



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 3

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, May 13, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special 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. Sandy Silver | Klondike | Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance |
| Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee | Riverdale South | Deputy Premier Government House Leader Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice |
| Hon. Nils Clarke | Riverdale North | Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment |
| Hon. John Streicker | Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes | Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate |
| Hon. Ranj Pillai | Porter Creek South | Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission |
| Hon. Richard Mostyn | Whitehorse West | Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board |
| Hon. Jeanie McLean | Mountainview | Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate |

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

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 |

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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| Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms | Joseph Mewett |
| Hansard Administrator | Deana Lemke |

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, May 13, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Today we have a tribute to the French community, and we have several guests here today. I would just like us to all welcome them here, please. We have: from l'Association franco-yukonnaise, Mme. Lorraine Taillefer, vice-présidente; we have M. Francis Lefebvre, directeur des communications et des relations communautaires; we have from the Direction des services en français, the French Language Services Directorate, we have M. André Bourcier, directeur; Nancy Power, gestionnaire de communications et de politiques; et Antoine Goulet, agent de communication.

I think that I also see Mr. Andrew Carne from ATAC Resources — if we could just please say “Welcome”.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Allan Nixon from the Kudz Ze Kayah team in BMC is here as well.

I would also like to welcome two individuals who are here today for a tribute I will be doing. Donna Hogan and Angie Joseph-Rear are here for the tribute that we will be doing to Joella Hogan today.

Applause

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Francophonie Day

Hon. Mr. Streicker: M. le Président, ce samedi 15 mai marquera la 15^e journée de la francophonie yukonnaise.

Depuis 2007, cette journée invite les Yukonnaises et les Yukonnais à célébrer la contribution des francophones au développement de notre grand territoire au cours des deux derniers siècles.

Nous avons beaucoup à célébrer en cette 15^e Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise. La communauté francophone du Yukon est en pleine croissance et se démarque par sa vitalité. Cette vitalité se ressent et se vit tous les jours grâce au dévouement de tous ceux et celles qui, comme nous, travaillent à offrir des services, des programmes et des activités en français. Je tiens à remercier tous ceux et celles qui font vivre et rayonner la francophonie au territoire et à la grandeur du Canada.

Je profite de l'occasion pour féliciter deux Yukonnais qui figurent au palmarès 2020 des dix personnalités les plus

influentes de la francophonie canadienne de Francopresse. L'une de ces personnes est Jean-Sébastien Blais, président de la Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. Jean-Sébastien a notamment contribué à la création du nouveau Centre scolaire secondaire communautaire Paul-Émile Mercier. L'autre personnalité francophone influente nommée au palmarès est le médecin-hygiéniste en chef du Yukon, le Dr. Brendan Hanley. Le Dr. Hanley a été reconnu pour son bilinguisme ainsi que son engagement à communiquer en français des enjeux reliés à la santé.

J'aimerais aussi féliciter les récipiendaires des deux prix annuels remis par l'Association franco-yukonnaise. Félicitations à Sophie Molgat, gagnante du prix Bénévole de l'année 2021, ainsi qu'à Diane Corbin, gagnante du prix Engagement exceptionnel 2020. Le gagnant ou la gagnante du prix Engagement exceptionnel 2021 sera annoncé à l'occasion des festivités organisées par l'Association franco-yukonnaise pour la Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise.

Ces festivités se dérouleront en ligne ce samedi sous le thème « fête à la plage ». Il fait froid! Voilà une belle occasion de nous baigner dans la culture francophone!

Je salue tous les organismes, les citoyens et citoyennes, les artistes, les entrepreneurs et les bénévoles francophones qui contribuent à bâtir un Yukon prospère où il fait bon vivre. Bonne journée de la francophonie yukonnaise!

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Yukon Francophonie Day, which takes place on Saturday, May 15.

On this day, we celebrate Yukon's French language and culture. We will pay tribute to all francophones across the Yukon for the amazing contributions they make toward our territory.

The francophone community presence is strong in our territory, as is the language. For over 30 years, since the adoption of the *Languages Act* in 1988, the Government of Yukon has made gainful strides in delivering programs and services in French and actively offering bilingual service across departments.

