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HANSARD

Monday, November 23, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

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

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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

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Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, November 23, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming Kate Mechan, acting executive director of Safe at Home Society; Mona Luxion, access coordinator at Safe at Home; Kristina Craig, executive director at Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition; Bill Bruton, chair of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Elders Council; Dianne Nolan; Larry Smarch; and Kerry Nolan. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

The members are here today for the Safe at Home tribute.
Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Can I also ask the Members of the Legislative Assembly to welcome two individuals who are here today for the tribute for the geoscience conference that has been underway over the last couple of days. With us today is the executive director for the Yukon Chamber of Mines, Samson Hartland, as well as Ed Peart — an extra round for Ed, who has just been re-elected as the president of the Yukon Chamber of Mines.

Applause

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

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Geoscience Forum

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 48th annual Yukon Geoscience Forum, which kicked off today.

The Geoscience Forum provides an opportunity for geologists, miners, and governments to get together and connect with others involved in the mineral industry. The forum also brings together industry, youth, First Nations, and potential investors from around the globe. Every year, the forum gets bigger and better. This year will be special, with the limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Yukon Chamber of Mines developed an innovative and interactive virtual conference for 2020 to support their membership and advance the interests of all involved in Yukon's mining industry. Much credit is owed for organizing the forum in a manner that enables attendees to participate online while protecting the health and safety of our community.

A modified Geoscience Forum will go ahead this year despite many hurdles faced by the mineral sector due to the pandemic.

I want to acknowledge the many contributions that the mining industry makes to Yukon, from the service industry to educational and work opportunities. We know that the mineral resource sector in Yukon contributes to our strong economy.

During past geoscience forums, the investment forum and presentations on reconciliation, leveraging partnerships, and our regulatory regime have provided an opportunity for attendees to exchange knowledge around best practices.

Attendees could also learn more detail about investment opportunities and develop relationships with others in the industry. This year, the knowledge sharing during digital meetings will be equally beneficial in moving the industry forward.

During the forum, Yukon government geologists will deliver talks and display virtual posters detailing their research. This includes showcasing Yukon's latest geological discoveries. Mining and exploration companies frequently attribute their investment decisions and exploration success to the information provided by government geologists.

In past years, the Yukon Geological Survey invited youth and students to participate in the trade show and take part in many hands-on activities related to mining and geology. This year, the Yukon Geological Survey connected with many youth through outdoor programming and field trips to achieve the same results.

The Yukon Geological Survey also hosts the popular placer forum during the Geoscience Forum. In past years at the placer forum, our experts gave presentations about technologies and processes that contribute to each miner's success and help them to mine efficiently. Yesterday, the Geological Survey hosted this event virtually.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Yukon Chamber of Mines and valued key sponsors for the 2020 Geoscience Forum. Supporting and contributing to the Geoscience Forum is just one way in which we demonstrate support for the mineral sector.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Yukon Geoscience Forum, which, as the minister said, begins today and runs through Wednesday, November 25.

The Yukon Chamber of Mines started in 1943 with a dozen founding members and has grown to hundreds in this, its 77th year of operation. I would like to congratulate returning president Ed Peart, who is with us today, and the newly elected board of directors from last week's virtual AGM.

Each year, the Geoscience Forum is widely anticipated by industry, organizations, businesses, and individuals from across the territory and beyond. Of course, while the Geoscience Forum usually offers a packed conference and events in addition to the busy trade show, it will be very different this year, moving to an innovative virtual conference offering

interactive sessions, keynote speakers, updates, presentations, courses, and meetings.

This year's innovative conference will have its benefits, allowing increased access to delegates, allowing participation from around the world, and offering a packed agenda to a broader audience. This year, the forum will be 100-percent green, with no paper to recycle and zero waste. I would like to thank the organizers of this year's event as you are doing a magnificent job in bringing everyone together despite being miles apart.

The mining industry in Yukon deserves a thank you for being an economic beacon in a year when our other cornerstone industry, tourism, was devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I'm sure it was anything but business as usual for the industry as they dealt with health protocols, travel restrictions, and self-isolation requirements. We look forward to hearing from companies and prospectors during this year's conference on their experience of how things are shaping up for next year.

We also look forward to future Geoscience Forums where we can once again gather together and share stories in person.

Applause

Ms. White: So, the Yukon NDP caucus wishes to add our voices to the chorus of thanks to the organizers of the 48th annual geoscience conference. I think that, if anything, it just shows the innovation of both the organizers and the attendees as we change how things look this year. We wish them well — lots of learning, lots of getting together virtually — and we thank them for this work.

Applause

In recognition of the Safe at Home Society and National Housing Day

Hon. Ms. Frost: I rise to pay tribute to the Safe at Home Society and community and government champions that have come together to develop, guide, and implement our community response to homelessness.

Yesterday was National Housing Day — a day that has its roots in 1998 when the Big City Mayors' Caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities passed a motion that homelessness and housing insecurity was a national disaster. In 2017, Canada launched its first national housing strategy. This overarching plan, along with the Reaching Home strategy to address homelessness across Canada, aligns the efforts of all levels of government to support the goals of every Canadian having a home that meets their needs and that they can afford.

In Yukon, we are very proud of the motivated individuals, community groups, and four governments that have created the Safe at Home plan and that continue to champion its implementation. It is an honour to note that the Safe at Home plan was adopted by the local Reaching Home community entity, previously under the guidance of the Council of Yukon First Nations and, as of this year, now administered by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition.

Launched in 2017, this is not a plan for one government, organization, or individuals to implement alone. Instead, the plan outlines coordinated action rooted in community values,

personal experiences, expert advice, and the best available research. The plan highlights what needs to happen to prevent and end homelessness for the Yukon.

The action plan recognizes the myriad of challenges that can lead to homelessness, highlights the gaps that create them, and identifies actions that meet the urgent needs of community members struggling with homelessness.

On November 6, 2020, Safe at Home became an incorporated society. As a society backed by four government partners, they will coordinate the implementation of the Safe at Home plan. On August 24, 2020, the Safe at Home Society released a progress report that illustrates the progress that our community has made in ending and preventing homelessness. We have, with the community advisory board, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the Anti-Poverty Coalition, completed two point-in-time counts — one in 2017 and one in 2018. These snapshots helped us begin to understand who in our community is experiencing homelessness. We have worked to provide additional supports for youth and families, and we are planning for discharge from hospitals, corrections, mental health, and addiction treatment services.

Yukon organizations, including the Government of Yukon, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and Blood Ties Four Directions, offer eviction prevention courses and awareness. The LWEH program — Landlords Working to End Homelessness — continues to thrive and support tenants. Housing navigators continue to help individuals navigate leases and applications for housing and to resolve conflicts.

We have increased housing supplies through Yukon Housing Corporation's programs and City of Whitehorse, Teslin, Carmacks, Dawson, and Watson Lake development incentives. We have also increased the supply of supportive housing through Blood Ties Four Directions through the Steve Cardiff Tiny House Community. Max's Place, which was completed in 2019, offers services to the FASD community. The Government of Yukon offers supportive housing and the Housing First residence. There are many others — in fact, too many to list. Finally, the Voices Influencing Change program helps to highlight voices of those who have lived and are still living with homelessness. This group helps to inform the priority of the Safe at Home plan.

These actions, overseen by the Safe at Home Society and the implementation committee of government partners, show progress toward the goal of the Safe at Home plan. There is much left to be done. We continue to work toward three goals of the Safe at Home plan: prevent homelessness; increase the supply of safe, stable, and affordable housing; and ensure access to housing and programs and services within the system.

Homelessness is a complex problem that requires vision, commitment, and innovation to help solve.

Mahsi' cho for all the work that the committee does for the homeless community.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November 22 as National Housing Day. In 1998, homelessness was recognized in Canada as a national disaster, and Canada was the only G8 country that did not have a national housing strategy. Two years later, the first National Housing Day was declared, calling for action on homelessness in Canada.

Housing issues in the Yukon have been and remain at the forefront of many discussions. For many years, we have seen housing prices soar, and there appears to be no end to the affordable housing crisis. Demands rise; costs rise; homelessness rises. Each level of government — municipal, First Nation, territorial, and federal — must continue to play roles in defeating this problem. In Whitehorse, as each of these groups works to further their Safe at Home policy or their whole community response, we should continue to see progress in the quest to prevent homelessness in the city and in Yukon.

There appears to be no single solution, but we see many organizations and individuals doing their part — Habitat for Humanity and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, just to name a few. Our population is growing, and the crunch to supply decent, affordable homes is overwhelming. Regardless of whether one is able to buy or rent their home, many find that most of their income is used to pay the huge cost of having a roof over their heads not to mention the increasing cost of operating a home.

If COVID-19 has taught us anything — if you do have a home, no matter how big or small — it is how to appreciate your safe space and where you can isolate if needed; it is a safe place.

Applause

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP in recognition of National Housing Day and our belief that housing is a right of all. This year, National Housing Day is more important than ever as the pandemic has both intensified the toll on people experiencing homelessness and further exposed the gaps in Canada's housing system.

Now, more than ever before, housing saves lives. COVID-19 has greatly exposed the risk people experiencing homelessness face in a pandemic, but this current crisis has shown that we can move quickly if we're housing-focused in our efforts to shelter people. In this time of uncertainty, what we do know is that we can't return to normal. Normal was 235,000 people across the country experiencing homelessness and at risk of losing their lives for no other reason than a lack of housing. The old normal was unacceptable. We believe that we have the opportunity to reinvent a new normal where everyone has a home that meets their needs.

National Housing Day is an opportunity to redouble our efforts and recommit to ending homelessness once and for all. We thank all of the housing champions in Yukon who continue to work day in and day out to support folks in their quest for a home.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports connecting every Yukoner to a primary care provider who provides care as part of an integrated health team.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon Energy Corporation general rate application

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Energy Corporation has submitted a general rate application, or GRA, to the Yukon Utilities Board requesting a rate increase of 11.5 percent in 2021, which is equivalent to an increase of 3.8 percent per year between 2019 and 2021.

Between 2019 and 2021, Yukon Energy expects to invest over \$55 million to support Yukon's growing demand for electricity and the application is needed to recover the cost of these investments. The investments include the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line replacement project and initiatives that increase the amount of energy that the company can generate, such as the generator upgrades at the Whitehorse hydro facility.

Yukon Energy is proposing to time the increases to minimize the impact on the bills residents and businesses are currently paying by requesting a two-phase increase.

The first, which would come into effect on July 1, 2021, would coincide with the anticipated reduction in the fuel rider, and the second, scheduled for December 1, 2021, would coincide with the anticipated reduction in another rider.

I will note that electricity rates are not changing at this time. All changes must first be reviewed and approved by the Yukon Utilities Board. In the past, extended periods of time between GRAs has led to a loss of potential revenue for the utilities. Yukon Energy's last two GRAs were in 2012-13 and 2017-18. The longer periods between GRAs has had two effects: the process tends to be longer and more complex as there is more material to review, and the resulting increases are larger and there are more costs to account for. As an example, the last increase was 11.3 percent because of the length of proceedings and actual increase for 2020.

We understand that no one likes a rate increase. That said, we need to invest responsibly in the generation and distribution resources that supply us with the energy that we need.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement here today. You will remember that it was the Official Opposition who

revealed that the Liberal government would be seeking a rate application when we asked the minister about this on November 10. At the time, we asked the minister how much of an increase they were seeking. Unfortunately, he was unable to provide the answer at that time, but we are happy that, two weeks later, he has confirmed for us that they are seeking to increase energy bills by 11.5 percent.

Another question that we asked the minister two weeks ago was about the decision of the Yukon Energy Corporation to delay their rate application from 2019. The minister avoided the question at the time, but I am hopeful that, two weeks later, he will be able to answer it. The question that we were wondering was: Who asked the Yukon Energy Corporation to delay the application from last fall, and was it anyone from within government?

Also, with the planned application from 2019 being delayed to this year, has the Yukon Energy Corporation lost out on any money as a result? For example, we see that the corporation had a significant loss reported in its annual report, and we have seen the amount on their line of credit increase in the last year. So, if the minister could expand a bit on the impacts of the delayed rate application, that would be helpful.

Going through the rate application in detail will obviously take a lot of time as it is 441 pages long, but a few things jumped out on our initial read that the minister glossed over in his statement. For example, it appears that, of the rate increase, approximately 35 percent — or \$3.8 million — is associated with the Liberal decision to rent 17 diesel generators.

As we have discussed in this House before, the Liberal decision to rely on renting diesels from an Alberta company means that we are shipping money south and Yukoners receive no assets at the end of the day.

So now, not only are we not owning any assets for our millions and millions of dollars that the Liberals are spending on diesels, but we are getting increased electricity bills as a result.

The rate application also projects that the total amount of diesel generation will increase by over 400 percent in just three years under the Liberals. Another part that was not mentioned by the minister is that another \$3.3 million of this rate application is associated with physical upgrades to locations in Whitehorse and Faro to house all of his rented diesel generators.

So, that would appear that approximately \$7.1 million of the increase will be directly associated with the Liberal plan to rent diesels for the next decade and we know that they plan on spending more, so we are likely to see future increases as well. The rate application mentions that the work on the Faro diesel project is expected to be in service by mid-November, so the final question that I have is: Can the minister confirm that the diesels in Faro are now in service, as of course we are in mid-November, and if this project was required to be referred to YESAB for an environmental assessment?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the minister's responses.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak to today's ministerial statement, I have a few thoughts to share.

First, I do question the timing of the government for this announcement. It feels like, on month 8 of a pandemic, while so many are still struggling and restrictions are being strengthened across the country, the last thing Yukoners needed to hear today was an increase to their utility rates. But I will come back to this later.

