



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 79

3rd Session

34th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, December 14, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2020 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Liberal Party

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, December 14, 2020 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper as the actions requested in the motion have been taken in whole or in part: Motion No. 367, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party. In addition, the following motion has been removed from the Order Paper as the motion is outdated: Motion No. 374, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition. Finally, the following motion has been removed from the Order Paper at the request of the member: Motion No. 377, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I would like the House to welcome this afternoon Michel Emery, his wife, Josée Tourigny, and Sasha and Kassia Emery. Please welcome them to the House this afternoon. Bonjour.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Canadian Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: On behalf of all parties, I am honoured to pay tribute to the Canadian Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, better known as UNESCO, and through it, my constituent Michel Emery.

I admire UNESCO and its ideals, and I visit its heritage sites whenever I can. When you are capable of travelling the world again, if you can visit Brú na Bóinne in Ireland or Edinburgh's Old Town and New Town, I encourage you to do so. Closer to home, the Yukon has one UNESCO World Heritage Site, Kluane/Wrangell-St. Elias/Glacier Bay/Tatshenshini-Elsek, and another two on the tentative list: Ivvavik/Vuntut/Herschel Island (Qikiqtaruk), and Tr'ondëk-Klondike.

Identifying and protecting these stunning cultural and natural icons and hundreds of others for future generations does not happen by chance. The Canadian Commission for

UNESCO works to build a common future of peace, reconciliation, equity, and sustainable development. It identifies UNESCO's priorities in Canada, and there are five of them: reconciliation, youth engagement, gender equality, freedom of expression, and the protection of documentary heritage.

Every few years, its executive committee elects someone to represent civil society. The most recent election happened in October. There were 13 nominations, ranked on gender equity, regional representative, racial and cultural diversity, Canadian francophonie outside Québec, and expertise in education, communications, and information. Yukon's Michel Emery was selected and, on October 27, unanimously became UNESCO's latest Yukon icon.

Michel came to the Yukon in 2004, working as a French immersion teacher. He was an education consultant in technology and libraries and a high school teacher and librarian.

When I met him in 2016, he impressed me with an impassioned plea to get students and educators access to better technological tools — something that wasn't hard to sell me on and which took effect in the last year or so. In class, he is an evangelist for students learning science, technology, education, arts, and math. He will tell you of specific students he has inspired through art projects, through 3D printers, or through virtual tours of the world.

A high-tech printer that he bought brought into the F.H. Collins library probably inspired a former student to launch Yukon 3D Solutions, which might be the territory's first such business. Michel sees libraries as something beyond books on shelves — something beyond consumption of the written word. He considers modern libraries as places where students should be able to experiment, innovate, design, and build things.

Human rights and reconciliation are also some things that Michel is passionate about. He was instrumental in the creation of the large wooden panels representing the clans that now hang in the F.H. Collins atrium. He got the wood by recycling large beams pulled from the old F.H. Collins school, an action that will endear him to my colleague from beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. He assembled students, elders, construction and heritage companies in the Northern Cultural Expressions Society, among others, to make them. "Now those trees stand tall again," a Teslin Tlingit elder told him.

In 2018, Michel asked principal Bruce Thomson to allow F.H. Collins to become part of UNESCO's school network, becoming the first in the north. I believe that Carcross is also one of the schools now on UNESCO's list. He worked with the social justice teacher, Meera Sarin, on human rights, climate action, reconciliation, and innovation. Recently, he was elected by his peers to be the Yukon Teachers' Association professional development coordinator. He was also elected to the Canadian Council of UNESCO.

This afternoon, I thank Michel for inspiring his students and for his efforts in advancing reconciliation, climate action, sustainable development, innovation, and technology. I also pay tribute to UNESCO for its work in creating a better future for us all. I'm glad that it has an eye for talent and chose Michel

as its civil society representative for the country. Thank you.
Merci beaucoup.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have some statistics to table — this on the number of sitting days across all provinces and territories.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House:

(1) recognizes the significance of the historical landmark that is the Keno City Hotel, which represents generations in Yukon's rich history;

(2) recognizes the economic and tourism impacts of losing this historical landmark; and

(3) thanks the volunteers, RCMP, business community, and community members at large who helped to extinguish the fire.

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

THAT this House congratulates Dylan Cozens of Whitehorse for making Team Canada as they look to repeat as gold medalists at the upcoming 2021 World Junior Hockey Championship in Edmonton.

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

THAT this House do issue an order for a breakdown of all Government of Yukon advertising expenditures that have featured the Member for Riverdale North in those advertising campaigns.

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

THAT this House congratulates the Yukon Indian community for a peaceful gathering that took place in solidarity with farmers across India on December 13, 2020.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to acknowledge period poverty by providing menstrual-care products free of charge.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Tourism relief and recovery plan

Hon. Ms. McLean: 2020 has been an exceptionally difficult year for Yukon's tourism industry. To support this important sector of our economy, our government has developed a tourism relief and recovery plan that includes investments of up to \$15 million over three years to provide much-needed relief and guide recovery of this vital industry.

The tourism relief and recovery plan is based on the vision, values, goals, and pillars of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* and there are several action plans in the strategy that have been prioritized as key initiatives in the relief and recovery plan.

The plan is centred on four themes: providing tourism sector leadership; rebuilding confidence and capabilities for tourism; supporting the recovery of tourism industry operators; and refining the brand and inspiring travellers to visit.

Nineteen key initiatives within the plan will help to provide a balance between the need for relief for operators and the need for recovery efforts to bring tourism visitation, jobs, and revenue of businesses back to 2019 pre-COVID levels. Providing tourism sector leadership is one key initiative that is well underway. The Yukon Tourism Advisory Board quickly came together in March to provide recommendations so that our government could better understand and meet the needs of the sector throughout this pandemic.

The Tourism Industry Association of Yukon has also been advocating for and communicating with their members since the pandemic started. Every time that we have reached out to our industry partners for assistance during the pandemic, they have delivered. I thank them all for the work that we have done together. There is much more to be done, but I'm confident that we have the right plan.

Today, we are announcing several new recovery initiatives in the plan that begin this fiscal year: supporting industry in the adoption of standardized safe travel protocols; rebuilding resident support for tourism; a one-window approach for our tourism partners to access supports and services; and finally, investing in the development of a recovery-specific place brand for Yukon as a whole. These initiatives complete the \$4 million that we have rolled out to provide much-needed relief to the sector through the tourism accommodation sector supplement, the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement, and the tourism and culture non-profit organization sector supplement. We need to be nimble and move between relief and recovery. This plan allows for us to adapt to changing conditions to continue to support this sector.

The tourism relief and recovery plan and the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* represent this government's strong commitment to this vital industry. I am confident in the plan and in the work of the department in partnership with all stakeholders. When the time is right, Yukon will welcome the world again.

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement.

The minister said that it has been an exceptionally difficult year for Yukon's tourism industry. I think that it has been a devastating year, Mr. Speaker. At the beginning of March, we started asking the government to take action to protect the tourism industry. World events quickly put the industry on the brink. Cruise ships collapsed, and it was clear that air travel was going to significantly change.

On March 9, the Liberals used their majority to vote against an all-party committee to monitor and support the economic recovery of our territory. At the time, the Minister of Tourism and Culture told the territory that there was no need to worry about the tourism sector. According to the minister, it was — and I quote: "... business as usual". The minister also was quoted saying that "We've got this".

The Premier at the time referred to us as being "paranoid". On March 16, the Premier even declared in this House — and I quote: "Let me be specific...: There is not a pandemic..." Just for your reference, Mr. Speaker, the World Health Organization declared the pandemic on March 11. It was 280 days ago that we first asked them to take action, and it was clear that the Liberals initially refused to accept the facts and slowed their economic response and supports for tourism, so that is how we need to look at today's announcement. How quick was it? We know that it was very late as they are announcing it just two and a half weeks before the end of the year. How will it work? Well, that second question is a little bit more difficult to answer because the Liberals have refused to share key details.

On October 19, the Liberals announced that the relief package would be \$15 million over three years. At that time, they only told us where \$2.88 million of that was going, leaving many questions for businesses. On November 30, they announced where another \$1.3 million of that was going. That leaves us with a question: There was the almost \$11 million — where is that going?

Now, with today's announcement, the minister told the media in her press conference that they are going to spend \$450,000 on the list of priorities this fiscal year, but that leaves us with a \$10.5-million gap, so I'm hoping that the minister can provide a breakdown of where that money will be spent. Does the minister know? If not, when will she know, and how did she arrive at the \$15-million figure in the first place?

Businesses have been through too much this year to be kept waiting for details, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals have had over nine months to come up with a plan for recovery of our economy, and the fact that they are still only trickling out details bit by bit is very disappointing. High-level concepts and themes are nice, but businesses need details now because Yukoners and Yukon businesses are hurting.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for her statement today with respect to additional information on Yukon's tourism relief and recovery plan.

Mr. Speaker, having attended many of the weekly virtual meetings of the Tourism Industry Association since early spring, I can attest to the tsunami-like rollout of the devastating

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this key sector of Yukon's social and economic fabric, a sector that represents over 400 companies, from large to very small, with 4,000 employees. Amidst the wreckage of this sector, what is really clear is that the folks in Yukon's tourism sector are a resilient and creative force in our territory. As the impact of the pandemic on their very existence worsened, to a person, I heard over and over the value that they place on making sure that tourism businesses are mindful of the environment that they operate in, which for months has been an environment of fear — fear of the unknown and fear that any misstep would create further uncertainty.

A consistent message from the tourism operators has been and is that regaining the vibrant and strong pre-COVID tourism sector must not come, as the chair of the tourism association put it this morning, "at the cost of protecting the health and safety of Yukoners."

The Tourism Industry Association, said Neil Hartling, "are proud to be leading the development and adoption of industry-wide health and safety protocols..." The goal, Mr. Speaker, is to gain and retain both Yukon residents and visitor support for tourism in Yukon.

They were pleased to hear that the proposed rollout of the balance of \$15 million previously announced — that is \$11 million over the next two years — will be done with a one-window approach. I would ask the minister to clarify or to explain how the concierge approach will work. Will the Department of Economic Development be flowing funds for the tourism recovery plan, or is it going to be through Tourism?

As the national and global situation evolves over the coming months into the next year or two, it is imperative that government adopts a strategic flexibility to recovery. There is no game plan for pandemic recovery anywhere, Mr. Speaker. We do have an abundance of talented and creative people in our tourism operators who have global reach. As our thoughts move to the easing of travel restrictions, we urge the government to engage now with the vital work necessary to create a global digital brand for Yukon. We look forward to again welcoming visitors from around the globe to Yukon.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, before I go into further closing comments, I just want to clarify something because the member opposite has been misquoting me out of context for this entire Sitting and it's wearing.

Back on March 9, when I talked about speaking of "business as usual", it wasn't in that context. I spoke directly myself to many operators, particularly in the Carcross area. They indicated to me that it's business as usual. That's what I said. The member opposite continues to misquote me and it's just — I feel like that's very unacceptable in terms of messaging back to Yukoners.

Again, referring to statements that our Premier made at that time when he made those statements about it not being a global pandemic, it had not been declared yet. That was clearly what that was about. The members opposite continue to spread this misinformation, really, because that's what it is when they take things out of context.

In terms of the dollars, the money will come from Tourism and Culture for this plan, Mr. Speaker. I want to just quote the chair of the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon from this morning, Neil Hartling: “The Tourism Relief and Recovery Plan is a strong and sustainable plan Yukon’s tourism industry has been looking for. The plan represents a firm commitment by the government to stabilize and support the territory’s critical tourism sector, and the tourism industry looks forward to working in partnership with the Yukon government on its implementation.”

Back in 2017, we started a *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. At that time, there were those who questioned doing this work when tourism was doing so well. Those members are in this House today. Yukon experienced record levels of tourism in 2017, 2018, and 2019. Then came COVID-19. I am so grateful that, when COVID hit, we already had a strong road map to the long-term sustainability and growth of tourism in Yukon, a shared vision in the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* for tourism to be a vibrant component of Yukon’s economy. With this plan and Yukon’s current state with respect to COVID-19 safety measures and the vaccine plan, we believe that we can get back to pre-COVID levels of tourism within three years, Mr. Speaker. That is at least a full year earlier than most recent projections from Destination Canada.

Some of the COVID-19 initiatives have already begun. There is no additional financial commitment needed, for example, for establishing the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board. The Tourism Industry Association of Yukon has been advocating for and communicating with all their members since the pandemic started, and they have had Zoom webinars every week to provide much-needed information for members and to create a forum where the tough questions can be asked and answered. That is leadership, Mr. Speaker.

Whenever we reach out to our industry partners for assistance during this pandemic, they have delivered every single time. I thank them all for the work that we have done together. I look forward to much more work to come. I am happy to make this statement to Yukoners today.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

Mr. Hassard: So, on October 19, the government announced \$15 million for tourism relief. So far, the government has only told us where \$4.5 million of that money is going.

Can the minister give us a breakdown of where the other \$10.5 million will be spent?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I believe that I just made a statement about that. There are 19 action items in a plan for relief and recovery. Today we announced some specific initiatives that were going to happen and start this fiscal year. Rebuilding resident support for tourism, support industry adoption of standardized safe-travel protocols for the protection of visitors and residents, a one-window approach, and place brand for

Yukon. Those items are moving forward this fiscal year. Other initiatives, as I said in my statement earlier, are underway. They do not require further dollars to be allocated.

We will continue to work with our partners, as we have done since the beginning and through the whole planning for the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* and through the work that we’ve done on the pandemic. We will be continuing to work with our partners and we will make those announcements when the time comes.

