would have calls. We also would have specific direct calls, as I have already said.

Another thing I can relay is that I also spoke with neighbouring counterparts. For example, there were times when I called counterparts in British Columbia. For example, when we were first putting in place border controls, we didn't want to isolate Atlin or Lower Post. We called Minister Farnworth from British Columbia and talked about trying to support his communities in BC because we just felt that this

made better sense. These are examples of how we worked together with our counterparts across the country.

Ms. Van Bibber: We might return to that topic later, but I would like to now turn to travel limitations and the minister's role in self-isolation enforcement.

What are the roles of the different departments with regard to enforcement of travel restrictions — in particular, the requirement that people self-isolate when arriving from outside of the territory?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Under the Emergency Coordination Centre, we brought together staff who have the ability to deal with enforcement from a range of backgrounds. I think that I have said here in the House that we had natural resources officers, we had conservation officers, we had bylaw officers, and we had liquor inspectors. So, we brought all of those officers — I won't say “together” — but depending on where they were dispatched, they would work under what I would call the “*Civil Emergency Measures Act* enforcement team”. We also coordinated, for example, with the RCMP. If there was something that we were concerned about, we could refer to the RCMP. At the same time, the Canada Border Services Agency would also refer things to the RCMP. The way in which we worked was dominantly through education. So, even though we had enforcement, the main role was to educate the public and to help them to do the right thing.

We put in place, for example, a call centre with a 1-800 number so that if people had concerns they could call the call centre. It is still in effect. We put in place an e-mail line, a COVID-19 enforcement e-mail, and a COVID-19 information e-mail. Those e-mails then fed back. We also put in an online form for people if they had any concerns.

Since the first declaration of the state of emergency to today, we have had roughly 1,000 concerns raised with us across that time. Looking back at that roughly 1,000, somewhere — 83, 84, or 85 percent of those were concerns that were raised but were not actually something that was happening that was incorrect or wrong. The education that was needed there was for the person who was raising this question or concern. What we did was reach back out to help inform them and to help them to understand what the rules were and why those rules were there. That dealt with, you know, 83 out of 100 concerns and calls, or 830 out of 1,000.

In the remainder, there was something that was going wrong and, again, our main role was just to find the issue that was of concern and to correct it through education if it was obvious that the people just didn't have a clear understanding. Most of those were corrected.

To date, we've handed out 24 sanctions for failure to self-isolate or failure to transit properly or breaking either the self-isolation or the border control rules. Those tickets were handed out — it depends; it could be charges or tickets — from our side. Of course, the Canada Border Services Agency has also issued charges. Together, those represent a small portion — roughly two percent — of the overall numbers of complaints that we've had.

We knew that it was going to be important to educate the public to make sure that they would — because, in order to keep

the public safe, we all need to work together to do that. That's, again, coming back to all of those practices that we've continued to foster and encourage throughout the pandemic.

Ms. Van Bibber: Can the minister elaborate and tell us who made the decision on which jurisdictions to allow travel from and which not to?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If what we're referring to here are the ministerial orders, then it is my responsibility or my signature for those ministerial orders. But at all times we sought the recommendation of the chief medical officer of health. As I stated here earlier in the Legislature, for each ministerial order that I signed, I first turned to Cabinet to seek their direction, as I said, based on the advice of the chief medical officer of health, who considers a range of factors in providing that advice to us, based on the epidemiology.

Ms. Van Bibber: What is the process for someone to apply for an alternative self-isolation plan?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There is an application that can be found online. It can be for a business or an individual. They submit that application suggesting that they would like to do something that is still self-isolation and that they believe can be done safely. They apply to me. Again, at all times, I turn to the chief medical officer of health's office to ask for their advice on whether the plan that is being proposed is safe.

Ms. Van Bibber: To follow up, can the minister confirm how many alternative self-isolation plans he has approved during this time?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: To date, Mr. Chair, I believe that the number is just over 400. I should clarify that this is the number who have applied. I would have to look back to see roughly how many have been approved and how many have been denied. We have had approximately 400 applications to date.

Ms. Van Bibber: Of those 400, I'm looking for a number — although the minister can't verify how many he has actually signed. Can the minister provide a breakdown of how many were from Alberta or from the US, or were they returning Yukoners? What other jurisdictions would these people be coming into the Yukon from? Where would they be coming from?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The first thing I want to say is that typically Yukoners are not applying for alternative self-isolation because they're just carrying out their self-isolation as necessary when they return. It's not typical for them to apply. Second of all, it's not typical for Americans to apply because it is a different situation for them. They would be talking to the federal government to decide whether or not they could come into Canada, and they would have isolation requirements through the federal laws — the *Quarantine Act*, I believe.

