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HANSARD

Wednesday, March 15, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Spring Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

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Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, March 15, 2023 — 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 was not placed on today's Notice Paper as the motion was completed in whole or in part: Motion No. 635, notice of which was given yesterday by the Hon. Premier.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have a number of people in the House today. I hope we all give them a rousing welcome. We have: Canada Winter Games judo coach Penny Prysnyk; Arctic Winter Games wrestling coach Jason Basnett; chef de mission Trevor Twardochleb; assistant chef de mission Tracey Bilsky; also, mission staff Peter Robertson, Carolyn Relf, Andrew Elines, Michael Lauer, and Ken Howard. We also have gold medal winner in figure skating at the Canada Games and winner of the Pat Lechelt True Sport Award, Michael Sumner, here this afternoon.

We have: chef de mission at the Arctic Winter Games and assistant chef at the Canada Winter Games, Megan Cromarty; Sport and Recreation branch director, Marie Cairns, who has been invaluable to me as I navigate these sporting events these last two years; and, finally, we have Edward and Elaine Sumner, who are Michael's grandparents, here today. Please join me in giving them a rousing welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of 2023 Arctic Winter Games

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise to tribute Team Yukon's athletes, coaches, support personnel, and mission staff who represented the territory at the 2023 Arctic Winter Games in Wood Buffalo, Alberta.

From January 29 to February 4, more than 350 Yukoners participated in the circumpolar north's multi-sport competition. It was great to participate in the opening ceremonies and to wave the Yukon flag as the exuberant team entered the stadium. I will carry that memory to my grave. Team Yukon's athletes earned a total of 169 medals over the week-long games, a remarkable feat, and we would like to congratulate all the athletes who found the podium. However, it wasn't just about

the podium. Many athletes reached new personal bests and tried their hardest. I want to congratulate you all on your accomplishments.

Of course, an athlete's journey is not done alone. Thank you to the coaches who work so diligently in training the territory's next generation of athletes. You aren't just setting them up for success on the field of play, but you are helping grow the community's future leaders. For any games experience, you must also acknowledge the dedication of the people who volunteer their time as mission staff. It is through their generosity of their time that the athletes and coaches can focus on their respective sports.

The Arctic Winter Games are larger than sport, however; they are a time to celebrate the uniqueness of northern cultures and curate friendships that will last a lifetime. Our Team Yukon participants showed a tremendous amount of sportsmanship, grace, and respect. You should be incredibly proud of this, as we are incredibly proud of you.

Team Yukon participation at the games galvanized the Yukon. For many, we are connected to someone at the games and we can't help but stop and cheer for everyone's success. This is the power of sports. They bring people and community together. They also bring us a sense of pride about where we're from, and we feel and share in the successes of our athletes, coaches, and mission staff.

The next Arctic Winter Games will be in the Mat-Su borough of Alaska from March 10 to 16, 2024. I know that we are all looking forward to seeing our athletes thrive again on the circumpolar north's largest sports stage.

Applause

In recognition of 2023 Arctic Winter Games and 2023 Canada Winter Games

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Team Yukon of the 2023 Arctic Winter Games and Team Yukon of the 2023 Canada Winter Games.

The Arctic Winter Games, after a five-year break due to pandemic cancellations, were a huge success. From January 29 to February 4, the games were held in Wood Buffalo, Alberta. Teams descended upon Fort McMurray from across the circumpolar north, with representation from northern Alberta, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Alaska, Nunavik, Greenland, Sápmi, and Yukon.

A strong Yukon team of 350 athletes, mission staff, volunteers, and coaches were ready for their time to shine. On a cold Sunday evening, the Arctic Winter Games cauldron was brought into the stadium by dog team and lit by Elder Lina Gallup. The games began and Yukon was ready. Our Yukon champions made it home with a total of 169 medals overall: 61 gold, 57 silver, and 51 bronze — the first in overall team medal standings.

The Canada Winter Games were held in Prince Edward Island from February 18 to March 5, and the theme was "Catch the Spirit". There were 170 athletes, along with coaches, volunteers, and mission staff, who were part of the thousands who participated in this national event. They returned with

three medals — two bronze and one gold — and we are so proud of these accomplishments. I understand that athletes at both events not only had an incredible experience, but their hard work paid off and the results were apparent. There were so many excited youth who headed to the games and, by the medal count, some very elated youth coming home with their hardware.

Thank you to all those who were involved in getting Team Yukon to both games and organizing, coaching, and assisting from home their time on the ground in Alberta and in Prince Edward Island and getting them home safely.

It takes an immense amount of work, from the planning stages right up until the plane touches down back home. Now we look forward to the 2024 Arctic Winter Games to be held in Mat-Su or the Palmer-Wasilla area in Alaska. The next Canada Winter Games will be held in St. John's, Newfoundland in 2025.

We are sure those eligible to attend will be training to keep their records or to do better in their discipline but, most of all, the memories and friends made while participating in a sport you love — what can be better?

So, congratulations to both of our teams Yukon. You did an amazing job, and we are so proud of each and every one of you and your achievements.

Applause

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate all those who participated in the 2023 Arctic Winter Games and the Canada Winter Games.

First, we want to thank all those mission staff who have spent months deep in the logistics of the “how to”, the “where”, and the “who”. Thank you to those who put in so many hours to planning the logistics of uniforms, staffing, volunteer supports, and getting Yukon athletes to and from Wood Buffalo, Alberta and Prince Edward Island weeks apart. You are incredible.

Thank you to the incredible staff at Sport Yukon who never waiver, no matter the challenges. You all just get better and better.

Thank you to the coaches and the volunteers who went to support their athletes to either or both the Arctic Winter Games and the Canada Games, because let's be real: You aren't just coaches for these games; you are the folks who are at practices all season long and you have just added the games to your already full schedule.

Thank you to the parents, coaches, and support teams for investing in kids and their love of sport. Thank you for teaching them life lessons along the way, and thank you for building them up to be stronger and more resilient. You may never know it, but I bet that more than a few of you will have made positive, lasting impacts on your athletes.

To the athletes, congratulations. We appreciate and honour all the time you put into getting better at your sport and testing yourself. We know that you trained hard and that your focus was finely tuned. We celebrate the new friends you have made, both at home on your teams and away while you were competing.

So, congratulations to each and every one who puts so much of themselves into these games. You have done us all proud.

Applause

In recognition of 2023 Canada Winter Games

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise again to continue and indeed amplify my tribute to Team Yukon — this time for their triumphs at the 2023 Canada Winter Games in Prince Edward Island. You will see the jackets up there. I had many people tell me that they were the best uniforms of the bunch at the games this year.

It is rare that two major games fall in the same year, let alone back to back. From February 18 to March 5, only two weeks after the Arctic Winter Games, Team Yukon sent more than 170 athletes, coaches, and mission staff to Prince Edward Island to compete against the country's best athletes. Many athletes in Prince Edward Island also represented the Yukon in Wood Buffalo. The momentum gained at the Arctic Winter Games certainly transferred to the Canada Winter Games.

Yukon's athletes had personal bests, near-podium finishes, won medals, and made history. At the games, the Yukon earned three medals by athletes: Cole Germain and Cheyenne Tirschmann took bronze in the single mixed relay in week 1; in week 2, judoka, Jaymi Hinchey earned bronze in the 57-kilogram division to win the Yukon's first medal in judo since 2007; Special Olympics figure skater Michael Sumner, competing in this third games, won gold. Sumner was also the recipient of the Pat Lechelt award, which is given to the athlete who demonstrates the True Sport principles of “Go for It”, “Play Fair”, “Respect Others”, “Keep It Fun”, “Stay Healthy”, “Include Everyone”, and “Give Back”. Gavin McKenna made history in week 1 by scoring 29 points to become the Canada Winter Games' all-time leader in sport and points scored in men's hockey.

The accomplishments of all of Team Yukon's athletes are remarkable and will inspire the next generation of Yukon athletes. Thank you to the coaches who put in the time and effort to prepare the athletes for the country's largest amateur multi-sport games. Also, thank you to the mission staff for volunteering their time to support the athletes and coaches. Without your continued dedication, Team Yukon would not be able to succeed to the levels it has reached. It was an absolute honour to follow the journeys of Team Yukon over the two weeks of the games. You made yourself, and all of us back home, proud — “Yukon Do It”.

Applause

In recognition of International Long COVID Awareness Day

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize International Long COVID Awareness Day. Post COVID-19 condition, which is also known as “long COVID”, is rapidly evolving and continues to be researched here in Canada and across the world. This condition can result in diverse and long-term symptoms that are

not traceable to another diagnosis. The effects of this condition can result in significant impacts on people's lives.

Supporting Yukoners and their families who are experiencing post COVID-19 condition is an important part of our commitment to protecting the health and safety of Yukoners. This is why we came to the table and continue to work with members of the post COVID-19 working group that was formed by those affected by this disease to raise awareness and seek support. We work with the working group to develop a resource and to help people understand and navigate the post COVID-19 condition.

I would like to thank Yukoners living with post COVID-19 condition for their advocacy and for their diligence to bring awareness and to seek ongoing support. I would also like to thank the health professionals, including those with experience in First Nation health care, epidemiologists, and staff in the chronic conditions support program, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, policy, and communications for coming together to develop this resource and working with these Yukoners.

The purpose of this work is to ensure that reliable resources and information are available to people with post COVID-19 condition. I encourage all Yukoners to visit yukon.ca to find out more and find out about the supports and the information about long COVID.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party to recognize today as International Long COVID Awareness Day. It is three years ago this week that we, here in the Yukon, started to see the real beginnings of the impacts of COVID-19 on our communities and on our lives. "Long COVID" is the name for all the long-term impacts that many people who contracted COVID-19 continue to experience months, and even years, after infection.

The signs and symptoms of long COVID are nearly endless, affecting each individual very differently. They range from physical disabilities and weaknesses, aches, and pains to brain fog and memory loss, heart issues, breathlessness, and many, many more. Estimates are that as many as 15 percent of those infected with COVID-19 experience some or all of these symptoms for three months or more. For many, that means not being able to work, care for a family, or live the life that they had before.

Our researchers are trying to catch up on the treatment and supports needed for those experiencing long COVID. No sure treatments exist yet, but research dollars are starting to look at the problem. It may be a while yet until we understand its causes and how to treat it. Until then, it is important that we recognize these impacts and, as friends, as families, and as employers, that we be understanding, empathetic, and make the appropriate accommodations to support those in our lives who are suffering from long COVID.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. McLeod: I have for tabling a news release from Raven Recycling dated February 27, 2023.

Mr. Hassard: I have for tabling a Liberal press release dated March 25, 2021.

Ms. Tredger: I have 54 letters sent to the Education and Highways and Public Works ministers and me in support of a downtown elementary school.

Speaker: 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

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase wages for registered midwives to be in line with wages offered to registered midwives in other jurisdictions.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Public engagement on Whitehorse school facilities

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today to update this House on our work to hear from Yukoners about how we can meet the educational needs of our children.

The ways that children learn are changing, and our schools need to reflect that. As Education minister, it is my top priority to ensure that our children have access to the resources that they need to succeed in life.

Yesterday, we launched a public engagement on Whitehorse school facilities to help shape long-term planning for replacing and renovating aging schools in our community. As part of this process, we are asking Yukoners to share their thoughts about school facilities in Whitehorse across three key themes: building modern learning environments; fostering connection to the outdoors; creating cultural, inclusive, and accessible spaces.

This follows the Whitehorse schools replacement ranking release in 2022, which identified schools that need to be renovated or replaced in the coming years. This ranking is based on a broad set of criteria, which included building condition, enrolment demand, utilization, and support for an adaptive, modern, and integrated learning environment. Input gathered from the public engagement will help inform decision-making on Whitehorse school major replacements, upgrades, or construction that may take place in the coming years. A "what we heard" report will be published following the consultation.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that plans for building, upgrading, and renovating school facilities must also reflect the students' and the communities' values and needs. That is why it is crucial that we hear directly from Yukoners. Although this engagement is focused on Whitehorse schools,

Yukoners living in other communities with students who use or attend Whitehorse schools are also encouraged to participate. Yukoners can participate by completing the online survey by May 15 or by attending one of the open houses scheduled across Whitehorse throughout April.

The department will be reaching out to educational partners, including the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, the First Nation School Board, Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, school councils, and other community partners to ensure that these perspectives are captured as well. We will also ensure that focus groups with youth and educators occur so that these important voices are captured, too.

Our government recognizes the fundamental role of schools in healthy, thriving communities. This engagement, combined with ongoing discussions with education partners such as school councils and boards, will help reflect community needs and how we upgrade and manage school facilities in Whitehorse.

I look forward to hearing from Yukoners and to continue work with education partners and stakeholders to shape the future of Yukon schools.

Mr. Kent: It seems strange to us that the government would launch a consultation regarding schools at the start of spring break when many families are away or busy with camps and other activities. It also seems strange to launch a consultation process when the minister has so definitively stated that the decision has been made to locate a new École Whitehorse Elementary School on a specific educational land reserve. But I'm sure the poor timing had something to do with the motion on a downtown school that we will be discussing later today.

The Liberals don't have a very good track record on getting this planning work done. I want to go back to the start of the Liberal's mandate in 2016. In her first Education annual report for 2016, the former minister committed to the completion of a school revitalization plan by the summer of 2017. The former minister fumbled this file badly. On November 20, 2017, when we asked about this plan, the minister said — and I quote: “The annual report lists a number of older school buildings that need to be replaced and renovated in the coming years, and that the government is working on this long-term plan to spread the cost of school upgrades and replacements over a reasonable period of time.” But there was no explanation of why that work wasn't completed in the previous summer, and then, of course, nothing happened. This was followed by a commitment to develop a 10-year capital plan for schools — again, nothing happened.

In one of the early five-year capital plans, Holy Family elementary and Christ the King elementary were included, which led us and many Yukoners to believe they would be up for replacement, only to see them disappear from planning documents a year later.

In March 2022, the current minister spoke to CBC Yukon about seismic concerns in our schools after government documents revealed four Whitehorse schools were rated high

for seismic risk. She said — and I quote: “Some older ... buildings need work to bring them up to current seismic standards.” Yet we don't see any mention of capital upgrades to these schools in this budget to deal with seismic mitigations. So, can the minister tell us what upgrades are scheduled and when they will be completed?

Then, after a number of years of secret planning, the Liberals finally announced last year which Whitehorse-area school would be replaced. They announced that it would be École Whitehorse Elementary School and that it would be built on the educational reserve in Takhini. They forgot to consult with affected stakeholders, like the City of Whitehorse, First Nation School Board, Softball Yukon, the school communities of École Whitehorse Elementary School, and Takhini Elementary School, as well as residents of Takhini. According to this year's budget, the project has been delayed and the construction timeline extended to 2028.

We remain hopeful that this project will be done properly and that all stakeholders will have their input considered fully, including the residents of downtown Whitehorse, who will be without a school in their neighbourhood for the first time in well over 100 years.

The ranking of Whitehorse schools for replacement or renovation was also released last year, as the minister mentioned. The question I have for the minister on this is: Where do the rural schools fit into this ranking? This is important work that needs to be done. The Liberals promised that this plan would be in place six years ago, but they pushed the pause button.

The 2016 report also stated — and I quote: “Based on capital funding and this plan, the goal will be to upgrade or replace one school building approximately every three years.” Hopefully, the Liberals will stick to that schedule after this exercise is complete rather than one building every 12 years, which is what is happening now.

Ms. Tredger: This morning, I had a look at the survey that the minister has described here. As she mentioned, it very prominently and specifically asks about fostering connections to the outdoors. My own education here in the Yukon was full of outdoor experiences, from field trips and gym classes to participating in the outdoor experiential learning programs right here in downtown at Wood Street school.

I, like many Yukoners, deeply value the connections to the outdoors and want that for all of our children. However, when people like myself and my constituents have reached out to the minister, looking for a commitment to a downtown elementary school, she has often talked about outdoor spaces. I worry about the way that this survey is framed, and I worry that people's desire for connections to the land will be used as an excuse to ignore the clear wishes of the downtown community to have their own elementary school. I think that some people perceive that downtown has a lack of outdoor space, and it is just not true. Downtown is full of wonderful outdoor spaces and opportunities for connections and experiential learning. We have the clay cliffs; we have the trails along their base; we have Rotary, Shipyards, and Cook Street parks plus several more

tucked away along the streets of downtown; we have the Yukon River and its shores running through our neighbourhoods. It is a very special place to live and to learn.

We are always supportive of talking to Yukoners about their priorities, but I will note that I tabled 54 letters today telling the Minister of Education and the Minister of Highways and Public Works about their priorities. I hope that the minister will take the time to listen to those letters as well.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I thank you for the comments across the way and the questions. Our government is committed to preparing youth across the territory for the future. We recognize that schools are a fundamental part of the learning journey, and we know that updating and maintaining these facilities is absolutely crucial. The current infrastructure at École Whitehorse Elementary School is nearing the end of its life and its ability to meet the needs of future students. We are relocating this school to the Takhini educational land reserve where students will have access to a modern facility and access to the outdoors.

With respect to other schools in Whitehorse, yesterday I announced that we are moving forward on our commitment to engage with Yukoners about how and where to best meet the needs of future generations of students. I want to highlight what our government has done on the education file since taking office. We launched universal childcare and have made incredible investments into early learning childcare facilities and advanced their reimagining inclusive and special education work plan, which was developed with partners. We worked with Yukon University as a transition to become the first university in Canada's north. We invested millions of dollars in school infrastructure, and we worked with the First Nation chiefs, the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, and the Chiefs Committee on Education to improve educational outcomes for First Nation students, and in fact, just recently celebrated the transition of three more schools to the First Nation School Board.