If we have learned anything in this last year, it's that more than ever, folks just want to understand. They want to have information shared with them in a timely manner. I appreciate that, after last week's question asking if the Yukon Energy Corporation was heading back to the Yukon Utilities Board with a general rate application, this information is now being shared with the public. People want to know what's coming and what it means to them.

I appreciate that Yukon Energy is proposing to time the increases to minimize the impact to folks, but for many, this is possibly the worst time to consider a hike in their energy costs. It would have been helpful to know last year when Yukoners saw their electrical costs jump drastically that it wouldn't last forever. Today, we're told that by July 2021, we can anticipate the first reduction in the fuel rider and then the second reduction in the fuel rider in December 2021.

We're also being told that, with those two anticipated reductions, we'll see the rate increase of 11.5 percent spread out to minimize the shock. But unless the Yukon government or YEC lets people know what's happening and why, it will still be a surprise. If we're to learn anything from the past, it's that waiting for long periods of time between rate applications isn't good for anyone.

So, let's change the timing of these hearings. Let's make them more regular so that, when we get an increase, it isn't a shocking amount. No matter what, it is critical that the cost of essential utilities does not go up during a pandemic. Many people have lost their jobs or have much reduced hours. There needs to be a plan in place for these folks who just can't take another hit, even if that hit comes in July.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It is, I guess, a very interesting take from the Yukon Party on this one. Let's compare the last rate application, which the Leader of the NDP just referred to — the last rate application that covered costs from when the Yukon Party was in office compared to this one. So, with the submission that has gone in, residential customers in this particular submission will see a 70-cent-per-month increase under our plan. Under the Yukon Party plan, rates went up to \$20 per month. Let's look at commercial rates for customers. Under this plan, there will be a \$2-per-month reduction. Under the Yukon Party plan, commercial customers saw their rates increase \$36 per month.

A question on many Yukoners' minds, as was touched on by the Yukon Party, is: Didn't we just go through this process and have a large rate increase? Yes, we did. In the lead-up to the last election, the previous Yukon Party government refused to have a rate hearing, even though they had to run up the credit card during their time in office. When we arrived on the job in

2016, we had to move to pay off the credit card balance that Yukoners had inherited. The result was a large increase in bills. If the previous government had held regular hearings instead of politicizing these decisions, we would have seen lower costs.

Mr. Speaker, if supported by the Yukon Utilities Board, the net effect on Yukon electrical bills under our plan will be an increase of 70 cents per month for the average residential customer and a decrease of \$2 per month for the average commercial customer. Again, under the Yukon Party, it was an increase of \$20 per month for residential customers and \$36 per month for commercial customers. With the support of the Yukon Utilities Board, Yukon Energy Corporation's proposed 2021 rate increase will have nearly zero impact on Yukoners' electricity bills. The rate application is a way for Yukon Energy Corporation to make the investments that it needs to replace aging assets and to meet growing demands for electricity while providing bill stability for Yukoners.

Electricity rates are not changing at this time. Yukon Energy Corporation's application must first be reviewed and approved by the Yukon Utilities Board before any rate increase happens. Even with the proposed rate increase, electricity rates in Yukon remain the lowest in the north.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon Hospital Corporation funding

Mr. Cathers: Last week, Yukon Hospital Corporation witnesses appeared in the Legislative Assembly. One issue that came up was the chronic underfunding of the Hospital Corporation by this Liberal government. According to page 14 of their 2019-20 annual report, last year they had \$96.5 million in expenses but only received \$92.6 million in revenue. That means that, because of underfunding by the Liberal government, the corporation had almost a \$4-million shortfall.

Can the minister tell us why the Liberals underfunded the hospital last year?

Hon. Ms. Frost: What I can confirm for the member opposite and for Yukoners is that we have increased the Hospital Corporation's budget by 29 percent, as noted by the guests to the gallery last week. We are working with them on their initiatives and their projects to address the core needs of the Hospital Corporation as they arise.

We have increased significantly additional supports at the hospital, and that includes the specialized supports — the orthopaedic surgeons and the pediatricians. Our government has a mandate that the Hospital Corporation provides collaborative care approaches, and we are working with them to do just that.

The overarching priority set by the board of trustees is to provide safe and excellent hospital care for all Yukoners, and our objective is to ensure that every Yukoner is well-supported and that the needs are met for all Yukoners to ensure that they are safe and healthy in their homes where they reside in their Yukon communities.

Mr. Cathers: The minister would have you believe that everything is fine, but you need only look at the hospital's own

report. It is right there on page 14 — a \$4-million shortfall last year.

When the witnesses appeared, the secure medical unit was also discussed. To quote the CEO, the current setup "... does result in some very real safety and quality care concerns. Just to list a few of these — there is an inability to zone patients. That means it's not possible to keep aggressive and violent patients safe and separate from other vulnerable patients." Then he went on to say: "There are limited areas to support staff in a safe area. Unfortunately, it results in some patients spending long periods of time in isolation."

It is for these reasons that the secure medical unit is needed and it is for these reasons that it was irresponsible for the Liberals to delay this important project. On March 17 last year, the Liberals promised that there was \$1 million in the budget for the secure medical unit. Why did they delay this project and put patients and staff in the hospital at risk as a result?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I'm happy to speak about the supports that we're providing for the Hospital Corporation. As noted, the 2021 budget for the Hospital Corporation was \$81.3 million. Historically, when we took office, that was significantly less — an increase of 29 percent. Part of that was to look at a coordinated approach with the Hospital Corporation, and that was to look at all of the core needs of the Hospital Corporation, including the orthopaedic units and bringing in the pediatricians to the hospital, looking at the support for the re-enablement units to ensure that Yukoners are supported as they transition out of the surgical units.

We are also working with the Hospital Corporation on their secure medical unit, and we have been for quite some time. The support to the Hospital Corporation around the secure medical unit is to ensure that they have resources available. We're intending to do just that by providing the necessary financial resources and supports that they require to proceed with their vision and their plan.

Mr. Cathers: The minister can't get past the fact that the hospital's own report shows last year that they were short \$4 million. Let's walk through the timeline of delays of the SMU project by the Liberals.

Last week, the Hospital Corporation confirmed that the SMU business proposal was created by working with Health and Social Services and Justice in 2017-18. On March 7 of last year, the Premier said, in his budget speech: "This year's Budget also provides \$1 million for a larger secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital..."

The Hospital Corporation confirmed last week that their board approved the SMU business case in April 2019 and that it was presented to the minister in September 2019. However, we heard nothing about any of this until there was an incident at the unit in October, and the minister then confirmed that she delayed funding for the facility until next year.

Will the minister agree today to finally provide the hospital with the funding required to address this important health and safety issue and complete the new secure medical unit project?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to just acknowledge that never once have we said, on this side of the House, that we would not support the secure medical unit. We have agreed and

we have committed to work with the Hospital Corporation and certainly have fully funded the Yukon Hospital Corporation last year, and they were not short of funding.

Now, we have looked at the secure medical unit, and the objective there is provide them with the resources and to put that in the capital budget for the secure unit. We are working with them on space improvements, and we will continue to do that in good faith to ensure that Yukoners have the supports and services that they need in collaboration with the Hospital Corporation.

I have to say that I am very pleased with the relationship with the Hospital Corporation over the last four years. We have worked in good faith to address the needs of Yukoners — more moving away from an acute care model to a collaborative care model. We will continue to do that and support our partners through the Hospital Corporation.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

Mr. Istchenko: With the closure of the BC bubble, clarity on the tourism recovery package is even more important as these businesses will lose out on business — business that they've been counting on.

When will the Minister of Tourism and Culture announce the rest of the tourism money?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question.

I have stated many times over the last several weeks that we're continuing to work with our partners to ensure that we have the right programs in place. I want to remind the member opposite that we do have a number of programs that are currently in effect now and will be for some time to come. I will just remind the member of some of those programs. We introduced sick leave. We introduced the tourism cooperative marketing fund, relief for essential workers, and most important for businesses — particularly in the tourism industry — is the Yukon business relief fund. I went over some of those numbers last week, but I'm happy to do it again for Yukoners.

As of November 4, we had 519 applications with \$5.67 million provided to Yukon businesses. The majority of the current businesses receiving this fund are tourism businesses. We have a good uptake as well on the accommodation fund, and we are continuing to work with that sector. I'm happy to have other questions.

Mr. Istchenko: I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, if you heard my first question, but I asked: When will the Minister of Tourism and Culture announce the rest of the tourism money?

Last week, the Minister of Tourism and Culture stated that they could not announce the rest of the tourism money because they needed to talk to the Bureau of Statistics first in order to make decisions based on evidence, Mr. Speaker.

So, can the minister explain why she was able to announce the accommodation sector relief without talking to the Bureau of Statistics first? Was that not a decision based on evidence, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The member opposite may recall that, when we announced the accommodation sector fund, I talked specifically about having done that pre-work with the

hotel industry to ensure that we had the evidence to go ahead with that decision. Again, folks on this side of the House make decisions based on good, solid evidence. That is what we did. We worked with our partners. We are satisfied that it is meeting the needs of the accommodation sector now.

There are still hotel businesses that are accessing the Yukon business relief fund because they have not maxed out their allowable allocation under that program. Those that have are accessing the accommodation fund. We knew that this was a pressure point; the members opposite said it time and time again. They asked, and we were well on our way to making that decision. That is why we announced it first.

Again, I will remind the member opposite that we have announced \$15 million that will go toward the tourism sector — some in relief, some in recovery. We are still making those final decisions, Mr. Speaker, on the immediate relief that will be needed.

Mr. Istchenko: While the member opposite was reminding me of that \$15 million, as I pointed out to the minister, she is saying that she cannot announce the rest of the tourism funding because she needs to collect evidence first.

Can the minister explain how she arrived at \$15 million as the total amount of money for the tourism relief package since she has not even collected the evidence about what is required for tourism relief yet?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I will just remind the member opposite of conversations that we've had over the last several weeks around the relief that is needed. We knew from working directly with our partners in the accommodation sector that we had a pressure point and that there was a stop-gap that needed to be filled right away. We identified those funds, and I am really happy that we have gotten past general debate in our supplementary budget because there is a portion of funds that we will be debating when we get to the tourism section of our budget. There is direct relief in that budget for businesses that are within the tourism sector.

We'll continue working with our partners. That's what we committed to do. We have worked with the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board. We have worked with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon. We will continue to do that.

Our work with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics has been successful. We have narrowed matters down, and we know where the gaps are, Mr. Speaker. When that decision is finalized, we will be happy to announce that to Yukoners.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic self-isolation requirements

Ms. White: Last week, we raised questions about the government allowing an Outside contractor to bring in out-of-territory workers and have them self-isolate while working alongside Yukoners on a construction site. Since then, we've been inundated with information and questions from local workers at Yukon mine sites. They too are feeling unsafe working and living alongside so many fly-in workers who have not completed the 14-day self-isolation requirement before coming to the camps.

Initially, these fly-in workers self-isolated in a local hotel for 14 days before going to the mining camps. Right now, fly-in workers from outside Yukon are allowed to self-isolate while still working at mine sites — a situation that has left local workers feeling unsafe and without recourse. Yukon workers are required to follow more stringent rules than Outside workers.

Will the government be reviewing the provisions for fly-in workers, given the increases in COVID cases across the country?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, the answer to the question is that, yes, we are always reviewing the alternative self-isolation plans. I will say that the work that is done with mining camps — as far as I know, there is only one that has had an application that has gone through to date. That one had a lot of work review back and forth by the chief medical officer of health's office.

Again, I don't approve these unless I've had a positive review from the chief medical officer of health. Then we still take a look at it to see whether there is safety. In the case where the one was approved, we asked that the mine be in contact with both the First Nation and the municipality to make sure that they were comfortable.

If there are concerns, I'm happy to continue to look at those. I think that it is changing because we recognize that the risk has changed across the country. We know that Yukoners are concerned right now. What I can say is that we have been doing this with plans that look toward the safety of Yukoners and our Yukon communities. I think that this has been achieved, but we will continue to review them as we go forward.

Ms. White: Today, the chief medical officer of health updated the COVID-19 information and informed Yukoners that there were six more cases as of today, bringing the total to 38. There are 170 tests from the weekend pending, with a two-to three-day wait time. This week, more fly-in workers will be arriving in Yukon to work their shifts. They will be working alongside Yukoners while self-isolating at the same time.

Does this government think that this is a good time to bring fly-in workers into the Yukon and allow them to work and live alongside Yukoners while they're still self-isolating?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What's different this week is that, if those workers are arriving from British Columbia, if they're arriving from the Northwest Territories, or if they're arriving from Nunavut, they will self-isolate. What was not happening last week was that those workers were not self-isolating. We listened to our chief medical officer of health. He made a recommendation to us. We took the decision to end the travel bubble.

By the way, I heard this morning that the Atlantic provinces did the same thing this morning. I think that is the right choice. We have all of those workers self-isolating. We will work to make sure that Yukoners are safe to the best of our ability. I think that all of these plans are there to ensure that we keep Yukoners and Yukon communities safe.

Ms. White: Yukon government is allowing workers from out of territory to come here and self-isolate while still working on a site with local workers, but Yukoners don't have

the same kind of flexibility. Many Yukon families won't be able to see their loved ones over Christmas without self-isolation, and those of us who have to travel for emergencies or to say goodbye to a loved one also have to respect self-isolation requirements. It's hard, but we know it's essential for the public health of Yukoners. Even Yukon workers returning from outside Yukon have to self-isolate when they come back home, but somehow we're allowing fly-in workers to self-isolate while continuing to work alongside Yukoners at local work sites.

What does the minister say to Yukoners who feel that this double standard is not fair to them?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: All who travel into the territory are self-isolating. Can I just say, Mr. Speaker — I've had more applications from individuals for alternative self-isolation than I have had from businesses. There have been some really heartbreaking applications, like a mom who is coming to help her daughter with a complicated pregnancy. The mom asked to be able to stay with the daughter, and we said yes because that family, as a unit, could self-isolate in a bubble.