Mr. Hassard: Now, we’ve all heard the minister say “We’ve got this.” Unfortunately, Yukoners don’t agree. Yukoners deserve details on this money. Once again, she didn’t answer the question, so I’ll give her another opportunity.

Can she give us an actual breakdown of where the other \$10.5 million will be spent?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think that the really good news today, Mr. Speaker, is that Yukon has a plan. Yukon has the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* that we released in 2018, and we have a relief and recovery plan.

We are absolutely the envy of the country because we had done good planning prior to the pandemic. I released the plan today with 19 very clear, actionable items that we have worked on with all of our industry partners. We will continue to work with them. We will make those other financial announcements as time unfolds.

We have a plan for recovery over a three-year period. We have two more fiscal years following where those dollars will be allocated. The action plans will be developed with our partners. As you saw today in the press conference, Mr. Speaker, we did the announcement alongside our partners. That is how this strategy will unfold.

Mr. Hassard: It is interesting that the minister speaks about good planning prior to the pandemic, yet we have seen an entire collapse of this industry, so maybe the planning wasn’t so great after all.

But again, Mr. Speaker, the question was very simple. I asked about a breakdown of that \$10.5 million — and again, no response, no answer on that from this minister.

So, I will try one more time. Maybe the third time is the charm. Can the minister give us an actual breakdown of where that \$10.5 million will be spent?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, the good news is that Yukon has a plan. We have worked really hard alongside our partners, and we will continue to do that. Tourism is a vitally important industry within Yukon. We planned when times were good, and that is why we have such a solid plan for Yukon that includes the voices of all Yukoners.

I will remind the members opposite that we collected over 12,000 comments when we did the consultation. We had 15 signatories on that tourism development strategy plan — much like what we did last week when we rolled out and did the declarations on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We took a whole-Yukon approach, and that is the strength behind the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. I stand by that plan; our partners stand by that plan. I guess that the members opposite are not standing behind that plan. This is Yukon’s plan, and I would hope that they would stand behind

the voices of this industry. That is what we are doing, and we are proud of the work that we have done with all of our partners.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

Mr. Istchenko: And we on this side are just looking for a breakdown of numbers — asking about numbers that the minister is responsible for. So, on October 19, the government announced \$2.88 million for the tourism accommodation sector supplement. Can the minister tell us how much of that money has flowed to Yukon businesses since that announcement on October 19?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, we announced a number of supplementary programs that are supplementary to the Yukon business relief program. One of them was the \$2.88 million for the Yukon accommodation sector. We announced another one for the non-accommodation sector supplement and another for the Yukon tourism not-for-profit sector supplement.

One of the criteria of that program is that anyone applying for the supplement must have maximized all of their availability through the CanNor program through Canada and the business relief program that is held with Economic Development.

To date, we are continuing to work with that sector, and as we've done all the way through, we're working with businesses to ensure that they are maximizing all of the programs so that, when they get to the supplement that is for tourism-related businesses, we then have that fund in place to assist if they are maxing out of those other programs.

Mr. Istchenko: It doesn't sound like the minister knows the answer to that either.

So, regarding supports for bars and restaurants, the government is requiring them to prove that at least 60 percent of their 2019 revenue came from tourists. Bars and restaurants will have difficulty proving this. We have pointed this out and asked the government to get rid of this requirement. On December 5, the *Yukon News* reported that the government will ask bars and restaurants to make a signed declaration that can be audited in the future. The government knows that it will be difficult for bars and restaurants to prove this but will subject them to red tape and audits.

Again, I will ask the minister: Why is the minister insisting that bars and restaurants go through this needless red tape to get support?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We have gone over this a number of times. These supplements are for businesses that are tourism-related.

We reduced the threshold from 80 percent to 60 percent of revenue attributable to tourism to identify part of the criteria. We continue to work with businesses. I have asked the members opposite to ensure that, if they are speaking to business owners, they are reaching out to Tourism and Culture to ensure that they have the assistance that is needed. Many businesses report to the Yukon business survey around the revenue and where it's attributable to. That is one of the measures. Yes, they can also do a declaration, and our Tourism and Culture department will continue to work with them.

I want to remind members opposite that the Yukon business relief program is available to all businesses, including bars and restaurants. If they find themselves maxing out of those programs and their business is 60-percent attributable — which it likely is — to tourism, then we have a supplementary. That is good news for Yukoners.

Mr. Istchenko: Bars and restaurants are struggling, and they are in need of immediate support. We are seeing layoffs and closures of some of the businesses. They should not have to jump through hoops to prove requirements to auditors. They should not have to wait for more details on the \$15 million, which is something that the minister is unable to provide a breakdown for.

When will the government announce a real, detailed relief package for bars and restaurants in the territory, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat myself again. This fund that we announced is a supplement to the Yukon business relief program. Businesses that are struggling have had that available to them since March, along with a few program through Canada. That allows businesses to access \$100,000 of grant money from Canada — a further \$100,000 from the Yukon government through Economic Development — and this supplementary fund that we have put in place is for businesses that have maxed out of that.

We know that tourism has been the first hit, the hardest hit, and the longest to recover. Other sectors are recovering as we speak. That is why we put these supplementary programs in place so that businesses are supported. We have the experiences and we have the infrastructure in place as part of the plan, Mr. Speaker, so as to be ready when visitors are welcomed and able to come back to Yukon. That is good news for Yukon because we have a really solid plan.

Question re: Emergency services in communities

Ms. White: Less than a month ago, on November 17, I asked the minister about the situation in Keno and Pelly Crossing when it comes to fire safety. Keno has not had a fire truck for over a year, and Pelly Crossing's fire truck was either not working or didn't meet the needs of the community when I visited this summer.

I wish I didn't have to bring this issue back to the House today, but given the painful loss of the Keno Hotel to fire over the weekend, it is a question on many people's minds.

Can the minister explain how a community in Yukon could go for over a year without an operational fire truck?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I just want to acknowledge the devastating news over this weekend for Keno and, in particular, Mr. Martel. We all — I think all of us in this Legislature — are very sad about the fire that happened on Friday night. Our hearts and thoughts go out to the community.

I did go — I was there, actually, with the Premier — to Keno. What we need are volunteers. We need folks in the community who are going to volunteer. We talked to them about that. We had a number of people who expressed interest; we did follow up with the Fire Marshal's Office. Unfortunately, no one put in their application, and we continue to work with them, and it is sad news today.

What I will say is that we also had that conversation in Pelly. The note that I got this morning, I understand, is that eight people had put in their application for the fire hall in Pelly. I think that we need roughly a half-dozen or so in order to make a fire hall, so we will be happy to support getting equipment there. What we need is for folks to volunteer, and we will do our best to support those volunteers.

Ms. White: We understand the challenge of recruiting volunteers for fire departments in small communities, but when this issue is recurring for years, it is not good enough for the minister to simply say “We don’t have the volunteers”. We know that people care about their communities, so we have to question why people are not stepping up for these roles. Are they structured in a way that makes sense for folks in the communities, and are the schedules or requirements hindering people’s participation? I don’t have the answers for these questions, but they must be asked. The consequences of the status quo are painfully obvious today.

What steps will the minister take to ensure that no community ever finds themselves without proper firefighting equipment in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The challenge is not equipment. What I am trying to say is that I am not able to put equipment in the hands of folks unless they are trained. It is not allowed. It is not safe, so we really do need people to step forward. I am very happy to try to focus on how to support volunteers to come forward, how to train them, how to provide them equipment, how to make sure that they are supported in that role, but I do need people in our communities. We all will need people to come forward.

Right now, what I want to say is thank you to all of those people across the territory who do put their names forward to keep our communities safe. I would also like to say thank you to Alexco because they showed up with some water trucks to support. We’re happy to get equipment. That’s not what’s lacking here. What we really need to do is to get volunteers. I’m happy to redouble efforts in Keno.

Just again, I’m very sorry for the Keno Hotel. I think that we were all deeply affected by the news. I just want to acknowledge the heartache that is going through the community right now.

Ms. White: I hope, with that reply, that the minister will work on figuring out what the barriers are to volunteering for fire departments across the territory. One of the worst things that could happen right now would be to deprive one community of resources that they need to assist another community. Robbing Paul to pay Peter is never a good idea, but especially when it comes to fire safety.

We know that there are needs across the territory when it comes to fire protection. Will the minister commit to bringing in proper fire protection safety equipment to communities that need it without taking resources away from others?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will reiterate that I am so happy to put equipment in the hands of folks who are trained to use that equipment to make sure that it is safe. Firefighting equipment nowadays — I went to the Ember Fire Academy this past summer and watched them, during COVID, doing all this

training. Fires are dangerous things. We need our volunteers to be trained. Absolutely, we’ll guarantee that we get that equipment into those folks’ hands as soon as we have volunteers who are going to be able to do that safely. I’m happy to work with Keno and all communities in recruiting those volunteers. Definitely, we’ll support them all with equipment and not take from one community for another. Wherever we have those trained volunteers, we will make sure that they are equipped to fight fires.

Question re: Secure medical unit

Ms. Hanson: Individuals in the secure medical unit are there either under their own accord or under the *Mental Health Act*. They are there to receive psychiatric support and help. Whatever the reason, these individuals have the right to feel safe.

Earlier in the Sitting, the media reported on the experience of being on the secure medical unit from the perspective of patients. These individuals noted that, while staff may be able to secure themselves away from aggressive patients, other patients sharing the unit are left vulnerable. They have nowhere safe to go, except to their own rooms, which cannot be locked from the inside. We know that the Hospital Corporation has talked of adding extra staff and a security guard.

What other specific steps have been taken by this government to ensure the safety of patients on the secure medical unit whose only option is an unlocked room?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I appreciate the question. We have been working very closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the psychiatrist.

Just as a note, the Yukon Hospital Corporation receives a significant amount of support from the Government of Yukon to essentially increase services at the hospital. So, the secure medical unit is intended to provide supports for clients who require the supports. We recently negotiated — the Hospital Corporation — an arrangement with the local psychiatrist. We are pleased to support them in that effort and to support the response when it comes to safety at the Hospital Corporation. As I understand it, the Hospital Corporation is working very closely with the service providers there to address the safety of clients and, of course, the safety of staff. As we heard from the Yukon Hospital Corporation chair and CEO, it’s a high priority for them to ensure that they provide the best services while still maintaining safety in their environment.

I’m happy to respond to further questions.

Ms. Hanson: Well, let’s talk about it from the patient-centred-care approach. One individual who has spent time at the secure medical unit shared some observations. They asked why inmates at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre are no longer allowed to be held in solitary confinement, but patients can be held indefinitely in the seclusion room on the secure medical unit. This individual was placed in the seclusion room not for their own safety, but because of overcrowding on the unit. They shared that it was like being in jail and not helpful to their mental state. Even the chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation commented in this Assembly that there are limited areas to support staff in a safe area. Unfortunately,

it results in some patients spending long periods of time in isolation.

Mr. Speaker, when will Yukoners be treated with the care and support they need when in crisis in a safe and supportive environment?

Hon. Ms. Frost: The Department of Health and Social Services and our community partners, along with the Hospital Corporation, are working toward a new secure medical unit. We have also provided supports to the Hospital Corporation for planning and design. In the interim, we recognize that the secure medical unit has limited space and we are working with the Hospital Corporation to plan for the new SMU and to ensure that it better meets and aligns with the needs of Yukoners.

The objective of the current secure medical unit is to ensure that we provide the best services possible for the clients who use that space and require supports. We rely on external supports as well. That means that we partner when it comes to matters related to justice — of course, we would collaborate with the minister responsible and the department. We are working also to ensure that, if there are any specific issues that come to our attention, it would be noted and raised with the CEO at the Hospital Corporation. The objective is to mitigate and address that, so if there are any specific concerns, I would be happy to bring it forward.

Ms. Hanson: Yes, it is true. We have heard about these situations in the secure medical unit for the last numbers of years. In fact, the chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board stated in this House that, yes, they have plans to move forward with an enhanced secure medical unit to be located above the emergency department. He pointed out that the planning, the costing, and even the initial designs are ready. Now it is back to this government to provide the necessary funding.

When can Yukon citizens finally expect to see funding for the completion of a safe, appropriately resourced, secure medical unit that addresses the concerns raised by the medical community and those seeking mental health care?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I am happy to advise Yukoners that this government is working with the Hospital Corporation to address a new secure medical unit. The resources are in place. We have worked under the process that is before us, which is to collaborate with the Hospital Corporation and come up with a plan that aligns with their needs first. The priorities that were put before us as a government were to look at providing additional supports for orthopaedic surgeons and additional supports for the operating room. We had to look at ensuring that we had services that aligned with their priorities.

The secure medical unit is high on the priority list, and we are working with them right now to design, of course, and plan the new unit. The objective is always to ensure that we provide better services and better care to Yukoners, and that is our intention as a government — to ensure that we bring the services to Yukoners and ensure that they are well-supported, no matter the circumstances. That is our vision and that is our goal, and we aim to meet those deliverables.

Question re: Yukon First Nation procurement policy

Mr. Hassard: So, late in the afternoon on Friday, the Liberal government announced a new Yukon First Nation procurement policy. While we agree with the objectives of increasing First Nation participation in the economy and creating new economic opportunities for First Nation businesses, we do have some concerns about the policy. The vast majority of businesses that we have spoken to since the policy was released were seeing this policy for the first time. Some had never even heard of this, as of this morning.