If there was an American who was already resident in Canada, they might have applied, but we would have thought of them as a resident of that other place. That's possible, I suppose.

Let me give a few numbers just to help form the picture for the member opposite. We've had, for example, about 160 applications from Alberta, about 70 from Ontario, and about 20 from Québec. I asked to get a number for how many have been

denied. The number that I have is 34, so that would leave about 370 applications that were approved.

Mr. Chair, if I can just add — typically, I write a letter back to each of those applicants. So, I don't just write a letter back to those applicants who are approved; I write a letter denying and sign that for those who are denied. For each one who applies, there's typically a letter in response.

Ms. Van Bibber: Of all those alternative self-isolation plans, how many were coming to the Yukon for work? How many were government-related duties that they were coming into the Yukon for?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We haven't been keeping running total stats on that. What it would take is asking folks to go back through and re-read each one, but I can give a bit of a sense for the member opposite.

First of all, you would also need to decide — let's say there's a piece of infrastructure that you're building, but it's being done by a contractor and that contractor has now applied for some alternative self-isolation. Is that government or is that not government? If it's a municipal government that's doing the project, is that government or not government? So, there are a few challenges around the question as posed, but I would say that the lion's share is not government; they are just people who are applying to us.

So, just the lion's share I don't believe are government. Even if we counted all of the infrastructure projects that relate to a government project, still I believe that the number — there were many more which are not government.

Ms. Van Bibber: I would like to now turn to border controls. Yesterday, when you gave your ministerial statement on border controls, I asked the minister in my reply about controls at the Watson Lake border after business hours, and the minister stated that they had put in place measures for after-hours, which included video cameras and CEMA enforcement officers conducting random checkpoints. Could the minister elaborate a bit more on these measures and how they are doing?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just moving back to the last question, the department has shared with me that the vast majority of the alternative self-isolation applications are just general citizens; it is not work-related at all, or those that are work-related are dominantly private sector workers — for example, mining or construction. I could talk about the individuals who come up — around what they are looking for. But the vast majority — what the department has let me know — are not government.

Yesterday in the House, what I said — I apologize if my language wasn't clear enough — was that we were considering how to work to protect — I am now quoting from Hansard, the Blues — "... to consider after-hours — for example, video cameras and CEMA enforcement officers coming forward to do random checkpoints in the evenings."

Those things are not in place at this time. We are monitoring the situation.

When I first stood up in my initial remarks, I also tried to very expressly state that these are not postures or activities that are in place at this point, but we are looking at them as a way to ensure that there are no concerns with evening transit.

I will say, as I did yesterday, that all those who are coming into the territory from outside of the travel bubble are required to complete a declaration.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is Vote 51, Department of Community Services.

Ms. Van Bibber: Can the minister — I'm still on border controls — outline the government's approach to the border control checkpoints, the location of these stops, and the cost of each?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I don't have a breakdown of individual borders. What I did say earlier today was \$374,000 for flagging, but that is a small thing. That is a piece of the overall puzzle. Where we chose to put in the borders, of course, was wherever we had people arriving from outside of the territory — not counting the international borders because those are dealt with by the Canada Border Services Agency. Our number is a rollup of all of that. Currently, in the supplementary, I think that it is \$2.2 million for that work.

I will just share that we used staff — and I have already mentioned this — from Energy, Mines and Resources natural resources officers; we used conservation officers from the Department of Environment; we used Tourism and Culture folks to deal with information at some of our stops; and we used the Liquor Corporation. Those departments will deal with the staffing costs for their staff, as they were additional. So, we are still working to pull all those numbers together to roll it up to be able to share it across — that this cost that amount of money.

So, I have the overall dollars for Community Services — \$2.2 million.

Ms. Van Bibber: The people who were staffing the checkpoints, as you just said, were from various departments across government. Were they volunteers, or were they directed by their departments to attend to these positions? Was any type of training provided to these employees? Another addition to that is: What authority were they given at these checkpoints?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just to clarify on my previous response about the \$2.2 million, if the members are looking at the supplementary, the list there for the border control is for \$2.82 million, but that includes the Emergency Coordination Centre, which is roughly \$600,000. That line item is approximately \$600,000 for the Emergency Coordination Centre and \$2.2 million for the border control activities — again, not counting the staffing that comes from other departments.