I've had other applications where people have come forward and said that they wanted to spread their husband's ashes back where they had their cabin. We said yes, again, because they could stay separate.

We will look at applications from workers when they demonstrate to us and to the chief medical officer of health that they can stay separate, because we will work at all times to make sure that workers, Yukoners, and communities are safe, and everybody will be self-isolating when they come.

Speaker: Order, please. The Clerks can stop the time and the Leader of the Third Party can sit for a moment, please.

The Leader of the Third Party will have your full time for your questions.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The Chair has noticed recently that some members, in particular during Question Period but also during some of the other processes and debates in the Assembly, have not acknowledged the Chair by saying "Mr. Speaker" or "Mr. Chair" after being recognized in the customary way by the Chair. If this was an isolated incident, the Chair would not likely bring this up; however, this appears to have become more commonplace for some members. Over the last week, it wasn't just the Leader of the Third Party.

As all members are aware, remarks made in the Chamber are to be directed to the Chair. This includes acknowledging the Chair when the Chair recognizes a member. Decorum in the Chamber is at the heart of maintaining civility in our debate. The Chair addresses members by their titles when they are recognized. This is a two-way street and must be maintained in order to facilitate a productive and respectful debate.

The third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at page 610 describes it this way: "Any Member participating in debate, whether during a sitting of the House or a Committee of the Whole, must address the Chair, not the House, a particular Minister or Member, the galleries, the television audience, or any other entity. Since one of the basic

principles of procedure in the House is that the proceedings be conducted in a respectful manner, Members are less apt to engage in heated exchanges and personal attacks when their comments are directed to the Chair rather than to another Member. If a Member directs remarks toward another Member and not the Speaker, the Member will be called to order and may be asked to rephrase the remarks.”

I also note that, while you are addressing the Chair, as much as you are addressing the individual whose privilege it is to be currently occupying this position, you are, more importantly, addressing the Chair as its position within this House. This is the embodiment of centuries-old traditions that have evolved to ensure that our Assembly functions smoothly and efficiently as the seat of our democracy.

On this topic, I would acknowledge and commend all members that this has not been an issue of any note in the previous four years and over 200 days of sitting in the 34th Legislative Assembly until recently.

In addition, I would just note that I do recognize that there is an issue with our television and the television angles. We will certainly make best efforts to address that going forward. It is even a bit more challenging now in that we have created seating and spacing to comply with COVID-19 physical distancing measures. In any event, as I said, in my observation, this has not been an issue for the vast majority of the 34th Legislative Assembly. I do anticipate that all members will return to the manner in which they were speaking through the Chair previously.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Question re: Fortymile caribou herd

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Yukon government announced opening a harvest on the Fortymile caribou herd for Yukon residents. This harvest will remain open until March 31 or until 300 caribou are harvested.

Mr. Speaker, does this government have the support of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation in making the decision to open the Fortymile caribou herd for the harvest of up to 300 animals?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, yes, we do.

Ms. White: This is the third time that the government has opened up a harvest of the Fortymile caribou herd, Mr. Speaker. In July, the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in government asked that a harvest management plan be in place before any more hunting permits for the Fortymile caribou herd were permitted.

Has this government finished the harvest management plan for this caribou herd and has the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in signed off on it?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, after 25 years of a recovery effort, working very closely with the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation and, of course, the Dawson Renewable Resources Council and our Fish and Wildlife Management Board here that covers the whole of Yukon and the State of Alaska, we are very pleased to announce to Yukoners that we have successfully signed off on the harvest management agreement. The Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation successfully passed that through their legislative assembly in the summer

with unanimous consent. From there, it went on to the leadership — as is their government process and structure — to endorse the plan.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, when will the government make this plan public?

Hon. Ms. Frost: As I understand it, the plan has now been endorsed and we are looking at getting the plan out as soon as possible. I believe it’s in fact in the works and it might very well have gone out today. It’s imminent and it will get out now that it has full endorsement.

Question re: Semi-automatic AR-10 rifles purchase

Mr. Hassard: Earlier this year, the federal Liberal government enacted a sweeping ban on a list of what it called “military-style assault rifles”. Now, the Prime Minister of Canada said that these types of guns have no place in Canada.

Recently, the Department of Environment purchased 20 semi-automatic AR-10 rifles. This exact make and model of gun is on the list of banned guns that the federal Liberal government brought in. This is not the type of purchase that would be made without ministerial approval.

Can the minister tell us the rationale for the purchase of these guns?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I’m not able to respond to the question at the moment. I will endeavour to get back to the member opposite. I certainly need to consult with the department.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly hope that the minister, if she’s in charge of signing off on this type of contract, would have the information for those of us here in the Legislature today.

But let me quote the Prime Minister of Canada: “These weapons were designed for one purpose and one purpose only: to kill the largest number of people in the shortest amount of time.” He said, “There is no use and no place for such weapons in Canada.”

Yet, while the Liberals in Ottawa are taking these guns away from Canadians, the Liberals in the Yukon are purchasing them for employees at the Department of Environment. The hypocrisy is not lost on Yukoners. The Liberal government here says the guns are needed for human-wildlife conflict. Yet our Liberal Member of Parliament said these guns are “... created by the military to kill as many people as possible in the shortest time possible...”

Mr. Speaker, who does the minister think Yukoners should believe?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest certainly not the Yukon Party and their fearmongering. The objective certainly is not to kill people. We have skilled, qualified individuals within the Department of Environment who are responsible specifically for ensuring that we prevent human-wildlife conflict and that we also look at ensuring that the officers, who are peace officers within their jobs, are doing the jobs that are required to ensure that the tools they have at their disposal are there to protect the rights of course of the laws they prescribe to enforce.

I also want to say that the Government of Yukon will continue to monitor if there are further legislative changes. We will certainly look at keeping our communities safe — working and doing so with fair and law-abiding processes with our officers as they enforce the rules that apply to wildlife in the Yukon.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, you have the Prime Minister and Yukon's Liberal Member of Parliament saying that these types of guns have no use in Canada and they're only meant for killing people.

On the other hand, you have the Yukon Liberal government purchasing 20 of these AR rifles saying that they're necessary to deal with human-wildlife conflict. Many Yukoners could easily find themselves in exactly the same scenario of human-wildlife conflict that the government is justifying as the reason that these guns are necessary for employees at the Department of Environment.

Mr. Speaker, will the Yukon Liberal government write to the Prime Minister and tell him that their gun ban does not make sense and ask them to abandon their plans to forcibly confiscate rifles from law-abiding Yukon hunters and trappers?

Hon. Ms. Frost: We will follow the rules as they are prescribed for us. We will take efforts on this side of the House to enforce the laws as they apply to us here in Yukon. The *Criminal Code* and the *Firearms Act* are under the purview of the Government of Canada.

The Government of Yukon will continue to monitor changes to the federal firearms regulated legislation and regulations with an interest in keeping communities safe while also being fair to law-abiding firearm owners and firearm-related businesses.

Our government remains committed to ensuring that all Yukoners feel safe throughout our territory by considering a common-sense approach to gun safety. I would like to reiterate that the officers who work for the Department of Environment are peace officers who have been skillfully trained to manage their tools.

I would like to acknowledge them for their great work and support to this government during the pandemic and for all the efforts where they have certainly contributed to Yukoners' safety.

Question re: Cannabis retail store

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to an issue that we addressed earlier this Sitting.

Currently, Yukoners can go to the Cannabis Yukon website, browse available products, select a product they would like, pay for it online, and have it shipped to them. This is an online store run by the Liberal government. Private retailers, however, are unable to offer this service. The Liberals' cannabis legislation forbids private retailers from selling cannabis online.

Why is it okay for the government to run an online store to sell cannabis, but not for the private sector retailers?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, you will recall that, a couple of years ago, we brought in the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act* and regulations. That was about introducing

cannabis as a newly legalized substance. We did so with an abundance of safety — we said at that time — for online sales, because there were some concerns that we heard from the public about whether those sales could be monitored and kept safe from seed to sale, as well as at an in-person store. Out of an abundance of caution, we said that the online store, to begin with, would be run by us as a government. I will have to check the numbers, but online sales are less than one percent of sales overall.

We have heard from our great local private retailers, who, by the way, have displaced us as government retail. They are doing a wonderful job. They have told us that they would like to do online retail. We will work with them to try to get that in place. We are also working on a pandemic right now, so I would ask for their patience as we work to get there.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, earlier this summer, the minister issued an order that allowed private retailers to sell cannabis online. This made sense for several reasons: For one, it allowed the staff of stores to limit interaction with the public, which meant that customers could make purchases while also respecting COVID measures aimed at keeping both customers and staff safe. It also gave private retailers access to sales channels that the Liberals' legislation had previously denied them, and it allowed them to sell their product online.

The minister took away this economic lifeline for these local businesses, but he continued to allow the government-run store to sell cannabis online. Will the minister use policy or regulation to reinstate this important sales channel for these cannabis retailers?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, since the pandemic started, by my count, we brought in 19 ministerial orders — 19 orders that I signed. I believe that we have repealed six of them, including this one. I heard so much from the members opposite about how we were overstepping, misusing power during the pandemic.

But twice now, the one question I've had from the members opposite is asking me to put back in place a ministerial order. Well, I tell you what, Mr. Speaker: We will look at it, and if it helps the health and safety of Yukoners, we'll happily consider it under this state of emergency.

By the way, thank you as well to all the members opposite for agreeing that we are in a state of emergency. We will — if it helps the safety of Yukoners, we'll do it, but we'll only use ministerial orders if it's out of an abundance of caution to keep Yukoners safe and well.

Mr. Hassard: If the minister would have been listening, he would have understood that I wasn't asking for him to reinstate a ministerial order. I was asking him to do it through legislation or other processes. If the minister had brought this ministerial order forward to a committee of the Legislature earlier, like we had been advocating that he do with all ministerial orders under CEMA, we would have had the opportunity to bring this matter forward then. We could have made this point on behalf of the businesses that have brought this forward to us, and hopefully the minister would have taken this issue into consideration. Unfortunately, this minister and

this government prefer to operate unilaterally, without any oversight or scrutiny.

When will the minister allow private businesses to have the same opportunities for sales as the government does?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the minister answered the question in the first response, saying that he will work on it. However, the members opposite want us to play politics with the CEMA orders. All jurisdictions right across Canada, thank goodness, are following the same processes. Chief medical officers of health in every jurisdiction are working around the clock to analyze the various situations regionally and coordinating efforts, providing accurate and timely recommendations that are saving lives.

Premiers and the federal government are also working around the clock to quickly implement policy necessary to keep Canadians safe. It took the opposition over a month to actually even admit that we are in a state of emergency. While Yukon's health and safety are at risk, this government will continue to show the swift and even-keeled leadership that all Yukoners demand of us.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 14: *Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 14, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. Frost.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Environment that Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely appreciate the comments. I certainly want to look at a lot of the efforts that have been put forward — great messages that we have heard — over the course of the last year and a bit. The House has discussed and covered the materials in detail during the debate on October 26. I would take a few minutes now to highlight the bill and its context.

Single-use products, such as plastic and paper bags, are harmful to the environment to produce and costly to deal with once they become waste. The best solution for this problem is to reduce the amount of single-use products we use, like water bottles and Styrofoam cups, et cetera. As I mentioned at second reading and discussed during Committee of the Whole, we are amending the *Environment Act* to strengthen the territory's waste-reduction efforts by moving to ban single-use bags and other single-use products and packages in the future. This is in the next phase of the government's ongoing work to reduce waste.

Specifically, these *Environment Act* amendments will enable the establishment of regulations to guide the manufacturing, supply, and distribution of single-use products and packaging and support our efforts to reduce waste now and into the future. Creating the legal mechanism to ban single-use bags and other single-use products and packaging will also help Yukon align with our national and international efforts to reduce waste — particularly plastic waste — in our environment and landfills. Stakeholders and the public will have a 60-day opportunity after Christmas to shape the future regulations banning single-use bags. The department will send key stakeholders, such as our big retailers and relevant associations, an engagement package to provide input on the content and timing of the regulations.

At the same time, a wide engagement will be launched for all stakeholders and the public to participate in, including the options to complete an online survey, given the COVID options that we have now, and through our virtual approaches.

As health and safety during this pandemic is top of mind for all of us, if another public emergency were declared in the future where the use of banned single-use products was deemed necessary or safer for the public, an exemption from complying with single-use product regulations would be established under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* or the *Public Health and Safety Act*.

These pieces of legislation deal specifically with when and how an emergency is declared and then delegate powers to the chief medical officer of health and the Minister of Community Services to deal with an emergency.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank all members. I'm very pleased to hear that we are moving forward. I thank all those who contributed their many hours — the public servants' many hours — to get us to this point.

Mr. Istchenko: I rise today to speak to Bill No. 14, *Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)*, at third reading.

In my second reading speech, I discussed much of the content and background of this bill, so I won't spend much time on that.

Having now debated this bill at Committee of the Whole, I would like to use this opportunity — as we've learned, this bill is largely enabling legislation, and the true force of the changes will come into effect with the passage of subsequent regulations.

As such, the main concerns that I have will need to be dealt with in the development of the regulations. In short, I have three concerns. Those are: the definition and how products will be identified; the second one is timing; and the third is consultation.

First, let me begin with my first issue of the definition. The bill's "Explanatory Note" says that the target of this legislation — and I quote — is "single-use products and packages".

In her second reading speech, the minister said that this legislation will allow for the regulation of certain types of single-use products and packaging, including the ability to ban them. Then in Committee, we learned that the minister intends

to target single-use plastic bags first and then she is planning for regulations to come into effect in 2021.