So, can the minister explain what consultation was done with the Yukon business community prior to releasing this new policy?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am really glad to be talking about the First Nation procurement policy on the floor of the Legislative Assembly this afternoon. We announced the policy on December 9, just last week, and a joint announcement was made with Yukon First Nation leaders at that time. The Yukon is leading the country with this procurement policy by reducing barriers and enhancing opportunities for Yukon First Nation governments, businesses, and people.

The First Nation procurement policy was developed through collaborative partnership with Yukon First Nations. Its co-drafting process was a first for our government and could serve as a model for future partnerships. Other jurisdictions across Canada have now taken interest in this rare co-drafting approach and the policy itself and are awaiting the results with anticipation. We have developed strong working relationships with our First Nation partners, who will help us move forward toward our common goal, which is a stronger, more prosperous, more inclusive Yukon.

We have, as well, run the policy — a very high-level draft of that policy — through our Procurement Advisory Panel, with the chambers of commerce, and we have also reached out and had a one-on-one meeting with businesses. Those meetings are going to continue right through to April when we actually implement a large part of the policy.

Mr. Hassard: Unfortunately, the question was about consultation with the entire Yukon business community. Now, one aspect of the policy is that Yukon businesses can make a commitment to hire First Nation labour for the duration of the contract. This means that the business would receive a 15-percent reduction in the price for the labour component of their bid in exchange for a promise to hire First Nation labourers. Reviewing whether or not a business lived up to their commitments cannot be done until the job is complete and the contract is concluded.

How will the government ensure that businesses live up to their commitments if a proper review can't be conducted until the project is complete?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This is a policy the likes of which have not been seen in the country before. It was done in close collaboration with our First Nation partners. We have letters of support from our First Nations across the territory stating that the Yukon First Nation procurement policy is a good step toward realizing the vision of chapter 22 of our final agreement

in achieving equitable and sustainable economic growth and prosperity for Yukon. That's from the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

We've also heard from the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council — in terms of the collaborative process used in the policy's development, we suggest it could serve as a model for future collaborations involving policy areas that overlap with the interest of Yukon First Nation governments. We commend the work of the representatives of the technical working group responsible for developing this policy.

We have worked very, very hard in giving the time that we needed to get this policy right. We're not going to rush it. We're going to work with our business community right now from today, right forward. I already have some meetings scheduled with business groups in the territory to go over the policy in detail. Highways and Public Works has done consultation with the First Nations. We're going to continue that work going forward with our business community because we want this to be a success. First Nations want it to be a success. The business community wants it to be a success. It's time that Yukon works together in our economic endeavours and not work against one another.

Mr. Hassard: So, the new First Nation procurement policy contemplates the establishment of a Yukon First Nation business registry, as well as an ongoing vendor performance review scoring system. It appears that the government will now be issuing scores to every Yukon business that does work for the Yukon government. These scores will dictate whether and how a business can access the advantages available in this new procurement policy.

Can the minister tell us how this new vendor performance review scoring system will work? Will businesses' scores be public? Will they be subject to review?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Having a business review program in government has been something that I've spoken about on procurement since 2017 when I first started the hard work on procurement. We have made huge progress in procurement in the territory.

The latest is the First Nation procurement policy, but if you recall, Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this term of this government, we promised to have the recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Panel implemented within two years. Mr. Speaker, we achieved that.

Mr. Speaker, we worked to get the definition of a "business" refined and improved. We worked with our other business partners. We actually got a new definition put in place, Mr. Speaker. Now, after working with that definition, the businesses have said that they want to refine it further. We're now currently working with businesses to make sure that definition is further refined.

Mr. Speaker, we worked for two years with our First Nation partners on the Yukon First Nation procurement policy. We did that despite intense political pressure to "Get it out, get it out, get it out". We provided the opportunity to get the time to get the policy right. I absolutely will defend this process going forward. We are going to take the time that we need to

make sure that this economy is working in tandem, together, for the benefit of all Yukoners. That is the goal.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 378

Clerk: Motion No. 378, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It is moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Julie Jai and Leah Robinson to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective December 14, 2020; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does reappoint Marius Curteanu and Roxanne Larouche to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective December 14, 2020.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It's my pleasure today to speak briefly to this motion. The Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators is granted its authority by way of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*. That act indicates that the panel of adjudicators shall consist of not less than three members. Currently, there is a roster of nine members, Mr. Speaker, and the term for three of those members will expire on December 14, 2020, which is today.

Advertisements went out to seek new members or returning members if they were interested, and applications were reviewed by the all-party Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees. That committee recommended that Julie Jai and Leah Robinson be appointed as new members and that Marius Curteanu be reappointed as a member of that panel of adjudicators.

The motion before the Legislative Assembly today also includes the option to seek reappointment of Roxanne Larouche as a member.

Mr. Speaker, capacity and experience are always important aspects of any board. Ms. Larouche has served one term on the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators and recently reapplied. She has served on many boards and committees in the past and brings a variety of experience to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators. She has gained experience over this past term, and her reappointment will contribute in a positive way to the roster from which a panel of adjudicators can be formed.

I think that it is important to note that the panel of adjudicators to which we are seeking in the Legislative Assembly to add names operates as a roster when matters come before them. A number of members form a panel that has a hearing and makes a decision on that basis. The wide variety of individuals is, in my submission to the House, a better option

because there are more opportunities for individuals to be chosen from a broader list, and their experiences and skills can be taken into account and also could deal if there were conflicts in a particular situation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the members of the House to support this motion so that the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators will have 10 active members, each bringing a variety of skills and experience. I would like to just take a moment to thank all of the members of the panel of adjudicators for their hard work and dedication to Yukoners and to thank those individuals who put their names forward during this process. Lastly, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees for their careful deliberations and recommendations.

Mr. Kent: Ordinarily, when responding to a motion like this, we would congratulate the individuals who are coming on to the board or being reappointed. Perhaps we would have a chance to thank those who are no longer serving, but the challenge with respect to this motion that the minister has presented isn't about the people who are coming on to the board. It is about the process and the fact that the minister has taken it upon herself to add an additional name to the roster — to her motion — that differs from the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

So, Mr. Speaker, you will remember that, earlier this Sitting, we amended the Standing Orders — specifically Standing Order 45(3.2), which deals with the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees. It says: "(a) shall review nominations and recommend appointments to the following major boards and committees". So, we formalized and added the Yukon Human Rights Commission and the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators. That was earlier this Sitting, based on a motion for concurrence from the Member for Copperbelt North that he put forward and which was debated as government business.

Again, when we look to the report signed December 1 by the Member for Copperbelt North — the *Twenty-second Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees* — it does mention three of the four names here.

Again, for us, this is a breach of process, quite frankly. It is a challenge for us when the minister puts forward a motion on this that doesn't take into account the Standing Orders and the fact that three members were appointed instead of four. Again, as I mentioned, this isn't about the individuals who are being appointed; it is about the process that this government has taken upon itself and this "My way or the highway" approach to putting additional names on to these panels.

I am not a member of this particular standing committee, but I would certainly be wondering today about the value of the work that I did as an individual on this committee and if it was taken into account by this government and this minister when additional names are placed on there which have not gone through the proper process as set out in the Standing Orders or being reviewed and recommended by the Standing Committee

on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

For this reason, Mr. Speaker, we will not be supporting this motion. Again, as I mentioned, it is not about the individuals going on; it is about the process that the minister has deviated from by adding an additional individual to her motion that differs from the report put forward by the standing committee that is supposed to advise on this.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to echo some of the words of my colleague who has just spoken. I am on that standing committee, and I just want to say for the record that I think it is unfortunate that the minister has chosen to bring this before the House today because there is a committee of this Assembly that is charged with reviewing and making recommendations with respect to the panel of adjudicators and to other boards and committees — we make recommendations. We recognize that we're not a decision-making body, but we're charged with coming together and reviewing the documentation that's put together and trying to either come to a consensus or a majority decision.

I feel somehow that, as a member of this Legislature, it is somewhat incumbent on me to apologize to the person named on behalf of members of this Assembly who do respect the legislative process and the process that we have for the naming of individuals to Yukon's major boards and committees. We respect that it should not be a political issue, nor should private citizens who put their names forward have any fear or expectation that the actions of a minister could be perceived to politicize their willingness to serve their fellow Yukon citizens.

We have had, I thought, a democratic process. The government still has the majority; they can weigh out any concerns that might occur from debate among all members during that committee, but it is a committee of this Assembly. That's what's missing here: respect for the process that we all agreed to do. I feel sorry that the minister has brought forward somebody's name and publicized it without having the committee having the opportunity to address it. We had a committee meeting this morning; it could have been on the agenda. Simple.

I feel compelled to abstain from any vote here because I can say neither yea nor nay; we didn't have the discussion.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, she will close debate on Motion No. 378.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the accusation of a breach of process, I think, is wholly unwarranted. Both members of the opposition read out that the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees has the responsibility to review nominations and recommend appointments. The boards and committees are listed. Clearly, this is one of them. That work was done. The individual's name and application were there when they made those deliberations. That's all I'm aware of.

Certainly, there is no lack of respect. Actually, the truth is that the recommendations that come from that committee are brought to this Legislative Assembly for debate. This is what we're doing today. This is the place where the appointments are made. I had no information whatsoever that the person named was not a contributing member of the current panel of adjudicators. I made the determination that her expertise would be in addition to a roster of individuals.

I also brought this motion to this House — I don't remember the exact day, but certainly last week — where it was read into the record and the names were available. Nobody contacted me with respect to any concerns about that. The making of recommendations by that board is certainly well-respected, but again, part of the responsibility that I have is to make sure that there is a full roster of individuals who can do that work on behalf of Yukoners if need be. The motion that I brought, I think, is an excellent addition — the names that were recommended by the board, as well as somebody who would be renewed. That was my submission to this House.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Mr. Adel: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Mr. Gallina: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Paired: Hon. Mr. Hutton and Mr. Kent

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yea, five nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion No. 378 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Tourism and Culture

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to welcome our officials to the Legislature today: Valerie Royle and Tim Sellars. Thank you so much for being here to support this debate.

I rise today to present the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for the 2020-21 fiscal year for the Department of Tourism and Culture. In the 2020-21 *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, the Department of Tourism and Culture is putting forward a net increase of \$7,847,000 in operation and maintenance expenditures.

Mr. Deputy Chair, the Government of Yukon acted swiftly and decisively to respond to the drastic impacts COVID-19 has had on the territory's arts, culture, and tourism sectors. On the arts and culture side, we are supporting our creative communities through the expansion of existing funding programs. Arts funding has been a welcome relief for Yukon's cultural sector and has sparked imaginative new ways to engage with their chosen crafts and mediums as well as their audiences.

On the tourism side, the release of the second quarter tourism statistics and the results of a recent needs assessment have confirmed what most of us already knew all too well: Travel restrictions to and within the territory have decimated Yukon's tourism industry. The goal of the department's response efforts to date have been to stabilize Yukon's tourism businesses by developing relief programs to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and prepare for tourism industry recovery.

First, I would like to speak to temporary support for events funding, a \$1.8-million fund included in the supplementary budget before the Committee today. Though absolutely necessary to protect the health and safety of Yukoners, the cancellation of events left many Yukon organizations facing unique, irretrievable financial losses related to perishable goods

and the last-minute cancellation of accommodations and services. This included everything from large-scale events — such as the 2020 Arctic Winter Games, the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament, the Dawson City Music Festival, and the Adäka Cultural Festival — all the way to conferences and any event in Yukon with more than 50 participants.

Transferred from the Department of Economic Development, this program allowed for mitigation of up to 100 percent of unique, irretrievable financial losses due to COVID-19-related cancellation of specific events. Yukon government was pleased to be able to provide this support to the local workers, businesses, and non-governmental organizations negatively impacted by cancellations of these events due to COVID-19. The \$1.8 million has been fully expended in support of accommodation and service providers that lost money due to cancelled events.

Next I will turn to an additional \$1-million investment in the tourism cooperative marketing fund. To help address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Yukon's tourism sector, the Government of Yukon announced a \$1-million increase to its tourism cooperative marketing fund, bringing the total available funding to \$1.7 million for the 2020-21 fiscal year. The scope of the eligible applicants and eligible activities was also broadened so that more Yukon tourism experience and service providers can promote themselves locally and within Canada and internationally when the COVID-19 pandemic subsides and wider scale travel resumes.

To make it easier for Yukon businesses to receive support for their tourism marketing efforts, the funding enhancement removed the requirement for applicants to contribute to the costs of approved marketing activities in 2020-21, enabling them to continue marketing for the future while cash-strapped in the present.

This increased funding and expanded eligibility will allow for greater promotional opportunities from a wider cross-section of our tourism sector and help facilitate a strong resurgence. To date, the department has processed 268 applications, for a total of \$1.4 million in funding.

Now I would like to discuss the additional COVID-19 relief of \$4 million. The largest item in our supplementary budget is \$4 million for additional COVID-19 relief to support Yukon's tourism sector. Investment of this funding is guided by the tourism relief and recovery plan released today, Monday, December 14, and is part of a three-year \$15-million investment in relief and recovery that this government made to the tourism industry in October. Incorporating the values and pillars of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*, the plan is built around four key themes: providing tourism sector leadership; rebuilding confidence and capabilities for tourism; supporting the recovery of tourism industry operators; and refining the brand and inspiring travellers to visit.