Mr. Speaker, please forgive me, but I will take no lessons from the Yukon Party about investing in education or building schools. During their 14 years in office, they built no elementary schools, and the one high school that they built is already overcapacity; yet their concern today is about things like a perceived lack of consultation and Softball Yukon — you know, not about preparing young people with the tools they need to succeed.

We have committed to working with Softball Yukon to relocate their facilities, but it is important to remember that these are temporary facilities located on a long-established education reserve.

To my colleagues in the Third Party, a school is so much more than just a building. When I was reflecting on this — my mother worked at Whitehorse Elementary back in the day, as we were transitioning away from residential schools. Most of the children in that school at that time were First Nation. While the school has really good memories for some, it's not the case for all, and that has been part of my reflection, Mr. Speaker.

We appreciate that there are many parents who appreciate being able to walk their children to École Whitehorse Elementary; however, only 10 percent of the students enrolled in the school live in the downtown core. At the end of the day, we have to consider what is best for all the students. We have never said no to a school downtown. We are really encouraging parents and Yukoners to participate in the survey and have their voices heard.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Opioid crisis

Mr. Cathers: Yesterday, following deaths in the community of Mayo, the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation declared a state of emergency and called the substance use crisis an “opioid emergency”. They called for the development of an action plan, including increased availability of treatment. Last year, the Minister of Health and Social Services declared a substance use health emergency.

How many new addictions treatment spaces, if any, has the government actually created since declaring the substance use health emergency 14 months ago?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The community of Mayo and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun are experiencing tragedies in their community. They have noted an opioid emergency leading to violence, crime, overdoses, and death.

Following the double homicide that has been noted to have occurred on March 11, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun declared a state of emergency on March 14 and directed the development of an action plan.

Our government is committed to working with that community and with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. We have supported that community and will continue to do so. There are a number of counsellors assigned to assisting that community, including four community counsellors, two clinical counsellor positions, one child and youth family clinical counsellor position, two mental health support worker positions, and one mental health nurse, who resides in the Dawson City hub. The mental health nurse resides and practises in Dawson City and travels to the communities that she also covers. All of the positions in the Dawson City hub are currently filled. I am happy to continue to speak about the declaration of the substance use health emergency and the concerns in the community of Mayo.

Mr. Cathers: My question is about whether there were new addictions treatment spaces created, and I didn't get that from the minister.

It is clear that there is a problem in the Mayo area with lack of access to addictions treatment and aftercare. The former Liberal MLA for the area, Don Hutton, resigned from the Liberal caucus over this issue. He made it clear that he felt that the Liberal government had failed his constituents and was not doing enough about the substance use crisis.

Over two years later, the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation calls the situation an “opioid emergency”. The First Nation, the Village of Mayo, and the public all want to see action. What

new measures, if any, is the Liberal government planning to implement in the Mayo area in response to this crisis?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The government is committed to working with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the community of Mayo to respond to the substance use health emergency. The declaration by the community yesterday of the difficulties that they are facing as a community is critical. The Dawson City Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services hub provides services to Dawson City, to Mayo, and to Old Crow. There are currently no wait-lists for mental wellness and substance use services in Mayo.

I can note, again, the number of individuals who support that community. Is it enough? Is it helping to avoid the current circumstances that the community has identified? Not enough.

There is a clinical counsellor position dedicated to Mayo, and that counsellor lives and works in the community of Mayo full time. There is a child and youth family counsellor who visits Mayo monthly, but the action plan called for by the community is critical. It is critical that all partners come to the table. The Yukon government will be one of those partners.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, Dawson City is not in the community of Mayo. This Liberal government seems to think that talking points and declarations are a substitute for action; they are not.

The Mayo detachment of the RCMP has only three members. In its declaration of an opioid emergency, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun called for — and I quote: "... increased law enforcement presence..." as the first item on the action plan.

Will this Liberal government agree to work with the RCMP to increase the number of RCMP members stationed in the Mayo area?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to thank Chief Mervyn for reaching out yesterday. I think it's important that Yukoners are aware that, on Saturday, when the events of the weekend became public, two of the first things I did was reach out to the Chief of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, as well as to the mayor — Mayor Ellis. I had good conversations in both of those cases.

Yesterday, I had an opportunity to speak with Chief Mervyn before the declaration was made public. We were in conversation with their executive director. We have committed to working in parallel. Officials from the Yukon government will be in discussions with the RCMP as well as officials from Na-Cho Nyäk Dun on Monday morning.

We commend Na-Cho Nyäk Dun for taking the approach they are taking and the leadership that they are showing in their community. I know that the municipality, as well as our government and the RCMP, are looking to work alongside. I commend the Minister of Justice for the increase in funding to the RCMP, which we heard about last week — very substantial — and I think the RCMP welcome that.

I think we do have to take a very significant approach — maybe a more aggressive approach — in all our communities, but Yukoners have to come together. This is not just one government that's going to solve it; all Yukoners have to come together to take on these challenges.

Question re: Seniors housing

Mr. Hassard: The Premier has been adamant that the old Macaulay Lodge site at 2 Klondike Road will be sold to the private sector. Meanwhile, the Yukon Council on Aging has publicly campaigned to have the lot developed as dedicated seniors housing. Their representative appeared at a rezoning hearing at the Whitehorse City Council on Monday night to speak against the Premier's plan. The representative noted that the wait-list for seniors housing has grown to almost 300 Yukoners under this Liberal government.

So, why is the Premier insisting on selling this lot to the private sector when the seniors housing wait-list has grown to almost 300 — 300, Mr. Speaker — under his watch?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, Yukon Party math usually doesn't add up. First of all, there are only 251 people on the entire wait-list for Yukon Housing, and that would be seniors and non-seniors, and I stated that in the House just the other day — so, again, Yukon Party math.

I think that the other key point of this is that we are investing in seniors housing. I have watched — and I know that the individual who spoke to the Third Party has sent letters to me. Just Thursday night, I was at the AGM for the Vimy society. They want to see a project go forward as well, and that is going to be another solution for seniors. We are going to continue to invest in opportunities for seniors. We have just done that with our Jeckell project; there are opportunities for seniors there.

I think the same individual has reached out and said that we should not have individuals from a diverse amount of backgrounds in that facility. We are taking a look at the direction from the national housing strategy, which said that we should have communities build together, and we are following those lines and we believe that it is appropriate.

So, again, we think that it is important that the Yukon government works with the private sector, in some cases, to build affordable housing and that is what we are trying to do. We are still committed to making sure that the people who helped build this territory have opportunities for housing, and we are investing in it more than any government ever has.

Mr. Hassard: So, during his appearance at city council, the representative for the Yukon Council on Aging said that he had attempted to arrange a meeting with the Premier. He said — and I quote: "He sent two registered letters asking for further meetings and about half a dozen phone calls" to request that meeting. He noted that he got back a letter and phone call telling him — and I quote: "Too bad; you're too late."

So, why has the Premier refused to meet with the Council on Aging to discuss their concerns about the sale of the old Macaulay Lodge site?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First we started with a question with incorrect facts from the Yukon Party. I can tell you that I have never responded to an individual, since I have taken on a role as an elected official, saying, "Too bad; you're late." Again, great characterization, but not factual.

So, I would go back and take a look at our correspondence. When it comes to working with seniors on the housing needs, we are consistently at Yukon Housing Corporation reaching out

to different groups to take a look at the opportunities to work together. I think it's quite interesting that I thought the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin supported joint ventures between the government and the private sector. Now, we are seeing the Yukon Party — when it comes right down to it, do they support this type of partnership? Maybe they don't.

We think, on this side of the House, that using programs that can ensure affordable housing, which we have done more successfully than any government in Yukon history when it comes to units, and having the private sector build out while we are building out other projects — this is what it is going to take. We know that there has been a lack of investment for a decade and a half by previous governments. We have a lot of ground to make up, and we are going to need to use a multitude of strategies. We are focused on affordable housing, and we are focused on working with the private sector when we have the opportunity.

Mr. Hassard: The Premier seems rather sensitive over this subject, but I will remind him that I am just repeating what the representative has told the City of Whitehorse.

Now, the Premier seems determined to sell the old Macaulay Lodge site, despite opposition from Yukon seniors. It appears that the plan to redevelop Macaulay Lodge was cooked up by the Liberal government without any consultation with Yukoners. This Liberal government continues to make decisions and only consult afterwards, and that, Mr. Speaker, is not real consultation. That is marketing the Liberal government's decision.

So, will the Premier agree to meet with the Yukon seniors and actually listen to their feedback?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will go back and look at the correspondence. I am always going to have my ears open at the table to listen to folks who are Yukoners who want their thoughts heard, and we are always going to take into consideration the advice that we get. But this is a great case of "Do as I say, not as I do."

We are in a position here where — next week, the question will be: "Why aren't you working with the private sector?" Today, it fits the fancy politically to say, "You should work with the private sector." At one point, it is going to say, "Build more housing"; "Don't build more housing." Yukoners are watching what is coming from the opposition. It's a flip-flop from day to day. There is zero track record of being able to work with the private sector when it comes to land development.

That is not what we are doing. We are going to look at a multitude of strategies; we're always going to respect those at the table, no matter if it is folks looking for affordable housing, those in need of social housing, or seniors who need the proper supports in place. Again, right now, we are housing seniors in our new building. It is one of the largest investments we have seen by the Yukon Housing Corporation. If you go back in the record, you will see that our record is spending money on capital, not on O&M. That's what the Yukon Party did. They spent it on salaries; we are spending it on new units.

Question re: Cost of living

Ms. White: In March of last year, in the face of red-hot inflation and mounting pressure from opposition parties, the Yukon government announced a hastily put together relief package in the form of a rebate on electricity bills. The program was renewed with this budget, but, unfortunately, the government didn't listen to constructive criticism on how to make it more accessible for people. Many Yukoners simply don't have access to this rebate. People who live off-grid also face rising costs, but they get no rebate. Those who rent and have their utilities included get no rebate. People who share a house with roommates split the rebate three, four, or maybe even five ways.

The problem is that it is not the cost of electricity that people are struggling with; it's the cost of housing, groceries, and basic necessities — gasoline and more. So, the minister's solution was quick but left out a lot of Yukoners. Will the minister improve the rebates so that they can reach every Yukoner in need?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: When I spoke directly with the person who is being referred to here today, and then also when I wrote back to the Leader of the NDP on the casework for this individual, what I said is that we have a whole range of ways in which we are supporting Yukoners with the rising cost of living. Yes, we have extended our inflation relief rebate program on our electrical bills. It is correct that it doesn't go to everyone. We also have universal childcare that doesn't go to everyone. We also have increases to our social assistance recipients which don't go to everyone but go to some folks. We have a Yukon seniors income supplement. We also have the pioneer utility grant, which has been going up.

What we have is a suite of ways in which we are supporting Yukoners, because we are looking to support them through a range, including a firewood subsidy and an extension of our sick leave program. So, there is a range of ways in which we are working to support Yukoners. Each one of these programs does not reach all Yukoners, but we hope that, through the suite of programs, it will help Yukoners through this time of inflation.

Ms. White: I wasn't referring to anyone in particular, but I thank the minister for that.

So, I am glad that the minister mentioned his firewood rebate, because the minister's second attempt at tackling rising costs has also missed the mark for some Yukoners. One of the reasons for the rising cost of firewood is the rising cost of equipment — trucks, chainsaws, gas, and oil — and plenty of people harvest their own wood.

They face the same rising costs, yet they are not eligible for the minister's rebate. These rebates are simply too restrictive, and they are leaving people behind because they are tenants, because they choose to live off-grid, or because they cut their own firewood.

But there is an easy way to make sure that the inflation relief goes to all Yukoners that we have already proposed, and that's the carbon rebate system. All Yukoners already get the carbon rebate, so it's a perfect solution that is already being done in other provinces. So, will the minister broaden this

program and distribute the relief money to all Yukoners through the carbon rebate system, like the Yukon NDP suggested months ago?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Maybe I have misunderstood, but we do refund all of the carbon rebate. That's the carbon rebate plan that we have; 100 percent of it goes back — well, more, because, of course, we as a government pay into it, and that goes back, and it goes to municipal governments, First Nation governments, individuals, and Yukon businesses.

We do have two programs out there for firewood. One is a subsidy for cords of firewood. We have issued now nearly 700 rebates on that. We also have been issuing incentives to industry, and that has been fairly successful, as I'm hearing from the Wood Products Association. Finally, for those individuals who go out and harvest their own firewood, we provide access to that wood without charge for permits.

We will continue to support all Yukoners. I guess I'll look to talk offline with the Leader of the NDP. I'm not quite sure what the idea is around the carbon rebate, but we do rebate all of that money to Yukoners.

Ms. White: We at the Yukon NDP pride ourselves on proposing solutions and working to make life better for Yukoners. The minister was indeed misunderstanding my point. It's the method of the carbon rebate; it's the ability to get money out to every Yukoner, not just through electricity bills.

Many of those solutions will soon come to light, thanks to the confidence and supply agreement. An increase to the Yukon child benefit and social assistance rates, working with the City of Whitehorse to achieve free transit, and rent controls will all help Yukoners with the cost of living, but there are some items left off our list.

The minister has so far refused to address the high electricity cost by giving ATCO a free pass. We know that ATCO is making more profit than they are supposed to, and a general rate review would mean readjusting the rates so that prices are fair for Yukoners and ATCO's profits are kept within reason.

So, when will the minister finally require ATCO to file for a general rate application to review the rates and profit margins?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Already done.

I have risen in the House previously and said that we would encourage ATCO Electric Yukon to go to the Yukon Utilities Board to put in for a general rate application. They have done so. I will find the documentation on the Yukon Utilities Board website, and I'll make sure to table it here for all members to see.

By the way, they put in for some rate rebate. There is an application, which is still being worked through. I reached back out to them and said that it's not enough, that there is still too much that we see, and it's really because mining has been doing so well. That's why they have been getting more profits. It's not from households, but it is our mining industry. Because they are earning so much, I said to them, "No, you really need to go back for a general rate application." They did it. I thanked them for doing it, and that will be happening over the coming year. I

am happy to table that information here, but it is on the Yukon Utilities Board website, I believe.

Question re: Hunting in Yukon

Mr. Hassard: In February 2022, the Minister of Environment announced that he was imposing a permit hunt authorization in the Sifton-Miners Range and the South Canol moose management units. Following that regulation change, the minister was asked about his decision here in the Legislature on March 15, when he said — and I quote: "Limiting harvest in those moose management units is essential to ensure that moose populations stay healthy and that licensed harvest opportunities remain available over the long term."

So, last week, I was interested to hear the minister say that he was willing to reconsider that decision to impose a PHA, so I would like to ask the minister to explain that further. Will his department be making a proposal to the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board to remove the PHA in the Sifton-Miners Range?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Department of Environment is committed to collecting robust wildlife population data to provide high-quality and up-to-date information that enables the evaluations of harvest sustainability. This will support decision-making, such as establishing threshold levels, permit numbers, and non-resident quota allocations.

To do this, we combine information from harvesters, First Nations, Inuvialuit, and community partners with results from our scientific research and monitoring so that management decisions are well-informed. For example, we integrate local and Indigenous knowledge to guide us in how we sample the landscape through our moose surveys.

We carry out targeted population inventories, collect harvest data, and perform ecological assessments annually to gather up-to-date information. We have recently analyzed data from several moose surveys that were conducted in November 2021. As the member opposite indicated, results from the Sifton-Miners Range moose management unit survey indicated that densities are perhaps higher than previous estimates. We are now reviewing those results, together with moose harvest data, to determine the number of permits to be issued this year.

In addition, results from the Fish Lake, Wheaton River, and Mount Lorne moose surveys will be available this spring as well.

Mr. Hassard: So, another comment that the minister made last week that got some attention was about elk hunting. He said — again, I quote: "They have asked to be provided with additional opportunities with, potentially, the elk hunt and different ways of hunting elk." The minister made it clear that, as he said, all these issues are on the table. So, can the minister explain his comments from last week further? How is he planning on expanding the elk hunt, and what new ways of hunting elk is he considering?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We recognize and appreciate the desire that Yukoners have for more hunting opportunities in the Yukon. Managing wildlife harvest, including creating new hunting opportunities, is a collaborative process that is

informed by wildlife surveys and scientific, traditional, and local knowledge sources. The Yukon government works with First Nation governments, Inuvialuit boards and councils, the Yukon public, and stakeholder groups, including Yukon Fish and Game Association, when making harvest decisions.

In recent years, the Department of Environment has increased the pace of wildlife surveys, consistent with my mandate letter, to ensure that decision-making related to harvest opportunities are grounded in high-quality, up-to-date information. Using this approach, the Yukon government will consider potential new hunting opportunities where it can be done sustainably.

I will be meeting with the Yukon Fish and Game Association within the next few weeks, and I will be listening closely, and I will also be going back to my department to possibly make decisions based on good science. I do appreciate the lines of communication that do exist with executive director Eric Schroff and President Bryce Bekar of the Yukon Fish and Game Association. We will continue those lines of communication.

Question re: Dempster Highway maintenance

Ms. Van Bibber: Last year, I asked the minister about the sorry state of the Dempster Highway. I know — and I have heard from many residents and visitors who have travelled the Dempster — that it is in very rough shape.

Last year, the minister admitted that significant investments in the Dempster are needed. He said — and I quote: “Ultimately, there will likely have to be — conceding the Member for Porter Creek North’s point — significant investment, whether it is through the Northwest Territories, Yukon, or sort of a pan-Canadian nation-building exercise.”