However, we also learned that this regulation was going to include paper bags as well. In debate so far, I pointed out that the federal government is also taking action on banning some single-use plastics. To our understanding, the definition that they will be using will include single-use plastic bags but will not include paper bags. When I asked in Committee if the definition that the Yukon government will use will be consistent with the federal definition, the minister did not provide a clear answer.

So, it seems that we are on track for competing bans, both coming next year. The ban at the federal level will be different from the territorial ban; however, there will be significant overlap.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight for the minister as a concern that I really hope that her department is able to work with the federal government to ensure that local businesses don't have to deal with competing bans and different sets of rules for different levels of government in the same policy space. Furthermore, I want to express some concern about what the next steps of the regulatory development are. Again, in this respect, I hope that the minister is able to come up with a clear definition that will work for the business community. I will speak more about that consultation in a few minutes. For now, I would like to reiterate the point that the definition used by the government needs to be clear and concise enough that local governments, citizens, and the entire community can understand it.

The next point that I would like to make relates to timing. As we all wrestle with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become obvious that many of our behaviours have changed. We are now encouraged to spend less time in common spaces like stores. We are encouraged to use single-use products rather than multiple-use items that need to be touched by different people. We are certainly eating out a lot more, which means an increase in takeout containers and bags.

This has also been particularly hard on small businesses. In particular, those businesses in the food services, hospitality, or tourism industries have been especially hard hit. We do wonder if this is the right time — speaking of timing — to be introducing a new set of regulations on the small business community. I think that we can all agree that the goals of this legislation are well-intentioned, but I can't help but wonder if this is the wrong time to be taking this action. I would encourage the minister to thoughtfully consider this when she decides to bring the regulations forward.

Finally, I want to bring forward some concerns about the lack of consultation. We have reached out to several different businesses that deal with single-use bags. Some that we have spoken to are on the distribution side and some are in the food services industry, but we have yet to find a business that can say that they feel they were properly consulted about this issue. In many cases, the businesses were learning about this legislation when we asked them about it. This obviously conflicts with what the minister has told us so far. Going

forward, the minister will need to do a better job of engaging with the local businesses that are affected by this legislation.

I hope that the minister's ambitious timeline doesn't cause her to do a rush job on consultation. The imposition of a ban on single-use plastic and paper bags will have a real impact on a lot of local businesses. Before she charges ahead, the minister really needs to listen to those businesses. Many of them aren't against what the minister is proposing, but they want to see it done the right way.

I should also note that the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce has written to the government expressing their interest in seeing more consultation on this proposal, Mr. Speaker. We would encourage the minister to take the chamber up on the offer of a facilitated meeting.

I also hope that the minister approaches these issues with some flexibility. I would encourage her to consider exploring the possibility of sector-specific carve-outs. In particular, the quick-service food sector seems like a logical sector to consider this for. It seems clear to us that the needs and the interests of different sectors vary considerably, and they do. It would be reasonable for the minister to try to recognize that as she moves forward with regulatory development.

In closing, we will vote in favour of this bill. At this point, it is strictly enabling legislation. But we are doing so in the hope — and I say this in the hope — that the minister can address the concerns that I have raised today when she moves forward with this regulation.

I would like to thank the department officials who worked on this legislation. I would also like to thank the numerous local businesses that have provided input as we have considered this bill. I hope that the local businesses get to provide a bunch more input when the regulations come forward.

Ms. White: In speaking in favour of Bill No. 14, it will probably not surprise anyone that occasionally the Yukon Party and I disagree on different issues. I think that, when we are looking at trying to change our habits and our patterns and doing it for the betterment of the world, sometimes those decisions are hard, but they still need to be made.

I think it's really important — the language that was chosen in this legislation, and that's of single-use products and packages. I appreciate that our local drafters and the champions behind this legislation didn't fall into the trap that we've seen in other jurisdictions and other governments. I want to give full credit to the officials for recognizing the pitfalls of banning single-use plastic bags, but allowing for single-use paper bags, by catching that and changing the language to "single-use products and packages". They've done us a favour into the future, and we look forward to voting on this.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I would like to thank all Members of the Legislature who have risen and spoken that they are in favour of the legislation. It is enabling legislation, and it's enabling in a broad sense, as the Leader of the Third Party just acknowledged.

The whole idea is that we have single-use packaging or single-use products — over time, we should move away from

single use. We need to reduce how much we're creating in terms of waste. It is better, wherever we can, to reduce, and if we can't reduce, to reuse, and if we can't reuse, to recycle.

In terms of the definition of the products, of course we will work with the federal government. Of course, we are in conversation with the private sector. We want to come up with a very clear definition, and we will take into account what the federal government is saying, but we also have given — I hope — a strong indication that, when it comes to bags, we are looking not only at single-use plastic bags but also at single-use paper bags. What I heard the minister say was that likely we would start with single-use plastic bags and then move on, but with both of those, I think that the timing is critical. I acknowledge that right now, as we are in the pandemic, we have to account for the changes in behaviours.

I think that Yukoners want to reduce the amount of waste and also want to be safe, so we will work — again, with the private sector and in conversation with them and the public — on what timing makes sense. Again, I support what the Member for Kluane is suggesting — that there should be that dialogue in place.

With respect to consultation, I will just sort of go over again how this all happened. Originally, the Department of Community Services and the Department of Environment took a look at this, looked at the Northwest Territories, and thought to bring in a charge — I think that it was 25 cents a bag — as a way to disincentivize single-use bags, both plastic and paper, and then to use those dollars to help reinvest in dealing with solid waste across the territory. When we went and talked with businesses, Mr. Speaker, what did they say to us? They said, “Hey, we don't want another thing to administer.” They said to us, “Could you instead please bring in a ban?” We have a letter from chambers that stated this quite explicitly. I personally met with them. I think that the Minister of Environment spoke with them. We had quite a few conversations. So, it was based on that engagement with the private sector that led us to say, “You know what, we let's go deeper, then. Let's not do a charge on the bag. Let's not burden the businesses with another thing to administer. Let's get to a ban.”

But when we looked at a ban, we understood right away that it would require an amendment to the act. So, that was the diligence that the Department of Environment undertook.

I just want to say that this act and how it is shaped here today was directly influenced by that engagement with the private sector. I agree with the Member for Kluane that it is imperative that we do that as we go forward — not here with the act itself, which is just the enabling piece, but as we move into developing regulations — that needs to be done while engaging with the private sector.

I just want to stand up and say that I know that the Community Services branch that deals with solid waste and community operations — I know that they are working in conjunction with the Department of Environment. I know that they are working with and are in conversation with the recyclers, the waste haulers, and the private sector. They are going to wait until we get through the legislation itself before

they start working on the regulations, but that work is planned, from the get-go, to be in conversation with the private sector.

Again, thank you to all members in the Legislature for their comments and I look forward to the vote on third reading.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I would like to thank my colleagues on all sides of the House for their words on Bill No. 14, *Act to Amend the Environment Act (2020)*.

I would like to also give a big shout-out and a mahsi' cho to the staff at the departments of Environment and Community Services for their hard work and vital role in assessing, regulating, and helping manage the impacts we have on the air, water, and land around us. As my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, highlighted, we will continue to collaborate with the other provinces and, of course, the federal government on solutions like the Canada-wide Action Plan on Zero Plastic Waste, working very closely in terms of their efforts. The amendments will strengthen the Yukon Territory's waste-reduction efforts and help Yukoners align with municipal, national, and international efforts to reduce waste in our environment and landfills.

With that, I would like to speak to the consultation and engagement that we have had so far. I would say that we have done significant engagement across the Yukon. Just a week ago, the department spoke with the Chamber of Commerce and they were very pleased with our plans for the next phase of consultation with the business community.

So, we look forward to the input and we also want to look at the stakeholder groups and public engagement in the development of the regulations. We would do that regardless. We are open to all feedback. We look forward to that step in the process.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Mr. Hutton: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McClean: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 14 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 14 has passed this House.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Hutton): I will now call the House to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Chair: Order, please.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Highways and Public Works

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the supplementary budget this afternoon with my colleagues across the way. We have a couple of departmental officials here — Mr. Richard Gorczyca and my deputy, Paul McConnell — here to help this afternoon.

Before I begin my opening remarks, I would really like to take a moment to thank the Official Opposition for finally acknowledging that we're in a state of emergency. I took us six weeks and three debates to finally get that acknowledgement from the Official Opposition, but I think we can certainly see how important it is to have unanimity in this House on the importance of a state of emergency and how important it is for us to manage our borders and our people safely. I really think that it's tremendous that we finally got unanimity on that point.

With that, I'm pleased to speak about the supplementary budget for the Department of Highways and Public Works. This request highlights our commitment toward ensuring safe and efficient transportation across all our road systems, supporting local industries, building sustainable infrastructure, and enabling our aviation community to continue the ongoing delivery of essential services and medevac systems.

The global pandemic is having an unprecedented effect on Yukoners. Over the last nine months, we've seen measures enacted to protect our health and safety. Our department will continue to enhance safety and minimize service disruptions to ensure that our economy and communities' health and well-being are properly supported. It is absolutely of the utmost importance that our citizens are safe and that is the primary focus of this government from the outset. This is evident in the number — so making sure that we do that is absolutely job 1.

Now, Mr. Chair, despite this once-in-a-hundred-years event, we have achieved a lot, and I look forward to questions on this supplementary spend in the afternoon.

I have a little summary. Highways and Public Works is expecting an increase of \$11.4 million to 2020-21 operation and maintenance estimates. The request in O&M funding amounts to an increase of about 7.9 percent. That's a lot, but I do want to note that, when associated changes and recoveries are factored in, the net increase to the department will actually be just \$1.4 million.

This \$11-million figure that we've been talking about in additional spending is primarily due to COVID-19 support for aviation. More than \$10 million in supports are coming to that sector. This includes the essential air service program, which will facilitate the distribution of funding to air services involved in the transportation of goods, services, and medevac support. We know that the funding was — and will continue to be — critical in ensuring that air services remain operational and resilient throughout the pandemic.

We will also see an increase of \$410,000 in cleaning costs due to COVID-19 precautions, especially in our schools and public buildings. Other expenses totalling \$1 million are related to a number of emergency washout repairs in places like the Campbell Highway and Dempster Highway — you know, Mr. Chair, that we have had an exceptionally wet summer and an exceptionally snowy first half of the winter season — and an increase in operating needs related to certifying our Mayo aerodrome as the fifth airport in the territory. We are proud of this investment, as it created space to further support our growing mining industry and we will keep our communities connected.

As far as the capital expenditures go, Mr. Chair — when we look at it, our capital funding expenditures for this year are projected to spend \$22 million less than our main estimate, meaning a capital budget decrease of 13 percent. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has delayed permitting, resulting in a deferral of the majority of the work that we had planned on the Dempster fibre line this year. We actually have started the brush-clearing — so that work is starting on the fibre line as we speak, but the line itself — the actual fibre optic line — is expected to begin next year. So, we are deferring \$19.5 million

and the corresponding \$18.9 million in recoveries from Canada until next year.

Additionally, \$2.5 million will be transferred to the Department of Health and Social Services for the IHealth information project.

So, throughout the remainder of this pandemic, we will continue to focus our efforts on supporting local businesses, keeping Yukon's transportation network safe and resilient, and ensuring that every citizen receives the services they need — again, with a focus on the safety of our citizens, which is absolutely paramount in everything we do.

I will leave it there, Mr. Chair. I welcome questions from the members opposite.

Mr. Hassard: I, too, would like to thank Mr. McConnell and Mr. Gorczyka for being here today and helping out the minister as we work our way through Highways and Public Works debate.

I think that, just to start, I would like to comment on — since the minister brought up the fact of the motion on the state of emergency — I would like to thank him and his government for voting against all of our amendments — amendments that would have seen things like legislative oversight and sharing of information — you know, those types of things. It is interesting that he brought it up, but I would certainly like to have the opportunity to thank them for voting against openness and transparency.

In terms of the Highways and Public Works debate, Mr. Chair, I think that the first place I would like to go is with regard to Bids and Tenders. I know that we had a little bit of a discussion on this. The minister did a ministerial statement on it, but maybe we could dig a little deeper and make sure that we have some information on record about Bids and Tenders. I guess the first question would be: Why was Bids and Tenders chosen? We know that the Government of Canada uses MERX and the City of Whitehorse uses Bonfire, so why Bids and Tenders?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to thank the member opposite for his question, although I will remind the member opposite that this isn't specifically part of the supplementary discussion we are having this afternoon. In the spirit of transparency and openness and actually answering the member's questions, I will certainly do that. Basically, the question was: Why Bids and Tenders? I will say that we are making it faster and easier for Yukon businesses to work with the Yukon government.

In late August, we replaced the tender management system with a new, more —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Hassard: Have we not already passed the supplementary budget in this Legislature, Mr. Chair?

Chair's ruling

Chair: We have passed it.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, the question was: Why Bids and Tenders? I want to say that we're making it faster and easier for Yukon businesses to work with the Yukon government. In August, we replaced the tender management system with a new, more efficient online platform called Bids and Tenders, which the member opposite was referring to. This modern system allows for online bid submissions at the request of the business community which was recently made more important by the onset of COVID-19.

It also enhances bid compliance by flagging most errors. The platform is easy to use with absolutely no fees. Businesses can sign up for tender notifications tailored to those services they offer.

The new system has two other features that will be rolled out in phases. The first is a tender analytics function that will enable us to be a smarter buyer, providing more detailed information for us to analyze spending through competitive tenders and make more informed choices. The second feature is a vendor performance review module that will store vendor performance review scores and ultimately help us reward good vendor performance and encourage poor performers to improve.

Mr. Chair, we could have gone with any number of bid programs that are available throughout the country, and we went through a competitive process. This program — Bids and Tenders — was the one that provided the most bang for our buck, Mr. Chair. We actually have a lot of features that are available through this platform that weren't available through other platforms and that is why we decided to go with this platform.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly hope that the minister realizes that this is general debate. We only had nine days in the Spring Sitting. I certainly hope that he's not going to use this as an opportunity to try to shirk his duties as the minister, Mr. Chair.