The tourism relief and recovery plan is a comprehensive and targeted investment that supports the relief, recovery, and rebuilding of our tourism industry in a way that is safe, economically viable, and will lead to a more resilient sector. Working with our colleagues in Economic Development, we have already launched two important relief programs as

supplements to the existing Yukon business relief program — \$2.88 million to help eligible accommodation businesses through the tourism accommodation sector supplement and \$1 million through the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement for businesses that derive at least 60 percent of their revenue from tourism visitation. Furthermore, we have also announced \$300,000 to provide funding relief to non-profit organizations in the tourism and culture sector — such as museums and arts organizations — through the culture and tourism non-profit organization sector supplement.

The tourism relief and recovery plan will help to rebuild confidence in an industry heavily impacted by the pandemic. This deliberate path to recovery demonstrates the commitment of Government of Yukon to extraordinary measures to enable tourism businesses to not only survive this unprecedented tourism downturn, but to rebuild and strengthen the sector for the future. The plan is now available on the yukon.ca website.

The supplementary budget also includes \$547,000 for border information kiosk staffing. With their experience as welcoming and knowledgeable ambassadors for the territory, we recognize that staff in our visitor information centres and the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre could play a role in providing travellers, particularly those transiting through the Yukon to Alaska, with COVID-19 information and resources.

This past summer, visitor information centre staff and staff from the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre were reassigned as information officers to augment and support enforcement officers at the borders, at the information station at Robert Service Way in Whitehorse, as well as at the Erik Nielsen International Airport. Today, our information officers continue to provide the support at YXY. This decision was made with a mind to the best application of staffing resources and to support the Government of Yukon's overall COVID-19 response and enforcement efforts.

Additionally, employees were hired to meet the demand for information officers during the summer. This supplementary budget item covers the additional personnel costs associated with providing this service. Funding from the supplementary budget allocation is also being provided to Liard First Nation for border-monitoring services at Watson Lake.

Finally, I would like to discuss the \$500,000 in the supplementary budget for enhanced domestic marketing. As a result of our ongoing and long-standing partnership with Destination Canada, we were able to negotiate a \$500,000 investment in our domestic marketing program. The resulting campaigns are part of the nationwide effort led by Destination Canada to restart Canada's visitor economy following the impact of COVID-19. This \$500,000 is a fully recoverable increase to the Tourism Yukon domestic marketing program. It has contributed to the promotion of Yukon in the Canadian market. This funding supported our "Now open" campaign in late summer 2020 that resulted in just over 15,000 British Columbians travelling to Yukon by late November, injecting some much-needed revenues into tourism businesses. We were also able to put some of these funds to work in our "Always on" marketing program through the winter months, which is

designed to keep Yukon top of mind with travellers. They are excited to travel to Yukon once health restrictions are eased.

We were also able to negotiate a \$50,000 disbursement from Destination Canada investments to support the Klondike Visitors Association's marketing program in local and regional markets in late summer and fall.

To summarize, we are putting forward an increase of \$7,847,000 to the Tourism and Culture operation and maintenance budget. These funds represent our ongoing supports to Yukon's tourism and culture sector in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Government of Yukon recognizes the value of our tourism, arts, and culture sectors and is committed to supporting them through this crisis. The work that we undertake using these funds will provide immediate relief to the tourism sector and pave our path to recovery as the COVID-19 pandemic recedes.

We will continue to adapt and respond to the impacts on Yukoners and the Yukon economy as it evolves. These recovery efforts will take dedicated cooperation across government as well as with our partners in the arts, culture, and tourism sectors. I would like to again recognize the department officials for their effort in getting this plan in place in a strategic and expedited manner under challenging and ever-evolving circumstances.

I would also like to thank the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board, the Business Advisory Council, the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon, the Convention Bureau, Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association, the Klondike Visitors Association, the Association franco-yukonnaise, and all other partners and individual operators for their invaluable guidance in making sure that the tourism sector's needs and challenges are known and understood. The pandemic will undoubtedly have long-lasting impacts and will materially transform the way in which these sectors operate in the future, but as we navigate a recovery, this government is committed to supporting our residents, businesses, and communities.

As we work proactively to implement the plan, we recognize the need for flexibility and collaboration, whether through adaptations to existing programs or the creation of new programs. We will work with our stakeholder partners to create a path forward together.

Mr. Istchenko: I do want to welcome the staff here today to support the minister and those who are on the phone working from home or in the offices who are also supporting the minister today.

I'll start off with a few questions right away here. In Question Period, I asked about the \$2.88 million that the minister announced on October 19. With the staff here, maybe the minister could get into a bit of detail.

Can the minister tell us how much of that \$2.8 million has flowed so far — which means how much has been spent so far? Of that \$2.88 million — it only covers until December 31 — how did the department, the minister, or all the partners she worked with — how did they come up with that date of December 31?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Deputy Chair, to date, the tourism accommodation sector supplement has not disbursed any of the funds. We have received inquiries from 27 accommodation providers that would like to explore this program. Our first step, as I have said in the House several times, is to work with CanNor and Economic Development to ensure that each applicant has maximized the funding available to them under the northern business relief fund and the Yukon business relief program. Once we determine eligibility and the amounts applicants qualify for, then we can proceed to disburse the funding.

Mr. Istchenko: So, no funds have been accessed, and it covers up to December 31. Can the minister elaborate a little bit more on why December 31?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes. Again, we are working with our businesses. We are ensuring that they are maximizing the programs. When the member opposite speaks about businesses not accessing funds, that is not correct. Businesses are accessing funds through the business relief program and through CanNor — the northern business relief fund. Again, they must maximize their eligibility under those programs and then they will be transferred into the supplementary program, which was set up precisely for that.

Again, we will extend to March 31. This is a supplementary budget for this fiscal year. We will continue to assess as we go along. We need to have flexibility, which is what this plan is designed to provide.

Mr. Istchenko: I think that we have spent enough time on that.

With the collapse of the cruise-ship industry and international air travel, can the minister tell us what specific action she has undertaken to fill the economic gap that has been left by the shutdown of both of these industries?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Our response has been around relief. I mean, this has been a global pandemic. It has impacted tourism worldwide. This was an unavoidable result of a global pandemic, so we have focused primarily on relief. What we are monitoring right now is a focus on Canada and domestic travel. This may include cruise-ship activity, but we are working closely with our federal partners. We are following our safe reopening plan. We are currently in phase 3 of that, and we will continue to work with our chief medical officer as things evolve. Again, there are always a lot of unknowns.

We have had good news about a vaccine. We are certainly working with our colleagues nationally, and that is great news, but we still have a long path ahead of us, as Dr. Brendan Hanley has talked about. We will continue to work with our chief medical officer to ensure that we are doing things in the best and safest way, taking those recommendations, and making the decisions within government.

Again, we have focused primarily, to this point, on relief. What we announced today was a more wholesome recovery plan that will bring us through the next two years. We are excited — as every Canadian is and probably every person in the world, perhaps — that things may come back to normal within the next year. That will be really welcome, of course, to

our tourism industry, which was the hardest hit, first hit, and longest recovery.

Mr. Istchenko: I had asked about cruise ships and international air travel, and the minister had spoken a little bit about being more focused on travel within Canada, so I will continue on this subject and wonder where it fits into the plan just announced today.

Can the minister provide us with the latest update on what is going on with Condor Air? Has Condor indicated that they're going to start service to the territory again when the border restrictions are relaxed and when the pandemic is under control?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The questions that the member opposite is asking today are really federal decisions. We continue to work with our federal counterparts. Our Premier is working very closely with the federal government. We'll continue to assess and see how things unfold with our great news that we had last week around vaccines and what that means for the travel industry.

Condor is excited to resume service to Yukon when it is safe to do so. Again, that is a federal decision — working closely with all of our partners worldwide. We have not stopped working with our partners worldwide in terms of continuing to ensure that, when travel can resume again, folks are remembering the Yukon and keeping that alive.

The chair of TIA talked about it today — that we're going to be a welcome destination in terms of the wide open, pristine land and air that we have. This is what travellers are going to be looking for. We're positioned so well in terms of inviting visitors back to the Yukon. Condor is selling right now for 2021.

Mr. Istchenko: So, just to confirm for the minister, it sounds like Condor is coming back and they're selling for 2021. Their flights are in the summer, so this summer, 2021, we'll see international travel back to the Yukon for the tourism industry. That's great news.

Hon. Ms. McLean: We did see this early in the pandemic where Condor sold out all of their flights. It was a great indicator that people were still willing to come to the Yukon even during a global pandemic. However, our borders are not open internationally, and so Condor made rearrangements with all of those folks who bought seats on that flight.

If travel still remains unsafe and Canada is not open to international travel, then that is exactly what Condor will have to deal with at that time. The good news is that people are remembering Yukon and they are eager to come back. When it is safe to do so, we will welcome them.

The actions that we laid out in our tourism relief and recovery program clearly are about ensuring safe travel and ensuring that resident support is there. Those are two of the items and actions that we announced today and that we are working on with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon. It is great news when businesses like Condor are selling those seats to come to Yukon. If they are not able to safely travel here, they will deal with that. It keeps the market alive. It keeps it warm, and that is what we want to see.

Mr. Istchenko: Can the minister provide us with an update on what is happening with Holland America and their plans for the Westmark in Dawson City, specifically heading into the busy summer months?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Holland America is a very important partner for Yukon. It is very similar to Condor. They are eager to start working within Yukon again and helping people come to our beautiful territory. Again, international travel is Canada's jurisdiction, and until those borders are open and it is safe to travel to Canada, including our beautiful Yukon Territory, that will not happen until it is safe to do so. That being said, our partners are eager. They are working. When the time is right, we will have them as strong partners again, so that will not change, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Mr. Istchenko: Has the department had any discussions with Holland America in reference to the Westmark?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Holland America no longer is associated with the Westmark. It's now the Sternwheeler Hotel. Of course, our department has been in discussions always with Holland America. It's a key partner for Yukon, and we will continue to have those discussions. When the time is right, they certainly will be a strong partner alongside Yukon as a travel destination.

Mr. Istchenko: So, I was more wondering about the Westmark this year in Dawson City. I'm wondering if the department had any discussions with Holland America about their plans for the Westmark in Dawson City.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, of course, the department is working — again, it's an international border issue, Mr. Deputy Chair. They haven't made the decision to start selling yet, but that's their decision to make. We'll see how things unfold with the vaccine. As things slowly move back to normal, they will be there. We look forward to that day when the Dawson Westmark and all the hotels are open. Those are still decisions that are being contemplated.

Mr. Istchenko: So, the Westmark in Dawson City will only open this summer if the borders reopen and if we can get customers, or does the minister know that?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, again, that's a business decision that they will need to make. If travel restrictions are loosened up and we're able to open — again, that's a federal jurisdiction and not our jurisdiction — they will then make that decision. Again, it's a business decision for Westmark Dawson.

Mr. Istchenko: I just want to ask a quick question and I want to stay with the overseas market. The additional funding for the enhanced tourism cooperative marketing fund — when the department gave us the briefing, they talked a little bit about how many applicants there were and stuff like that, but businesses that had applied for international travel and stuff like that were basically denied because we didn't have any international travel. I am just wondering — with that fund or any other fund, is the department now going to look at accepting that as we try to promote Yukon again?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I said in my opening comments, we increased the fund by \$1 million to make it a \$1.7-million fund. Previously, the fund had criteria where you could not use it for local or domestic marketing, so we changed that criteria

to allow for businesses to be able to use that fund for those purposes. As of December 1, we had 181 applicants — 167 clients — resulting in support for approximately 740 traditional online or travel-based marketing projects.

All projects and activities supported by the tourism cooperative marketing fund must reflect the advice of Yukon's chief medical officer of health and respect orders pursuant to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act*. Applicants for travel-related activities occurring outside of Canada will be declined, given recent developments in national and international COVID-19-related travel restrictions. As an alternative to travel, the department is supporting clients to participate in virtual trade and consumer events, so the work continues — again, working with each individual applicant to ensure that their plans are in line with the current state that we're in.

In terms of additional information about the tourism cooperative marketing fund, of the approved projects, 61 percent are with Yukon-based advertisers, representing 61 percent of the \$1.4 million in approved funding.

A breakdown of the business types that are receiving marketing support — 70 accommodation businesses approved for \$580,000; 38 adventure and outfitting businesses approved for \$327,000; eight transportation businesses approved for \$55,000; 23 restaurants and bars approved for \$45,000; seven attractions for \$64,000; eight destination marketing organizations, First Nation governments, and municipalities for \$203,000; and 13 NGOs featuring tourism product for \$114,000.

The current eligibility for TCMF activities includes: traditional advertising such as magazines, television, radio, et cetera; online advertising; ad word purchases; banner ads; social media ads, et cetera. In Yukon, familiarization tours with Canada-based participants' travel-related activities within Canada including conventions and tradeshow, sales missions, sales calls, sponsorship events, and event bid and destination presentations.

The program guidelines, application form, and reporting requirements — which are available in French and English — have been streamlined and are less burdensome for applicants. The interim changes to the program were developed in collaboration with the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board based on feedback from the industry.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that answer. So, according to the contract registry, the department has given \$2.9 million worth of contracts to a company called Cossette communications this year that covers about 62 different contracts. This is a company that's based out of Québec.

Looking at the contracts, they range from production of YouTube videos, experience guide planning, posters for the Whitehorse airport, and website enhancement. It looks like they also were part of the Explore Your Yukon campaign and enhancement to the website.

Can the minister tell us how they decided to go with this Outside company for these contracts?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Cossette is our agency of record. I know the question that you're asking is — because there is a

new standing offer agreement in place now, but I'm going to refer back and then come back to that, as I think that it's very relevant.