Has the minister made any formal request to Canada for the type of funding that he suggested in October? Is there any significant investment in this year’s budget to repair the Dempster?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I had the pleasure of travelling to Inuvik this summer and had a few meetings with my counterpart, Diane Archie, in Inuvik on the topic. I also met with her recently in Whitehorse. Certainly, she is interested in there being both a Northwest Territories and Yukon joint discussion with the federal government with respect to the Dempster Highway. As we all know, the Dempster Highway is certainly more frequented and the passenger volume, or the traffic volume, is certainly more significant from the Northwest Territories. Notwithstanding that, we certainly do wish to work with our partners, and I anticipate having an ongoing and fruitful discussion with my counterpart in the Northwest Territories.

The Yukon government maintains the Yukon section of the Dempster Highway from the north Klondike Highway to the Yukon-Northwest Territories border. This ongoing maintenance ensures that Canada’s first all-season road to cross the Arctic Circle remains safe and open for business year-round.

Our government is also, as I indicated, engaging with our counterparts in the Northwest Territories to look at ways to

collaborate on improvements to the Dempster Highway in the future. During the 2022 construction season, the Department of Highways and Public Works conducted gravel resurfacing on both the Ogilvie and Klondike sections of the highway.

Question re: Campground development

Mr. Dixon: Last week, my colleague from Kluane asked a simple question about whether or not the Yukon would be seeing the construction of a new campground, as the Minister of Environment promised last year. In response to those questions, we have seen some competing information from the Government of Yukon.

On Monday, the *Whitehorse Star* ran an article that included a comment from the Liberal Cabinet offices, which said that the minister — and I quote: “... was clear no final decision had been made, as discussions were ongoing with the First Nations who would be impacted by a possible new campground.” They went on to state that the budget did actually include funding for the development of a campground.

However, this week — yesterday — on CBC Radio, an official from Environment Yukon explained that, in fact, there was not going to be a new campground and that a decision had, in fact, already been made to instead focus on adding sites to existing parks.

So, can the minister explain which of these officials was indeed accurate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. The Yukon Party should take another look at the budget documents. Yukoners will still find funding set aside for the development of Yukon campgrounds in our five-year capital plan for 2023-24.

Mr. Speaker, our government has built strong, respectful government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations in order to foster reconciliation and economic reconciliation. We will continue to collaboratively explore ways to enhance our parks system for years to come. We are in the process of completing conceptual designs for potential expansions and recreational activities at several campgrounds, and Yukon Parks continues to engage with First Nations on various business models in regard to furthering the *Yukon Parks Strategy* and delivering on our commitments.

Mr. Speaker, it is rich for the member opposite to put this forward, as he was Environment minister, a leader — and where he tried to bulldoze ahead with his poorly conceived plan for a campground on the shore of Atlin Lake in 2014. The Taku River Tlingit First Nation said they were not meaningfully consulted, sued the Yukon Party government, and that campground, which was supposed to open in May of 2015, never came to be — did not get it done.

Mr. Dixon: An entertaining response, but not entirely accurate, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this week, the minister told us that no decision had yet been made — no decision had yet been made, is what he said, but earlier — just yesterday — an official from the Department of Environment said that a decision had been made — that we are not pursuing a new campground. So, my question

for the minister is simple: Was the minister correct, or was his department official correct?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The specific answer to the member opposite's question is that all options are still on the table. What I would like to ask the member opposite is: Was he the Environment minister in 2014? Was there a plan to implement — to have a campground on Atlin Lake in 2014? Was there a lawsuit that was brought by the Taku River Tlingit First Nation, who said that they were not meaningfully consulted? Finally, is there a campground on the north shore of Atlin Lake right now? What part of those questions are not accurate?

Mr. Dixon: I think the part that the minister missed is the question about what he's doing currently. Of course, yes, I was the Environment minister last time a new campground was started in this territory. That was, of course, Conrad.

Last week, the minister outlined the demand for 150 new campsites within two hours of Whitehorse. According to the five-year capital plan, the minister plans to spend \$2 million to \$3 million next year developing existing campgrounds. Can the minister tell us how many of the new campsites will be developed within a two-hour drive of Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the former Environment minister. We are continuing to improve our park infrastructure, including adding to the upgrading of existing docks and boat launches at a variety of locations. In 2023, we will be piloting a new dock system at Pine Lake, Twin Lakes, and Squanga Lake. We are also anticipating the construction of a replacement boat launch at Teslin Lake as well.

As I indicated previously, we are investing approximately \$2.3 million in infrastructure upgrades this year to complete improvements at Marsh Lake and Congdon Creek, as well as, as I indicated, boat launches, docks, parking upgrades, and boardwalks at a variety of locations. As I also indicated in previous answers in the last few days, there are fruitful discussions that are occurring with four or five First Nations with respect to various opportunities and, as I indicated, various business models.

We understand that Yukoners want more opportunities. We also understand that impacted First Nations wish for opportunities as well. We will have the hard conversations with those impacted First Nations which the member opposite didn't have.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. Introduction of visitors outside of proceedings.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would just like to recognize someone who many of us know and have debated here in the House — Liz Hanson, who is here visiting here today and, I assume, for some of the motions. She spent a tremendous amount of time in a leadership position here in the House, always championing many causes on behalf of Yukoners. I miss having the opportunity to debate back and forth with Ms. Hanson, but I am glad to see her today and commend her for her contribution here to the Legislative Assembly in the Yukon.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I am delighted to introduce a number of my constituents who are here today for the debate on an elementary school downtown. We have, as already mentioned, Liz Hanson; Sylvie Leonard; Jean-François DesLauriers; Miche Genest; Eve Camelli; Peggy Land; my sister, Erin Kate Roch; and a couple more who I am pretty sure I have e-mailed and I can't put a face to the name; I'm sorry about that, but thank you so much for being here.

Applause

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order. I just want to remind members to please refer to other members by their titles.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 577

Clerk: Motion No. 577, standing in the name of Ms. Tredger.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that there continues to be an elementary school in downtown Whitehorse.

Ms. Tredger: A community without a school is a dying community. Schools are the social glue that holds communities and neighbourhoods together. The heart of a community is its school and its children. These are a few of the comments that I've heard from my constituents since the government announced last summer that École Whitehorse Elementary School would be moved to Takhini, with no consultation or notice whatsoever.

In that time, I have heard a lot about this issue. I have heard from educators; I have heard from parents; I have heard from community members; I have heard from past and present students; I have heard from people who attended Whitehorse Elementary as children and whose children and grandchildren attended and currently attend the school. I have had letters — I know that the minister has also been flooded by the 54 letters that I tabled today, not to mention the e-mails, phone calls, and conversations at the market and on the doorsteps. I very much admire the initiative of my constituents who started a petition last fall. They went door-knocking downtown with it and collected signatures, and it was presented here in the House.

Most of those letters that I have received start with something about sadness and something about dismay and disappointment. I don't know if anyone used the word "anger", but I can feel the anger and frustration in the letters that I have received.

I am actually going to say very few of my own words today, because my constituents are an incredibly passionate and eloquent group of people, and it is them whom I want you to hear from. So, the majority of what I say today is going to be quotes from them, and I am going to start with a quote — with a letter from a parent, and it starts like this: “I am a Downtown resident, and parent of two children who currently attend EWES. We decided to build our home Downtown based on walkability. For many reasons (health, environment, time), it was — and is — important to us to try to minimize the amount of driving we do. We — along with many other stakeholders, including the EWES School Council and the City of Whitehorse — were completely blindsided by your announcement in June 2022 that you had decided to relocate EWES to Takhini. It is regrettable that this decision would be made with absolutely no consultation whatsoever with any of the affected stakeholders. Doubly regrettable is the fact that this decision leaves the Downtown without an elementary school. Schools are an important part of what helps comprise and support a healthy, thriving, and diverse community. The removal of our only elementary school will undoubtedly have profound implications on the future demographics of our neighborhood. Our own kids will likely be in high school by the time EWES is moved to Takhini, if that is indeed what happens. But I very much want to live in a neighbourhood where children, old people, single people and families are all represented. Someone recently said that if you remove its schools, the community loses its heart. That really rung true for me.”

I would like to share a second letter from a parent: “As a born and raised downtown resident who is currently residing in the downtown area with a child who is attending WES the idea that one of the largest communities within the City of Whitehorse will not have an elementary school within walking and biking distance for the hundreds of children who live here is absurd ... As a downtown resident who has [seen] the official community plan for old town change significantly over the past 15 years with the main theme ... to increase density it is imperative to keep open public spaces in the downtown core. WES not only functions as a school but in summer numerous daycares use the playground and families...” do as well. “As someone who grew up walking to one of the two elementary schools that used to be downtown I can attest to the benefits that having a school in walking distance to home brings.”

Mr. Speaker, I have heard from many, many parents but also many people from many walks of life. I think some of my favourite letters were from some of the people who have been downtown for a very, very long time, and I want to share one of these now: “Whitehorse Elementary has been in place since I came to Whitehorse as a child in 1954. In the 50s and 60s it was the center of the community. All forms of art were done for the community. It was the main playground for us and the monkey bars ... was the center of Miss Farley’s art class for proportion. I look out at the school from my front window and it is so good to see the children playing.”

Over the next few minutes, I’m going to attempt to pull together these many letters and stories that I have and make a

case for why we need an elementary school downtown. I am going to start with talking about why children are important to a community. One constituent wrote me that kids are the indicator species of a great neighbourhood.

I don’t think I can say it better than another letter, so I am going to read another letter. “I have been a downtown resident for over twenty years. It’s difficult to put into words how I value EWES in my neighbourhood. Having the school nearby means children and families are nearby, and to me, that is community. It means I regularly hear kids playing, and that every year I see the awesome snow caves some class builds up on the clay cliffs. Downtown has been heavily impacted by realities of under-served, under-housed folks relying on the shelter system, which itself is struggling to adequately meet peoples’ needs. I deeply value an integrated community. Yes, children and family are near a facility that represents a social crisis. I feel there is more balance, and that we are all safer when in our daily lives the whole continuum of the community shares the same sidewalks and street corners...”

Someone else wrote to me and said — and I quote: “If downtown is seen as only a place to work, travel through and/or access services, rather than a place to gather, live, thrive and build community, I believe this will lead to many other social problems.”

Another person wrote — and I quote: “We need the sounds of children playing in the schoolyard. We need to see and experience kids playing games, and running and jumping. We need a school as an after hours community centre, as a place for neighbours to meet, and for many kinds of local events — from sports and cultural events to dance and martial arts classes to rummage sales and fundraisers for good causes.”

I don’t want to only talk about the benefits of the children to the community; I also want to talk about the benefits to children from being downtown. As one person wrote to me and said — and I quote: “A community needs children in it. And children need the community.”

Many people talked about the benefits of children being able to walk to school. One of them said, “Fresh air and exercise in the morning helps to get the brain working optimally for school.”

I certainly know that when I walk to work, my brain is working much more optimally.

I was really struck by the story of one of my constituents, and it starts like this: “I grew up in Riverdale, but have lived downtown since my partner and I returned to Whitehorse. Perhaps it is because of my childhood in Riverdale ... but this matter has particularly hit home for me. As a kid, I was given complete freedom of movement and this confidence and independence stemmed from the ability to walk or bike to school on my own. Since moving to downtown Whitehorse, I would argue that this neighbourhood is not dissimilar to Riverdale. Downtown is home to a mix of families and single people of varying ages. There are forests and clay cliffs behind town and natural green space throughout the neighbourhood. Some people are homeowners and others are renters. I chose to live downtown because, to me, this neighbourhood represents a ‘Complete Community’.”

Another parent wrote to me about the impact that she felt having her son go to school downtown had on him. She wrote: “My son went to Whitehorse Elementary School, and I feel strongly that his daily experience of the downtown has contributed to his maturation. He was able to witness a melding of cultures, including some vulnerable Yukoners. He had a small window into the hub of our community. His time downtown was a big part of his growth.”

Something I heard over and over and over again, as we talk about wanting a diverse and vibrant downtown — diversity includes children. If we want to welcome children, there must be a school — that is the signal that a school sends.

I am going to read another letter: “Downtown Whitehorse should be for everyone; by not having a school there, you’re signalling that kids aren’t welcome in the heart of our city. If we want a downtown with bustling businesses where families feel welcome to spend time together, we need to make sure that it’s welcoming to people of all ages. A school isn’t just an educational institution, it can be the centre of a community. Let’s make sure that downtown Whitehorse is a community for everyone.”

I want to share a few more stories that really speak to, I think, some particular groups of people who live downtown. One person wrote to me about his personal experience as an immigrant who lived downtown for two years. He wrote about how many people who are new to Canada and new to the Yukon can’t afford a vehicle right away, and being able to walk to businesses, to work, and to school is very important to them. He particularly talked about it being a walking distance that is helpful when you are new to the Yukon and the winters of the Yukon — that it is nice to have things that are really within walking distance that don’t have you outside for too, too long. He talked about how important it is to that community that there is a school that their children can walk to.

Another downtown resident wrote to me and she said, “I grew up downtown in a low income family, and I am now raising my son in the downtown core as a low income family. I have the privilege of being able to send my son [to] school in another neighbourhood, but I also know this is a privilege. Families have a right to a safe, accessible school in their neighbourhood. When I was growing up I had friends that would take the bus to school, and sometimes their stops got missed, or the bus wasn’t running, and they would walk in -30 to school because just going back home was not an option. For some kids school is the only place they feel safe, get fed, socialize with friends, and get needed supports.”

Another theme that came up often in my conversations has been the climate. One person wrote to me and said, “The paradox and contradiction is not lost on me that the Government has invested so much money in creating Our Clean Future and the Yukon Climate Council, but when rubber hits the road, it fails to provide a school, a destination within reasonable walking/biking distance of a large neighbourhood to promote sustainability. You can do all the flashy electric charging stations, but nothing beats the sustainability of using two human powered wheels or your own two feet, not to mention promoting youth independence at a young age.”

Another person wrote: “A downtown school allows some downtown residents to walk, bike, or kicksled their children to school. It makes for a vibrant, liveable city when infrastructure and its associated transportation patterns is oriented around non-vehicular transportation. It is environmentally friendly and by getting people out of cars promotes physical activity which is healthy.”

Another person wrote: “The fifteen minute walkable city is the city of the past and the future because it is the only plan that makes sense especially in this current Climate Emergency.”

I think someone maybe said it best when they said that downtown is “... the kind of neighbourhood we should be striving toward, not gutting.”

A lot of people wrote to me about urban planning. I was grateful for their expertise. It’s not a specialty of mine, but I have so many wonderful constituents who really are experts in this, and I really appreciate their input. One of them said: “Urban planning best practice suggests that complete, livable, and vibrant communities exist when a diversity of uses ... are promoted within a 15-minute walking or biking distance from where people live. People need to live close to where they work, shop, play, and go to school. This creates vibrant and complete communities and reduces people’s needs to drive. Removing a school from the Downtown does a disservice to Downtown residents and works in the opposite direction of creating complete, connected, and livable communities.”

One person actually went through the official community plan for Whitehorse and shared some thoughts from it and their thoughts on that plan. One of the first things in that plan for downtown is: “Make downtown socially inclusive and accessible to all.” That has to include students. We can’t talk about everyone — we can’t talk about all diversity and inclusive — unless we’re talking about children as part of it.

“Provide a broad range of housing types and tenures to meet the varying needs of a growing and diverse downtown population.” As I said before, “... a diverse population will include children, and they need a neighbourhood school.”

I had many people talk about how we are increasing density in the downtown and we are hoping that more and more people will want to live here. How can we ask people to live here if there is no school for their children?

Another item from the plan is to “Provide density with amenity — encourage new development opportunities while ensuring they contribute to a safe and attractive public realm for the benefit of residents. A school is certainly an amenity. It can and should be a safe and attractive place, with facilities that the community can use out of school hours...” for everything from gyms to outdoor playground equipment.

A final item from the city plan is to “Adopt a ‘pedestrian-first’ planning approach that prioritizes pedestrians but actively supports all transportation modes.” I think it is pretty self-evident that having a school that kids can walk to is part of promoting pedestrian-first planning.

I know this is a plan that comes from the City of Whitehorse and not the Yukon government, but I hear a lot about partnerships. I really hope that those levels of

government work together, and I think this is a really wonderful opportunity to do that.

On the note of community planning, someone wrote to me something that really struck me. They said, “Take out the neighbourhood school now, and in 20 years, you will need a revitalization project.” We can avoid that. We can avoid that damage by having an elementary school now.

I feel like we are really lucky with our downtown. I could go on all day about how much I love downtown, but I feel really lucky that people still want to live in our downtown and that it is still a vibrant, exciting, livable place. I very, very much fear that losing an elementary school is the first step in losing that vitality, losing that livability — that it is the first step toward downtown becoming a ghost town after hours. That is when crime goes up. That’s when break-ins go up. That’s when people don’t feel safe being downtown — when there is nobody there.

I want to say that one more time, because I just think it is so powerful: “Take out the neighbourhood school now, and in 20 years, you will need a revitalization project.”

I want to turn to talking a little bit about the motion itself. I hope I have made a case for why an elementary school downtown is so important. I know, in the conversations, there’s a lot of detail and there are a lot of things to consider, so I want to talk about them. I want to start by talking about what this motion really says. It says: “... ensure that there continues to be an elementary school in downtown...”

People understand that the current school is an aging building. I really appreciated what the minister said earlier; it is a place that does not have good memories for everyone.

So, this motion doesn’t say keep the building. It doesn’t say keep the French immersion program downtown. It doesn’t even say keep it on the same site. What it says is make sure there is an elementary school downtown — and that gives government all the freedom it needs in order to make sure it’s a decision that’s practical. They can figure out the details of where to put it and how to build it, but promise downtown residents that there will be an elementary school for them.