It is worth noting, Mr. Chair, that the role of the people at the borders is typically information. It is not typically enforcement, but still, everyone is trained. There was training on health and safety, of course — on how to keep everything safe. There was training, for example, on de-escalation.

There is training on the rules, because those rules were changing over time about where the travel bubble was or was not and the declarations, et cetera. Those things changed over time, so that always had to be relayed to the folks on the front line at the borders. Today, we are in Watson Lake training with Liard First Nation — doing that same level of training again to get their teams up to speed on the issues.

Enforcement is dealt with more by the CEMA enforcement team, which isn't necessarily located at the border. We have some CEMA officers around the territory and some here in Whitehorse — a specific unit — who do a lot of that follow-up. I was talking about when those complaints or those concerns are raised.

The member asked where the authority lies for that. Well, under the declaration of a state of emergency — and I stated this earlier — under one of the specific ministerial orders, that's where the authority comes for that enforcement.

Ms. Van Bibber: The minister has discussed the agreement that his department has with Liard First Nation for the border checkpoint and just mentioned that training is happening today. Can the minister elaborate on other First Nations or if it's providing funding for checkpoints? It was noticed this summer that both Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had their checkpoints going into their communities for fear of spread in small, rural Yukon. Did the department support these checkpoints financially or otherwise?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We did not support those checkpoints financially. They're not at our borders with other jurisdictions. We did work with those checkpoints to help them be good information checkpoints. We did support them in the sense that we went to those communities, talked with them, and provided them information.

We also had an information-sharing agreement where we would take our information that we had about, for example, people going to self-isolate, and as long as the partner government would sign an agreement to maintain the individual confidentiality of that information, we then would share it with them, government to government. That, for example, was established with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and the Teslin Tlingit Council. That opportunity was made available to First Nations as they wished, or we worked with them directly.

I would say that we did support our communities, including both municipal and First Nation governments, but we did not support checkpoints financially.

Ms. Van Bibber: That was a good clarification. Can the minister now clarify if, in their agreements, verbal or otherwise, these First Nations had the legal right to obstruct a public road? Did the department authorize these installations of checkpoints by blocking the public road?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: At all times, we were supporting our communities to take measures where those measures were around education and helping people to achieve compliance. We supported that wherever we could, so what I will say is that we spoke often with communities. We heard from them about concerns.

When checkpoints were initiated, we worked to support their endeavour to educate. That is what we worked with them

on. It certainly was never — as I understand it — about enforcement. As I said earlier, enforcement — even at our own borders — it is dominantly about information, about education. It is not about enforcement. Enforcement is managed through our *Civil Emergency Measures Act* enforcement team.

Ms. Van Bibber: I would like to thank the minister and the staff who are here today, and I will turn it over to my colleague from the Third Party at this time.

Ms. White: I thank the minister and, of course, his officials who are here.

Just a heads-up — I will be bouncing all over the place, and I will try to do it as coherently as possible. I am going to start with waste and waste management. So, waste management in communities and transfer stations continues to be an issue. I won't get into it right now, but we are going to talk about Johnsons Crossing.

Are there tipping fees in all communities? Have they been instituted? Are there weigh scales? Is there fencing? Is there staff? Is there a way to stop people from going in? I will just start there.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I know that this is a topic near and dear to the member opposite's heart, near and dear to mine, and also near and dear to the Minister of Environment's heart.

The plan was always to begin with charges at those solid-waste sites near Whitehorse. That included Marsh Lake, Tagish, Carcross, Mount Lorne, and Deep Creek. Then the plan was, for next spring, to get to the regionalized sites as set out in the *Yukon Solid Waste Action Plan*, including closing down some of those very small sites in order to gain efficiency.

So, most of those sites — all the ones that I've just listed — and most municipalities — in fact, I think all — have fencing. Are they all gated? Not necessarily — I'll have to check on that. Do they all have weigh scales? No, not yet. So, that is a work in progress.

I should note that, as we work through questions of liability and agreements with municipalities, there still are many hurdles to overcome. I don't want to paint a picture like it's all clear sailing; there's a lot of work that has been going on and needs to go on. Some of that work has been challenged and compromised by COVID-19. When COVID-19 hit, a lot of our waste facilities had challenges — for example, with free stores and things like that.