The previous standing offer with Cossette is a Vancouver-based company. It has been in place since 2016. It was awarded through public competition. The previous agency was Outside the Cube, which ceased in November 2015. This standing offer, completed in 2019, was extended for a year to accommodate the review of the Yukon Tourism and Culture governance model as identified by the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*.

Where we are currently is that we have just gone out to competition. That is now completed. Tourism Yukon went through a very extensive process. The deadline for receiving proposals on this new standing offer was September 21, 2020, following a 30-day public tender.

The completion of this has now wrapped up. The current standing offer is now again with Cossette. They were awarded. They were the successful applicant. I'm really happy that it's in partnership with a local company, Aasman. This is really great news.

Again, the technical evaluation committee that went through this entire process consisted of three Tourism Yukon staff members and a member of the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board. As in previous competitions, an independent fairness monitor, Common Ground Mediation and Consulting, was engaged to provide support to the technical evaluation committee and to ensure fairness and transparency. This was headed by Yukon's former Ombudsman, Hank Moorlag. Common Ground Mediation and Consulting has provided fairness monitoring services on more than 100 Yukon government procurement competitions. A total of 11 proposals were received from proponents with five proposals that either included or were led by Yukon companies.

The competition wrapped up, as I said. The technical evaluation of all proposals was extensive, and I'm really thankful for the folks who worked on that procurement.

So, that's really great news for Yukon and for this particular company. I had the chance to go and meet with them during my mandate. They are an exceptional company. I'm really, really pleased that Aasman was able to partner with them and that we have a local company that will be working alongside them.

I know that one of the other parts of your question was that they worked on campaigns for Yukon. That's their job. That's what an agency of record does for destination management organizations.

Mr. Istchenko: It's good to see that they partnered with a local Yukon company. There's a lot of money that left the Yukon for many years on that standing offer.

I want to switch to events cancellation. I know that the Arctic Winter Games had to be cancelled and there was some sort of relief and help for them, but I don't believe that it is there anymore for some of the organizations and some of the events.

Of course, with this worldwide pandemic, our borders still being closed, and nobody moving around much, we have had some major things like the Kilrich Yukon Native Hockey

Tournament and the Yukon Quest that are cancelled and aren't happening this year. So, what sort of relief and help is there for those non-profit organizations?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The events cancellation fund was put in place in response to the sudden cancellation of events. The 2020 Arctic Winter Games is one of them, and as you have mentioned, the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament is another. In response, the Department of Economic Development launched the temporary support for events funding program on April 1, 2020. The program covered events scheduled between March 7 and July 31 that were cancelled due to COVID-19. The purpose of the fund was to cover costs related to unanticipated cancellations. Examples of eligible expenses included food purchases, flight cancellations, and cancelled room bookings. The Department of Economic Development and the Department of Tourism and Culture jointly administered the program. The funding provided timely and effective support, lessening the immediate impact of COVID-19 on Yukon businesses and NGOs. During that time, we were also working on the Yukon business relief program, which is in effect, and we also had the CanNor program so that organizations and businesses were able to access funding from those respective funds.

We in the Department of Tourism and Culture and throughout government extended all of our transfer payment agreements to all of the organizations that we respectfully work with. I have gone over that extensively — previously in other debates in the House. I am prepared to do it again today.

Sporting organizations were covered under a different fund. There was an emergency fund.

I'm sure that folks in the Legislative Assembly were able to ask those questions of the Minister of Community Services during that debate. Each and every minister holds responsibility with different sectors and different organizations. We know that non-profit organizations related to tourism and culture are part of the mix for us in terms of immediate- and long-term impact. We've created the non-profit organization fund where organizations can receive additional dollars, and so we'll work with them to ensure that they have the supports that they need. At the time when this was established, it was under the advice — and in working closely with Yukon business, business council, and the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board. This was in quick response.

The Minister of Economic Development and I, along with the Minister of Community Services and the Premier, met quickly with the business community because it was an imminent issue. Folks had ordered a lot of food and there were a lot of perishables. There was an immediate impact. This fund, as I've said, is now closed because we do have other relief programs in place.

I'm prepared to go through the list of events, if the member opposite would like me to do that, in terms of how much money was expended on each one of the large events. For example, the Arctic Winter Games — we saw \$1,256,753 of relief given because of the cancellation of that event, as an example.

Mr. Istchenko: Can the minister confirm that some of the FTE positions in the Department of Tourism and Culture

are positions that are identified for different regions like the Kluane region or Watson Lake region, Elsa/Keno, and Dawson City region? They are designated a portion of their time to work with the business communities in those regions; is that correct?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In terms of our staff, we cover the entire Yukon. Other than staff who are specific to community visitor information centres and those types of staffing positions, we do not do an allocation or a special assignment to any one community. We look at the Yukon as a whole — other than the VIC staff; those are specific to the communities.

Mr. Istchenko: So, like the Department of Community Services has a community liaison person — there are no staff within the Department of Tourism and Culture that the local chamber of commerce can contact as a representative for their region?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we do not have that allocation of staff to any particular community. It's more by service area. Our department has cultural services and tourism services and heritage. Those positions are shared in Yukon, so it's really their area of responsibility and they cover the entire Yukon. Then there are different organizations that represent the interests of certain areas within Yukon, such as the Klondike Visitors Association, which is a separate association that works with that region.

There is a new position that we're working with TIAY on today, which is the concierge or navigator position. They are going to be posting that position on behalf of Yukon. Again, it will not be specific to any particular community. It will be for the entire Yukon to help navigate services and funding right now and relief and different programs that are available. This was a part of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* and was certainly an important aspect of it in terms of assisting folks with navigating our systems within government and really working toward that one-government approach.

Mr. Istchenko: So, according to the contract registry, since June 1, the department has spent \$121,000 on marketing to Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States. Given that our borders are shut down, I believe that it's good that we're doing this marketing so we can keep the Yukon on their radar. But in my riding and throughout the Yukon, I've talked to many businesses that are fly-in only. They are picked up at the airport off the Condor flight and they are taken directly to the lodge location. Brand new money coming to the Yukon, brand new money from a different jurisdiction — and there's a better portion of them, Mr. Deputy Chair, that didn't open last year. They just didn't open. They had no customers. Some of them are 70- or 80-percent European travel or travel from the United States — a few Canadians, but a lot of them are overseas market. It's new money to the territory. That's what we believe on this side — to see new money to the territory, especially when it comes to tourism so they can explore the wonderful Yukon and check out what we have to offer when it comes to pristine wilderness and the great heritage and culture that we have here.

I'm just wondering what comments the minister would make to the businesses that are asking me now, because they were closed all last year and — please don't tell me about the

programs that you have because they understand what programs they have. They're on those programs. They're hoping that they stay extended or whatever. But a lot of them just tell me: "We don't want the government programs. As soon as we can, we want to get our customers back."

We're seeing the rollout of the vaccine right now. It's worldwide, and that's such a positive thing I think. Today with the minister's announcement, I don't believe I heard her talk about the rollout of the vaccine and how this was going to work toward our reopening of the economy again, especially with the devastated tourism industry.

That's my last question for the day. I would like the minister to comment a bit on that because I have to tell my constituents and the business community — we on this side do have to tell them — what summer is going to look like for them. They're going to have to plan and prepare all winter long.

Hon. Ms. McLean: There was a lot in that to respond to. In the relief and recovery plan, we talk about two pots on the stove.

I'll go through it. COVID-19 has had a paradoxical impact on the tourism sector in that the very measures put in place to keep citizens safe — for example, travel restrictions, limitations on gathering, social distancing — have devastated the tourism industry, making it incredibly difficult or even impossible to operate. We know that.

In 2020, many Canadian jurisdictions turned to staycations, encouraging citizens to stay in their own jurisdictions and take advantage of the local tourism experiences as a way to generate revenue for the tourism sector. Unfortunately, Yukon staycations and the BC bubble cannot come close to sustaining Yukon's tourism industry, which saw over 500,000 visitors in Yukon in 2019.

While many sectors of Yukon's economy have been able to adapt and begin to recover from the impacts of COVID-19, the sectors that rely on visitation and gatherings continue to need ongoing relief and support. Government of Yukon will continue to focus on relief with supplemental programs based on needs analysis for accommodations and tourism businesses, as well as for tourism and culture non-profit organizations. International and national tourism is a long game requiring relationships with the travel trade and various markets built over decades and strong brand presence through various marketing tactics. The future recovery of the tourism industry in Yukon is dependent on maintaining those relationships, marketing initiatives, and consumer purchasing patterns today.

The relationship between tourism relief and tourism recovery is like having two pots of water on the stove at the same time — one on the front burner and one on the back burner. While significant travel and gathering restrictions are in place for Yukon and Canada, tourism relief is on the front burner on high right now; tourism recovery is on the back burner on simmer.

The tourism relief and recovery plan is designed to move tourism recovery from the back burner on simmer to the front burner on boil as conditions evolve over the next three years. We will continue to monitor the situation and turn the heat up and down on the two pots, when needed, as COVID-19 evolves

and travel restrictions lessen. Eventually, when the time is right, we will turn off the tourism relief pot altogether. I think that is a really important analogy to keep in mind.

Yes, we are keeping our markets warm because we need to. They are important to us. To get back to the level of revenue that we had attributable to tourism, the jobs, and the GDP, we need to keep those markets warm, because those are — just like Condor, it is a great indicator. They are selling; they are selling seats right now, and that is going to keep that market warm for us. German-speaking Europe is one of our most important international markets. I know that businesses are wanting this to end. We all want this to end — there is no question — but right now, these are the measures that are in place to keep Yukoners safe.

The relief and the recovery program are going to help us get to that place of being ready for travellers to come back. Everyone has been impacted; everyone feels differently about travel. We are lucky to be where we live, because this pristine, open Yukon is going to draw a lot of people worldwide, and we are going to see new markets as a result of what we have gone through and how we have managed as well.

I think that the values that Yukoners talked about in the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* shone through completely during the pandemic. I think that people are going to want to be part of that. They are going to want to come to the Canadian north where things were managed and people were cared for, and that includes businesses. Yes, we know that folks want to get back to earning revenue, but we can just look not far from where we are today — in other jurisdictions and see the result. I mean, I feel for my colleague in Alberta every time that we are in a federal-provincial-territorial meeting, and my heart goes out because what has happened in their province is devastating. It is devastating. Those are lives lost.

We followed the science and we have governed with empathy, and that is really important to Yukoners. Yukon is for sure in a unique position to closely match many of the attributes that travellers are looking for in the post-COVID-19 travel world — the desire for natural and untouched destinations and a return to values, as I've said. What is important is fresh air, community health and wellness, consciousness of the environment, less large groups and more meaningful events, and authentic local travel experiences. With tourism relief and recovery plan supports in place, Yukon will be ready to draw from our strengths and deliver safe, flexible travel experiences to inspire traveller confidence.

The other part of that is that one of the programs that we are working with our partners on — with our partner at TIAY and Yukon University — is the Elevate program, which is helping businesses adapt. Those supports are in place as well. Businesses can actually receive up to \$20,000 — \$5,000 per business — to do a general consultation and then a further \$15,000 to enact some of that plan. This will go on throughout the relief and recovery implementation. That is exciting, because it is actually helping businesses to look at their business with new eyes and with a new lens.

The global pandemic has caused disruption throughout the whole world, but it has disrupted, for sure, our industry in a way

that — you know, this is a creative industry. I think that there are businesses that are adapting really, really well. Elevate is helping them to get there. Businesses that are struggling with adaptation can really refine and look at new ways of visualizing their businesses and then making that a reality.

Mr. Istchenko: That concludes my questions for today. I want to thank the staff who are here today assisting the minister. I will turn it over to the member from the Third Party.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the officials for their presence here today, as well as for the briefing they provided us on October 14.

I just want to pick up on the minister's analogy with respect to having the pot on simmer. Despite this being an unprecedented pandemic, we do have, within that period of time, a precedent. Can the minister outline for the House what lessons were learned with respect to the July 1 Yukon-BC bubble opening? As we all recall, Yukon got caught short. We announced it, but who cared? BC wasn't ready and didn't have the information. As we saw, there was a catch-up period. Anticipating that we were going to have success, that we were going to be opening borders, that we were going to be — I'm really looking for what lessons were learned for that process. The minister and her officials will know from participating in the weekly Zoom calls with TIAY that there was some real angst and concern expressed about how it was great it was open, but jeez, we missed an opportunity here. How could we have a bit more nimbleness?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, of course. I know that there was a lot of angst among the industry during that time. That was our first opening. The campaigns were ready to be launched, but the decision had to be made. The final decision had to be made at the Cabinet level. That is something — as soon as that occurred, we launched the campaign. We were ready. The Department of Tourism and Culture had the campaign ready. They had the website ready — all the information for folks to look at to ensure that they were travelling safely in the territory. That work was ready to go. We were ready to launch it. We had to wait for the final Cabinet decision to be made. Things were changing rapidly, sometimes on a daily basis. We were really following the plan, following the recommendations laid out by the chief medical officer, but that public health framework that we worked from was what guided us in that decision. Better state, worsened state — there are a number of criteria within that safe reopening plan for Yukon that really guided us.

I know what you're asking, but that was in fact the way that it had to be at that time. Again, this was not the experience of a public health situation that we faced over the last 10 months and was certainly — yes, understatement, unprecedented. We do have lessons learned. We are documenting — what could we have done better? The review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* is going to be a really great discussion to have with Yukoners as we review and talk about how this unfolded. Again, the CEMA act didn't even contemplate Yukon First Nations in that in self-government. There were a lot of lessons learned. What would we have done better? They're from different departments that I'm responsible for. I certainly am

compiling that in terms of: What did we learn? What could we have done differently?