In the letters that I and my constituents have sent to the minister, there are a number of objections that we have heard several times. One is that most of the current students at École Whitehorse Elementary School don’t live downtown. I actually think that this is a really good point. It makes me kind of sad that kids downtown who want to go to school in English have to leave downtown right now. Even if they want to go to school in French, they are not guaranteed a spot at École Whitehorse Elementary School. Some of them are being bused across the bridge to Takhini to attend the same program that is downtown. So, I actually think that this is an opportunity to make the downtown school so much better. I think that this is an opportunity for a catchment school downtown that every child who lives downtown can attend if they want to.

A second objection that I hear often is about needing a modern learning environment — and there are a couple of things. I often hear about how old the building is, how it doesn’t meet students’ needs, how acoustics and spaces and the needs of education have really changed. I could not agree more. I am

not asking that we keep this building — this old, aged building — and make our students stay there; I’m asking for a downtown elementary school that they will love and that they can learn in.

I also hear a modern learning environment talked about in terms of outdoor space. Again, I’m going to go back to what my constituents say, because I really think that they can say it so well and maybe better than I can. So, someone wrote to me and said, “The Wood Street school, located at Fifth and Wood, uses downtown open spaces for experiential learning, specifically the clay cliffs and the Cook Street park and rink.” I’m actually going to interrupt this quote for a minute and tell the House that I went to Wood Street school for their outdoor experiential learning programs, and never once did I feel like I didn’t have a place to go.

I’ll continue: “Shipyards Park is a five-minute walk away, for skating, skiing and tobogganing in winter, outdoor playing in summer, including that amazing new playground. There’s the entire waterfront to explore for birds, insects, fish ... The beauty of a downtown school is the number of options for experiential learning, not just outdoors learning, but learning in partnership with not-for-profits and businesses.” There’s the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, there’s glass-blowing, there’s the MacBride Museum, Nakai Theatre, Arts Underground, and L’AFY. A downtown school has easy access to those spaces.

Someone else wrote to me — a former educator — about how one of the goals of education is always to integrate the school into the community, and he talked about how easily that is done downtown, for all those reasons. There is so much that downtown has to offer a school.

The third objection we have heard to committing to an elementary school downtown is that there is going to be a consultation and that everyone should bring these views to the consultation. Well, the first thing I would say is that I hope the minister is listening to all the ways that people engage, whether it is the 54 letters I tabled or whether it is filling out a survey. I hope that it doesn’t have to be just a survey before people are heard. I know that they have had meetings with people from downtown and received letters from people downtown and called and talked to them. I really hope that they are going to listen, because — I want to quote again from a parent who said, “The minister is talking about an engagement to decide what happens next, but that is a bit of a slap in the face, because no engagement was needed to get rid of downtown’s only elementary school. No engagement was needed with Takhini before dropping a second school into their neighbourhood.

“So, why does this government suddenly need a formal engagement before they can listen to downtown residents?”

I am not against engagement. I am not against talking to people. I hope that’s clear from how many people I have talked to in order to prepare this speech — but it feels like an excuse. It feels like a way to push the problem until later in the hopes that people might forget how important a downtown elementary school is. Well, one, that is not going to work, because I know that people are not going to forget, but I think that there are a lot of opportunities to listen to the information that is already had and then use that to inform the engagement. What I would love to see this government do is commit to there being an

elementary school downtown and then engage on what that looks like. What does that school need? Where should it be? What can it include? How can it best serve parents and children and the entire community? That is an engagement, I think, that people would feel was really genuinely meant — that they would be excited to participate in — not an engagement where they feel like they have to repeat themselves over and over again with the hope that someone might listen.

People have come up with some pretty exciting options for what we could do going forward. They have talked about alternative spaces downtown. Many people have noticed that the government has recently put out — I think that it's — an RFP for 5th and Rogers. There are lots of spaces downtown — lots of options. I personally think that the simplest one would be to rebuild on the current site, once the new French immersion school has been built somewhere else. I think that is the simplest and easiest one, but I am certainly open to other ways to keep an elementary school downtown.

I am going to finish off, if I can find my quotes with one last letter — oh, two last letters; sorry.

I heard from a couple who has lived in the downtown for a long time, and they said this: “We have lived in Whitehorse for almost 50 years and most of that time in downtown.

“In that time we hear that ‘the downtown is the heart of the city’. If this how the Liberals treat the heart of the city what hope is there for any community in the Yukon?” I really want those people to be proven wrong. I want this government to show how much they care about downtown, and that is what I am hoping will happen today.

I will finish with one final letter: “I live downtown. I walk by Whitehorse Elementary School several times a week. Often, recess is in session, and I'm able to see and hear, from the sidewalk, kids from K to 7 living their lives in the middle of the city. That energy is the fire in the hearth of my city.

“Children and schools don't just add life to a city, they keep downtowns safe. Schools slow traffic, they stop cars from idling, they put police, businesses, and members of the community on alert: something precious here needs our care. Whitehorse is remarkable in its ability to accommodate an elementary school and a shelter within two blocks of each other. This is a fine example of a working, integrated city, and I know it is not achieved without a lot of hard work.

“A downtown school is an essential part of the ecosystem of a healthy, vibrant city. Study after study on the decline of downtowns in small North American cities demonstrate how cities die: essential services are moved to the outskirts. Schools are closed. Young families move to subdivisions. Children are driven from A to B. Downtowns become deserted after 6 pm.

“In my neighbourhood there are people struggling with addiction, living rough in the woods nearby; there are drug deals happening outside my house. And there are young families with children who ride or walk by on their way to school, who play hockey in the pocket-sized rink in the Cook Street Park, who learn to ride their bikes on the path near the cliffs. Teenagers from the Wood Street School run in joyous packs for outdoor ed [in] the park. This life, this presence, keeps my neighbourhood in balance, as it keeps the city in balance.”

I just want to finish my comments today by again thanking everybody who came out for the debate today, everyone who sent me letters, who flooded my inbox, and who stopped me on the street to talk to me about this, because I am so proud of the work everyone has done to make their voices heard. It has been a real honour to represent that today.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I appreciate and welcome the opportunity to speak to Motion No. 577, brought forward by the House Leader and member of the New Democratic Party.

I appreciate the interest of Yukon citizens and the member opposite who care deeply about education in their neighbourhoods. Many factors contribute to how communities experience a school facility and how the facility can contribute to modern programming and curriculum. Location, access to greenspace, technology, modern and experiential facilities, and inclusive cultural spaces are all important design considerations.

I have heard clearly that some community members value having a downtown school. I have certainly received and read all of the letters that the member has spoken about today and answered many of them. Folks will probably go home today and see an answer to their letter in their inbox, and we are working to have — some are more complex than others; some were very similar letters. So, we are taking the time to answer each one of them respectfully.

Moving the École Whitehorse Elementary School facility to the Takhini educational land reserve does not preclude us having a school in the downtown core in the future. So, I think there are lots of — like, we agree on a lot of things. You know, I wanted to just point out — and yes, some of these are not — the ones that I will speak about are not elementary schools, but they are still schools in the downtown right now — the Wood Street Centre, as spoken about today; the Individual Learning Centre is also downtown; the Aurora Virtual School. All operate out of locations that are downtown and are an important part of our portfolio of schools. We also have the Montessori school; we have many early learning childcare centres located throughout the downtown; the Child Development Centre is also in the downtown area, and we are really excited to be opening that new facility soon.

At the same time, we also appreciate that École Whitehorse Elementary School is not fundamentally a neighbourhood school in respect to its student population, and I know the member has spoken about that today, but I am just going to give a little bit more detail around that. École Whitehorse Elementary School is a school that focuses on the delivery of French immersion programming and, as such, has served French immersion students from across the city and outlying areas.

School buses transport children from all corners of the city, and country residential, to the École Whitehorse Elementary School. In our estimation, about 10 percent of the children going to École Whitehorse Elementary, which is approximately 42 out of — the numbers may be off slightly — 451 students live downtown.

Since we were going over some letters, I received letters, as well, that were not in favour — actually, the subject is: “Downtown school — not in favour”. I figured that there would be some reading of some of the letters that we have received. I respect all of them, and again, we’re replying to all of them. This is one that I thought may be of interest in this debate:

“Dear Minister McLean, I’m writing because the NDP is bringing forward a motion to have a school downtown for downtown residents. I take issue with this. I live in Porter Creek and all of our children attended school at Whitehorse Elementary. The school is old, has ventilation issues and had students from all over Whitehorse being bussed there. Much more preferable would have been to have French Immersion in all neighbourhood schools, so that bussing wasn’t such a big thing, and all schools benefited by having French accessible.

“So this asking of a school downtown is not logical nor necessary. How many kids even live downtown? They can easily go to Selkirk or up the hill to Takhini School. Or to the new French Immersion school by bus (I’m sure that there will be way less of them than there are hundreds being bused to a downtown school where there is no neighbourhood and most kids don’t live).

“Also, with our own children going through WES, you had all kinds of issues having it downtown, mainly due to poor location, being way too public, having too small of a gym (and needing 2 more) ...” — at least — “... for a population that size ... again, why is the NDP asking for downtown?”

“PCSS lost a couple hundred students to FH Collins because of having French Immersion all located at FH. Again, if you had French Immersion at FH and PCSS, then it wouldn’t constrain FH the way it has, with it bursting at the seams and many students from all over being bussed there only b/c they want to do immersion.

“Please do not use my name on this letter. I do not want to be publicly identified, but I do want to support the Liberals in saying ‘NO!’ to a downtown school.”

I read it exactly as it was written. I will talk about what our position is on those matters, but I thought that it was important to hear other sides of how parents and families are feeling around this decision that has been made to move a school. I hear the member opposite, for sure, in terms of — that it’s not so much about that — moving École Whitehorse Elementary School; it’s about having a school downtown.

So, I hear you loud and clear. The Takhini educational reserve is well-positioned to fill that need that we have just talked about for this school. It is also a central location that can accommodate French immersion students from around the Whitehorse area. An initial step in this work is to identify potential locations for the future school on the Takhini educational reserve, at which point, conversations with Softball Yukon, the First Nation School Board, and others will occur.

Some letters that we received spoke about renovating the existing building to continue having the school there in that building. We have determined that renovating the École Whitehorse Elementary facility is not a viable option. Estimated costs to renovate are higher than the cost to build a new school, nor is it a viable option to replace the École

Whitehorse Elementary facility on the same downtown site while school takes place. It would require costly, prohibitive decamping strategies — that is, moving students for a two- to three-year minimum to accommodate a build.

Replacing École Whitehorse Elementary School at the Takhini educational land reserve is an important investment and is school infrastructure that will support successful learning outcomes.

In terms of infrastructure investment, I would like to talk about the Government of Yukon’s commitment to replacing aging infrastructure and modernizing our schools.

The Whitehorse population continues to grow, and we are expanding our capacity to provide a modern learning environment for an increasing number of students. The way that students learn is very much changing, and our school environments will need to change to reflect these changes. We are working with local communities and First Nations to identify where other schools, renovations, and modular extensions are needed.

We are excited to be planning for a much-needed replacement in the École Whitehorse Elementary facility. Again, that facility was originally built in the 1950s, and it is the top priority for replacement among Whitehorse schools. The current facility is not able to meet the current and future programming and community needs for modern learning, and it does not provide the needed access to spaces for innovative, inclusive, and experiential learning. A new facility will bring a world of new opportunities for teaching and learning, which will benefit generations to come.

The new school design will focus on providing flexible, multi-use spaces that emphasize collaborative, experiential learning. I note that the member spoke, in opening, about *Our Clean Future*. Our infrastructure also needs to reflect our values in addressing climate change. Our upcoming school facilities are investments in *Our Clean Future*.

In 2021, the 70-plus-year-old École Whitehorse Elementary School emitted 345 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. The new facility will be designed with renewable energy considerations in mind. As with all of our new schools, it will have significantly better energy performance and will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I also want to emphasize again that we know that it is not just students and teachers who use school spaces. School facilities are important spaces that host valuable community activities and support vibrant communities.

In October 2022, I met with some downtown residents who were concerned about having an elementary school in the downtown core. The feedback that I heard is one of the reasons that we are engaging the public on our long-term plan for replacing and renovating Yukon schools. I am very pleased to confirm that the public engagement launched yesterday, on March 14 — it took us a little longer than expected to secure a contractor. This is why there has been a bit of a delay in launching the engagement. The public engagement on Whitehorse school facilities will inform the long-term plan for replacing and renovating aging Whitehorse schools.

I have already heard about many factors that contribute to thriving schools and neighbourhoods. This engagement sorts those factors into three key themes for ideas and considerations for school facilities in Whitehorse: modern learning environments; connection to the outdoors; and cultural, inclusive, and accessible spaces. This engagement is part of our work to help ensure that our portfolio of Yukon schools meets the demands of our growing population, provides modern learning environments for students, and supports learning and growing for years to come. This is why we want to hear from the public and school communities about what is important to them so we can better understand their experiences with school facilities.

Before I move into the next part of this, I would really encourage folks to participate in the survey, but, of course, all of what we have heard so far will be given to the contractor and will be taken into consideration as well, but I do encourage folks to please participate in the open houses or fill out the survey.

In 2022, we released the Whitehorse schools replacement ranking, which identified Whitehorse schools to be renovated or replaced in the coming years. The ranking was based on a broad set of weighted criteria, which included building condition, enrolment demand, utilization, and support for an adaptive, modern, and integrated learning environment. This public engagement will help us to refine this ranking with values that reflect the greater Whitehorse school community. This engagement will help ensure that plans for building, upgrading, and renovating school facilities can reflect the values and needs of the users and, of course, the community.

We want to hear from the public, users of Whitehorse school facilities, and neighbourhoods about what is important to them to better understand their user experience with their school facilities and how to better meet the K to 12 programming needs. Although this engagement focuses on Whitehorse schools, we are inviting those Yukoners living in other communities whose students utilize or attend schools in Whitehorse to also participate. We will continue working closely with the two Yukon school boards — the First Nation School Board and the CSFY — on their vision for education and capital needs.

As part of this engagement, we will be having conversations, of course, with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. The online survey is open between March 14 and May 15, 2023. I recognize that it is spring break, but the engagement is open until May, so I think it gives folks plenty of time to participate. In addition, we will host open houses throughout April. Our hard-working school councils and boards play important roles in advising on key decisions, and we are so grateful for their contributions. We have retained a public engagement contractor to meet with Whitehorse school councils and facilitate focus groups with educators and students. I encourage our school communities to spread the word about this engagement and encourage participation. Everyone interested can visit yukon.ca/en/engagements to find out more information and learn how to participate in an online survey or attend an in-person event.

Since being in the position and since our government has taken on these important roles, our work with school communities on planning for their needs for the short, medium, and long term definitely continues. Our government is committed to improving access to education for all Yukoners by building new, modern learning facilities, including the new school in Whistle Bend, the construction of Kêts'ádañ Kù Burwash Landing, and the new École Whitehorse Elementary School.

Whistle Bend is quickly growing in size. It's one of our fastest growing neighbourhoods. It will soon be home to the first new elementary school in over two decades. It is expected to be completed in the winter of 2023-24. Moving the current Kluane school from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing has been a long-standing request of Kluane First Nation. We are pleased to be working in partnership with Kluane First Nation on the Kêts'ádañ Kù project. This project reflects our commitment to reconciliation and our investment in providing a new learning and community space that meets the needs of residents in the surrounding area. It is of the upmost importance that students are learning in safe, healthy, engaging, and culturally rich environments. This whole conversation that we're having about vibrancy in communities and thriving communities is absolutely evident in the work that we have been doing with Kluane First Nation. Of course, our government believes in investing in communities in that way.

The last elementary school built in Whitehorse was École Émilie Tremblay, which opened in 1996. Fast-forward all the way to January 2016 when F.H. Collins Secondary celebrated its grand opening, and then the French first language secondary school centre, CSSC Mercier, opened its doors to students in November 2020. Today I'm standing before you talking about three new builds.

In addition to new facilities, we are also making important short-term improvements, such as an addition and portables to alleviate enrolment growth. This past January, the Robert Service School in Dawson City celebrated opening a modular addition, supported by funding under the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. We are looking forward to seeing how these four new classrooms will complement and enhance the school's learning space. Construction of an addition at the Selkirk Elementary School allows for the expansion of the French immersion program and freed up a classroom for grade 7 students.

In terms of functional planning, our long-term capital plan aims to provide more access to inclusive and innovative learning spaces that can better incorporate experiential learning and empower students on their learning journeys. We completed a generic design, or functional plan, that can be used to scale the design of multiple types of schools. This is now referred to as the "Yukon schools functional program", and the plan outlines consistent standards for school design and construction that are scalable based on school population, grades, and urban and/or rural contexts.

This plan was used as the basis for designing and planning for the Whistle Bend school and now also for the Burwash Landing school, or Kêts'ádañ Kù, school. The Yukon schools

functional program is not a complete school design; it is a conceptual design of individual spaces that make up parts of a school.

We also have a list of specifications that can be used. These two documents are intended to reduce the front-end design time when we are planning schools and to make the whole process more efficient. With each school design, we expect a certain amount of customization to ensure that the school meets the needs of the community it serves.

I really welcome the debate that is happening around this, and I think that it is an important one for our community. Again, this is why we are having a public engagement. Our government is working to create successful learning outcomes for all Yukon learners, in collaboration with Yukon First Nations and education partners, by implementing the desired outcomes of reimagining inclusive and special education. Our investments in school facilities provide the infrastructure that children need to learn and grow. That means working to ensure that schools are welcoming and are a true reflection of our communities and provide spaces in which children are safe and comfortable and that they are absolutely functional. I encourage the public, to visit yukon.ca/en/engagements to learn how to participate in the Whitehorse schools capital planning engagement.