The minister said quite a few things about Bids and Tenders there, but I guess the question that we've heard — and it's kind of a common complaint — is that the city and the Yukon government don't better align with procurement or with their rules or the way that they do procurement.

I'm curious as to why the Government of Yukon wouldn't have chosen, say, Bonfire, for example, to be more in line with the process that the City of Whitehorse uses.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I believe I answered that question. We went out to a public process. This was a program that really did the trick for us. It ticked the most boxes. It had the most features that we can use. Specifically, there were a few there — the analytics feature and the fact that we have performance reviews. Those are very important to us, Mr. Chair, so we chose that program.

I'm happy to answer the member opposite's questions before us this afternoon on the *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21* for Highways and Public Works, but generally speaking, this is Supplementary No. 1 and we have about \$30 million on it, as I outlined in my notes. I'm happy to answer questions on those items. I'll wait for the first question on those items that are in the budget.

Mr. Hassard: So, I guess the next question for the minister in regard to tendering would be: Who controls the old site and all of the data stored on it? Is that a third party, or is that Yukon government? How long will that data be left online and available for the public? While we're at it, are there any costs associated with maintaining that old website?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, I think I made this point before. If the member opposite didn't get the information, I'm certainly willing to provide it this afternoon.

Through the open-tendering process, the eSolutionsGroup ranked highest in our evaluation proposals. The contract is for three years with an option to renew. The contract cost is \$142,000.

Businesses can still access the old tender management system for research purposes, including reviewing old tendered documents, previous pricing, and bid lists. We own the data. The old tender management system will be available for businesses to do research for the next three to four years as the cost to host this platform is minimal. It is probably less than \$10,000.

There it is. The information is still available, as is our want. We want to make sure that we're open and transparent. We have that information still available, and I've just given the cost for the new system.

Mr. Hassard: One notable feature of the new site is that bidders can submit their bids online, but it seems that this would make it easier for Outside companies to bid on Yukon jobs. I am just curious about how the minister feels about the opportunity for Outside businesses to now have greater opportunities to bid on local work here in Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Chair, we live in a digital world. We can't roll back the clock. This is a service that many people in the territory were asking for. We welcome people to bid on our contracts to make sure that we get the best price and grow our economy. In the past, we had local companies representing others. They would get the bid documents and still be able to submit it. There really is no change except that it is a lot easier now for people to submit bids online from any one of our communities. We actually have a system now where, if they fill in the bid documents incorrectly, it will flag that error and will prevent people submitting bid documents that would be excluded. Now they don't have that issue.

This is a service that is available in virtually every other jurisdiction in the country. We are catching up to them and offering a great service to our business community, making it easier for them — less red tape — to work in the territory.

Mr. Hassard: Another ongoing issue that we have heard about from the business community is the decision that this government made to cease the practice of releasing bid prices once bids are open. Currently, bidders wait anywhere from a few days to a few weeks — in some cases, it is even more than a month — to see bid prices. Only successful bidders are notified when the prices are open. That leaves businesses checking back, day to day, to see whether or not they have won a bid. I am curious why the government decided to cease the practice of releasing bid prices when bids are actually opened.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The Government of Yukon posts construction tender bid prices as quickly as possible once a tender is closed. Between April 1, 2019, and September 17, 2020, our government issued 97 requests for bid tenders for construction. Of those, 48 percent were posted in one or two days. An additional 28 percent were posted in three to four days, meaning that 76 percent were posted within four days. Only 13 projects took five or more days to post — equalling 13 percent — and 11 of those were cancelled, accounting for 11 percent of the total projects. In these cases, the prices were not posted. When the prices are not posted, Mr. Chair, that allows the companies that actually had put all that time and effort — sometimes tens of thousands of dollars or hundreds of thousands of dollars preparing bids. Once the bid prices were posted, they would lose all that work. Now they are able to retain that work and can bid again, a lot more easily than they did in the past, and that is why we are doing it.

Mr. Hassard: I have a question regarding two brushing contracts on the Robert Campbell Highway. I am wondering if the minister could provide us with any updates on where that work is at in terms of completion, and maybe he could explain to this Legislature the reasoning as to why those two particular tenders put out this fall were direct-award contracts rather than done through the traditional procurement fashion.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: If the member opposite has more information about the companies that were direct-awarded that he knows about, I would be happy to take that information, look into it, and endeavour to get a response for the member opposite. I don't have any information at the moment. We're looking into it.

But I am happy to talk about brushing this afternoon — although I will note that it's not part of the \$30 million in the Supplementary No. 1 that we're doing this afternoon in this second appropriation.

But — in the interest of openness, transparency, and good government — I will answer the question from the member opposite about brushing. I will say that we changed the way that we do brushing in the territory, Mr. Chair, for the better. Our government takes the safety of its travelling public very, very seriously. Unlike before, where it was reactive — where somebody would phone up and say "Was there any brushing done?" and they dispatched a contractor to do whatever it is — we're doing the entire 5,000 kilometres of the Yukon highway system over the next six years — I think we're down to five years now — and doing brushing and safety improvements across the entire gamut of our highway system.

Mr. Gorczyca here has actually worked very hard on this project. I can say that it has been a tremendous amount of work that the department has done on this in a very short period of time to upgrade and actually make sure that our highways have a standard now that they didn't have before. We are working on making sure that the highways are safe. You can see the fruits of our labours all over the territory. You can see that the highways are well-brushed; they're safer. You can see cars and animals much easier than you could in the past. I'm happy to say that, over the coming years, we will see the entire 5,000 kilometres of the Yukon highway system brushed to a standard

and then maintained over time, which will actually bring down the operation and maintenance costs of the work.

We're doing this with a mixture of — we haven't put any of the Yukon's smaller contractors out, Mr. Chair. We have actually kept the budget for those small contractors and we have the larger contracts let to make sure that bigger swaths of highway are maintained.

We're doing more, Mr. Chair, in the interest of having a much safer roadway system that's proactive rather than reactive, and at the end of our work, we will have a system that is easier to maintain and we expect that the costs of maintaining our highways will go down quite substantially after the that.

Mr. Hassard: I too appreciate the work that Mr. Gorczyca has done in regard to brush and weed control in Yukon. We certainly look forward to seeing all of those ditches cleaned up. That's great.

The two contracts that I was referring to in my previous question were direct-award contracts to First Kaska on the Campbell Highway in the Tuchtua area.

Since we are on brushing, I have another question for the minister. I have travelled the Yukon — put quite a few miles on my truck this summer travelling around — and it's quite interesting to see the brushing contracts from job to job and area to area. It appears that some contractors are — not forced, but the government ensures that they do all of the work, yet other sections are not being done nearly as well. I am curious as to how the government's standards work in deciding when one contractor has done sufficient work to complete their contract while, with other contractors, it appears that the work is not very sufficient at all.

We talked about this in the Legislature before. I used the example of what was done out by Marsh Lake and then north of Whitehorse, up through north of the Lake Laberge area. The minister, at the time, assured me that the contractor was doing it in a two-phased approach — phase 1, where they came through and cut the brush; and the second phase was where they came through and cleaned it up. I guess he didn't give the contractor the memo about phase 2, because it never did get cleaned up. My understanding is that the contractor was paid in full for the contract.

The question is: What guidelines are Highways and Public Works following with regard to ensuring that the brushing is done to actually meet the specifications in the tender?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the extra information that the member opposite provided, which just basically confirmed our suspicions. The two brush-clearing contracts he was mentioning — with the Tuchtua, there were actually three. There are two going to the Liard First Nation under the Gateway project agreement; the other was to the Ross River Dena Council. That again was part of the project agreement we have under the Gateway project. That is where that work is coming from.

As for the member opposite — I haven't heard a lot of complaints about the brushing work this year, so if the member opposite certainly sees work that doesn't meet his high standards, I encourage him to please write me a note and I will certainly look into it. I know the specifications of the brushing

program have been adjusted to address safety concerns raised about the stem height left after the brushing is completed. We actually have that worked into our contracts now, so there shouldn't be any problems going forward. If he sees something, please let me know and we will address it.

Also — to tie the two questions together with Bids and Tenders — there will be an evaluation process. So, if contractors are not meeting the terms of their contracts, that will actually get logged in this new system we have. So, in the future, it will encourage good behaviour and it will encourage contractors who are not really doing what they're supposed to be doing to pull up their socks a bit.

Mr. Hassard: Since the minister has spoken of the Yukon Resource Gateway funding, I'm wondering if we could get an update on the money that was announced last year at PDAC, I believe it was, in regard to the work that would be done in between Faro and Ross River with Gateway funding.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm happy to talk about the Gateway project. This has been a very rewarding contract, though it has been slow-going. The project that we inherited on Gateway was so convoluted. For new roads across the territory, it had very little flexibility.

We have worked — my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, and I — and others as well — have worked very, very hard to develop some flexibility and to actually make this project much more responsive to the needs of the territory, its businesses, its resource companies, the First Nations, and the communities. The results are starting to bear fruit.

The Government of Yukon has signed four project agreements with affected First Nations on the Yukon Resource Gateway project. This represents a breakthrough for all the time and effort we have put into improving First Nation relations through our work with all First Nations in the territory.

The approved project agreements have an estimated total capital construction cost of \$164.7 million. They include the first phase of the Nahanni Range Road component with Liard First Nation with an estimated construction value of \$17 million. We have the North Canol Road and the Robert Campbell Highway with the Ross River Dena Council, with an estimated construction value of \$71 million. We have the Carmacks bypass with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, with an estimated construction value of \$26.7 million. Work is proceeding with that this year. Most recently, the Robert Campbell Highway, kilometre 114 to kilometre 171, with the Liard First Nation, with an estimated construction value of \$50 million — amazing. This is a section between Ross River and Watson Lake.

The Government of Yukon has worked hard in the last year to increase the flexibility of the Gateway funding program, as I have said, with the Government of Canada to include additional roads as well as the ability to approach projects in phases. This way, we have more options to focus the available money on projects that are supported by First Nations and communities.

It has been a very, very rewarding experience to be changing the scope of this project and the way that it works, but ultimately, Mr. Chair, it is going to see real value in our

communities, from Ross River to Dawson City and points in between.

Mr. Hassard: I am just wondering — the convoluted process that the minister spoke of — was that not approved by Prime Minister Trudeau?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Chair, I could talk about this all afternoon. The Gateway project that we inherited was tied to the Casino project and all sorts of other projects. They are very important, but they are still in their infancy. What we have done is that we have managed to get the flexibility from Ottawa — working with our federal partners, including the Prime Minister's Office and others — to make sure that this money is actually working for Yukoners, Yukon communities, and Yukon resource companies. What we have managed to achieve are project agreements with Liard First Nation and Ross River Dena Council. Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and others are in the process right now, and those agreements — that hard work, those hard negotiations — are bringing tangible benefits to communities from Ross River to Watson Lake to Carmacks to points in between. We are going to make sure that these agreements serve the best interests of those First Nations, of those communities, the Yukon government, and the resource companies that depend on them.

Mr. Hassard: Prime Minister Trudeau signed off on this project in 2017. Then, at some time in 2019, the Liberals changed it. I guess I am curious as to why it was good in 2017 but not so good in 2019.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This year, we started laying BST from Ross River to the Robert Campbell Highway to serve the constituents of Ross River — constituents of my good friend across the way there.

Next year, work is going to begin on improving the road between Ross River and Faro. This is a job that has been neglected for many, many, many years. Mr. Chair, this government, working with the Ross River Dena Council, the Liard First Nation, and Carmacks, has actually managed to get deals in place that will improve the roads for the citizens of Carmacks, Ross River, and Watson Lake. We will bring real, tangible benefits to the members of Carmacks, Ross River, and Watson Lake and to the First Nations in those regions. The roads will be improved, the jobs and work will flow to those communities, and we will have tangible benefits from the work that we are doing on these roads throughout the territory. The resource companies will actually have better access to their claims and their resource sites.

Mr. Hassard: The minister said that BST has been laid from Ross River to the Campbell Highway. Can he inform the House how many kilometres of BST have been laid — currently?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will take this time to correct the record. As of this moment, no BST has been laid on that road. That was my error. I beg the indulgence of the House for that. We have, actually, prepared the road. It's ready to have the BST laid. It's about 10 kilometres. That work will happen next year, probably in the spring.

While the road is ready for the BST to be laid, it has not yet been laid. That was my error.

As of now, all of the work has been done to prepare the road for that final phase. We hope to get to it early next year.

Mr. Hassard: Just for the minister's information, the road is actually not ready for BST. They haven't even put any crush on it yet. Just so he can update his briefing note, they have probably two months of work there before the BST will start.

But, anyway, in regard to the Gateway funding, I'm curious which companies were consulted before the announcements of reprofiling the Gateway money. Also, if the minister could let us know how much money is being put in from the private sector as well, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm going to leave questions about the negotiations and the consultation with the companies for my colleague in Energy, Mines and Resources who actually handled those negotiations.

For the current projects, Mr. Chair, there is very little public money in a lot of these projects right now. They're a deal between the federal government, Ottawa, and us. There will be a lot of public money going into those projects at this stage.

Mr. Hassard: It seemed like it was a bit of touchy question when the Deputy Premier got involved there. I'm just curious as to what was going on there.

I guess another question in regard to the Gateway money — the minister talked about the \$50-million worth of work on the Campbell Highway. I was just curious if the minister — why would the government have made that announcement just days before a First Nation election? I'm curious if anyone in the minister's department flagged concerns beforehand that this could be perceived as interfering in an election.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite knows that there's — I'm not going to comment on that. I'll await the next question he has.