In this case, we could not launch that campaign until the decision was final and was made at the Cabinet level. I don't know what I could have done differently with that, given where we were at with COVID-19 and that this was the first opening that we had. You know what? We've experienced a worsened state and had to retract that BC bubble and that was a hard decision as well, because we know of course what the impact has been on Yukoners and on other Canadians.

Ms. Hanson: Maybe I'm not being clear. I'm not asking the minister to defend the process that occurred. What I'm being told is that we have two pots on a stove — one is on simmer and one is right up there going. So, the question I'm asking is: Based on what we learned — so that simmering in my mind means you have the strategy and you're ready to go when the green light is given so that you don't go simmer, simmer, simmer — oh, now we go to Cabinet and now we seek their approval. Well, actually, your strategy, I would hope, is presuming that you have Cabinet approval and you're ready to go. There are many precedents for government action to be taken like that.

My question is: Subject to other conditions being present — and I can give the minister many, many examples of how Cabinets have operated in the past on this, not just in this territory — the lesson learned in terms of strategically — we have a strategy, I presume, over the next short while — one of the questions will be — and I will ask her now in the context of this — there is a branding exercise and I am hoping that there is a significant element that is going to be pushing a button to be ready to go when you have the green light. That would have been part of what wasn't present in addition to the communication with the other jurisdictions that we're opening up to, whether — ostensibly, the minister can speak most comfortably to the Canadian scene because she and her counterparts in the federal, provincial, and territorial arenas are dealing with the Canadian context. I am not asking nor worrying about international at this stage. In the Canadian context, when we start opening, what did we learn in terms of being ready to be able to go with that green light?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I think with lessons, the issue and the crux of it was the timing between the announcements and legal decisions being made. The department is and will be ready again when we move to that stage. Having discussions with the chief medical officer about these types of implications have been ongoing and they will continue as the back scene unfolds, as things change, and until we get back to a final, full back-to-normal life and state.

We have been working on this all the way through the pandemic, ensuring that we are ready to go when we can get there. We were preparing, just in the off chance — when the BC bubble was established, we started preparing for the potential of Alberta. That is a fact. We started preparing for it. We never did launch because there were no decisions indicating that was safe for Yukoners, so we didn't go there, but the campaign was ready.

We have been preparing, and without agency of record — Cossette — and now Aasman is part of that. Aasman did the local campaign under Cossette during the summer for the travel and buy-local campaign. That was done with Aasman.

So, we will continue working with our chief medical officer regarding that. I am not sure if there was a question — or you wanted me to speak about the Yukon place branding — that you would want me to speak to.

Ms. Hanson: Just to clarify for the minister, I was asking — one element of that certainly will be our branding. As I understand it, it is part of the recovery plan. So, where are we at in that very vital element of the new branding? There has been discussion on some of the meetings with TIAY about global digital branding. Has the work begun on that? Is it halfway through? Is it three-quarters of the way through? When would we expect to see the new branding for Yukon as part of this recovery plan?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, that was a really exciting announcement that we are moving forward on with place brand work. A place brand is really a comprehensive collection of marketing and communication tools that we share to raise the awareness of Yukon as a destination and to attract visitors. The place brand will create the overarching story, the connective tissue that binds together and elevates all economic sectors, not just tourism. This is a really broad, wide-spanning initiative. A strong place brand can help Yukon compete in a global marketplace by articulating our unique characteristics important to attracting investment, people, and capital. A Yukon place brand will not only contribute to Yukon's recovery from the pandemic and grow our economy, but it will also bind us together through collective expression and what makes Yukon so special. In this way, the brand will be a shared public asset for the entire territory.

The initiative involves a community engagement process with businesses, communities, residents, and government to identify and confirm the qualities that make Yukon truly special and unique — geography, history, culture, values, et cetera — and the things that we should celebrate, protect, and promote. A lot of that did come out during the tourism development strategy consultation and the resulting documents. This will not be a Yukon government initiative. This is an initiative that has originated from Yukon's private sector, and we recognized the potential of a strong Yukon place brand. We want to provide funding to support its advancement. Working with our private sector partners, we look forward to providing you with a fuller picture as it unfolds.

We currently have marketing in place. We're not going to wait for the place brand. This is going to be an initiative that will take some time to get it right. We're going to do that work. The marketing of Yukon remains in place. It's strong. We have folks who work for us around the world. All of that is still in place.

I've already said that it will be overarching. It will take some time to get there. We're working with research through Destination Canada on how we need to refine the Yukon tourism brand. All of that being said, we do have strong marketing throughout the world through Destination Canada,

and we have Cossette which takes care of our domestic marketing and Aasman now as a partner with them.

The place brand project is going to unfold over a period of time. It's going to be in partnership; we see ourselves as a partner. This is not a Government of Yukon initiative. I think that this is the most important part of that — this place brand, Yukon story concept that will emerge.

Ms. Hanson: I am confused because a minister just said that this not a tourism — it's a whole-of-government thing, but it says right here on the press release: "4. Refining Yukon's tourism brand and inspiring travellers to visit the Yukon". If it's not a tourism branding exercise, why was it announced as part of the COVID-19 relief and recovery plan?

My rationale for asking the minister to outline for us how this is going to unfold is to try to get a sense of — you usually have a start date and you have a target for completion. You usually have a budget, and you have a sense of how much you're going to put into that. I haven't been able to get that from the minister.

I'm told that it's the private sector as the lead and that the government is a partner. So, who is the private sector lead on this? Who is leading this if it's not Yukon government doing Yukon government's tourism brand and inspiring travellers to visit Yukon? I'm simply asking for the information with respect to when we anticipate this exercise to begin, when we anticipate a target for completion so that we have a sense of what we're paying for in terms of product and who are we paying that to.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Under theme 4 — refining the brand and inspiring travellers to visit — data and insights are essential for destination planning, development, management, and promotion. Consumer behaviours have shifted, and it's virtually impossible for destinations to understand these shifts without conducting relevant and timely market research. Providing updated and timely data is necessary to help the tourism industry evaluate opportunities and to make informed business decisions. With the insights gained by researching current and potential post-COVID-19 consumer markets, the department will use the opportunity to modernize the Yukon brand and brand assets to better appeal to newly defined consumer segments. The current Larger than Life tagline and brand may not resonate as well in a post-COVID-19 world. The COVID-19 crisis will change the way that destinations manage tourism and go to market. The three-year tourism relief and recovery plan takes into consideration the new reality based on updated market research. The four key initiatives under theme 4 are: to invest in research to better understand changing consumer behaviour and new markets; to enhance the Yukon's tourism brand and assets as a result of this work; to enhance investments in a three-year destination marketing strategy; to enhance partnership and key tourism stakeholders and partners; and to invest in place branding for Yukon as a whole.

All of this obviously ties together. We do have a Yukon tourism brand, and this will enhance that brand.

It brings a whole-of-Yukon approach. This year, we have \$150,000 allocated to the First Nation Chamber of Commerce this fiscal as the Yukon place brand project. For this particular fiscal year, they will be hosting the work that is going to take

place. The Yukon place brand project is already over a year old. This is something that has been going on for some time. We are investing in that because we believe in Yukon place brand.

Ms. Hanson: I am beginning to get a sense that we have part of the answer that we proposed. The minister has indicated that we spent \$100,000—some so far to begin the process. The whole of my question was about the target for completion and who is involved. If the private sector is the lead for this exercise — the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce — is correct, the minister could just confirm it. I can read and did read exactly what she just read into the record, so I don't need that. In the interest of time, what I'm really trying to do is move rather quickly through with a series of questions that relate to the financial element of it, not the narrative.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, I know that you are trying to get to the — when does this start? The Yukon story and Yukon brand has already been underway for about a year. This is our government's investment into Yukon's story. The Department of Tourism and Culture — we have a marketing strategy. We have a research plan. We work with Destination Canada. This Yukon branding exercise is going to be overarching. It is going to reach into a lot of other sectors. It is going to help us to be clear about — when we market to whoever it is we are marketing to — that we are consistent and that we are telling the story of Yukon in a way that is common. You can see this in New Zealand, if you want to do some looking into what it is that we are looking to do here in Yukon. New Zealand has done probably the best job in the world. There are currently countries that are doing similar things to meet a need.

We have to manage our brand very carefully, and so it made sense for Tourism and Culture to be the lead on place branding that will be overarching into all aspects, really. It is going to include everybody in this House, and it is going to include every Yukoner, and it should, because it is really defining who we are and how we tell our story and those common tools that businesses can use or the university can use or other entities as we are looking to attract people, investment, and visitors to our territory. So, really, Tourism and Culture has a primary job of protecting and working with our tourism brand, so having it led from Tourism and Culture made a lot of sense. So, that is why you are seeing investment here, but it is a Government of Yukon investment into this.

In terms of the money that we are talking about today and the \$11 million over the next two fiscal years, that is investment, over and above — our current marketing fund is \$7,686,000 for marketing in 2020-21, plus we had, in our supplementary budget today, \$500,000 from Destination Canada for domestic marketing. I've already talked about the partner that we have in place right now for this fiscal year — the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce — working really closely with the private sector and businesses. You won't have to go far to find folks who are well aware of the Yukon story initiative that has been unfolding for the last year and a bit. This is a new, modern approach. You can also look to places like New Zealand that have done an exceptional job. If you look at all of their marketing, it's very aligned with their values and

what's important to them. That's where we're going as a jurisdiction within Canada.

I think that there are a lot of exciting things in the relief and recovery plan that come directly out of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. One of them that really ties to this in a strong way is the sustainability framework. We're working with world — sorry, it just slipped out.

We're working on finalizing that framework, and it will be tied to many of our other strategies in Yukon around the sustainability of tourism.

It's the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories. That's a really exciting initiative, and we're close to being ready to talk about it in more detail. It's in the relief and recovery plan. It has been elevated out of the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* and is a really key initiative. It's one of our pillars in the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. All of those things really tie together.

Ms. Hanson: One of the advantages — or disadvantages, I suppose — of being an MLA for 10 years is that I have attended all of those conferences. I have heard the presentations over and over — at least twice from New Zealand. They're wonderful, exciting, thrilling, but that's not our strategy. What I was asking about — and I will cease now because I'm not going to get an answer, just a narrative — and looking for was this: We have some project money that has been provided to one entity. I am curious as to the strategic framework that this will fit into. I haven't heard that articulated, so perhaps it is not ready yet; that is fine.

Can the minister provide this House with an update on the tourism survey that was conducted earlier this year? At one point, there were, I believe, 350 surveys sent out. It would be good to have on the record the number that were returned and found compliant in terms of data sets. Also, if the minister could provide a breakdown of the sectors that are represented within that, and if the minister could indicate to the House, given that we're in part of the marketing thing that we are involved in as a territory and given the difficulty and the possibility of having familiarization tours — is the department engaging in virtual familiarization tours? If so, how many and what targets have there been if virtual familiarization tours have been conducted or are planned for this fiscal?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will start with the — and there is a lot in there. I will start with the familiarization tours; they have been ongoing. We did have in-person familiarization tours up until the BC bubble burst, and now some are virtual. All of the familiarization tours have gone virtual — the big world conferences — so we are providing that now. We will have to get back to you with the numbers in a legislative return; I do not have that in front of me.

In terms of the survey that we conducted with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, it can be found on yukon.ca. I am not sure if you have had a chance to see that; it is there. Tourism businesses were contacted by e-mail to self-complete the survey online between September 28 and October 11. The respondents had the option to self-complete in French, if requested. Operators not on the distribution list were encouraged through tourism non-governmental organizations,

including TIAY, WTAY, Association franco-yukonnaise, and the chambers of commerce as well.

A total of 334 survey invitation links were sent to businesses. A total of 123 responses were received with 116 responses in scope, for a response rate of 34.7 percent.

In terms of highlights — 34 percent fewer tourism businesses will be operating year-round in 2020-21; 86 percent of businesses reported having reduced revenue from earned income — for example, sales and bookings; 38 percent of respondents changed their product offerings; 84 percent of tourism businesses accessed at least one COVID-19 funding support program; 3.1 was the average number of COVID-19 funding support programs accessed; 86 percent of respondents accessed business and/or personal financial reserves; 57 percent of businesses do not expect to have sufficient cash flow to cover business expenses for the next six months; 70 percent of respondents' mental health is worse now than it was before COVID-19. Those are really daunting results and not surprising.

We certainly expected — and that is where we derived our information from to develop the programs. Partly, we gathered the information from this and working with TIAY and working with other associations and, of course, our Yukon Tourism Advisory Board to develop the programs as a result of these numbers that we have before us.

Respondents — 38 percent were in adventure or recreation; 32 percent were accommodation; 13 percent were food and beverage.

There are some of the highlights. It's a 24-page document. It can be found on yukon.ca. I would be happy to — you'll have more conversations and the department will as well.

A couple of other notes in terms of business structure: 43 percent were corporations, 32 percent were sole proprietors, and 23 percent were non-incorporated partnerships. Again, these are some of the highlights, but if the member opposite wishes to have further discussions about this, I think that we can arrange to have some briefings around what the findings were or we could have other discussions in other ways.

Ms. Hanson: I thank the minister for that. I do appreciate the fact that sometimes those documents are on yukon.ca, but the other part of it is that our job is to put on the record some substantive issues. Sometimes it is important, particularly when we have sometimes abstract questions in Question Period — they may seem to be out of the blue — and when you ground them in the statistics on the record, citizens who are either reading or listening to the proceedings of this House will have a better understanding of why people do raise them.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I just wanted to thank the staff for being here today and supporting the debate that we had. I appreciate all of the questions. We will follow up on any legislative returns that are necessary from the debate today. I thank everyone for your participation today.