On this note, I think, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to move an amendment to this motion which would see comprehensive engagement be undertaken to ensure that Yukoners, along with education and community partners, are heard and that their perspectives are captured to determine if there should continue to be an elementary school in downtown Whitehorse. Moving this now — I did ask for a friendly amendment to work toward getting to a place of collaboration. We are where we are, so I am going to make the move for this amendment.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. McLean: I move:

THAT Motion No. 577 be amended by replacing the phrase “ensure that there continues” with the phrase “engage with Yukoners and education partners including the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Ta’an Kwäch’än Council, the First Nation School Board, the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, school councils, and other community partners to ensure their perspectives are captured to determine if there should continue”.

The motion would then read: “THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to engage with Yukoners and education partners including the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Ta’an Kwäch’än Council, the First Nation School Board, the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, school councils, and other community partners to ensure their perspectives are captured to determine if there should continue to be an elementary school in downtown Whitehorse.”

Mr. Kent: I request the unanimous consent of the House, under Standing Order 14.3, to take a 10-minute break in order to review the proposed amendment.

Unanimous consent re recess

Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to take a break for 10 minutes?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Recess

Speaker: Order, please.

The amendment is in order.

THAT Motion No. 577 be amended by replacing the phrase “ensure that there continues” with the phrase “engage with Yukoners and education partners including the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Ta’an Kwäch’än Council, the First Nation School Board, the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, school councils, and other community partners to ensure their perspectives are captured to determine if there should continue”.

The motion would then read:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to engage with Yukoners and education partners including the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Ta’an Kwäch’än Council, the First Nation School Board, the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, school councils, and other community partners to ensure their perspectives are captured to determine if there should continue to be an elementary school in downtown Whitehorse.

Hon. Ms. McLean: As this amendment suggests, I want to re-emphasize that we know it’s not just students and teachers who use school spaces. School facilities are important spaces that host valuable community activities and support vibrant communities. The type of engagement that I’m proposing in this will inform the plan for an elementary school in downtown Whitehorse and would feed into the broader engagement that I spoke about today in my ministerial statement.

This engagement that I spoke about today is part of our work to help ensure that our portfolio of Yukon schools meets the demands of our growing population, provides modern learning environments for students, and supports learning and growing for years to come. The engagement is important and will help us to refine the values that reflect our school communities and those using school facilities. Engagement will help ensure that plans for building, upgrading, and renovating school facilities can reflect the values and needs of users and the community.

Again, I want to thank all Yukoners, particularly those from the downtown, who took the time to write letters to me and others in the Legislature. I will just confirm now that all 54 of the letters have been answered. Those that had additional questions or additional matters that need casework will be answered, will have follow-up correspondence to them and/or reach-out from the Department of Education.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I know that all members of this Legislative Assembly value the importance of engagement and, I hope, will support this important amendment.

Ms. White: I'm speaking against the amendment today, actually. I would always anticipate that there would be a consultation and engagement with not only those listed but, for example, the Downtown Residents' Association, businesses, and others. But the motion today, as it originally stood on the floor, was about ensuring that a downtown elementary school remains in Whitehorse. The reason for that is all that we have heard. So, today, very briefly, I'm speaking against the amendment and look forward to speaking on the motion.

Mr. Kent: On behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, as the Education critic, I too will be speaking against this amendment today. We will not be supporting the amendment. However, we will support the original motion that was put forward by the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Just curiously, with respect to the amendment put forward by the Minister of Education speaking about engaging with Yukoners, education partners, First Nations, First Nation School Board, CSFY, school councils, and other community partners — again, as the Member for Takhini-Kopper King mentioned, one of the things that stood out to us is that there was no mention of downtown residents in the amendment that was put forward, but you know, that is just one of the things that jumped off the page. We're curious why this level of engagement wasn't done before last year's announcement to move École Whitehorse Elementary School to the site in Takhini that has been chosen and which the government plans to move that school to. So, it is a bit curious for us that the government wants to insert this amendment into this motion to do engagement and consultation that should have been done prior to last year's announcement of the moving of the school out of the downtown core up to the Takhini subdivision.

As I mentioned earlier today in my response to the ministerial statement, this government doesn't have a stellar track record when it comes to capital planning for the development of schools. I mentioned that the former minister, in the very first Education annual report that she tabled in this House for the year 2016, she committed to the completion of a school revitalization plan by the summer of 2017. In the fall of 2017, when we asked about this plan, the minister told us that it did list a number of older school buildings that needed to be replaced and renovated in the coming years and that the government is working on this long-term plan to spread the cost of school upgrades and replacements over a reasonable period of time. So, that again was in the fall of 2017, but then nothing happened.

We later, from the former minister, got a commitment to develop a 10-year capital plan. Again, nothing happened on that. As I mentioned earlier today, in one of the five-year capital plans, we saw Holy Family Elementary and Christ the King Elementary — they were included, which led us in the House and many Yukoners to believe that they would be up for replacement, only to see those disappear from the capital planning documents in the following year.

As I said, in that very first Education annual report, the former minister promised this school revitalization plan for 2017. Here we are, almost six years later, and now they are

going out to consult on a broader plan, starting today, I believe — or starting yesterday — for the next two months.

Again, we are concerned with the fact that the engagement on this wasn't done prior to the announcement of the moving of École Whitehorse Elementary School out of the downtown core, and we are also concerned with the track record that the Liberals have in capital planning for schools — a promise that is almost six years overdue. That's why we will not be supporting this amendment here today.

Ms. Tredger: As my leader has already said, we will be voting against this amendment. I just want to flesh out the reasons a little bit. I am struggling a little to keep my temper here, and that is because I think we all saw the people in the gallery today. I have seen, over the last many months, how much heart, how much care, how much time the downtown residents have poured into asking for this commitment for a school. They have written petitions; they have knocked on doors; they have sent letters; they have met with ministers. They have spent so much effort, and then today, they came here again to ask the ministers to commit that there would be an elementary school downtown.

Before all of us in this House were elected, how many times did we come to the Legislature? I came a couple of times when something really, really deeply important to me was being debated. I would suspect that is the same for most of us. It's a lot to take time out of your day. Some of those were parents on spring break. They took hours out of their day to come here and listen to this debate, asking for a commitment. Instead, the minister has put forward a suggestion that we continue to engage. Did they really think downtown residents would be satisfied with that?

This is a motion to engage that does not specifically name anyone downtown. It does not name the Downtown Residents' Association. I know it says "community partners and Education partners and Yukoners". It does not name downtown residents. So, no, we will not be voting in favour of this amendment.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Okay, I'm going to talk to the amendment a bit. First of all, let me start with me and where I am from. My riding is south of town. I live in Marsh Lake, but once you become a minister — I think we got sworn in at the end of 2016 — I found out I am deemed to live in Whitehorse. Luckily, we had bought a place downtown about 10 years before that, where my mother-in-law lives. So, I became her neighbour; I became, sort of, the basement suite person, and I probably spend more than half of my time in the downtown.

I love the downtown. I think that it's a great part of the Yukon, and I think, in many ways, it's the heart of the Yukon. I remember going to one of those — I forget what they were called — one of those community things where people got to talk about places, and they asked me to talk about the downtown. I just love it, and I love its vibrancy and everything about it. I live right across — or, when I'm in town, I stay right across from the Housing First project, and one of my neighbours is, in fact, probably one of the people who wrote in, because she goes to École Whitehorse Elementary School, and

she now and then kicksleds to the school, so, I wouldn't be surprised.

Okay, I think it's fair to say that schools are a really important piece of the fabric of our communities, our neighbourhoods, and one of the things that I have seen over the past several years is that, especially when we came up with the universal childcare, it seems like we have even more daycares in the downtown. So, it is great to have kids in the downtown.

All right. So far, it sounds like all sides agree. I just heard the House Leader for the Yukon Party say that, hey, you didn't engage, so no engaging now; you can't put in an amendment here. And one of the things that he said was that we don't list the Downtown Residents' Association. Sorry, but "community partners" is exactly every neighbor in the downtown. That's who is there listed; so, no, this is not excluding folks in the downtown.

The choice here about voting for this amendment is about whether we should engage to talk to Yukoners about it or whether we should take a decision.

The criticism coming from the opposition, especially the Yukon Party, is: "You didn't engage when you took this decision" — and now they are going to vote against engaging with Yukoners to take a decision. That's pretty good. It doesn't ring sincere for me.

Let's talk about the choice. I'm more sympathetic to the NDP's position, which is that they want to ensure that there is a school downtown. So, let's talk for a second about some of the simple realities that are coming up. Also, one part of my background is that I'm the son of two school teachers, so I think about schools a lot, and I also happen to be an engineer, so whenever we get submissions around buildings, I probably look at them in a slightly different light than some of my colleagues.

When we started to hear about what was going on with École Whitehorse Elementary School, the first thing you do is ask yourself: Could we please just renovate it? Because then we would keep it there; it would all stay the same. But it's not really feasible. When I looked at what the minister and the Minister of Highways and Public Works brought — about what the condition of the school was, just even about washrooms — you can't really just renovate it. Could you, for example, instead build right next to it and then move the students over once it is built and then deconstruct it? And the answer again —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Leader of the Third Party, on a point of order.

Ms. White: I'm going to call Standing Order 19(b), which is speaking to other than the amendment. The minister, I believe, is speaking to the issue of moving the school but not to the amendment specifically.

Speaker: Government House Leader, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just to the point of order, the amendment talks about the difference of engagement or ensuring. That is exactly what I am talking about.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is no point of order.
Government House Leader, please continue.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, one of the steps that is necessary is — this school is near the end of its life. What are you going to do? Where are the kids going to go? Effectively, what you have to do is you have to build another school, at least if it's for the interim. There has to be another location for them to go. How about an educational reserve? So, that is the step. So, even if the step is to get back to this location, the actions that have been taken to date are the steps that you should take, and we put forward an engagement. Earlier today, the House Leader for the Yukon Party said that an engagement was brought forward just because of the motion coming forward.

In my experience, as a minister, of how we design public engagement, there is quite a process involved. It takes several months just normally lining those things up, but if you are lucky, you can do it in a month, but you don't do it in a night. Yesterday, we heard that the motion was coming forward. This was already in the works, and it is a commitment to engage.

The amendment says: Let's have that conversation with Yukoners and then let's take the decision.

Voting against the amendment says: No, no, no — let's take the decision and maybe then talk to Yukoners.

I get that there has been some conversation with folks, but I don't think that there has been the full conversation that is contemplated with the engagement that has just been launched.

So, what we would end up doing, if we vote against the amendment right now, is say that we don't want to listen to that piece.

When we talk to the main motion, whether it is amended or not — I will stand and I will speak further to that whole notion of the need to move — the need to have the students somewhere and then the choice about where to go over the long term. I appreciate what we are discussing here, but what is being voted on in the amendment is whether or not to engage before we take a decision. I hear very often from the members opposite that it is critical that we engage before we take those decisions, and today they are telling me that they will vote against that very step.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Tredger: Disagree.

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

Speaker: The nays have it.

I declare the amendment defeated.

Amendment to Motion No. 577 negatived

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will now speak to the main motion. When I started off talking about the amendment, the physical school — the building — is getting to the end of its life, so something has to happen. There has been work to try to see whether the students could stay right on-site. That is not possible, so the pivot was to the educational reserve. We have a couple of them. We have space in Riverdale. We have space up in Takhini.

You have to move the students for at least a period of time, and then there is a sort of clever thing that happens here where, if you start getting this right, it will help as we deal with a lot of schools. If there are future schools that have the same challenge, you can get into a sequencing. Some schools that we have — no problem. It will just be renovations, but they may even need to be moved for a time period. There is a lot of planning that has to happen. The educational reserve is very important for that.

The debate today — and I appreciate the Member for Whitehorse Centre in her comments when she said that this isn't about whether it is École Whitehorse Elementary School; this isn't about whether it is French immersion; this is just about having a school downtown. We believe that you need to have the conversation with Yukoners first.

My sense is that the NDP believes that this conversation has already happened, but respectfully, we haven't completed it in our minds. What I heard from the Yukon Party is that they believe that we shouldn't have that conversation.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Well, let me rephrase that then, Mr. Speaker. It's fine. What I heard from the House Leader and the critic for Education is that you need to have had the conversation before you made the decision that kids need to be moved, but you should not have the conversation before you decide that we should have a school downtown. That was the vote, and the point about moving the children is the fact that the school is aging out. So, it's a reality that is being faced.

I love Softball Yukon, but if there's a choice about needing the kids to be somewhere or whether those fields are used, I would just find a way to try to support Softball Yukon to some other location, or maybe there's a possibility to keep some of the fields — that is part of the planning process.

The notion about having a school downtown — now it gets a little bit trickier, because maybe there is, but should it be where it is right now? I don't know that yet. People get attached to where things are, but you know, I've seen some schools thrive in different locations. I think it's also fair to say that, for the past several years, we've been working to increase this whole notion of experiential learning and doing so especially in our natural spaces.

Again, the Member for Whitehorse Centre made suggestions about accessing those spaces, although they are not right there. So, one of the arguments that I heard from the Yukon Party was that you don't want a school next to the greenbelt because you would use up the greenbelt. From my perspective, that's a great place. We are doing work to bring in McIntyre Creek Park. You are close to the university — there are a lot of strong opportunities there. But really, the choice about moving is because there is an education reserve there, and it's because the school is effectively aging out.

You know, from my perspective, the motion that we have before us — it is strange to me that it is us, as legislators, as MLAs, as representatives of the government, that we make this call. I would rather that our school professionals, our parents, even the residents be the ones who sit there and think through all of the various options — and part of it that it seems to me is still not quite on the table is because I think there is still a misunderstanding that this site is a site that can be used. Ultimately, it is but not in the interim, meaning that, no matter what, as the school ages out, the students will need to move somewhere else at least for a time. Because I am not sure that is well-understood, then I worry that the input that we have gotten from the folks who have written to the minister is not yet as informed as it would be important to be as their voices come forward.

So, my perspective is it is much better to have that engagement first and then make the choice about what the planning is for the downtown over the long term. I would like to thank the Minister of Education for her public comments, because no matter how this shakes down today, her comments have been that there is still this willingness about a school downtown, but we always want to have the conversation first. So, that is my perspective on the main motion.

I love how much we have going on in the downtown. I think it is great that the Child Development Centre is going to be across the street here. I love how many daycares we seem to have growing in the downtown.

There is just one more point that I want to make before I stand down — sit down — and that is that there also seems to be a bit of misunderstanding that École Whitehorse Elementary School is populated with kids from downtown; it is not. The minister explained that less than 10 percent of the school population are kids from downtown. So, that does not take away from the argument about why it is good to have a school

downtown, but it does sort of change that perspective that this is all about kids being able to walk to school. I think it is important that we have schools in all of our neighbourhoods and that they be close to kids as much as possible.

Anyway, I look forward to the rest of the debate today. I would like to thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for bringing forward this motion.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am very pleased to rise to speak to this motion this afternoon. I thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for bringing it to the floor. It's an important conversation. I think it's bringing some clarity and gives us an opportunity to address some of the concerns we've heard in the community.

This is, at its heart, a discussion about investment in the minds, hearts, and bodies of our children. It is about building healthy, happy, sustainable communities. It's about investing in the future of our Yukon, investing in the future of our Yukon children, and this is exactly what the Yukon Liberal government has been doing for years. It's also about building community trust and consulting with Yukoners — and those things, too, are hallmarks of the hard and ultimately deeply rewarding work the Yukon Liberal government has been doing for years. It's also about planning and fairly executing on those plans in a way that benefits parents and children, the municipality, and the contracting community, in some cases — again, things this Liberal government has been doing for the last seven years.

So, yeah, I'm happy to be talking about it this afternoon. I'm not against building a school downtown in any way, shape, or form. I agree with my colleague, the Member for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I think all of our communities should have schools. I think that's what we have set about to do: investing and improving the lives and education outcomes of our children; it's very important to all of us on this side of the House. So, I'm not against building a school downtown, once we have a brand-new, purpose-built, and beautiful replacement to Whitehorse Elementary up in Takhini.

In fact, it bears noting that both my sons went to Whitehorse Elementary. They're not alone. It also bears mentioning that they attended from the Logan subdivision and, in fact, that is common. Most kids attend Whitehorse Elementary from other areas of the city and have for years. It's not specifically a downtown school. It's downtown, but it services the entire community, because it is a French language school. As we have heard this afternoon from several of my colleagues, very few of the kids attending that school actually live downtown.

I have listened to the Member for Whitehorse Centre's sentiment this afternoon, and the reality is that the catchment for downtown is from Selkirk Elementary, not Whitehorse Elementary. As I said, only about 10 percent of this downtown school's students currently live downtown. Whitehorse Elementary is a French immersion school and, as such, is an all-of-Whitehorse school at the moment, not specifically a local elementary school.

The member has spoken about the opportunity to make a local school, and I hear her. None of us disagree. All of us on this side of the House agree with that sentiment. It would be great to have another school downtown. What we disagree about is process. We do not believe that, on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon, we should be making a decision on what should happen downtown before hearing from residents, from the First Nation School Board, from other school council members, and from a whole panoply of people, groups, and agencies about what should go downtown and where and what it should look like.

On this side of the House, with the work that we've done, we know of issues that have to be thought through and dealt with when making a decision like this. It's not really responsible to make that decision here on the floor of the House today. It really isn't. One of the key issues is: Where would you build a school? As my colleague has said, you might build it on the site of the current Whitehorse Elementary School, but that site isn't really big enough. Where else would you put it? That's a good question. Nothing else is zoned. What site would you choose? I don't know, and I haven't heard anything on that from the members opposite. If we are going to make a decision this afternoon, we should have that in the talk.