It has been a lot of work and made difficult by COVID-19, so I'm not sure today of the timelines, but I am sure of the intention.

Ms. White: When the tipping fees are collected, where do they go?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Tipping fees that are now collected at the five sites that I listed off go to general revenue.

Ms. White: The minister sent a letter to folks who were concerned about the Johnsons Crossing transfer station. The one that I have here is dated November 9, and it's in response to the initial communication that started in February of this year and followed up with meetings in the summer and in ongoing communication.

One of the concerns of the folks at the Johnsons Crossing transfer facility catchment area is that they wanted to know how

many residents the government identified in that catchment area — so if I could have that number.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Let's talk about Johnsons Crossing. I heard the Member for Kluane put forward a motion today about Silver City as well. What I can tell you is that every small facility where there is an existing small facility that we are suggesting should close would wish for that facility to stay open. That's pretty clear.

I will get to the specific answer for the member about the numbers.

Those small facilities are part of this overall plan to create a regional system — which is what has happened generally across the country — because we recognize that the economy of scale is poor where you have a lot of small facilities and the liability is high. If you can concentrate that, you can come away with a more efficient system. Of course, that will mean that some people who used to have a solid-waste facility next to them no longer have that.

The specific question that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King asked was about the number we used. I'll have to look back in the report, but there is a page on the back of the report where it lists off all of those stats that are in there. I think they used an estimate — taking the Bureau of Statistics numbers that they had, but just effectively doubling it. I think the number that was used was around 50. I'll have to confirm that, and maybe the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin can let me know if I got that wrong, but that's roughly the number I think that we were using. I think that the community felt that they had a lot more residents. That's fair; I understand that. But the challenge is that sometimes they're counting seasonal residents. But if we count seasonal residents, then I need to count seasonal residents everywhere and change the numbers accordingly.

We ran the math in a couple of ways, and even if the number was double that, it still showed that this was one of the facilities that was at the small end and not terribly cost-effective to keep running, and so it was better that we go with a regional choice than with Johnsons Crossing. The answer, I think, for the number — and I will review the solid-waste plan, but I believe it is 50.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that number. One of the challenges is that, in that entire process with the folks out at Johnsons Crossing — and I appreciate that you're talking about seasonal and non-seasonal — there were concerns that the numbers that government was using were inaccurate — not including seasonal.

One of the highlights that was made there was that, no matter which direction you chose to go in — whether you chose to go to Teslin or whether you chose to go toward Marsh Lake — you were looking at over a 125-kilometre round trip to get to the nearest facility, and so they had concerns. If you were right there on the highway and you had to go 64 kilometres in one direction or 64 kilometres in the other direction, what was going to happen with people who were just going to put waste in the woods? What was going to happen about attractants, bears, and all those issues?

I think that when we look at other places and other locations, I guess it comes down to how far — is there a

distance, for example, that we want to have between a group or settlement of people? Obviously, more than 10 but less than 1,000 — and where we find that balance in there. The reason that I say this is because, if you are looking at a 125-kilometre round trip and we talk about how we want to do the right thing for the environment, which means not putting waste in the woods, and we want to make sure that we are not driving unnecessarily and all these things — how do we make that decision? This is an ongoing issue.

One of the questions that I have is: What is the response about the concerns about bear attractants or the 125 kilometres or an aging population? These are people who pay taxes. They are part of the reason why the highway is kept open. They are an important part of the community. What is the answer with those concerns? If you live in a rural place, you pay for that privilege, and now you are being told that there is a 125-kilometre round trip to take your garbage to town. How do you address those concerns?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Chair, these are really valid concerns. Let me just start there.

I live in a rural community. I don't live right next to a landfill, but I am closer than 120 kilometres round trip, although I tend to think of it as a one-way trip, but that's fine. I am 20 or 25 kilometres from the solid-waste facility. Heck, as Yukoners, we all call it "the dump".

So, what do I do? Well, what I do is I work to manage stuff that's not going to attract wildlife, like bears. For example, any food waste, I stick in the freezer until I am ready to head into town. When I am going to town, whenever that trip is — let's say I'm going for groceries or whatever — on the way, I take my garbage. That is how I manage it.