Mr. Hassard: So, I'm just curious as to if the minister is unwilling or unable to provide an answer as to whether someone in the department flagged concerns about this being perceived as interfering in an ongoing election.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'll await questions on the budget matters before us. As I said, we have \$20 million in capital money to discuss; we have \$10 million in O&M money to discuss. I haven't received a single question on either one of those issues this afternoon. We've spent dozens of hours discussing the whims and whimsies of the opposition. We're happy to do it, but there is a lot of budget material ahead of us and discussing advice between the civil service and ministers is not what I'm going to do on the floor of the Legislature, thank you very much. I would never do it, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Hassard: This is taxpayers' money that we're talking about, so to me, that would be a budget item. But, I guess, let the record show that the minister is refusing to say why they would make an announcement during an election. It's interesting — because it's a move that later led to the government being accused of election interference. It's certainly interesting that the minister doesn't feel that this is a question worth answering.

Maybe this question will be a little less uncomfortable for the minister. Maybe he'll be happy to talk about something different.

The question is regarding the tenders for the \$1-million exemptions. I'm just curious as to where we're at with the 10 \$1-million exemptions that are allowed under the free trade agreement.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: First, I am going to address the remarks of the member opposite about letting the record show — let the record show that I am not going to discuss advice to ministers on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. That is really what the record will show. I want that point made.

I am happy to talk about the \$1-million exemptions that our government is using to help boost regional economic development across the territory. This is a tool that has been available to the territory for a very long period of time, but we are actually the ones that implemented it. For the 2020-21 fiscal year, we have awarded five projects for our regional economic trade exemptions worth \$2.8 million. Five additional projects will be tendered by the end of the fiscal year.

As I mentioned, Yukon was the first jurisdiction in Canada to use the 10 \$1-million exemptions under our trade policy. We started that in 2017-18 and we were the only jurisdiction to use them all each year. The exceptions came into effect in September 2017. Since January 2018, qualified Yukon businesses have been able to compete for and secure 35 such government contracts worth \$17.6 million to date.

When COVID-19 hit, Mr. Chair, we acted quickly to identify projects that could be tendered and awarded earlier in the year to support Yukon's business community. As the Chair will know, we have one of the best economies in the country at the moment. It has certainly been devastated by COVID, but we are certainly weathering it better than a lot of jurisdictions in the country. That is largely because of the discipline that the citizens of the territory have shown in the face of this global pandemic, as well as the quick and strategic economic stimulus that we have been able to inject into the economy.

This year's projects include tenders for vegetation control, building maintenance, and engineering consulting. Three of the projects take place along highways in northern and southern Yukon. One project is in Carcross and the rest are located in Whitehorse.

The Procurement Business Committee asked for a detailed impact analysis of selected projects, so we added reporting requirements to the tender documents. Starting in the 2019-20 fiscal year, suppliers are now required to report, at the close of a project, the total dollar value expended on Yukon labour and materials to quantify the direct impact that these projects have on Yukoners. This is a great demonstration of the change in culture we have in Highways and Public Works. We actually implement projects quickly and then assess how we're doing and look at how we can improve on them in real time year over year.

To date, the projects that have submitted their reporting have used 100 percent Yukon labour and Yukon materials, where possible. Over the past three years, manufacturing, construction, and consulting projects have been selected for communities across Yukon, including Carcross, Watson Lake, Ross River, Carmacks, Teslin, and Whitehorse.

Mr. Hassard: I apologize if the minister answered this question, but there was a lot of stuff there and it got a little bit scattered, maybe — but I understand that he said that there have been five tenders let, totalling \$2.8 million, and there are five to go — if I'm not mistaken.

So, I am wondering if we could get some information on what those individual tenders were, how much each one was, and what he anticipates the next five exemptions to be used for before the end of the year.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will endeavour to get that material to the member opposite.

Mr. Hassard: I am wondering if the minister could let us know when the Procurement Advisory Panel last met.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It was within the last month.

Mr. Hassard: Are the minutes from those meetings made public? If they are, where could we find a copy of those, Mr. Chair?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The meeting happened on October 22. The minutes are not public, but they are shared with the members.

Mr. Hassard: Why would those minutes not be made public, Mr. Chair?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: In the interest of time, Mr. Chair, I will endeavour to get the member opposite an answer to why those minutes are not made public.

Mr. Hassard: In the minister's opening remarks, he talked about the Dempster Highway project — or the Dempster fibre project, sorry. I'm curious as to if he could provide a little insight as to which permits caused all of the delays or what the permitting issues might be and why there are continued delays. We know that the minister stood here in the House on November 17 — I think it was — not that long ago — and he said that he was happy to talk about the successful project.

I'm curious: What is the "successful" part of this project so far? Because he said that they're starting to do some brushing. I guess, for a project that's so far behind, I'm curious as to why the minister would call it a "successful" project?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am very, very happy to talk about the redundant fibre line on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon because there is so much to talk about. The history of this project is long and broad. I know the members opposite went to the High Country Inn — I believe it was the High Country Inn — and made an announcement that it was all done and then — or, you know, they went out in public. In any case, we can discuss — over casual conversation sometime in the future — where that discussion was made, but they came out and said the project was done and ready to go. It was \$35 million of Yukoners' money. We expected that.

Redundant fibre didn't exist — there was nothing there — \$35 million was the cost, but we know that it was way more expensive than that — way more expensive. But you know what? The deal that we negotiated for the project — which is now approaching the neighbourhood of \$80 million — \$79 million I think is the number. We haven't varied from that \$79 million. We are getting a \$79-million project — a Canadian project — and the Yukon government is putting in about \$4 million of that. That is a much better deal than the

vapourware that we had heard about from the members opposite, when they announced their fibre line so many years ago.

Since that time, we have done the hard negotiations to make sure that the project is a success. We have spoken to First Nations, communities, and companies. We have gone through the Mackenzie Valley Land Water Board. That is work that hasn't been done before — certainly not often — and we managed to get through that regulatory process. We went to YESAB. The member opposite was asking which ones asked for more time. YESAB actually asked for a little bit more time because of COVID, and we granted it to them. We now have a decision document that we're waiting to finalize and that work is coming quickly.

We have done an awful lot of work on this file. Now, the fast-and-loose crowd on the other side — they just made announcements. They just did stuff. They announced things as happening — we came in — “Oh, there is nothing there.” The Salvation Army building and the Whistle Bend extended care facility — all these things that just — nobody hired for Whistle Bend. This fibre project was really just in somebody's imagination, but no actual tangible work had been done, but it was announced. We had \$300-million capital budgets announced, and then they would deliver on \$140 million and declare success, because they oversell and underdeliver.

We could talk about this project ad infinitum. I will say, Mr. Chair, that this project's budget is \$79 million and we have not changed that number. The previous conservative Yukon Party government suggested that it would cost much less, and that was a gross underestimate that did not reflect the true cost. When we are talking about delays, Mr. Chair, we should talk about delays that the current Yukon Party leader spent considering which route he would take on this project. He never made up his mind. He is dangerously indecisive, that fellow — and in fact, it wasn't until the interim leader took over his files that any decision was actually made, so I congratulate the member — the current Leader of the Official Opposition — for actually taking the file from the current leader of the party and actually doing something.

Again, this work has involved important negotiations with the First Nation in whose traditional territory this project crosses. I suppose that we could have followed the lead of the Yukon Party and simply ignored these First Nations and plowed ahead with a project, but that's simply not how this government operates.

We value respectful working relationships with First Nations and communities. We stand committed to working with them on all projects — this one included. We were not willing to sacrifice that integrity to move this forward quickly, fast-and-loose-like. Now, the members opposite have a difference of opinion on that. I'm happy to discuss it further this afternoon.

Mr. Hassard: That was quite a performance by the minister. I'm not sure if maybe he needs to take a break now after all that, but I would like to thank him for confirming that, under his mismanagement, this project has now increased by 130 percent.

It's also interesting to hear him complain that the previous government did stuff, because the number one complaint that we hear about his government — this current Liberal government — is that they not only don't do stuff, they actually can't get anything done. I guess, Mr. Chair, it's a case of — we'll have to agree to disagree.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Mr. Hassard: Yes, it's a dispute among members, Mr. Chair.

I'm curious if the minister could inform the Legislature on what the cost is for YDC and what we call the “YuKconstruct building”, Mr. Chair?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I think that question is probably best suited to my colleague, the Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources, Economic Development, and the Yukon Development Corporation.

Mr. Hassard: It's my understanding that Highways and Public Works was the department that would be in charge of leases and rental agreements for the Government of Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'll endeavour to get the member opposite an answer on the cost of the lease to YDC.

Mr. Hassard: When the minister is doing that, could he also — or maybe he already knows the answer to this question: Was that a publicly tendered lease?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'll endeavour to get that information to the member opposite, as I said.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly look forward to that information.

I have a couple of questions around the Mayo airport. I'm just wondering if we could get a bit of an update from the minister on the airport in the Chair's hometown and if we could maybe find out what caused the \$300,000 increase to O&M.

I know that, at one point, the minister talked about \$5 million being spent on the Mayo airport. The five-year capital concept talks about \$1 million to \$2 million this year — so if we could just get an update on how much money was spent and what was done on the Mayo airport this year, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, I want to stress that this is something that we got done. We got Mayo certified as the territory's fifth airport. That's something that we've accomplished. I'm very happy that we were able to do it. It's certainly better serving that community — your community, Mr. Chair — and the resource industry in that area and tourism — the whole bunch.

Those are tangible benefits that have flown to the people of Mayo and the people of the territory.

Now, as part of that certification, our government has made a number of important investments at the Mayo airport, including runway reconstruction and improved maintenance equipment. As a result, on November 1, the Mayo aerodrome became the Mayo airport — as I said, the fifth in the territory. Following certification by Transport Canada, Air North provided scheduled service to and from Mayo until the pandemic reduced the demand for air travel in the spring of 2020. As of the fall of 2020, Air North provides charter service to and from Mayo, as I am sure you are aware.

We will continue with infrastructure upgrades at the Mayo airport, such as runway lighting that began in early October. The upgrade will eventually allow night use of the Mayo airport for all users. COVID-19 has delayed the design and tendering process. As a result, the work is now scheduled for completion in the summer of 2021. I understand that some of the underground electrical work has been finished. We are just waiting for the lights to finalize that job.

The lighting upgrade project is a \$2.7-million investment in the Mayo airport, which will allow for scheduled and non-scheduled aircraft operations at night. We also invested \$1.8 million in the airport to rehabilitate the runway and to purchase some maintenance equipment. The \$300,000 that we are asking for in this budget item today is really for operation and maintenance personnel to actually maintain this newly certified airport in Mayo.

Mr. Hassard: The minister talked about how busy the Mayo airport is and how it is now the Mayo airport and not an aerodrome anymore. With all of the increased activity, I am curious why, in the five-year capital concept, the building expansion for the Mayo airport has been pushed off to 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This government entered into a short-term lease with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to actually provide space at the Mayo aerodrome that allowed us to do the required work to put a proper new facility in place. I'm very glad to see the members opposite using the five-year capital plan as it was intended.

Transparency, Mr. Chair — we have a document now that the opposition can look at and that all contractors can use. They're using it. I'm glad to see that. Whenever anybody uses one of these refinements — these improvements that we've made in the service and transparency of this government to help democracy and to help procurement and they're using — it just warms my heart, Mr. Chair, that they're actually using the tools that we put before the public to be open and transparent — and to actually use it. I had hoped that contractors would use it to plan their construction projects in the future, but I'm happy to see the opposition using that tool — the five-year capital plan — in the way it was intended.

I look forward to future questions of the Leader of the Official Opposition on this matter.

Chair: Would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Mr. Hassard: Just before the break, the minister had a fairly long-winded spiel about the five-year capital concept, how great it was, how it provided so much more certainty for contractors, and how everyone could use it, get accurate

information, and be kept up to date. Let's ask a question in regard to that.

Back in 2018 — we look at the five-year capital concept, and there is Christ the King Elementary School. So maybe we could get an update about where the government is with Christ the King Elementary School.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The five-year capital plan is right here in front of me. I know that the members opposite find planning difficult, and I won't criticize them for that; that is who they are. The fast-and-loose crew — they didn't like planning. They didn't like to do it; they didn't foster it; they didn't promote it; they didn't reward it. But we do things differently, and they don't understand that, I don't understand them, and I am not going to criticize them for it. We will just accept it for what it is.

We have a five-year capital plan, and that five-year capital plan is sitting here — for members opposite, it is page 6 of the five-year capital plan. It goes into schools, and I encourage the members opposite, when we get to Education, to ask their questions. I'm sure that they can do it.

But I can look at the five-year capital plan here for schools, and we can see that the Whistle Bend school is there. Kluane school is there this year — \$500,000 to \$1 million planning for that. The French first language secondary school is there — \$10- to \$15 million. The French first language school is finished. We have students in it. Talking to the community, the people who built the school said that it was one of the best projects that they have ever worked on. The French community is very happy with the school that we have gotten built. It is an absolutely beautiful facility and will certainly set a benchmark for schools into the future.

We have stuff here on Whitehorse school replacements. It's in the budget; we have that. Elementary school expansions are in there as well. Modular classrooms and portables are in there for \$2 million to \$3 million this year. We have money in there for Yukon University transitions, school facilities, and parking lots.

So, Mr. Chair, we have a five-year capital plan that you can use. The members opposite are using it. I encourage them to continue to do so. I know that contractors are using it. I know that the public is using it. It's a great tool. It's something that we didn't have before. It's another part of how this government is open and transparent in making plans.

Now, those plans — as the members opposite know, things happen. Global pandemics happen, washouts happen, and things happen that we have to adjust to. The plan is flexible enough to allow the changes as the society and conditions change in the territory. That's what planning is all about. It's not only putting it down, but actually being flexible enough to know when it has to be altered because of circumstances sometimes beyond our control. That's what we're doing.