Deputy Chair: Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate in Vote 54.

Ms. Hanson: Mr. Deputy Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: Ms. Hanson has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$7,847,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$7,847,000 agreed to

to

Department of Tourism and Culture agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 205, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2020-21*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Health and Social Services — continued

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I have with me today the DM of Health and Social Services, Stephen Samis, and of course Karen Chan, assistant deputy minister.

I will speak a bit. I know that, at our last time here, I answered a few questions with respect to the supplementary budget before us today. I will speak a bit about that and then I will look at providing — I know that there were some specific questions about the general overall budget for Health and Social Services outside of the supplementary budget today. So, just as a note, I provided to the members the breakdown of the

budget as we presented it. The budget, as it is presented today for the supplementary, is for \$33,695,000. There are specific sections that the budget covered.

Just for the record, we have the expenditures that cover direct client services for our vulnerable population. So, I fielded quite a few questions around that, and that addressed the diverse expenditures to protect the health and safety of Yukon's vulnerable population. I spoke at length about accommodations so that we can look at ensuring that the clients of Health and Social Services are housed appropriately, and we had significant discussions around the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter as well and the parameters around COVID-related rules and parameters when we look at ensuring that the clientele there are safe and supported. There is also funding to augment some of the services that are provided through NGO groups like the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, All Genders Yukon, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and then additional professional staff at Health and Social Services to respond to increased demands in the community with nursing and health professionals and mental health services.

The budget that we're speaking to deals with further pressures that the department had observed and accounted for and social supports. Some of the supports were supplemented and supported by the federal government when it comes to the CERB payments, social assistance, and payments to mitigate some of the financial hardships that were experienced by Yukoners and that supported anticipated increase and demand in social assistance as well during this pandemic. Then we saw some additional pressures on housing as a result of the requirement for social distancing, generally seeing 70 people in a night — 60 to 70 at the shelter. We had to accommodate and allow the individuals an appropriate alternative, and that meant that we had to put some resources into hotels and had to commission out some of that support.

We also ensured that we had sufficient resources in the budget for childcare centres and childcare supports and that the parents and the childcare centres were sufficiently accommodated, meaning that we had to ensure that there were the necessary supplies and supports there so as to keep the childcare centres open, that additional prevention measures and controls were put in place and that the supplies were there — like the disinfecting supplies and the spacing requirements — and that the staff were well-trained as well in the COVID rules and compliance.

We had put in also resources in this particular budget for surge capacity and vaccine planning. That would be of significant importance to Yukoners, given that the budget that we have before us speaks to the additional COVID requirements, including capacity, vaccine planning, and potential early implementation.

Now that we have the decision and are proceeding with implementation, it certainly means that it's not the sole responsibility of Health and Social Services. It will also fall on Community Services — around the planning and capacity to some extent. We have spoken about that work. For the record, Community Services is working with National Defence and looking at the mass distribution and the requirement for the

north to get a higher percentage of the vaccines to cover 25 percent of our adult population, so there is some really good news around that.

Since this budget was put in, we have essentially negotiated with Canada the cost factors associated with the vaccine, which is not covered here. It is mainly about the logistics and the logistical requirements of getting the vaccines out to the communities. We are essentially setting up two teams to travel to rural Yukon communities and one hub here in the city and working through our two rural hospitals and through our health centres. It is establishing and putting the team in place. I know that I have spoken about that ad nauseum here. I have gone back in time to say that we have worked through some of the logistics early on and just recently made the announcement last week. When I actually came in last to speak about the budget, we made the announcement that Yukoners would see the Moderna vaccine in January. I understand that the decision is imminent and will happen soon around Health Canada's endorsement.

I suspect that, as we go ahead in terms of additional supports and implementing this, we will continue to work with the federal government to ensure that we have sufficient resources. We have worked very closely with the communities and with the First Nation communities and municipalities around personal protective equipment, ensuring that they are well prepared to protect themselves against COVID, but also around implementation of the vaccines. We are really focusing on the delivery of the vaccine into the communities and having the communities well versed on what this means, but also having a plan in place for every community. That is being worked out through the Health Emergency Operations Centre with the experts there, with Community Services directly involved and Dr. Hanley's team as well.

We have also recently had the mass flu clinic. The objective there was to see, on a bit of a trial basis, if we can actually establish a centre that will be able to deliver vaccines in a way that is sufficiently following the COVID protocols, delivering the maximum amount of vaccines in a day while still following the parameters of COVID and getting the citizens in and out. I believe that the general rule is that we can see 1,000 citizens come in for inoculation in one day. There is a possibility that we can go up to 1,200. That was the trial at the mass flu clinic.

That is really great. That means that, in a few short weeks, we can get the majority of Yukoners through. We are using the Panorama electronic data system that we use right now to track and monitor so that we can quickly follow back around in 30 days — 28 to 35 days — who had been inoculated, how we can get them back in, and the notifications to get that out. It is already tried and true so we can go ahead and continue on down that path. The team is well versed in that already — just an indication that there is a team of experts on the ground with extensive experience. Having 12,400 — almost 12,500 — vaccinations in one month is a good indication, I think, that they know what they are doing. They have been doing inoculations for a lot of years, and this is no different. It is just a different

vaccine. How you treat the vaccine, how you deliver it, and the logistics around that, I think, have been worked out.

Some comments around — well, it's so different; the flu vaccine is so different from the COVID vaccine. Well, in actuality, the structure is set up to be successful, and so we are putting our good faith in the team of experts to get this out.

At the same time as we were going through this process, we had to establish an additional support for COVID testing, so just making sure that we do the contact tracing and the testing and that it continued on, given that we were in the middle of a second wave.

That linked to the enhancements and supports for COVID and looking at mitigating COVID transmission — additional health supports and additional medical staff, infection control nurses, care providers in long-term care homes, and the Communicable Disease Control Unit as well. We had a bunch of our nurses deployed over to the communicable disease centre to do contact tracing and testing support to the COVID centre.

So, additional funds there were to provide support for the COVID centre and the 811 line as well, which meant quicker service and a quicker response time. There was a requirement for ensuring that we have sufficient and appropriate turnaround in terms of testing, results getting out, and then contact tracing, which is an investigative process. The team that is there is doing an exceptional job in keeping Yukoners safe.

The IHealth — as we went through this exercise and we looked at the Panorama system through the IHealth review, the 30-year-old system at the hospital — the Meditech system — and now the collaboration between Health, Highways and Public Works, and the hospital to modernize — I think that this was a test for doing virtual care and a test for quick access to medical supports. This was considered as we looked at this supplementary and we looked at the supports for technology. The technological supports were looked at for quick delivery and turnaround of correspondence and in terms of virtual care and making sure that our health centres are linked to our physicians who are then linked to the specialists in other parts of the Yukon or outside of the Yukon. I think that this kind of gave us a quick indication of what we needed to do and the additional supports that were required there.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation received an extra \$6,012,000 to support their response. For the most part, the funding, as I understand it, in that we have not had a lot of COVID hospitalization — most of the patients who have contracted COVID were isolating at home and took care of themselves in their home environment.

The support to the hospital was really around bringing in additional staff and additional staff time, as well as salaries, supplies, and equipment, indicating it was really augmenting the loss of their budget, because generally they have clients travelling through the Yukon or visitors coming here who require medical support, which now means that the hospital doesn't have those clients; therefore, they're not receiving that revenue from the clients. The objective here, through this budget submission, was to help support that loss.

What we received in terms of the ask from the hospital for the \$6 million — I believe about half of that went to the lost

revenue. The lost revenue was due to that, but we also had to deal with supports for the hospital as they had to follow COVID protocols as well — social distancing, visiting, and cleaning and such — so it was an added scope of care there.

The self-isolation facility was a huge part of this expenditure — making sure I responded to a whole bunch of questions there as well. We had to keep the facility in place so that we could contain COVID in a centralized place where we had individuals isolating rather than having it out in the community in a contained environment. That's part of what was covered under here. Sufficient supports for that — sufficient social supports and client services — a lot of that I covered already in the questions that were asked last week in the submission to the floor and to the Members of the Legislative Assembly on the budget.

I will stop there and just take the questions from the opposition with respect to the supplementary budget that we have before us.

Ms. McLeod: I want to welcome the officials back to the Legislature today. I want to talk to the minister today about home care supports. We had a fairly lengthy conversation in this regard back in spring 2018 when the minister seemed to understand fully what types of supports were necessary for our older Yukoners to stay in their homes.

Obviously, fiscally it makes a lot of sense to keep people in their homes given that the numbers tossed around are in excess of \$2,000 a day to stay in a hospital, in excess of \$500 a day to be in a care facility like Whistle Bend Place or Copper Ridge Place. We're looking at a relatively small amount of money, I believe, to help older Yukoners stay in their homes and manage their lives there.

I'm wondering — since 2018, when the minister had indicated she would be talking to the Yukon Council on Aging — I believe that was the organization — and working with them to provide some services — it has come to my attention that they're not able to work outside of Whitehorse. I'm getting some calls from concerned Yukoners in rural Yukon who are not able to access any supports. Obviously, two or three weeks ago, we did hear from some senior folks in Whitehorse who were also having those problems. This clearly seemed to be front of mind for the minister and she did indicate that she was working on this. I'm wondering what has changed in the last two years to help these Yukoners stay in their homes longer. By "help", I mean help with clearing the snow from driveways, shovelling snow off their roofs, with some of their summertime yard work that they need, or indeed with washing the walls or windows. Those are activities that aren't accessible through traditional home care routes where time is limited for each of those seniors.

If we can just start there, with the minister letting us know what's being done in the last two years to help these seniors stay in their homes.

Hon. Ms. Frost: There is lots in that question with respect to seniors and aging in place. What have we done from 2018? I would say what we have done since 2016, since taking office with respect to seniors' care, aging in place, and elders. For our aging-in-place action, we clearly don't just work with

the Yukon Council on Aging; we work with all sectors of our community when we speak about seniors. We work in our communities in different regards — having early on recognized that there have been major challenges with historical services for seniors to age well in their own homes, in their own communities, and therefore not being well-supported to stay in their own homes longer.

The member opposite put some numbers out with regard to \$500 in care facilities or \$200 in their homes. I mean, there is a significant difference. In terms of extended care facilities, we are still the lowest in the country in terms of what we charge for care. The idea is to augment, as much as we can, supports for seniors to stay in their homes longer. Early on, we heard very clearly that the seniors needed to be heard — that they have a lot of wisdom collectively, in terms of lived experience, and they wanted a say in how services were provided to them. How and what we do — rather than speak for them, they wanted us to speak with them.

They essentially would tell us what they needed. That took effect through the aging-in-place action plan. We corresponded with over 1,200 senior Yukoners from across the spectrum of Yukon, so some with disabilities and some from indigenous communities. In fact, in the member's riding of Watson Lake, I spent a whole afternoon speaking to the elders from the Liard First Nation and the Kaska Nation to tell me what it is they saw, what they needed, and what they would like to see in their community. Interestingly enough, they didn't feel supported in terms of cultural sensitivity and support. They didn't want to access the Wye Manor and told us why that was — and so what other alternatives could we look at for them?

At the same time, as we went through the consultation and engagement, we had representation from every Yukon community through the aging-in-place document. In the submission, we heard that there were quite a lot of recommendations that came out of that. The seniors want to stay home longer in their own homes. We went and worked through a partnership with the Yukon Housing Corporation to look at the home first initiative, which meant that we had to put resources in our budget to keep the seniors at home longer so that we could support mobility and mobility access. We also, at the same time, looked at creating a rapid response home care team to help individuals leave the hospital and re-enable them to go back into their own homes.

The creation of the 10-bed facility at the Thomson Centre was built to do just that. It was to allow the seniors who come out of the hospital to stop in there for rehabilitation and then go back to their own home communities. The O&M estimate for home and community care in 2015-16 was \$5,833,000. This year, the budget for home and community care is \$9,000,863. That is a significant increase. That included additional care for the home first philosophy and the clients who need complex care. We have seen also, just as a note for the record, an 85-percent success rate in getting people home through the re-enablement unit at the hospital, and that is covered through this home and community care budget. So, it's really around the programming and the supports.

Certainly, we're aware that rural Yukon communities have not historically been well supported, so that meant, of course, that we needed to work with our partners in the communities and work with them — the indigenous communities, the health centres — and look at providing care coordination, social work support, and home support. A part of that was looking at the occupational requirements and doing retrofits and such on their homes. Physiotherapy as well — bringing specialized supports to the communities — and working closely with the Meals on Wheels programming, working with home care across the territory.

The question around 2018 and what we have done to allow seniors to stay in their homes — always a philosophy that we keep the seniors in their homes as long as we possibly can and out of our care facilities unless it's absolutely necessary. That's very exciting. We are also enabling Yukoners to stay in their own home communities.

We have also looked at end-of-life care — a palliative care initiative — so that seniors can go back home into their respective communities and have all of the supports that they need for end-of-life care. We do that with the support of our medical team, the support of the RNs in the health centres, and the support of our communities.

As we respond to the question around what has been improved, I would say that certainly lots of things have improved in terms of creating more capacity, creating more supports, and looking at additional services to all of the communities. Lots of synergy is happening throughout in terms of reaching the goal of having seniors stay in their communities longer and working on the action items together.