The Member for Whitehorse Centre quoted much from her constituents, and I appreciate the interest of Yukon citizens — her constituents and others, of course. The member opposite has demonstrated a sincere interest in education in their neighbourhood — education, their neighbourhood, and education in their neighbourhood; however, there are, as I note, many factors that contribute to how communities experience a school facility and how the facility can contribute to modern education and curriculum — location, access to greenspace — we talked about that this afternoon — technology, modern and experiential facilities, inclusive and cultural spaces are all important design considerations, as is — as my good colleague, the Minister of Education, noted this afternoon — the thoughts and interests of others who may not have had a positive relationship with the current Whitehorse Elementary. There is a history with that building; it's 70 years old, and we have to be cognizant of that as well.

Yukon government — this Liberal government — is committed to replacing aging infrastructure. We have a good record on that front. École Whitehorse Elementary is more than 70 years old, and the current facility is not able to meet future programming and community needs, including access to spaces for innovative, inclusive, and experiential learning. In fact, that building doesn't even have Wi-Fi in most of the building. There are dead zones which really inhibit learning. So, the building had to be replaced. I won't even get into the greenhouse gas emissions this afternoon; my colleague has already done that.

There are good reasons to replace the school, and you can't replace the school in situ and have two schools on that site — it's too small. There are dangers with doing such a construction job that were frankly just not responsible. So, yes, we made a decision to move it to Takhini, a site that is zoned for education, has the space to do it, and is a good location, frankly. While we build that school, we can then plan for the future of other

schools in the territory — perhaps one downtown. I think that is the proper way to do it.

We have to look at where it might be appropriate downtown, how will we fit it in with existing businesses and uses. There are many alcohol and cannabis outlets downtown. I have heard the New Democratic Party being explicit about avoiding having a school anywhere near such places. I believe that the Leader of the NDP said she felt compelled to speak out against a local start-up cannabis business recently in council because she felt that it was too close to a downtown school. These businesses are supposed to be 300 metres from any school or place of learning.

So, immediately, many possible locations downtown are not appropriate. If the NDP has a location in mind, we would be glad to hear and consider it. I hope that, during the consultation, we hear that.

We have also heard from the Yukon Party this afternoon — you know, we'll take our record on education support over their record anytime. I will take our record on consultation over their record on consultation anytime. I will take our record on design and execution over their record anytime. I will take our record on procurement of new schools, recreation facilities — heck, on most infrastructure — over their record anytime. I will take our record on transparency and long-term financial planning over theirs anytime. We do it; they did not — never. They were flying by the seat of their pants.

First and foremost, we are building elementary schools in Whitehorse, in Burwash and other places — work that our colleagues in the Yukon Party, a conservative organization, refused or outright neglected to do during their term in office. In 14 years in office, they built no elementary schools in Whitehorse and only one high school. The high school went millions of dollars overbudget, and proper building permits were not in place when construction began. Their so-called “free design” from Alberta ended up costing taxpayers more than a million bucks. Due to their inability to properly plan or build or procure, the school is already too small. They balked at the cost, stopped, redesigned, and then, in the end, wound up with a school that was too small at a higher cost than the initial, much larger design. That is the legacy of the Yukon Party: paying too much for too little.

Indeed, the biggest issue to the Yukon Party seems to be the fate of some ball diamonds. My colleague, the member from beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, talked about that today. I played ball. I played on those ball diamonds. It's a great location, but if I was looking at committing to a school or committing to some ball diamonds — as much as I like Softball Yukon — I will take the school over the diamonds any time. We have repeatedly said that we would work with Softball Yukon to relocate their diamonds, which are currently located on a long-established educational reserve. Frankly, I believe the education of our children should take precedence over the fate of a ball diamond that can far more easily be moved to a new location. If the choice is between softball fields and preparing young people for a lifetime of success, I will pick young people every time.

They say again and again, “Why didn't we consult before deciding?” Again, we won't be taking any lessons from the Yukon Party about building schools. The existing school could not be saved. It could not be renovated. It could not be used anymore. We are looking at building a replacement school. We chose a site for that location on an educational reserve — land that was zoned appropriately to handle the school — and we are building it there and moving the kids to a new location — a purpose-built school, a modern educational facility in a great location.

The educational reserve has long been public and is included in the Whitehorse official community plan. In the downtown core, I will say again that there is no suitably sized educational reserve, so consultations are vitally important as we move forward.

I must also reiterate, as we have over the years, that it is very hard to take advice from the Yukon Party on consultations. For anybody who has lived here for more than eight years, then you will surely remember the generational fight over the Peel watershed between First Nation governments, environmental groups, outfitters, and the Yukon Party government. So, to have the same Yukon Party MLAs who were part of that attempt to hoodwink Yukoners now lecturing government on consultations is beyond rich — enough said.

We are building an important, modern school on properly zoned and long-identified land in Takhini. After that, we committed to consulting on the issue of a school downtown where no properly sized reserve has been identified. Again, I hope to hear from the NDP and the Yukon Party, formerly the “conservative Yukon Party”, where they would like to plunk a new school —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe you have ruled in the past about referring to parties by their proper name, as enunciated by Elections Yukon, and once again we see the Member for Whitehorse West not referring to the Yukon Party by its proper name.

Speaker: Minister for Community Services, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I very closely considered and followed the guidance I was given by your office and the Clerk's office on this matter in referring to the party that way.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is a point of order. I would ask members not to phrase their debate in that manner. Please continue.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, I hope to hear from the NDP and the Yukon Party on where they might want to plunk a new school downtown.

Now, this afternoon, we have also heard that every community needs the vibrancy and energy that youth and children bring. While things can always improve, I don't see

the downtown dying in any way, shape, or form, and I don't see a lack of children in the core.

Today, I see our downtown filled with children and youth. We have many daycares downtown, far more than any of our suburban communities. We have the Wood Street school, we have several Montessori schools, we will have the Child Development Centre just down the road from this building as soon as renovations are complete, and just across the bridge into Riverdale and in sight of this building, we have F.H. Collins, Paul-Émile Mercier, and Selkirk. There's no magical line, aside from a small bridge, that separates them from downtown. Indeed, the students from those schools frequently make the 15-minute walk to stores and attractions downtown on their lunch hour.

Keep in mind that what we consider to be the downtown core continues to grow as the population of Whitehorse surges. As one of my constituents recently remarked, this isn't the Whitehorse of the 1950s or the 1980s, neatly contained within a few downtown blocks. Again, we are not against another school downtown. We want to hear from folks about it.

On March 14, our government launched a public consultation to hear directly from Yukoners about the future of Whitehorse schools. This consultation provides all Yukoners with the opportunity to provide feedback to the government about educational opportunities in downtown Whitehorse. We encourage all Yukoners, especially those with children in Whitehorse schools, to participate.

If the broader community feels that a downtown school is desirable and a large, suitable location is identified together with our partners in the city, First Nations, and others, there's no reason that this government would not seriously consider that. But asking us to guarantee a school without any consultation with other governments — such as the City of Whitehorse, the First Nation School Board, or school councils — seems offside. It is necessary, especially given that there is no potential location put forward. To do otherwise would be irresponsible. If the large educational reserve already existed downtown, that would be a different story. It currently does not.

I would like to return for a moment to the Government of Yukon's commitment to replacing aging infrastructure and modernizing our schools. The Whitehorse population continues to grow, and we are expanding our capacity to provide a modern learning environment for an increasing number of students. The ways that students learn are changing and our school environments will have to change to reflect these changes. We are working with local communities and First Nations to identify where other new schools, renovations, or modular extensions are needed. We are excited to be planning for the much-needed replacement of the École Whitehorse Elementary School facility; however, if we agreed to this motion, we would be tying our hands and limiting our options when it comes to selecting the best option for the children of our community.

What we must keep in focus, beyond the sentiment and politics, is what best meets the needs of our children. This motion really gives that short shrift. In fact, as my colleagues have noted, it encourages us to take a concrete action before we

properly consult, before considering the needs of the students. That stands in sharp contrast to the approach that the opposition has been demanding. It is really hard to reconcile. I would argue that it is wrong-headed; in fact, I am arguing that it is so. For this reason, I will not support the current motion as it is written.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to take an opportunity to put a few points on the record. Just in general, I want to respond to a few comments that were made today by the Member for Whitehorse Centre. I was in agreement with many of the comments that were made on points about downtown and the fact that it's important to have the right infrastructure in the downtown core. I think there might have been a bit of conflict in some of the points. But for the formal record, I would like to identify a few things.

First, when it comes to the downtown vibrancy, there were comments from the Member for Whitehorse Centre that it's important to ensure that we have the vibrancy in the downtown core. As it spoke to the downtown south plan around continued densification, I am in full agreement with that. I think that more has to be done in the downtown core. I know this is the jurisdiction of the City of Whitehorse, but I think it is key for us to look at what has happened in other cities across the country where there was a period of time when there was a move for most residential development to be done in suburban areas. The end result was that many downtown cores in almost every province across Canada saw their downtown area become sleepy once you hit 6:00 at night. I know the member opposite touched on that and said that this is something we see here. What I mean by the "conflictual statement" is that there is a vibrancy downtown, but in the evening, there is not. I won't split hairs. I think the comments really focused around the fact that there is a lot of activity during the day, and that's important, and that leads to a balance in downtown Whitehorse and then in the evening, because individuals go back to their neighbourhoods and they take a lot of the population that we see during the day from downtown back to the neighbourhoods that surround our downtown core.

That's part of the reason why I think it's so important that 5th and Rogers gets developed with maximum densification; I really do. I think it's important to our downtown businesses, especially that it's a rental market and it's an affordable rental market so that individuals who are coming back to the Yukon — maybe after post-secondary, whether it's trades or another form of academic undertaking — or there are new folks who are moving to the Yukon to fill our needs in our labour market, in tourism — you name it, mining, many areas of the private sector. We know we have the highest ratio of job openings in the country, so it's important. Plus we know that we are going to need to recruit, as we grow, more health care professionals and educators, and there are so many different areas where we are going to need to see increased growth with expansion within our labour market. Our belief is that 5th and Rogers will be part of that. We want to see more people making a decision to go to rural Yukon and live in those communities, and that's why it's important to stay focused on lot development and opportunities,

but I'll stick to our motion here, which is really about downtown and the schools.

We believe that there can be up to 300 units, potentially, put into the area of 5th and Rogers. We're not looking at social housing, and it's important to note that. That's because the downtown south plan clearly defines the goals that they want to see in that area, and the neighbourhood neighbours have spoken. I know the Member for Whitehorse Centre would know that from knocking on those doors — that what they want to see there is development, but they want to see, really, market housing and affordable options but not social housing. That's what we believe should go into that particular area, and it should go in as quickly as it possibly can be developed in a feasible way. We think that is going to lead to a more vibrant downtown.

We know that we have talked about the grader station here. For the record, that is not part of our 1,000-lot strategy. The grader station was something that we thought should start to move. We know that Kwanlin Dün First Nation has a first right of refusal on that lot, and we also know that the lot needs to go through a remediation process. But, when you look at it, some of the initial work that has been done identifies up to 1,000 units that could be found there.

Then, as we move toward other areas of opportunity in the downtown core, we know that the City of Whitehorse is going to be making some decisions on where their old municipal services building is; I think we would all call it across from the old Canadian Tire building, next to the Yukon Inn. It is another very significant piece of land. It is a piece of land that will have to go through remediation, but I also think that there is a lot of interest in that area, as well, for more housing and a mix. I think that what we are going to see from the city on zoning is, in all cases, a request to have a mix of commercial, as well as residential, and that is about sustaining the population that you're bringing into the downtown core with things like daycares and convenience stores — you name it — gyms, office space — and that is part of the conversation that is around 5th and Rogers. What that means is that — and this is where I think that there is alignment, from my perspective, with the Member for Whitehorse Centre — we are going to see a significant increase in the downtown core population.

I think that we all agree that — most of us agree — that is a positive thing for downtown and for Whitehorse. It will provide more customers and clients to our private sector. It will lead to a more vibrant downtown, which likely means that the conversation around school infrastructure in the downtown core is going to be a significant and real conversation. What I know is that, in my discussions with the minister, in the immediate future, we know that Whitehorse Elementary — and I know the school well. I have sat on the school council at Whitehorse Elementary. The Member for Riverdale North sat on the Whitehorse Elementary School Council previous to me. I know the school well, and my children spent a period of time going to that school. To be fair, I drove them from outside of downtown to downtown. I drove my children from, at the time, Granger to that area. I think that there are other individuals in here, now that I think about it, whose children were going to

school and probably had to be driven from downtown, and I know that the Member for Riverdale North also was living in Riverdale at the time, and the children went to downtown.

I get the walking part, because my children finished their elementary school experience at Elijah Smith. I agree that it made more sense. It was nice that the boys could walk to school in the morning. They would leave the house and make that trip. What we do know is that, in the current circumstances, only about 50 children from downtown Whitehorse are attending Whitehorse Elementary School. We know that there are other children who may be attending other schools who live downtown. What I believe — and I want to be respectful and accurate in my interpretation of the words from the Member for Whitehorse Centre — and I am paraphrasing a bit, but that an English school maybe would draw a greater number of the current downtown population of children versus the school that is providing a more unique program which is focused on a bilingual delivery.

With that in mind, I think that part of the dialogue today — and I can understand that there was concern around the amendment — but what we were trying to do was provide a clear path where Whitehorse Elementary School, which is coming to a point where it must be replaced — and we know that the easiest solution at this point or the best solution, if you want to take into consideration the school community, would be looking at Takhini. Why? Well, as a person who ran programs at the university — which was a college before — I can tell you that I did lots of land-based learning. I did it right behind that university, and I did it every day with my students. It was one of the best parts of their day. I went to McIntyre Creek with our students, and it really enriched the delivery on a daily basis. That is part of the reason why I have been trying to look at the protection of McIntyre Creek, because I think it is a really important asset to those neighbourhoods and to not only the university, but to Takhini Elementary and any other elementary school that comes after that.

I haven't had a chance to dig up which government had put the educational reserve in place. It makes sense. We understand in Takhini that there is a potential disruption. Look, if we can't figure out collectively between the great leadership at Softball Yukon and the municipality, where we can have two fields move to another location — I believe that it can be accomplished. There is a reason, under the guidance and leadership of George Arcand for a long, long time — and I worked with George, who was a fierce leader — where he knew and he put all of his permanent infrastructure from Softball Yukon across the road — that's where he invested, in those two other fields. For the length of time they have been in there, they have really had minimal permanent infrastructure because they are on an education reserve.

So, finding two other spots, whether it's looking down toward expanding the areas on the south access — anyway, I'm going to leave it to the organization to define that, because I'm sure it is important to them to have some of those pieces of critical infrastructure in the same areas for when they do bigger events, like Dustball or whatever it may be. I know we can

figure it out. We have to be able to figure out how to find locations for two softball fields.

I think the opposition wants to make this into a battle. Yes, we get it. There are lots of people who play softball. It makes sense to battle on behalf of the people who play softball. But by and large, Yukoners and residents of Whitehorse understand that it's important to have proper infrastructure in place for a school. So, we understand the political calculus, but at the end of the day, I think people have a common-sense approach to these conversations.

When it comes to using the education reserve, as I stated, you have a phenomenal backdrop for children to take part in many, many things. I also agree with the Member for Whitehorse Centre who says there are great amenities in the downtown core. Clay cliffs, maybe not; Black Street stairs, sure; probably not bringing children up to the clay cliffs, maybe carefully along the Millennium Trail, but not by the river. I know those are all common-sense approaches, but it probably would be important to use other areas downtown.

Will there be a need — and after speaking with folks, do we think individuals from the downtown area, as well as from other organizations — will they identify, with increased infrastructure and increased densification, the need for additional school infrastructure in the downtown? Likely. Probably, and that makes sense, based on where we see population trends going. Do we think that a new bilingual school in downtown will draw more downtown students into that area? Likely not, because we know there are only 50 students attending right now.

If there were an English school in the downtown, would we see that number go from 50 to hundreds of students? Potentially. Are we going to see the downtown growth happen? Absolutely. So, nobody is against a school in the downtown area. Nobody is saying that. What we are saying is that we believe a common-sense approach at this time is to ensure that a school is built on an education reserve with the proper amenities around it, that the children in the downtown area who are currently going to Whitehorse Elementary have an opportunity to go there.

I don't think it is even — getting into the climate change conversation, I think, on this one, would be really challenging. I think that we could go back and forth, but I think that there are a lot of parents and buses coming into the downtown core who would have to go less distance. We know that, in many jurisdictions, we have great public transit. We know that the NDP believe that; they have doubled down on that in their conversations with us around the confidence and supply agreement. We know that having an opportunity for 50 children in the downtown core to walk to a public transit area and potentially go two kilometres into a beautiful area is something that is not going to take away from what happens downtown.

I agree with some of the comments that were made and comments I have heard previously from other members in the House, that it could be challenging to have your children at Whitehorse Elementary. There probably needs to be a really thoughtful redesign if another school is going to go into that location, but in the interim, the children who are going to that

location will have to go somewhere else. We will have to look at demolition, and we will have to look at remediation. I know that, from the conversations in the House, 5th and Rogers is the next available large chunk of land. As we know, we are going out to RFP. To come back now — for the Third Party to say, “No, you should use that for a school” after — for lack of a better term — trying to beat me up or beat us up on the fact that there should be housing there — come on, that is a bit of a stretch.

What was told to us by everybody in this House was that we need to get that moving on housing, and we know what happened in 2015 and 2016 — announcements and nothing happened — and it did. I know; we will leave that.

Right now, since we want to move on this, we know that it was a bit of a stall concerning the geotechnical challenges that we had this year, the slide on the south access — what has come back to us at this particular time is that the berm that was to be put in place at 5th and Rogers will be suitable, and we have to look at the actual structures that go in place. And there will be some, I think, advance geotechnical requests, based on which RFP is selected. Now, to say that we should all of a sudden not use that for housing, while we have an RFP out, and we should now build a school there — I know that, if that happened, the next thing we would be told by the Third Party is that we are not investing in housing. They would say that we are not following through. Then what would happen is that the Yukon Party would come to House and say, you know, that we are not keeping focused on housing development, so I leave that on 5th and Rogers.