We have a plan. We have a plan that is relatively detailed. It lays out our initiatives over the next five years. As I said earlier in my answer just before the break, I'm very happy to see the members opposite using this piece of transparency so effectively.

Mr. Hassard: I am trying to use it effectively — but effectively making a point to the minister that it's a great concept, but if you don't have proper information in it, it's not worth the paper it's written on.

He was working pretty feverishly over there trying to find what I was talking about — the Christ the King Elementary School. I said, at the beginning of my question, that it was in the 2018 five-year capital concept, and then it has gone in the 2019. This year, the Christ the King Elementary School doesn't exist anymore. That's just an example of why — yes, it's a great concept, but you can't brag about something and tell everyone how great it is if the information in it isn't worth the paper that it's written on.

The Holy Family School is also in that 2018 five-year capital concept, but it doesn't exist anymore after that year. Maybe the minister could provide us with an update on what's happening with Holy Family elementary school?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Chair, this discussion this afternoon has moved beyond the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, in which we have \$10 million in O&M changes and \$20 million in capital changes that we touched on briefly. I was happy to touch on the \$20 million in capital. I was glad to see the members opposite actually asking a question to do with the supplementary estimates before us this afternoon. Of course, I am happy to handle questions on an array of topics, as we have seen this afternoon from the members opposite. They are an inquisitive bunch and I am happy to answer their questions.

We have dealt now this afternoon with an existential question. I think that we are getting well beyond the bounds of the debate, but I will entertain the member opposite. He said that Christ the King Elementary School does not exist. Well, I know the teachers and students in that school that say that they are in school today. It does exist, Mr. Chair. Plans change. We know this.

There is a five-year capital plan here that we have tabled again and updated this year. If the member opposite has questions for the Education department, I know that — should we get through this discussion this afternoon — we will have other departments going forward. He can certainly ask Education some of the questions about what they are doing with their facilities or what their plans are for the future of the schools and education into the future. I know that my colleague, the Minister of Education, would be happy to have that discussion on the floor of the Legislative Assembly during Committee of the Whole.

I will leave it there, Mr. Chair. I know that, while the plan does not address Holy Family or Christ the King — there has obviously been a shift there — I will ask the member opposite to bring these questions up with the Minister of Education. I do encourage him, though, to continue using the five-year capital plan, as thousands of Yukoners are doing today.

Mr. Hassard: The minister is the one who started telling us about this plan — how great it was, how everyone is using it, and how he's so happy to use it. Yet, when you ask him a question regarding it, he seems to get a little bit flustered and he doesn't want to talk about these things anymore. He talks about how he knows teachers at Christ the King Elementary.

What we are talking about is the fact that — then, I guess the most interesting thing he said near the end was “Well, plans change.”

So, you know, it really makes you wonder how the minister thinks, when he can brag about these issues, bring them forward, and then the next year they have disappeared out of the plan. It is rather concerning. It is concerning for Yukoners. It is concerning for contractors. They look at something like this and say, “Holy, look — in a couple of more years, they are building a school here. We can plan on that.” Maybe somebody wants to move into that neighbourhood and they say, “Great, there is going to be a new elementary school there. I think I will spend that extra \$50,000 and buy that house so that I can be near that school.” So, for the minister just to stand here in the Legislature and talk about how great it is — and to make jokes almost about knowing teachers and he is so happy to see that we are finally looking at this — Mr. Chair, I am trying to prove a point — trying to show a point to the minister that this is an important document. As I said, it's a great concept, but you need to put accurate information in it; otherwise, there is no point in having it.

In the 2018 capital concept, the Macaulay Lodge demolition is slated for this year. So, are there any updates on whether the Macaulay Lodge will be demolished?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will say, Mr. Chair, that the member opposite — I thank him for acknowledging that the five-year capital plan is a good document. I did hear that and I thank him for his words this afternoon on the floor of the Legislature.

He did bring up Macaulay Lodge, and I think that we have fielded this question in Question Period, but I am happy to answer it again this afternoon, although it is straying outside of the supplementary budget, which deals with \$11 million, roughly, of O&M, of which, roughly \$10 million is going to the aviation industry — and then a capital reduction of about \$20 million because we have now pushed the majority of the fibre line to next year.

So, that is really what is before the House this afternoon, but I am happy to talk about Macaulay Lodge and repeat the answer that I gave in Question Period not long ago, which is that Highways and Public Works completed a building condition assessment — a feasible study report on Macaulay Lodge — in May 2020. The report considered renovating and repurposing Macaulay Lodge as housing or office/mixed-use space. The report indicates that repurposing Macaulay Lodge to housing or office/mixed-use space is not financially viable.

Highways and Public Works is leading the future use planning for the building site based on the results of this report in collaboration with other government departments. That is really what is happening. After the assessment was done in May, we realized that repurposing Macaulay Lodge for use in other ways is currently not financially viable, and we are working with other government departments to determine the future of that building.

Mr. Hassard: Just to set the record clear, Mr. Chair, I said that the five-year capital concept was a great concept. I didn't say that it was a great plan.

It is interesting — the minister has said that they decided in May that the Macaulay Lodge wouldn't be suitable for various different projects.

I'm curious why he went through the process of determining that when, in the 2018 capital concept, it said that Macaulay Lodge was going to be demolished. If they made the decision back before the 2018 budget came out, why did they go back to looking at other options?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The question from the member opposite was why did we initially — he goes back to 2018. He really does love the 2018 capital plan. There was a 2018 capital plan, a 2019 capital plan, and now we're on the 2020-21 capital plan. But he likes the 2018 plan. That's fine. He'll refer to it. That's fine. I encourage him now to dust off the 2020-21 plan, and he'll soon have another one when we release our 2021-22 plan, and he can have a look at that one. I'm just glad he likes it. Whatever he calls it, he likes it. His mistake is in calling it a concept; it is a plan. We'll agree that he sees some utility in it, and I think that's great.

As far as Macaulay Lodge goes, back in 2018, a number of years ago, the idea was to demolish it. We had a lot of interest from government departments saying, "We like to recycle and we'll take a look at it." So, we actually did a more thorough analysis of the building and determined again that — in following all of those ideas to try to salvage this building and after doing a real analysis and doing the hard analysis of the building — we decided that it was not fit for renovation.

Mr. Hassard: So, before the break, we were talking about the Mayo airport as well and the minister talked about a lease that the government had entered into with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. Would the minister be able to provide the Legislature with the dollar amount and how long that lease is with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'll endeavour to get an answer for the member opposite.

Mr. Hassard: I look forward to receiving that information.

A question regarding a highway project from this year. The two highway reconstruction projects on the north Klondike Highway up in the Gravel Lake area — I understand that those projects were not completed this year. I'm just wondering if we could get an update from the minister on when the anticipated completion date is on those two particular projects.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite is asking about the north Klondike Highway. That's the \$157-million job that is going to create 800 jobs over the construction period on the north Klondike Highway and improve stretches of road that are boggy and just aren't in very good condition.

We are very happy that this project began this year during COVID and roughly 13.5 kilometres of roadwork was done this summer. It has been largely completed; it just has not been chipped. That work will be done next year.

Mr. Hassard: Is the minister saying that everything is completed on those two particular projects except for chipsealing?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am getting from the department — the officials have been on this file for many months now — that

the crush has to be regraded in preparation for the BST. There are a little bit of embankment slopes and ditching that need to be finished. Beyond that, we are pretty much finished.

Mr. Hassard: Does the minister have any timelines on when that work will be completed?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As the member opposite knows, this is one portion of 13 kilometres of a job that will be almost — well, there is an awful lot more work to be done. I can get the specific number. There are almost 99 kilometres of road to be done. We have done about 13. That work is scheduled to be done next year.

I will update the House at a time more appropriate when we have the procurement done and everything else. As the member opposite knows, we are in the middle of a global pandemic. I don't want to make any firm commitments a year out, but we are scheduled to get the job done next year.

I have no doubt that the contractor and the Department of Highways and Public Works will make sure that the work gets done as quickly as possible because I know that it is an important project for travellers along the north Klondike Highway. Our goal is to get that job done as soon as possible, once the snow is cleared. Now, we don't know what is happening with rain — or all these different things. When that work can be done, we will get it done.

Mr. Hassard: I am not sure if the minister understood the question. He started talking about 99 kilometres of something, so I guess I will maybe just clarify the question and give him another opportunity. I was talking about those two particular projects — Gravel Lake and Stoneboat swamp, the ones we had been talking about, the ones that he said were nearing completion. I was curious as to what the expected completion date was or the timeline on the completion of those two particular projects.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, I will vigorously deny the assertions of the member opposite. I am not confused or anything else. I was actually making sure that the member opposite knew that this was one portion of a very long and very large project — one of the largest single capital projects in the Yukon's history — \$157 million going into this road that has been long ignored. We managed to secure the financial resources from Ottawa to do this work. We are investing a little bit into it ourselves, and we are actually going to make the road from here to Dawson — almost 100 kilometres, 98.9 kilometres, of this road will be improved for the benefit of travellers to the Klondike. That is a great thing. I just wanted to make sure that the member opposite wasn't going to misunderstand that the whole project would be done next year. No, we have 13 kilometres that we started this year, and that work will be done next year, early in the season. The member opposite can't predict the weather, and neither can I. We will get it done as soon as humanly possible.

Mr. Hassard: It is interesting that the minister seems to think that I find he is confused. I don't know why he would get that idea.

Another question in regard to those two particular projects — because they were funded through the Gateway funding or from the federal government, will the non-completion of those

two projects have any effect on funding flowing from the federal government for this construction season coming?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have to be laser precise for the member opposite on this. This has nothing to do with Gateway. I know that the member opposite is a little bit confused about this. It is not Gateway at all. It is the north Klondike Highway funding. Gateway is an entirely different animal. This is a totally different project. It is a project unto itself. It is a \$157-million project that we negotiated with Ottawa. It is to improve the north Klondike Highway. The work this year, under the very, very challenging weather conditions this year — the contractor, I know, worked so very hard to make sure that the job was done. It wasn't an easy job. It wasn't an easy area to work in. I know that the project worked very, very hard — I know that the officials here with the Department of Highways and Public Works worked very hard on that project this last season.

As I said in my previous answer this afternoon, the job is almost 100-percent complete. There is a little slope work, a little bit of ditch work to do and some regrading to do with the crush, and then we're going to lay down the BST. There is no problem with Ottawa and the funding that has been provided us, and we're very confident and very happy to say that this job — on the initial 13 kilometres of this much larger project — will be done as soon as humanly possible next year.

Mr. Hassard: I will begin by apologizing. I didn't mean to say "Gateway". That was certainly my error.

I think it's interesting that we hear from residents in the Dawson area as well — and they certainly are looking for an answer as to when the government expects to complete this project. I would certainly hope that the minister would have had somewhat of an idea on when the contractor had anticipated to get this project done, whether there's a month's work or two months' work. I would hope that the minister would have had an idea on that.

Mr. Chair, I just want to confirm that the minister, at the end of his last response, said that funding for projects for this coming construction year will not be affected by the non-completion of the two projects that we're talking about.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: My departmental officials have assured me that they are confident that there will be no impact.

Mr. Hassard: I am happy to hear that.

This summer, Highways and Public Works had a drilling program. They had a small drill working along the Alaska Highway — I know that it worked for a while in the Teslin area. I am just wondering if the minister could provide us with some information as to what that drill was doing. What was the government looking for with that drilling program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are a bit perplexed by the question. If the member opposite has any other information, I would be happy to look into it further and endeavour to get him an answer.

Mr. Hassard: I will follow up with a letter for the minister on that.

With regard to government-owned equipment — in the past year or two, the government has gone into the business of renting out the equipment that is used at grader stations

throughout the Yukon to private individuals. I am wondering if the minister could give us a bit of information as to why the government chose to take this route of starting to compete with private rental companies here in the Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: In *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, we have roughly \$10 million — a little bit more than \$10 million in O&M spending to discuss this afternoon. We have \$20 million — a little bit more than \$20 million in capital spending to discuss this afternoon. I haven't received a lot of questions on the actual meat of the supplementary estimates, but in the interest of transparency and good government, I am happy to answer the questions of the member opposite on the floor this afternoon.

This is one that I have run to ground with my colleagues here from the department and they don't believe that we are renting out our equipment to anybody. We are not making any money off of our equipment. If the member opposite has other information that he can provide to us, we will certainly investigate it, but that is not our understanding.

Mr. Hassard: It certainly has become a practice of the Yukon government to do just that. Maybe if the minister could provide us with some direction as to what information we should pass on to our constituents when they have concerns about this. Maybe he could tell us who the person is they should be contacting to find out why this would be happening, if the minister is unaware of it.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: If the member opposite can provide us with dates, times, the type of equipment, who rented it — any of that information — I would be happy to look into it for the member opposite. It was pretty simple information. He obviously has it. I don't have it. My officials don't have it. If he can provide that information to me, I would be happy to look into it.

Mr. Hassard: I think it was a pretty reasonable, straightforward, and simple request. The minister said that it wasn't happening to his understanding. I'm explaining that it is, and my question was very simple: When constituents come across this issue, who should they contact? Should they have to contact me and then I can write a letter to the minister and then they can go through that process? Is there something that would be a little more streamlined, Mr. Chair?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm trying to solve a discrepancy in information. I've asked for the member opposite to provide some details so we can run to ground to find out where he's getting his information from. If he has constituents who want to contact the department, please have them call my deputy. That's usually the best way to get questions answered. We'd be happy to answer the questions through the Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works, if they have questions pertaining to the department.

They can, of course, reach out to me, but I would have to go through the deputy in most cases, in any case. The most direct route is to go through the deputy minister, and if they don't get any satisfaction through that route, they can certainly come to me or to the opposition. But the first point of contact for the Department of Highways and Public Works should be

the staff of the department. In most cases, probably the deputy is the best way to route your queries.