I am not saying that this is a perfect solution for all folks, but I am saying that, as a territory, we are looking to make our solid-waste system, overall, more sustainable, and it's not right now. This is an important step in that. I am just, flat out, trying to say that regionalization was one of the big recommendations that came out of this Solid Waste Advisory Committee, which is made up of communities and government folks — but folks who, I think, really know their stuff around solid waste and sustainability.

So, the idea is that we need to not have a lot of landfills situated every place, but we need to concentrate them. Once that recommendation was adopted, then you are down into the hard choices about where they would go. These four facilities that we are recommending or that we are intending to close — that recommendation comes from the fact that they are not as heavily utilized as the rest. That is how the line got drawn. I have had conversations regarding every one of those four facilities — hard choices, for sure.

What I said directly to the wonderful folks at Johnsons Crossing — they posed questions. They invited members of the department and me out to talk to them a couple of times. Actually, I went three times, although I missed a meeting. There was some miscommunication, but I just wanted to show my sincerity to get there and to talk to them in person. There was even one meeting that we held during COVID time, with full precautions to try to make sure that it was safe for

everybody. That was all about trying to respect their perspectives and concerns. I said to them that I would take their concerns and rerun the numbers and consider whether it made sense; and in the end, I am saying that it does not. I am saying that respectfully because I appreciate that there are still concerns.

But as Yukoners, we do have to figure out how to deal with attractants, how to deal with landfills that we live next to and landfills that we don't live next to. It is a challenge, but that is part of the reality of living here.

I also want to say that I don't believe for a second that our tax dollars pay for the full cost of solid waste here in the territory. For example, the charges that are there in Deep Creek or in Marsh Lake today are meant to be level with the nearby community of Whitehorse. But in reality, the cost of running those solid-waste facilities is several times higher than those fees. The fees are not paying for that solid-waste collection. What we're trying to do is say that every Yukoner should pay roughly the same amount and that we all do the heavy lifting together.

With respect to people who are dumping — don't dump. It's illegal. Please don't do it. It's awful, it's lousy — I'll refrain from saying a word that would be unparliamentary. What we were doing, as well, is to increase the fines and to increase our ability to try to catch those folks who are doing that, but I just say to those folks: Stop doing that. That's not a good thing.

Ms. White: I appreciate the minister's personal ways in which he deals with his waste and compost, et cetera. The 25 kilometres from the facility on his way into town — possibly. But when you're in the middle of a place — for example, Johnsons Crossing — or let's look at Keno. Keno is an example.

I had the pleasure of going down again this summer and hanging out in the community. I recently had a conference call with the community, which is pretty fascinating because you can have a conference call with the entire community, which is very fun. But one of the things that they highlighted was the concern of their transfer station being closed.

Driving to Keno in the winter — it's an adventure, and it's an adventure that the people in Keno will shop really a lot for to try to avoid, which then means that they're storing garbage outside around their properties for an extended period of time. Then one would hope that you have a pickup truck in which you could then take months' worth of garbage, recycling, and stuff in with you to the transfer facility.

I understand the minister's point about transfer facilities and the cost. But when the minister said that the tipping fees don't cover the cost, well, Yukon doesn't cover her cost in Canada. The decision is that, well, it's important to have us here because it's important that we have a presence in the north and Alaska can't just amalgamate us — so you make those decisions.

I don't think that the minister is suggesting that people move in from rural Yukon so that they're closer to transfer facilities, but when you're looking at Keno, you have to drive to Mayo and back to get to the nearest facility. That is a bit of a haul, and it's a haul for Johnsons Crossing.

I am just going to put it out there that this is going to be an issue for whoever is in the position of Community Services. Who knew that you could spend so much time talking about waste, but we could. We could spend hours talking about it, Mr. Chair, and I don't even think we could solve the problem. We can't really, in the hours that we have.

At the beginning of the pandemic after both of the recyclers in Whitehorse closed down — both P&M and Raven Recycling closed down — to protect their staff, which, of course, I don't disagree with — one of the questions that I sent to the minister was: What is the Yukon government doing about recycling right now? I was told, well, we're not. That is a concern to me. The Yukon government has a lot of yards. They have government property that is fenced in. I wanted to know if the minister has an idea of how much waste, which was really recycling, went to our facilities when there was a closure of the recycling.