So, right now, when we look across from the bridge to Riverdale, to the Two Mile Hill, to Mountain View Drive, there are not a lot of areas that haven't been touched upon. There are a couple in the industrial area — probably not suitable — it is not suitable. I know from doing the OCP at the municipal level, you can look across the city, and it would be really difficult. There are areas that are there, but they should be for housing.

So, with that being said, it is important to put on the record that there are some things that need to be corrected. I think it is important to say that, if there is a need for a downtown school, there should be a downtown school. The trend of population looks like that is where it will probably go. At this time, what is the right approach is to put something in Takhini and start to plan what should go downtown and what is the way to maximize the number of students who live downtown to attend that school. Having a bilingual school in the downtown core as that first option does not meet that goal.

So, I think it is important to share the right information with the citizens of downtown. I know that the Member for Whitehorse Centre will continue to communicate; we will ensure that we communicate accurate information as well, and we will continue to move forward and have the conversations with those very, very important stakeholders as we move forward on continuing to get schools built — which I think is important. At the end of the day, that is what this is about. Let's get these schools built. We know there is a big gap. There has been a lack of development in educational infrastructure, and

we are focused on building new schools here and in the communities.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. Tredger: I don't have a lot to add at this point, but I do want to tell a couple of stories. The first one I want to start with — I was door-knocking last fall, and it was sort of that late fall time where it is getting a little cold, but you still have the long, really golden light. I was walking down the street with a volunteer, and this couple walked by and they said, "Hey, are you Emily Tredger? Are you the Member for Whitehorse Centre?" Sorry — I want to get that correct. They said, "I heard you were asking people — there was a petition about Whitehorse Elementary School, and we wanted to talk to you about that."

We had this really lovely conversation. They were a young family. They actually just had their first child, I think, a couple of months ago. It was really important to them. They had chosen to live downtown because they wanted to be part of a walkable community. They chose it because everything is downtown — schools, stores, businesses — and they were really worried that they were going to lose that. It just so happened that the volunteer with me was a really remarkable young woman who had been a student at Whitehorse Elementary not too long ago, so she talked about why that school was so important to her. It's those conversations that I'm thinking about as we talk here today.

There has been a lot said this afternoon. I am going to repeat a couple of things that I said earlier, because it's like they weren't heard. I really want to go over them again. I am not going to respond to too many of the different things that were said, but this is what I said in my first statement: I know that most of the students at École Whitehorse Elementary School do not live downtown. That is an indisputable fact. I know that. I think it is a really great point. I think we need to ask: Why is the downtown school not attended very much by downtown kids? It's because they don't have the right to attend it. It's not their catchment area. Even if they want to be in French immersion, they are not entitled to go to École Whitehorse Elementary School. They might be sent to Takhini or across the bridge. I know that, right now, this school is not meeting the needs of most downtown kids. I think we can do better than that. I think that this is an opportunity. It's an opportunity for a neighbourhood school where downtown kids are guaranteed a place.

I heard a lot about how it is an aging building. I think I said that, too. I know that it is an aging building. I know that it is no longer suitable for education. I know that there are problems with everything from the Wi-Fi to the acoustics to the size of the gym. I am not asking that kids continue to learn in that building. I am not asking for them to stay in that building. I am not asking to keep the French immersion program downtown. I am not even asking that we keep it on that site. I think it's a good option, but I really deliberately wrote this motion to not

be prescriptive because I don't have all the answers. I don't know what the best site is. I have a lot of ideas. I have brought forward lots of them today, but I don't have access to all the information that the Yukon government has, so I wanted to make this motion as un-prescriptive as possible while still ensuring that downtown residents could feel secure knowing that they have an elementary school downtown — knowing that they will continue to have an elementary school downtown.

One of the people commented — listening to a letter being read from someone from Porter Creek saying, "Do kids from downtown even go to that school anyway?" I certainly respect that lots of people have different opinions on this, but it feels like the downtown voices are being ignored. It feels like the downtown kids are being ignored. When I hear that we can't have a school downtown because there are too many cannabis stores, I think: What are we prioritizing? What I'm asking is to prioritize kids downtown. That is what I'm asking for. That's what the residents of downtown are asking for. Make sure they have a school downtown.

I don't really have a lot to add other than that. I think I said it all — actually, I think my constituents said it all pretty concisely the first time I got up. So, I'll just finish by thanking them so much for all their input, all their heart, all their effort, all the time and effort that they have put into being here and communicating through petitions and letters and phone calls and meetings. I want to apologize to anyone whose words I have missed — who sent them to me. I have done my best to capture them all, and I hope that they feel that they were represented today.

I will just finish by asking everyone to consider: What does it take to get people out to the galley in the Legislature? It takes something they really deeply, deeply care about and that is so important to them. That's what we saw here today — a gallery full of people who felt so strongly about this issue that they took their afternoon to come watch this debate. I guess this is my request, my plea: Please, please commit to having an elementary school downtown.

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. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yeas, seven nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 577 agreed to

Motion No. 575

Clerk: Motion No. 575, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct a quality assurance assessment of the Yukon midwifery program to determine why and how the program stopped operating six months after opening.

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, the shutdown of the midwifery program was a surprise to no one, except for maybe this government.

For years, midwives and advocates urged this government to support their vital work in offering pre- and post-natal care in safe, culturally relevant deliveries. Midwifery is a critical component of primary care, and we can all agree that a good health care system offers care from birth to death. For so many Yukon families, it should involve midwifery. This profession is dedicated to providing compassionate, safe, and patient-centred care.

For Indigenous communities, midwifery has been practised for centuries, allowing people to give birth in the place they feel safest and with the community they feel most supported by. It allows individuals to make informed choices about their care and where they want to give birth. Midwifery is a proven successful and safe option for delivery. In fact, a recent study from the University of British Columbia shows that midwives in BC are providing safe primary care for pregnancies of all medical risk levels. This study validates what so many in our community and in the midwifery profession already knew to be true. Midwives provide safe, patient-centred care at every level of risk. The study notes — and I quote: “Midwifery clients were less likely to have preterm births and low-birth-weight babies compared to physician-led care...”

Midwives are critical providers in pregnancies and deliveries. They provide preventive care that allows the patient to make informed choices about the health care they receive, and Yukoners deserve reliable access to their services.

After years of grassroot efforts, this government finally decided to regulate midwifery, but it was botched from the start. Again, they had expert advice to draw on from midwives and parents, and the Yukon NDP also warned this government of the flaws in their regulations. This government hires midwives with a minimum of one year of experience, meaning that they expect to attract and retain midwives from Outside to work in

the Yukon for less than they were making before. For all of the concern over health care shortages and retention, this government made the insulting decision to hire midwives for \$40,000 less a year than the average pay for midwives everywhere else in the country — \$40,000 less a year.

It wasn't just the insultingly low wages that doomed this program from the start. We know that the midwifery program suffered from a serious lack of protocols, leaving midwives with little support from this government from the start.

In every other medical profession, workers have clear, consistent, and reliable guidelines to rely on. Nurses, for example, can pull up clinical protocols for diabetes treatment options and follow, step by step, how to best move forward in treating their patients. Doctors have the same. But from the start of this midwifery program, none of these protocols were developed or available to midwives.

We have heard from the community and health care workers that this government expected midwives to do things on the fly while their profession was being introduced in a hospital setting. The government offered little to no support in normalizing or establishing midwifery in hospitals and births.

On March 6, the minister stated — and I quote: “Between November 6, 2022, and January 20, 2023, a total of 12 midwifery-led births were supported.” How many of these births were home births, how many were births in communities, and how many were not hospital based? We know that when midwives are integrated into obstetric care teams, the risk of C-sections and transfers of care are decreased. So, what are Yukon numbers telling us and how do they compare to the rest of the country? These numbers from the early months of the midwifery program are important because they give us a sense of how the program did on the whole — maybe even to know what to expect.

So, midwifery, like so many other services in the care industry, faces systemic pay discrimination. These workers are experts in delivery and maternity care, but they are consistently underpaid and undervalued for the years of training and experience they have. I used the word “insulting” earlier to describe their pay, and I used it very pointedly. It was irresponsible and insulting of this government to undermine this work — work that provides reproductive justice, that fights to end gender discrimination in health care, and that is one of the most culturally safe forms of health care. They insulted it with such low wages. It's insulting to the years of education and the hours of practice required to become a registered midwife. It undervalues all that work.

The minister might say today that these wages have been reviewed by the Public Service Commission and have increased, but she would be conveniently omitting the fact that the new wages are still so much lower than what was asked for. She would also be omitting the fact that the wages were only increased after the program shut down due to midwives leaving. So, instead of paying midwives a fair wage that reflects the value of their work from the beginning, like advocates such as the NDP asked, the Liberals only decided to increase wages by a small amount once they were forced to after being publicly called out for mismanaging a program into closing. Even then,

the wages were only increased to a level 17 in the Yukon government pay range. This is much less than what the midwives were asking for, and it is still lower than wages across the country for registered midwives. A fair wage for registered midwives in the Yukon would be at a 21 level in the Yukon government pay range. So, wages remain a key issue in the shuttering of this program.

As much as the minister uses the national and global shortage of health care workers as a blanket excuse, we know that this is not the only reason that midwifery is unavailable in the Yukon.

It wasn't just the failure to give competitive wages; it wasn't just midwives going on leave or leaving the program; there is a whole host of reasons that this program was mismanaged from the start by this government. Midwives in this program worked incredibly hard to provide the best care to their patients, and they are the backbone of this program and gave quality care in spite of this government's shortcomings. It is untrue and unacceptable that this government would then blame the closure of this program on those same midwives.

Yukoners deserve to know exactly how and why this government allowed this program to close. We know that the minister might list a lot of actions and plans that the government has for midwifery, but the reality is that midwifery is not operating in the territory right now. No one can access a registered midwife right now for a birth. They can access it for prenatal treatment and postnatal treatment, but not for a birth. And, right now, I know the minister is hearing from one specific Yukoner who plans to have an unattended birth because of the closure of this program.

When the government began to implement midwifery in the Yukon, they formed a Health and Social Services midwifery implementation committee. On this committee, there were professionals from a wide array of professions, and there were more than 15 people who sat on this committee. There were two physicians, there were multiple staff from Health and Social Services, and on this midwifery implementation committee, there was only one midwife. Just one. One midwife to talk about the midwifery implementation and how it would roll out in the Yukon.

That should be shocking to us here to know that only one midwife was included. So, how did this government expect to run a midwifery program with so little input from midwives from the start? And, again, I'll remind everyone here that no matter how many consultants are hired, there is still no program in operation right now. Midwives are not leading births; that's the important part. People are not having midwifery-led births.

So, we asked the minister directly in a letter if she would direct her department to conduct a quality assurance assessment. In response, she twisted those very words and said that the department had conducted two quality assurance reviews, but let me be clear: Neither of those reviews were what we specifically asked for. The departments of Health and Social Services, both here and in departments across the country, have a very clear understanding and use of what we asked for, which is a quality assurance assessment. What the minister was referring to in her response was not what we were asking for.

Those two reviews were case reviews. They are mandatory, routine reviews that are generally done monthly.

It is also clear to everyone that these two reviews did nothing to inform the government on how to keep the midwifery program running. The quality assurance assessment that we asked about in our letter to the minister, and that we are talking about on the floor today, is a system in program assessment that looks at the whole program. It is completed by a team of external registered midwives who have not been hired in any other role by this government to prevent bias and to focus on the objective measures of why the program did not succeed.

A quality assurance assessment is not a random idea. We have real, relevant examples of how this assessment can be used. Over 10 years ago, in Nova Scotia, their own midwifery program was on the verge of collapse. Their program was eventually suspended. Patients were left in the lurch, losing access to the vital health care they needed. The program was suspended for the same reason that the Yukon's was — a shortage of midwives — but it went much deeper than staffing. After the program was suspended, a quality assurance assessment was conducted. This assessment allowed folks in the province to learn why and how the program didn't work out. It also provided the critically needed recommendations for the government to get the program up and running again — from hiring a midwife, practice specialist, to overseeing clinical standards, conducting peer reviews and audits, and expanding the program to hire more midwives.

Mr. Speaker, we have the opportunity, over 10 years later, to learn from other jurisdictions and use the pause of our own midwifery program to conduct our own quality assurance assessment. As you know, I am an optimist, and I am optimistic that the minister will do right by this program and conduct this assessment. I am optimistic that the government wants to know what this assessment would recommend and wants to make midwifery accessible and available to all Yukoners. So, I am hopeful that the government will vote yes on this motion.

I will end by sharing what I have heard from so many expecting parents and health care professionals who are on the ground. This government can talk all day about the plans they have and all the work they did for midwifery, but right now, on the ground, there are no midwifery-led births in the Yukon. Not a single Yukon parent can assess midwifery for a home birth or even a hospital-assisted birth. So, that is why we are here. Midwifery is about choice. It is about being able to make a decision about where you have the baby. It is about making consensual decisions about your own health care.

So, I am hoping that the government will agree that we should call for a quality assurance assessment so that we can figure out what went wrong here and right our course.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't think it will surprise anyone that I don't agree with much of what has been said by the member opposite. I do appreciate the opportunity to have this motion discussed here in the Legislative Assembly. The motion notes — or urges — the Government of Yukon to conduct a quality assurance assessment of the Yukon midwifery program.

It says to determine why and how the program stopped operating six months after opening.

I think there are a number of key issues and words in that motion. First of all, it speaks about an assessment, which I — not surprisingly, lots of comments that came from the other side were things that I was going to say — well, I hope I am not disappointing the member opposite — and most of which I will not say, but clearly, a quality assurance assessment — I should note, and I will talk about that in a bit, but it doesn't say "external quality assurance assessment". That might have been a different conversation for us here today. Now we hear the word "external". The quality assessments that I will speak about later apparently aren't good enough, but we must focus on the issue of the midwifery program here in the territory and the importance of that, and "how" and "why" are the next words. I have answered that several times here in the Legislative Assembly, and I will do so again today.

Then, there are the words "stopped operating". We have heard by the submissions from the member opposite — by her own submissions — that it has not, in fact, stopped operating. I don't want to play semantics, because I certainly agree that there are currently no midwife-led births happening here in the territory and for good, strong reasons, and I will talk about that.

The motion is about how and why we got here and how and why we are going to get out of here. I think that this is the critical part of what is before the Legislature today, but it is true that midwife-led births have been temporarily suspended, and I will have more to say about that later, Mr. Speaker, but I cannot support — that won't surprise anyone, I guess, that I don't agree that it stopped, so I can't support a motion that is inaccurate.

I am well aware that this motion has been carefully worded for a political purpose to imply or even to state that the midwifery program and the clinic are somehow a failure. They are not a failure. I don't see them as a failure.

It is also curious to me that the opposition members seem so eager to criticize our government and the Department of Health and Social Services that they have made a political target of the midwifery services program that, by all accounts, they say they want to be successful. I think that they want it to be successful. It seems to me that they seem to want it to be successful.

Let's talk for a second — if we can start from the premise that the midwifery is a long-overdue priority in our health care system. I don't think I need to review the history of that. There are certainly others here in the Legislative Assembly who are well aware of that. If we start from the premise that midwifery is long overdue as a part of our health care services and system, then presumably, the next rational question should be: How can we achieve it? As I have said, there are others here in the Legislature who know much more about the history of how long the issue of a midwifery program has been a topic of discussion here in this House and, perhaps more importantly, how long it has been ignored. I will let others speak to that.

Once we came to government, we did the work required to plan, design, build, and legalize a new fully integrated and fully funded health care service — the first such new health care

service integrated into our health care services here in decades — in decades. I know that the members opposite will say that this should have been easy and that this should have been done in a matter of months. We should have been able to figure out what the law needs to do, how the regulations need to work, who needs to be affected by those, how we can plan to enforce them, and we should plan to have a program. Should we just pull that out of thin air? No, we should go and speak with experts. We should speak with midwives in other places. We should know that, as the last jurisdiction in Canada to implement midwifery, we should do it properly. We should do the work that is necessary to learn from the people who know how this process should be unraveling.

That does not take a number of months. Did it take time to do all of this work? Absolutely. Yes. Did it take too long to get to the opening of a midwifery clinic? Yes, but we took the time to do it right, and we consulted with experts. This is not something that politicians — Members of the Legislative Assembly, people elected to represent their neighbours and constituents — should be doing. We needed to consult with experts. We needed to consult with midwives and health care professionals, and we built what they recommended. There were a thousand decisions to be made during that process. Should they be contract individuals? Should they be staff individuals? How should the process for health care work? How do we integrate midwives into our current health care system and into our hospital system? Hospital privileges, bylaws for the hospital — the Yukon Hospital Corporation — how did they need to be changed? I am only scratching the surface with respect to how that process needed to be properly respected.

I very much appreciate the opportunity here to thank all of those individuals who were involved in that process, in that work: the experts, the midwives, the health care professionals, the Department of Health and Social Services individuals, and many others who were consulted on how we should build a program. I much appreciate the opportunity to thank them for their hard work. The success of this program is theirs, and it is a success. It will be a success. We should all be thankful for their work and respect it.

The temporary suspension of midwife-led births is a very difficult situation. I feel for all of those who have been dedicated — some for decades — and have worked so diligently to make this program a reality. I am not sure if the opposition — some of their newfound support for this program — are insinuating that the Department of Health and Social Services are not paying appropriate attention to the success of the midwifery program.