Mr. Hassard: I am happy to hear that it is the deputy's responsibility to deal with those. I will most certainly be passing that information on.

I have a question regarding the overhead signs that are going up at the Carcross Cut-off as well as north of town toward the Mayo Road turnoff. We know that it was roughly \$2.5 million to purchase and install those signs. My question is: When are those two sections of highway slated for a rebuild and widening, such as the ones that have been done over the last couple of years — the section through the Carcross Cut-off to in front of the airport and out to the Mayo turnoff? When are those two sections in between slated for reconstruction?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can say to the members opposite that any improvements to the Alaska Highway widening project are certainly outside the scope of work in the immediate future. It is not captured in our five-year capital plan, so it is beyond five years.

Mr. Hassard: So, I guess the next question in regard to those signs is: When that road widening happens — not in the next five years — will those signs need to be moved, and are they going to be assembled in such a way that they will be able to be moved?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are going to continue to expand our intelligent transportation system program to serve Yukoners' transportation data collection needs. This system uses a number of technologies — including traffic counters, road temperature sensors, and cameras — to collect information on road conditions and weather in order to improve safety and efficiency for all road users. This program includes the use of digital message boards, which display known hazards to travellers and information about road closures and construction. Eventually, this data will also feed into our 511 platform, which means that Yukoners will have more accurate, reliable road-condition information to plan any trip.

Those signs are being constructed next to the road. The member opposite, I am sure, has seen them on his way into Whitehorse. We are building them there because that is the best place for them. As I have told the member opposite, there are no plans to widen the road in the vicinity of those new highway signs anytime in the immediate future. There is no need to even — I think that the member is getting a little bit ahead of himself. We haven't even got the signs in yet and he is talking about road expansions. There are no plans for road expansions in that area.

The signs are going to be a huge improvement to the information provision for the travelling public, which is really one of the mantras of this government — to provide more information, like five-year capital plans, to be open and transparent, and to provide more information to the people we serve on a daily basis.

Mr. Hassard: Would the minister be able to provide us with some timelines as to when those signs will be operational?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will endeavour to get a specific answer for the member opposite. I can tell the member opposite that the hardware has arrived in the territory. We were waiting

on that, and that has arrived. Now we're waiting for programmers, and we have to schedule the contractor to actually install the equipment. As soon as we get that schedule with the contractor and get somebody to program the signs — which, in the middle of a global pandemic, is proving to be a little more difficult, even from BC — then we will have those signs installed. I will endeavour to get the member opposite a better estimate for when those signs will be up. Soon, I would say — but I will endeavour to get a more specific answer for the member opposite.

Mr. Hassard: Maybe when you find that person to do those signs, you can speak to the Minister of Community Services, and he might be able to provide you with an exemption on how they can come here to work in these times of COVID — and even self-isolate at work.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

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

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I just — actually, I'll let it go, Mr. Chair. Just let it go.

Chair: No point of order.

Mr. Hassard: I'm wondering if the minister would be able to provide us with an update on the portables at the Robert Service School in Dawson City.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Before I begin the answer on the Robert Service School portable issue, I want to be very, very clear for the member opposite because it is absolutely essential that we get the right information to Yukoners.

The member opposite — I'm sure he just made a mistake. I am sure it was just an innocent mistake. There are no exemptions. We have said that. My colleague, the Minister of Community Services, has said that. There are no exemptions to self-isolation. If you come from BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, or any place outside of the country, there is no exemption to the self-isolation requirements. You are required to self-isolate in the territory when you arrive. I want that to be absolutely clear, and I don't want it to fall into some sort of interpretation because of a mistake made by the member opposite. There are no exemptions. I want to be clear about that.

The member opposite asked about the Robert Service School. We have to provide students with safe, comfortable spaces to learn. The safety of our populace — be it with COVID or with schools and mould — is the utmost responsibility of this government. We take it very seriously. When tests identified mould in the modular classrooms at Robert Service School in July 2019, they were closed immediately. Education found space for the displaced students in the main school building in time for the first day of classes. Demolition of the existing modular classrooms is planned for this winter, and new modular classrooms will be ready by December 2021. That is the answer. That is the answer that I gave during Question Period as well, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Hassard: Would the minister also be able to give us an update on the portables at the Porter Creek school, Mr. Chair?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have mould as well — as the member opposite has noted — in the Porter Creek Secondary

School portables. Again, the health and safety of our students and staff is very, very important to us. It's a primary concern.

Highways and Public Works maintains and assesses all Yukon government buildings on a regular basis, which includes logging and following up on any issue identified.

In preparation for the school year this year, we inspected a portable previously used for storage at Porter Creek Secondary School to see if it could accommodate students and found no cause for concern. On August 10, water was discovered in a portable, which necessitated a repair. During the repair, mould was discovered and spore testing took place. Initial mould remediation was completed. Follow-up testing showed that mould levels are still present in the portable. We are looking at the long-term plans for this portable space with the Department of Education. A full renovation or demolition are two of the current options being reviewed. As a precaution, we tested two additional portables on the same site to ensure that there was no mould present. These tests came back clear with no mould identified in either portable.

Mr. Chair, I am more than happy to answer these questions from the member opposite. I will say again that this afternoon we are talking about *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*. In those supplementary estimates, we have a total of about \$30 million roughly — a little bit more than that — for discussion this afternoon, \$10 million in O&M spending — most of which is for the aviation sector — and \$20 million which is a capital reduction in spending for the Department of Highways and Public Works — largely because the redundant fibre line work is starting next year, so that work has been delayed by one year. The majority — the laying of the fibre — has been delayed until next year.

That's what we are talking about this afternoon, Mr. Chair. I haven't received many questions on either of those subjects — certainly none on aviation supports. I have answered a question on the redundant fibre line. I appreciate the question on the matter that is before the House this afternoon.

I will continue to answer questions on all manner of other things — to be transparent and open — and to make sure that this democratic institution functions as it should, as we agreed to come back on August 1.

Mr. Hassard: It is interesting, you know. The minister has talked about the "safety of our students; the safety of our students" — and yet, when we ask a simple question about the safety of our students and when they will be able to get back into that portable, the minister is annoyed and doesn't like talking about this anymore. So, I guess I will ask again: When is the expected timeline for students to be able to get back into that portable at Porter Creek Secondary School?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Just for the record, I am not annoyed at all. I am not annoyed in the slightest. I am happy to talk about the good work that we are doing on behalf of education, whether it is the Porter Creek Secondary School or the Robert Service School. I am happy to talk about all manner of good work that we are doing. I am very comfortable with the work that Highways and Public Works is doing, serving our colleagues in other departments and the people of the territory, and I could talk about that all afternoon.

What I am perplexed about is that the members opposite have strayed far and wide beyond the matter before us this afternoon, which is *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, but I just wanted to make the point that, while we are way off the topic of conversation this afternoon, my department officials and I are more than happy — although it really isn't something that we prepared for — to talk about any manner of things relating to Highways and Public Works this afternoon. So, I am neither annoyed nor upset — happy to answer the member opposite's question.

We agreed, when we broke in March, to come back on October 1. We have met that obligation. I am happy — during the midst of the global pandemic — to have this House functioning as it is and doing the good work that we always planned to do back in March when we agreed unanimously to come back on October 1. So, here we are, discussing the matters before the House. Today it is *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*. We have \$30 million on the ledger, and we are discussing all manner of things from schools to everything else. I am happy to do that.

As far as Porter Creek Secondary School's portables go — the portable in question, Mr. Chair, was used for storage. It never had students in it. It was a storage portable that we were looking at trying to put students into. We had planned on doing it. When we found a problem, we made alternate arrangements for the students and staff because we want them to be safe. They are currently not using that portable, of course, because it's not safe. We're continuing to do studies on the portable to make sure that we've cleaned it up to proper safety standards. If we don't, we'll have to either demolish it and replace it or whatever.

But right now, the students to whom the member opposite was referring are accommodated and are being taught in a healthy, safe, clean, dry environment — and I'm happy about that, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Hassard: Just a little reminder to the minister — it wouldn't be the first time that this government has put students in storage rooms. It's interesting that — maybe we'll just move on from that school.

Let's take a little trip up to Ross River, Mr. Chair. Maybe the minister could give us an update on the Ross River School. There was \$4 million to \$5 million scheduled to be spent on that school this year. I'm curious as to if we could find out how much money was actually spent there and what was done in terms of work.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm happy to discuss the Ross River School this afternoon. Again, Mr. Chair, as with COVID and with school safety, that's where it lands right off the bat; it's always about safety. I want to assure the members opposite that the Ross River School remains safe for occupancy for students and staff.

A multi-disciplinary team, including an architect, a structural engineer, a geo-technical engineer, a surveyor, and a biologist — just in case the member opposite wants to bring bats up again, we'll be happy to talk about that — continues to inspect the school quarterly. The bats are no longer there.

The latest building condition inspection report completed in September 2020 confirmed that the school remains safe for occupancy. As I said, that is the primary goal right now — to make sure that the school remains safe.

Work will continue on the existing school to keep it safe and to help prevent structural movement and bats. We anticipate spending \$1.5 million this year, including designing the ThermoSafe cooling system, designing the mechanical room project, continuing with more tie-down installation in the roof and further bracing, et cetera.

\$1.5 million is being spent on that school this year, but that work is to make sure it's safe and that it remains safe for staff and students who occupy it.

Mr. Kent: I just wanted to circle back to the Gateway project for a second. I know my colleague asked the minister and I'm not sure if he provided an answer or not. How much private sector funding is going into this revised Gateway project that has been submitted to the federal government? I know the previous one had a significant private sector component. Is there a private sector component for this new one and how much is it?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: For the member opposite, I will say that Gateway is not a project in and of itself. Gateway is a program through which many different projects are being funded. We currently have the first phase on the Nahanni Range Road, which is \$17 million. The North Canol Road and the Robert Campbell Highway project is a \$71-million project. The Carmacks bypass with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation has an estimated construction value of \$26.7 million. The Robert Campbell Highway with the Liard First Nation has an estimated construction value of \$50 million. Those four projects are separate projects at the moment. They have agreements with the affected First Nations under the Yukon Resource Gateway program. At the moment, there is no private capital in any of those projects. They are all on public roads. The industry contribution is \$108 million. That number has not changed. Industry will still be expected to contribute \$108 million. That hasn't changed.

Mr. Kent: Can the minister tell us what individual projects within the larger Gateway envelope that \$108 million from industry is going to be funding? I think that he mentioned four, and none of them have an industry or private sector component. I am curious — with the mention of \$108 million, which aspects of the new funding envelope that was submitted and approved by the federal Liberals will require private sector investment?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said in my previous answer to the Leader of the Official Opposition this afternoon, we are talking about the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for 2020-21. In the supplementary estimates for 2020-21, there are a few items that amount to roughly \$30 million — it is a little bit more than that — in the Highways and Public Works budget. As I said before, a little bit more than — about \$11 million has to do with the O&M side. Most of that is taken up in Aviation funding. I'm happy to talk about that this afternoon.

The other bit in the capital budget is the \$20-million reduction — plus or minus — mostly having to do with the

redundant fibre project which is starting in earnest laying fibre next year. Right now, we've let contracts for the preliminary work to lead to the major work that's happening next year. I'm happy to answer questions on those questions — or any others that they have come up with.

The member opposite has asked about the specific negotiations to do with Gateway. The negotiation component of the Gateway program lies with my colleague in Energy, Mines and Resources. As I said to the Leader of the Official Opposition today, please ask him for any answers to do with the negotiation process with the affected companies, First Nations, and that type of thing. Highways and Public Works is executing on the Gateway project. We are working with Energy, Mines and Resources, but they are the lead on the negotiations and they would be better positioned to answer the very specific questions the member opposite is asking this afternoon.

Gateway is an important project for us. It is going to lead to great gains for the First Nations of the Ross River Dena Council, the Liard First Nation, the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, eventually the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and other First Nations as they make their submissions and want to come forward to actually take part in this program which is hundreds of millions of dollars and will improve and provide access to resource properties across the territory.

Right now, we're very happy that we've reached four program agreements, with an estimated total capital construction cost of \$164.7 million. That work is going to be going into the Nahanni Range Road — \$17 million there to provide access after reaching a project agreement with the Ross River Dena Council and the Liard First Nation down in the southeast. North Canol Road and Robert Campbell Highway with the Ross River Dena Council — an estimated construction value of \$71 million down there — \$71 million going into that region. It will be a huge step forward and it will improve safety and resource development in that area. I'm very happy that my colleague, the Minister for Energy, Mines and Resources, was able to strike an arrangement down there for that money.

It will make sure that the road on the Robert Campbell Highway is much, much more safe for residents and traffic running along that road.

The Carmacks bypass — with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation — we talked about that. That project has progressed and is just getting started this year, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to say that it will be a couple-of-year project. That's another \$26.7 million going into the community of Carmacks and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation — again, a huge boon to that community. It will make the road safer and get some of the heavy industry traffic out of the community. It will allow it to bypass the town entirely. I know that they have been asking for it for a long time. We're happy that we have managed to make these arrangements to make that road safer for people down in that part of the country.

We also have the Robert Campbell Highway with the Liard First Nation — an estimated construction value of \$50 million. Again, that will improve the section between Ross River and Watson Lake — another important stretch of road on the Robert

Campbell Highway that will need improvement. It will be good for tourism, it will be good for resource companies, and it will be good for travellers going to and from Watson Lake and Ross River.

With that, Mr. Chair, I have enjoyed the conversation that we had this afternoon with the members opposite. With that, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

Written notice was given of the following motions November 23, 2020:

Motion No. 345

Re: eliminating annual federal excise tax increase on beer, wine, and spirits (Istchenko)

Motion No. 346

Re: extending the wage top-up program for essential workers (White)