To me, Yukon has been in training since I was in school to be good recyclers. I know that people were trying to store it as long as possible and then hit a tipping point. My neighbour actually asked me one time when I was heading to the transfer facility if I could take his recycling. I said, "Oh, heck no, because when someone takes a picture of me putting your recycling in the garbage, I am going to have to talk about it and I am going to have to answer to it, so you have to deal with that." I want to know what kind of diversion we lost when the recyclers were closed down.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will work to try to see if we have a number. I am checking with the department right now to see if there is an estimate. It will be an estimate at best. It was a real mix out there with a lot of Yukoners working to do their best to store their recycling. I think the member opposite is right.

I am so thankful that we have our recyclers here in town. I sure missed them when they were not open.

I will also say that I have been to Keno. I love that community. With each of the communities that we have been talking with — talking about closing it down — what we have said to them is: "Hey, let's work with you to try to find solutions that will make sense."

I know that they would like us to please keep going. I have said to them — including, I think, the last time that I was physically in Keno — I think the Premier was there with me — and we talked it through and just explained that this was about trying to do it all together as a territory. I know that road, especially in the winter, can be rough, but I also know that people make the trip now and then. They often do go for groceries now and then and that is the time, right. Or, we could, through maybe a commercial operator, get them a bin, or they could get a bin where things are locked up. We had conversations with them about what solutions might work for them, so I don't want to say, "This is the solution that will work for you," but we are there trying to say, "Can we help to find a solution to deal with this new reality?"

The other thing I will say is that I know that we — it is here in our supplementary budget — gave an additional \$78,000 to support the adaptation of recycling facilities to make sure that

they were safe for COVID-19, so we did work with them to try to get them back up and open as quickly as possible.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

Just on the lines of Keno, while we're here. I heard a story from Keno — so, they have no fire protection right now, because they have volunteers — they do have volunteers, but what they are missing is a fire truck. I was told that Community Services picked up their fire truck and was going to take it in for repairs and it never came back.

I was wondering if the minister could fill in the blanks of the story of the Keno fire truck.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: As I give this story — again, all love to Keno. If we are going to give people a piece of equipment like a fire truck, they actually have to be trained to use it. That is first and foremost — okay? We can't give people equipment that they could get hurt with; that is just not possible for us. So, we did go to Keno. Like the member opposite has said, at a meeting in Keno, you can have 80 percent or 90 percent of the community out for a meeting — and just someone was off doing groceries or something like some other — that's who's not there. We said, "Look, we need volunteers. If we get volunteers, we can get you equipment." We got a great group of folks signing up and then it didn't stick. So, we followed up with them. The Fire Marshal's Office reached out — our community advisor reached out, but it didn't materialize. So, we continue to work — as of late this summer, we still hadn't received any completed registration packages for those volunteers. We need those volunteers. Again, all love to Keno, but in order for us to get them equipment for people to operate safely and be trained for, then we need those volunteers.

Ms. White: What kind of outreach does the Department Community Services do to make sure that those applications get submitted?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: A lot is what I'll say. We have community advisors for each of our communities. I've talked directly with our community advisor who works with — so, there are sort of two fronts that we work on — the Fire Marshal's Office and also the direct community advisor, the liaison. I know that our community advisor for Keno has been very proactive in trying to support the community in a variety of ways — not just this way; there is a suite of ways that we're working to support the community. I find it pretty proactive whenever I follow up to check in on how that work is going.

Ms. White: Thank you for that answer. I know that, in my conversation with the community, they said in the past that the mining company — so in this case, Alexco had been involved in some of those safety measures. A great point was made here to my right from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. He said, "Well, has Community Services approached Alexco about some of these issues?" — fire protection, waste hauling, and similar things.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The answer is yes, we have talked with Alexco. I thank them for their support. I haven't personally talked with them for a little while now, but there are ways that Alexco has in the past — I don't want to speak for them today, but I do think that they have done their best to support the community, but there are also the ongoing challenges of a small

community and some of the ongoing tensions that can exist in our smaller communities. But Alexco is a potential resource and we have spoken with them and we are happy to work with them.

We have also spoken with our Wildland Fire Management folks in the area around whether there are risks. You may recall that, not this past summer but the summer before, we had fires nearby. That is what prompted a lot of the interest from the community in trying to make sure that, if there was an interface fire, they would have equipment. That is what prompted a lot of the dialogue.