I don't like to speculate; it happens entirely too much in this House, so I will just answer the question. I can assure Yukoners — particularly those who are choosing midwifery services and a midwife-led birth — that we are working every day to restore safe midwifery-led services as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, there is no one who wants to see the success of this program here more than my colleagues and me. We have spent hundreds of hours working, with respect to the thousands

and thousands of hours working with respect to the individuals who helped to build this program.

Ensuring the health and safety of clients for the midwifery clinic and midwifery services here in the Yukon relies on a team of registered midwives who are able to provide the full scope of midwifery care. To provide the 24/7 coverage that the Yukon midwifery program offers while complying with the Yukon standards of practice for registered midwives on second attendance at non-hospital births, there needs to always be two registered midwives on call. That is just the structure of the process. We may hear from the other side that this is not the process that should be in place, but let's remember that this was the process that was built by the experts, advised by midwives, as to what they wanted to see happening in the Yukon. To achieve this level of coverage, being two registered midwives on call, the program needs to fill all four positions — a clinical manager and three registered midwives. We currently have two. As a result, we do not have full staffing resources available to achieve the level of coverage that I have just described, which contributed to the decision to temporarily pause midwifery-led births.

This is a challenge faced by many midwifery programs across the country at this point, regardless of the model of service delivery that they have chosen, and at the centre of this decision is the health, safety, and wellness of Yukoners.

The leaders of the two opposition parties and the Member for Lake Laberge were in attendance at a Birth Choices AGM last night, as was I, and will have heard from one of the registered midwives who was employed with this program that they had an integral part in the decision of suspending, temporarily, midwife-led births. This was not something imposed by the government.

This was in relation to the safety and the security of the clients, a decision led by the midwives and certainly supported by government. I'm not suggesting for a second that it was one or the other, but this was something that we came to together for the purposes of making sure that the clients who avail themselves of the services of midwives were supported in the way that was designed to be supported and supported in a way that the midwives appropriately felt was safe and comfortable for their clients.

There was much information in the submission previous to mine about compensation for midwives and how, again, it's being politicized by the members opposite. From the moment I became involved in the responsibility of ensuring that the midwifery program came to light, we talked about appropriate compensation. It has never been suggested — certainly not by the Department of Health and Social Services — that it is an appropriate amount of compensation. Did we proceed with the idea of trying to hire midwives? Absolutely. Were we concerned about a further delay in relation to that? Absolutely. We have challenged the compensation rates that are scheduled and decided upon, initially by the classification process with Yukon government and then, subsequent to that, by arbitrators who decide the challenges going forward. Yes, we have challenged it. Yes, we will continue to challenge it. We recognize that the competitiveness of the compensation rates

for registered midwives across the country is high, and their impacts on our ability to successfully recruit and retain new midwives are important. It's a key factor, of course. The Department of Health and Social Services and the Public Service Commission are working together to explore options, and there are a few available to bring the remuneration rates for registered midwives working in the Yukon in line with other parts of the country.

I think we also should take into account that some of this is apples and oranges. I'm not going to challenge that midwives are paid more in other jurisdictions than they are currently in the territory, and that's not appropriate. I'm not challenging that at all, but I think we need to remember that the model that has been chosen here and selected by midwives was for midwives to be staff of the Yukon Department of Health and Social Services. With that comes a 20- to 30-percent package of bonuses including vacation, pension, and other things that are in addition to the base salary.

It is still not enough. Don't mishear me on this; it is still not enough. But those things must, and should be, considered. Others, in other places, are paid on a contractual basis with no benefits. Some midwives in other places are paid per birth at a rate. There are many, many options across the country. All of those were considered by the experts who helped us build this program, and the one selected is that compensation would be as we currently have it — as part of the government classification process. We have challenged it; we will continue to challenge it. We have made some progress, as noted by the member opposite, and we continue to press, because we agree that the current classification — and the current rate of compensation that comes with that classification — is simply not acceptable.

The Yukon midwifery clinic opened here in Whitehorse in July 2022 and has supported a total of 12 midwifery-led births, including one home birth, between November 2022 and January 2023. I think there were some questions earlier about whether they were community or Whitehorse. I haven't been asked those specific questions — breakdowns — before, but I am happy to sort out if we can provide that to the member opposite.

The Yukon midwifery program is experiencing the impacts of the local, global, and certainly national shortages of health care workers and is currently facing significant staffing challenges in that we require three full-time — plus the medical assistant, which we have, but we do not have three full-time midwives. As a result of these staffing shortages, the Yukon midwifery program has temporarily transferred clients to Solstice Maternity while recruitment for additional midwives and other mitigation strategies are underway. Again, the member opposite will have heard this at the AGM we attended last night.

At the core of this decision to temporarily suspend and to partner with Solstice Maternity to make sure that the clients of the maternity clinic had support was the health, safety, and well-being of our clients, and that reflects the reality of challenges that are being faced by many midwifery programs across the country and across the north.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you.

As I have noted, the program is currently supported by two midwives. As with any of the programs across the country, the midwifery program relies on the robust quality improvement process to conduct ongoing assessments and implement adaptations in response to these assessments, as they are needed. I should note that, with respect to the competition, search, and recruitment for midwives here in the territory, it is currently open. It is quite vastly advertised across the country. There is work with midwifery organizations across the country to make sure that individuals are aware of our recruitment process. It's online, it's in print, and it's in other parts of media. We are currently assessing and interviewing candidates on an ongoing basis. I understand that there may be four such candidates in the process.

As I have noted earlier, I think that the decision to temporarily suspend service was taken by the midwife team in connection with those responsible at the Department of Health and Social Services. It wasn't something that was imposed externally. Certainly, we needed to work together, as we do. The midwifery clinic wanted to provide safe, accessible, and fair care to their clients. They did not want to pick and choose which clients could have midwifery services or have them attend a birth if it just happened to be that our two midwives were available, because that would not be fair to all of the clients who were trying to avail themselves of the services.

The quality improvement processes, along with all of the policies and the practice protocols that guide the midwifery program, were developed and continue to be reviewed with the input of the local and national experts, including registered midwives, nurses, physicians, and Yukon First Nations.

I will challenge some of what was said by the member opposite about how — I don't want to put words into anyone's mouth — it's flying by the seat of our pants and not properly supported by protocols or by policies. The work has been dedicated to making sure that the Yukon midwifery clinic is successful.

The Yukon midwives regulation and the associated standards of practice rely heavily on British Columbia's regulatory framework. The adoption and the modification of the 24 standards of practice were done in consultation with local and national stakeholders. Some of these standards have already undergone updates to reflect the evolution of the midwifery practice here in the territory and to align with modifications that British Columbia continues to make. This is an ongoing process.

I will take a moment to tell Yukoners about the current assessments that exist and are ongoing for the new midwifery program. I don't hear that these are either known to the member opposite or satisfactory to what they want to see. But again, the motion doesn't say much about what they want to see, so it would be impossible to address that necessarily, but what I can do is tell Yukoners about the engagement and assessment process that we have relied on and continue to do as we continue to access these as a way to provide safety and proper review and assessment to the program here in the territory.

We have two expert midwifery consultants who provide advice and feedback on system improvements to the program as needed. At the Whitehorse General Hospital, there is a midwifery working group that contains representatives from Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to support the systems and the operational integration of registered midwives into the Whitehorse General Hospital. Since the launch of the Yukon midwifery program, this group has completed two separate, full quality assurance case reviews of all the midwifery-led births, including one after the first six births in December 2022 and a second after the first 12 births in February 2023.

There is also a comprehensive patient safety and performance improvement program for interprofessional obstetrical teams. This is funded by the Government of Yukon for the Whitehorse General Hospital. In 2022, official sign-off for the development of the nursing midwifery guidelines for the Whitehorse General Hospital was received.

In addition, there is the Health and Social Services midwifery implementation committee, which was formed to prepare the Yukon's health system for the implementation of midwifery. The committee consists of two physicians from Solstice Maternity, a local obstetrician-gynaecologist, a national expert midwife, three people with lived experience, a senior leader, a maternity nurse, policy staff from the Yukon Hospital Corporation, First Nations Health and representatives from the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Kwanlin Dün Health and Awareness Centre, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and Health and Social Services.

Change management experts working with the committee produced a readiness framework for the Yukon midwifery program, and they continue to provide regular advice on process improvements, readiness, and adaptability and practice protocols.

We also continue to participate on committees and teams and attend regular meetings with providers, partners, and stakeholders from across the health system to ensure that the Yukon midwifery program is effectively being integrated into our health care system.

The challenges that the Yukon midwifery program has experienced are related to staffing. They are exacerbated by the local, national, and worldwide shortages of health care providers, and we are working to address them on a daily basis. As I have said, we are currently assessing four applicants and look forward, hopefully, to restoring full services as soon as possible.

This is not reflective. The current, temporary suspension — and I appreciate that this is how I am characterizing it, but members opposite will say it has stopped, that it's a failure, that it's crashed, and that it is giving no service. It's not giving "no service". We heard from the member opposite that it is providing services — postnatal and prenatal. It is working carefully and closely with the doctors at Solstice Maternity to make sure that clients are supported. We heard last night from one of the registered midwives that they have attended post-birth at the hospital, they have attended post-birth at homes, and they are continuing to try to support their clients as best they

can. We also heard that they were continuing to use the opportunity to work on how to better the service for Yukoners.

The temporary stop of services and my insistence — I think it's fair to say that nobody is happy that this is, in fact, the case, that I certainly expect that we should be staffed with more than the three minimum registered midwives as soon as possible and that we continue to work on this. The temporary suspension of the births led by midwives is not reflective — and I really want this to be heard by my colleagues — of either the implementation plan that was chosen, or the model of care, or the launch of the midwifery program, because it was carefully and strategically developed to address gaps in the previous system and to provide an accessible, safe, and positive experience for all clients.

As a result of the information that I have provided, the assessments that are ongoing, and the support for the work of the midwifery program — past, current, and ongoing — I will take the opportunity to move an amendment to the motion that is currently on the floor.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT Motion No. 575 be amended by:

(1) adding the words “to continue” after the words “Government of Yukon”;

(2) replacing the words “a quality assurance assessment” with the words “ongoing assessments”; and

(3) replacing the phrase “determine why and how the program stopped operating six months after opening” with the phrase “ensure that midwife-led births can resume after the necessary number of midwives are recruited.”

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services:

THAT Motion No. 575 be amended by:

(1) adding the words “to continue” after the words “Government of Yukon”;

(2) replacing the words “a quality assurance assessment” with the words “ongoing assessments”; and

(3) replacing the phrase “determine why and how the program stopped operating six months after opening” with the phrase “ensure that midwife-led births can resume after the necessary number of midwives are recruited.”

The motion, as amended, would read:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to conduct ongoing assessments of the Yukon midwifery program to ensure that midwife-led births can resume after the necessary number of midwives are recruited.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I note, with respect to the amendment, that I have already mentioned some of the information that is pertinent, but I think it is critical to emphasize and note, with respect to the amendment, that the Yukon midwifery program is currently staffed by two registered midwives. This is why the wording in the amendment has been changed in my presented amendment to

note that the program to ensure — we all want the program to resume midwife-led births after there is appropriate staffing.

So, as a result, we have two registered midwives, one with full hospital privileges, at this point. I can note, without saying too much with respect to privacy, that we are working diligently with the additional midwife to ensure hospital privileges are granted as soon as possible. There is also a part-time medical office assistant employed in the program.

The work is underway to fully staff the program, and using strategies and advice from our local and national partners, the registered midwife positions are currently available online, in print media, and other places, as well as outreach to other organizations that might help. Our goal is to ensure that we have adequate staffing available to ensure that the program can continue to offer the highest of quality and safe care for Yukoners.

We recognize the competitiveness of the compensation rates for registered midwives across the country and their impacts on our ability to successfully recruit and retain new midwives. We are working together with the Public Service Commission, as I noted earlier, to explore options to bring the remuneration rates for registered midwives working in the Yukon in line with other parts of the country and frankly to an appropriate level.

Despite these current challenges, the midwifery program, which was carefully and strategically developed to address gaps that existed in the previous system and to provide an accessible, safe, and positive experience for all clients — we are hopeful that we will be able to offer a full scope of services again soon.

I hear from at least the Third Party, and certainly by the attendance of the leader and the Member for Lake Laberge last night at the Birth Choices AGM, that they clearly seem to support the success of the midwifery program here in the territory, despite their current criticisms that it is not being managed properly, or being paid proper attention to, or wanting there to be success. From that, I take it that they want it to be a success. I can't see how any of us would differ on that.

The clinic continues to offer some prenatal and postpartum care to all clients who were accepted as of January 12. There are currently approximately 40 clients who will or are currently accessing support in an ongoing way. Some clients have already been discharged at eight weeks postpartum, and others have decided to access the service of Solstice Maternity.

The midwives have also offered to — our currently employed registered midwives — Solstice Maternity that they can refer up to two to four priority population physician clients for postpartum midwifery care over to the midwives — two to four per month. In February, the midwives accepted two clients from Solstice, including a newcomer to Canada.

The Government of Yukon, Mr. Speaker, is committed to providing Yukoners with additional options for safe, accessible, and high-quality maternity care. We should note that this midwifery program and the clinic are a free-of-fee service. They are fully supported by government. They are free to all clients who wish to avail themselves of that.

The Yukon midwifery program has temporarily transferred clients to Solstice Maternity — I think that it is important to

make sure that we know that it was with the client's consent — while we recruit additional midwives, and there are other mitigating strategies being worked on.

In 2023-24, we have budgeted \$1.35 million for the Yukon midwifery program.

I certainly have, I hope, explained and expressed our support for the Yukon midwifery program for all those who got us to this point at this time, to the current staff for their dedication and professionalism and for their continued work on behalf of Yukon parents who are wanting to avail themselves of midwifery services. I certainly hope that there will be support for the new wording of the amended motion, because I note, not only will it commit us to providing continued assessments, ongoing assessments, I hope they will be as the member opposite wishes them to be. If they are not the full extent of the assessments that she is interested in seeing, I hope she will express that in some particular way so that the Department Health and Social Services can respond and provide the information that she likes. I also hope that, as a result of the information I have presented here today and with the amended motion, we can all support it.

Ms. White: In speaking to the amendment, maybe just like the minister said, I shouldn't be surprised by her actions; she should not be surprised by mine — which is that I disagree.

The reason why I requested a quality assurance assessment is the very nature of what that assessment is. It's important to note that the government has already done reviews of their program, and it hasn't worked. I do think there should be regular reviews. I think that should happen, but looking toward Nova Scotia and how they had to recognize in their program what needed to be changed, I believe the same thing should happen here. So, the very nature of what I am saying is that it needs to be removed. It shouldn't be people who are working for the program right now. It shouldn't be the government themselves. It needs to be different.

So, had the minister brought forward maybe a different suggestion or different wording or maybe hadn't lumped the three together, the conversation would be different, but as it stands right now, I disagree with the amendment. I look forward to voting it down.

Mr. Cathers: In the short time remaining in the day, I would just note that, with regard to this program, our position, both related to the motion and the amendment, is that government should fix the flawed implementation of midwifery by taking actions, including the following: ensuring that pay for midwives employed by Health and Social Services is competitive with other jurisdictions; allowing midwives to provide —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Order, please. Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I think we are talking about the amendment, and I believe the member is talking about

the main motion and discussing his points of view on the main motion, but we are debating the amendment at the moment.

Speaker: The Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: I made it clear that I was speaking to the amendment and the Government House Leader gave me very little time to provide comments there.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, please speak to the amendment topic.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I noted, we believe that midwives should also be allowed to provide service in private practice and be paid for those services under a negotiated agreement. As well, with regard to the current operation of the program, the government, I should note, has shut down the program actually providing home births.

It's really interesting that the minister actually lauded the success of the program when, in fact, the government's record on this was to rush the regulation of midwifery in a pre-election announcement, effectively banning midwifery for over a year in the territory before their program was up and running, and then, when their program was up and running, it briefly operated and is now shut down, and the minister calls it a success.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, you just ruled. I don't think that anything changed with what the member opposite was speaking about. He again is talking to the main motion and not to the amendment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

Mr. Cathers: On the point of order, my comments were very directly relevant to the amendment. The Government House Leader has been very quick to call a point of order without allowing me the normal amount of time that members are accorded to connect comments to an amendment at hand. It seems that he is just trying to stall and avoid me criticizing the government for other failures on midwifery.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The Chair will take it under advisement and get back to members, if necessary.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on Motion No. 575, and the amendment, accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following documents were filed March 15, 2023:

35-1-119

Whitehorse Elementary School, letter re (dated November 2, 2022) from Michele Genest to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education and Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Tredger)

35-1-120

Whitehorse Elementary School, letter re (dated November 2, 2022) from Laurel Parry to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education and Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Tredger)

35-1-121

Ensuring there is an elementary school Downtown, letter re (dated March 15, 2023) from Brook Land-Murphy to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education (Tredger)

35-1-122

École Whitehorse Elementary School being moved out of downtown, letter re (dated March 10, 2023) from Valerie Herdes to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education and Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Tredger)

35-1-123

Construction of a new elementary school in Takhini, letter re (dated March 13, 2023) from Georgi Pearson to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education and Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Tredger)

35-1-124

Downtown school, letter re (dated March 14, 2023) from Phil Emerson to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education and Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Tredger)

35-1-125

School in the downtown core, letter re from Sabrina Clarke to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education and Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Tredger)

35-1-126

Construction of new French Immersion Whitehorse Elementary School in Takhini, letter re (dated October 31, 2022) from Kelly Milner to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education and Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Tredger)

35-1-127

Replacement elementary school in the downtown core, letter re from Tytus Hardy to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education and Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Tredger)

35-1-128

Replacement elementary school in the downtown core, letter re (dated March 14, 2023) from Rosemary Scanlon to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education and Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Tredger)