Going back to the aging-in-place action plan that was released in 2019, we released the plan just this year — September 2019 — but 2018-19 is when the seniors participated in the advisory committee. Really valuable guidance and recommendations came forward out of that — programs and service infrastructure, housing, transportation, living full and meaningful lives, and necessary actions taken to ensure that they have that opportunity to stay in their own homes, as well as maintain a high quality of life. Any specific concerns that they had with respect to upholding a home base is one that we take into consideration, specifically around the culturally based philosophies and partnership with long-term care.

As of November 30, home care has served 894 Yukoners, 581 in Whitehorse and, of course, in all of our communities. Right now, we have 343 outside of Whitehorse, but that doesn't say that we've only provided supports to 343; that means that those are the ones who are in direct contact with Health.

The partnership with indigenous communities and our health directors in each one of our communities has been, I would say, stellar in that we've had many opportunities to work with the communities on implementing recommendations and ensuring that enhanced supports are there for medical travel and medical supports.

As well, we have additional supports for Meals on Wheels and supports in the budget to allow for that. That is in partnership around making sure that the seniors who are able to

stay home but not able to cook for themselves — that we essentially provide supports to them.

We also provide, in our communities, the support for the First Nation support workers, which is funded by the department and augmented. Partnerships in that — trying to right size the services that were essentially left unresolved for many decades — and part of reconciliation as well in ensuring that we take good care of our seniors and care at the right place, at the right time, and without compromising them in any way.

I can go on until the end of my time in terms of speaking about the success and the accomplishments and why it is important.

The question was asked — and it's not so much a fully Health and Social Services responsibility; we look at the whole of government. We look at housing and we look at what was put into the budget over time. Again, \$5,833,000 in 2015-16 — and today we see a budget of \$9,863,000 to fund home and community supports.

Ms. McLeod: I didn't really get an answer to my question. Perhaps I need to ask this in a different way. How much money is in this year's budget, including this supplementary budget, to assist Yukoners with staying in their homes by way of snow-clearing from roofs or roads and other maintenance issues that they may have?

Hon. Ms. Frost: So, the question specific to the supplementary budget — whether we have funding in the supplementary budget for snow removal and such — I can tell the member opposite that the funding that was allocated in the mains and what was allocated for home and community supports was \$9,863,000 specific to the supplementary budget. As I go through the supplementary budget — and we look at ensuring supports for seniors and we look at ensuring that we provide supports through Yukon Housing Corporation for all of our seniors units that we have — ensuring that snow removal is done appropriately. Given the recent big snowfall, we had some challenges. Granted, we took every effort to ensure that we had quick supports, and I just want to thank members who went out there and supported the seniors.

Meanwhile, we have in our budget \$9 million — almost \$10 million — that is intended to support seniors. Specific to snow removal and yard work, it doesn't really fall under the Health budget. We're here, under Health, to provide essential services — health services — to our clients, but we work with our partners to ensure that the seniors are supported to age well at home, meaning that we put the resources into Yukon Housing Corporation to make sure their home is accessible — mobility accessible. If it is in an indigenous community, then we work with the First Nation.

The objective of the Health budget and the supplementary budget is to ensure that we support our non-governmental organizations that provide the non-health-like services. If there is a gap somewhere that we are not aware of and if there is a need for Health to do a further review of its budget to look at snow removal and yard work — would one capture that to say that it's a Health responsibility? Perhaps we need to have a further look at what "health" covers. Our main objective is

ensuring that we provide the essential services as they relate specifically to the Health and Social Services mandate.

We also know that the Yukon Council on Aging — there are some supports and some matching services that allow seniors to access some resources as well. There are further supports out there. I would be happy to get that out if there are any concerns coming from the seniors community.

Ms. McLeod: Still no answer — the minister stood on her feet here today and said that she had worked out a deal with Yukon Housing Corporation, which she is the minister of, to get some of these services out to our older Yukoners, but clearly there is a miscommunication somewhere between those two ministers.

I'm going to move on since we have almost no time.

We know that there is a shortage of mental health services and that there are people on wait-lists for appointments. In the past, the Yukon has allowed US-trained and US-licensed psychiatrists to practise under a special licence. We know that at least one US-trained and US-licensed psychiatrist has contacted the government expressing a desire to provide services here. Can the minister tell us why the government is not taking steps to help this psychiatrist to provide needed services in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Those are very interesting comments from the Member for Watson Lake with respect to not answering the question. I have answered the question. As Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I have responded under that file as well. My responsibility and mandate as the Health and Social Services minister and the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing is to look at ensuring that both departments work fluidly together to address and augment one another. Why would we work in silos as we have seen historically? So, I will let you do your thing over at the Yukon Housing Corporation and don't talk about housing with social supports or housing with senior supports or even talk about aging in place in the modern context of having a senior age well in their own community and in their own home. That is very interesting.

I am certainly happy to advise Yukoners that all of the supports — I am very honoured and happy to say that we have had significant dialogue with seniors. I have met with them multiple times. I have spoken to the communities. We made efforts around aging in place.

I see that the Member for Kluane may have some questions as well, so I will take those questions later. For now, I think that the Member for Watson Lake has some specific questions that she wants to ask about what we are doing for snow removal. What are we doing for yard work? I tried to provide a narrative that might resonate for the member with respect to how important it is to work through the departments and ensure that we work with our NGO communities.

With regard to the question around US psychiatrists and whether or not we are going to give an exemption to a US psychiatrist who wants to work here in Yukon — give that individual a licence to practise in Yukon — as we look at the Health and Social Services budget and we look at the service delivery model and services here in Yukon, I am happy to say

that, most recently, we were able to acquire the services of four psychiatrists here in the Yukon.

Historically, that was not here in the Yukon. This is brand new, by the way. These are new services that didn't exist previously, much like the mental wellness hubs are new, the supports and counsellors in each one of the communities are new, and the child psychologists are new. The services that we provide in the hubs in four communities — in fact, there is one in the community of the Member for Watson Lake — are to provide direct services to the community members there and, of course, in the surrounding region.

The question around the psychiatrists — in the supplementary budget, the supports that we have requested in the supplementary budget for services were actually related to mental wellness supports, and that was to ensure that we provided additional resources and supports to our mental wellness hubs so that we can essentially provide virtual care. Because of COVID restrictions, we are not able to provide in-person supports.

The member opposite is asking a question that is outside of the parameters of the supplementary, but to appease the member opposite, the reason that an exemption is not granted for a psychiatrist from the United States to work here in Yukon is because we currently have sufficient psychiatrists in the Yukon to provide services to the Yukon, plus we have the mental wellness hubs. We have many services.

The member finds it humorous.

I just want to say that psychiatric services have now been expanded in the Yukon — for over 18 months. With 17 psychiatrists — local and visiting — currently registered all this time, we have not identified a need for an additional visiting psychiatrist. We have sufficient services here now and therefore cannot justify initiating a process of requesting the Yukon Medical Association to issue a special licence to an out-of-country physician — a psychiatrist. So, those are the parameters within which we work, and signing off on another psychiatrist would not add value. We have 17 currently; we have four within Health and Social Services who we finance and support, plus we have the mental wellness hubs across the Yukon that support Yukoners, broadly speaking.

Ms. White: Just to follow up where I left off on December 10, I was asking about the death of children in the care of Family and Children's Services. More to the point, I just wanted to know if the funeral costs would be covered by the Department of Health and Social Services if a young person, up to the age of 24 who had been under the care of government, passed.

Hon. Ms. Frost: Great question — thank you for that. For funeral costs associated with youth who are in care, my understanding is that the costs are covered by the department for children who are in care. Now that we've made some new rulings around supporting youth who age out of care and who are still part of our system, the director has the discretion to cover those funeral costs. We've done that recently. But also, keeping in mind that maybe 80 to 90 percent of the children who are in care are indigenous children who come from one of our communities — when one of those children should pass on,

then the First Nation covers the costs. It's their customary practice to cover all funeral expenses, and the department would work with the child's family or the child's First Nation and look at working through NIHB, which would cover \$1,000 of those expenses.

We have to work with our partners to make sure that we don't put any undue burden on any of the families that maximize the services that are there.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that answer. It is an exceptional situation, but it's about trying to remove as much stress as possible while supporting those folks through that loss. I just wanted to make sure that we could have it there so that it was more understood.

I have a question about social assistance payments. I am going to use an example and hope that the minister can help me understand this. If a person collects social assistance and it goes into one bank account — because now they are able to get it directly deposited, which is fantastic — and they take out, say, \$300 from that amount and put it in a separate bank account, why is that money viewed as a gift and then used in the calculation of the next social assistance payment?

Hon. Ms. Frost: That is a great question. I honestly don't know the answer. I will certainly endeavour to get back to the member opposite with regard to income support and how it is calculated from month to month. It is a great question, so thank you. I will get back on that one.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. That would be really helpful as I am trying to support someone through an appeal process right now, but when they move money from one account to another and then it is viewed as a gift, they are being penalized and it makes you ask why. I thank the minister for that.

Moving right along, what kind of outreach has the department done for doctors as far as CGM coverage? In some cases, people are having quite an easy time applying, then being accepted, and being able to get their CGM within a short amount of time, whereas at other times there are multiple follow-ups, multiple weeks, and long delays in the process. What kind of outreach has the government done toward medical professionals, assuring them that the CGMs are now covered and making that as easy as possible?

Hon. Ms. Frost: So, with the recent announcement of the supports for constant glucose monitoring and flash monitoring covering adults and youth, which is very exciting — it is a new initiative that was recently announced through this government. It is a huge opportunity for quality of life for Yukoners. It is the only jurisdiction in the country that is funding this, which is absolutely amazing.

Early in my mandate, I sat with — I have family members who are diabetics as well, and it makes it very difficult when you are seeing challenges. You want to make life easier. In particular, the emphasis really early on, as I started meeting with the families, was to say, "What are your concerns? What recommendations would you have? What options are there out there?" That has resulted in this really great announcement. That announcement, I think, is a new endeavour. We wanted to ensure that we communicated this broadly to all of the clients

that were T1D recipients and that they were well-supported and notified that this is available and here is where they should go to get it. Of course, you need to get into your physician.

So, the member opposite is absolutely correct in that insured health — and perhaps the physician's turnaround time is not always so quick and the services are not there. A bit more communication needs to happen. We have communicated with the Yukon Medical Association about the changes to the program coverage.

How it works is that the patient presents to the physician and gets a referral. The physician has to make the referral. Some are quicker than others, so there have been some delays. We will certainly need to do more work on that. I appreciate the member opposite asking the question. Just for the record, as of today, we have had 20 people who have been referred, which is a significant uptake, which is really great.

I'm sure that there are others. We want to try to get the message out as much as we can and as broadly as we can so that every person who wants or needs the devices can have the devices. We also need to communicate and ensure that the physicians are not lagging and that the turnaround is much faster and consistent across the board. Thank you for the question.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. I appreciate that, for folks with type 1 diabetes, life has just become substantially easier and we should celebrate that — first jurisdiction in Canada, absolutely.

In June of this year, the press release says: "Disability Services families to receive additional support". I wanted to know how the department decided that it would be based on families as opposed to individual children. If you have three children with complex disabilities and you get \$400 a month, it means that you're trying to support those kids with — separating that \$400. If you're a family with one child with a disability and you get \$400 a month, it's easy to see where that goes.

How did the department decide that it was supporting families as opposed to individual children?

Hon. Ms. Frost: Thanks for the question. It is a great question. Of course, as we were in the middle of COVID, we saw that there were some barriers. The federal government made an announcement that they would fund individuals for the disability services additional supports as a result of COVID. Here in the Yukon, we saw — exactly as the member opposite noted — that, during the response to COVID, some concerns that were brought to our attention around family groups. In an effort to ease the disproportionate impact felt by individuals with disabilities, we also had to look at family groups. Additional temporary funding was provided automatically in a one-time payment to all families and caregivers of disability services clients. The feedback from families for this initiative was overwhelmingly positive.

The funding is available to support family-related costs for such things as housekeeping, childcare, respite, or specialized equipment. I want to just emphasize that, really, the support as we look at — when we were in the middle of COVID, families had additional stressors. Young adults or children were no

longer in their care facilities; they were now at home with mom and dad. That burden of 24/7 care was acknowledged by families and by the department.

We had to come up with a way to support them, so augmenting and looking at the federal program that didn't provide supports there, we decided to put in additional support to look at respite care, which is primarily for mental wellness and supports for the families. At the same time, we had to provide some cleaning services and extra supports because the families are now caring for a disabled child or adult 24/7. This meant that they didn't have a lot of free time or flexibility in their schedule.

Disability services will continue to work with all families to identify and support their needs going forward. Every exercise that we go through and that we have learned from during COVID will help us to better serve Yukoners so that collaborate care models and additional supports that are required will only lead us to a better Yukon, to better programs, to better collaborate care models, and better health care programs for all Yukoners, much like we learned from the health care system IHealth, which links to Panorama, which then links to COVID vaccinations, tracking, monitoring, and documenting.

Everything that we've put in the supplementary budget and are debating today is intended to provide supports, but it doesn't end once COVID ends. Good lessons that we've learned will carry us into the future so that we have a better Yukon and we have a system. All of this will lead well into *Putting People First*. It will lead well into our polyclinics, our expanded clinics, our communities, and our nurse practitioner models. All of the efforts that we put in during this time — this is no different — are best practices and best lessons learned.

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Ms. Frost that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

**Written notice was given of the following motion
December 14, 2020:**

Motion No. 387

Re: Yukon Energy Corporation's *10-year Renewable Electricity Plan Technical Report* (Adel)