Ms. White: I guess this brings me to Pelly Crossing and their fire station. What is the status there of fire protection?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It is a similar situation, though not exactly the same. With Pelly, we did get some volunteers, but we didn't get the critical mass of six. Again, we did meet with them. Recently, we met by Zoom as well to talk with them. We did send our deputy fire marshal to the community. We even talked about hosting a barbecue to try to solicit a few more volunteers. But that is a similar challenge.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

I don't think that the minister and I are on different pages when we both recognize the critical importance of having fire protection in communities. In Pelly Crossing right now, the Selkirk First Nation is doing an incredible job of building housing — right? I think there were eight units going up in the summer when I was there, and to know that the entire community is vulnerable — I asked what happens if there was a fire and they say, well, they just lose it; there's no recovering or saving the structure. I think that's too bad.

So, yesterday, Mr. Deputy Chair, I was having a conversation with the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation. I was talking about the recently announced Canada housing benefit. I wanted to talk specifically about the issue of mobile homes and mobile homes in parks because they pay pad rent. This is just quoting from the minister yesterday of Yukon Housing when she said, "... what I can say is that the rent-assist program is to provide for those clients who are on rental arrangements. I would certainly be happy to have that discussion with the minister responsible for the mobile homes."

So, here I am. I'm having a conversation with the minister who's responsible for the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. So, in a mobile home park, you pay for pad rent, which is rent. What I want to know is: Are there conversations happening right now between the Minister of Community Services and the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation to make sure that qualified people can apply to help defer the cost of their rent of their mobile homes?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, when this first got announced, this was one of the things that was flagged. My understanding from talking with the minister is that it is being looked at. I don't have an answer for the House today, but I do know that we are looking into it — can I say with a hopeful look? We're looking because we're hopeful that this rent will be supported through the program, but I don't have an answer today.

Ms. White: I hope that the minister would consider tabling a legislative return when that answer is found. I'll put out that there are hundreds of mobile homes in Whitehorse — hundreds — and sometimes people own the assets, but they are still paying their rent. Often it is a great place for a retired person because it is all on one floor. There is a whole bunch of reasons why parks are ideal, but pad rents continue to go up and the average now in the City of Whitehorse is \$500 a month. They're maybe not as affordable as people thought they were. When people say that it is an affordable place to live — its affordability has gone down since I was elected in 2011.

I want to talk a bit about allied health professionals. I am talking about the people who are critical in kind of making my life run. I am talking about massage therapists, I am talking about osteopaths, and I am talking about naturopaths. The reason why I am bringing them up is because, when there was a stop-work order for personal care, the entire allied health field was shut down, including chiropractors and physiotherapists — although they are under their own act.

Under the purview of the Department of Community Services is the *Health Professions Act*, and what I wanted to have a conversation with the minister about is — are we looking at identifying other allied health professionals? Currently, it has folks in here: it has physiotherapists, and it has registered psychiatric nurses and nurse practitioners — oh sorry, pharmacists regulations — but I believe that it can be expanded, because all of these people have professional bodies that they belong to. But when personal care — so, we were talking about hair studios and esthetics, for example — were mandated to close, all of allied health shut down. They worked very hard to show the differences between them and personal care. Is there an appetite to try to expand the designation under the *Health Professions Act*?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: My answer is: In principle, yes. I know that, for example, we talk with various health professions that are not yet regulated under the act and wish to be or are interested. There is an identified need, but it's also true that — and we believe that the *Health Professions Act* is good in the sense that — because you can be more efficient when you put more there than if you have separate acts for individual professions; that's more complicated. I should at least acknowledge that there are challenges. We're a small jurisdiction with sometimes a handful of folks. Even in our largest ones — we don't have colleges here that other larger jurisdictions would have. As you try to provide the regulatory services, it can be challenging.

The answer is: Yes, in principle. I've spoken to several groups that are interested. Some of the groups that exist already under the *Health Professions Act* are looking for changes as well as their professions evolve over time.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I'm just going to urge that those conversations continue.

When we talk about the health of the human, there are a lot of different things. It's not just necessarily western medicine and it's not just doctors or nurses or nurse practitioners who can help us; there is a wide array of folks who have the schooling

and the education and belong to governing bodies outside of Yukon to get that support.

I'm just going to put this on the radar for the next time we're up, and I'm going to say the words "Carmacks arena".

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

Deputy Chair (Mr. Adel): It has been moved by Ms. White that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled November 17, 2020:

34-3-45

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Hanson related to Motion No. 297 re: including the Yukon Historical and Museums Association in tourism recovery planning — visitor exit survey results (McLean)