Throughout the private sector, we have seen a rise in French services, as well, due in large part to the advocacy and assistance of the francophone community and organizations such as l'Association franco-yukonnaise. L'Association franco-yukonnaise has made great strides in promoting the French language and culture throughout the Yukon and providing services to the francophone community. Francophones are a huge part of the social fabric that makes up the Yukon.

As critic for the French Language Services Directorate, I will have the opportunity to see how programs and services are growing and changing within the public sector. I would like to thank l'Association franco-yukonnaise and the French Language Services Directorate, as well as those organizations who work to promote culture and provide service in French. Thank you to the francophone community for all your contributions to the Yukon.

Ms. White: Merci M. le Président, ça me fait plaisir de prendre la parole au nom du NPD du Yukon pour souligner le 15^e anniversaire de la Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise qui aura lieu ce samedi.

Cette journée vise à souligner l'histoire et la vitalité de la communauté francophone du Yukon. Plusieurs activités auront lieu en personne au Centre scolaire secondaire communautaire et aussi en ligne. Une chasse au trésor, des ateliers d'arts et la lecture de contes par notre commissaire, Angélique Bernard, et un spectacle en soirée ne sont que quelques exemples.

Toutes les activités sont gratuites et ouvertes au grand public. C'est une occasion pour les francophones de se rassembler et pour l'ensemble des Yukonnais de découvrir une communauté qui fait partie du Yukon depuis près de 200 ans.

Un grand merci à l'AFY qui coordonne l'organisation de cette journée année après année et un grand merci à Marjolène Gauthier pour son travail. Merci Monsieur.

In recognition of Joella Hogan and The Yukon Soaps Company

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal Party to pay tribute to Joella Hogan and The Yukon Soaps Company.

Before I begin, I want to recognize our guests who are with us today — thank you very much for coming. Mr. Speaker, there's nothing better than seeing a Yukon business succeed. Joella Hogan, the owner of Yukon Soaps, has been a fantastic example of entrepreneurial success in Yukon.

Last week, she was selected to receive a \$250,000 grant from the Grand Challenges Canada's Indigenous Innovation Initiative. Joella was one of 10 recipients in Canada chosen to advance indigenous gender equality across health, economic, and social dimensions through transformative innovation and systemic change. This funding will support Joella's new mentorship program that will teach indigenous girls, two-spirit-plus people, and women to develop plant-based micro businesses.

Joella is well deserving of this funding and well positioned to launch her mentorship program. Retailers across the territory already sell the Mayo-based entrepreneur's products, and her traditional plant-based soaps are gaining in popularity. Even as the pandemic caused serious challenges, Yukoners stepped up to support local businesses like Yukon Soaps. At the same time, Joella responded by increasing focus toward online marketing. With a new website and new marketing approach, she saw a 50-percent sales increase from US-based customers.

It is more important now than ever to celebrate and support homegrown businesses like Yukon Soaps and to celebrate programs that diversify our economy while supporting Yukoners who are under-represented in our business community.

Please join me again in congratulating Joella. Hi to Joella, who is listening in with us today, and thank you for all that you do in your community — not only her entrepreneurial work but also looking at housing needs in her community, coming up with solutions for that while working with Yukon Housing

Corporation, as well as her work in mentoring folks to succeed in business — again, wishing her success in delivering this mentorship program.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to a beautiful Northern Tutchone woman, Joella Hogan, and her business. Joella is a member of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation and lives in Mayo, Yukon. I hear that she is listening today.

She is a manager of the heritage and culture department of NND where her passion for all things traditional in history has been good for her and her community. But was that enough? No. She had free time that needed filling, despite an active lifestyle. In 2012, Joella decided to buy an established soap company named the Essential Soap Bar.

After several years, she decided to change the name. The Yukon Soap Company was born, and it became truly hers. Joella began to research, along with elders, and, of course, her biggest supporter — her mom, Donna Hogan — using and gathering all-natural local ingredients around her to add to her soaps. She uses wild rose petals, juniper berries, and many other plants. Then, to integrate her First Nation heritage, she uses local beadwork to imprint on her products, making them truly unique and authentic and Yukon. Whether it is bar soap, shampoo bars, or essential oil blends, you know that the product is natural and of high quality.

For close to 20 years, Joella and her company have produced many products and generally sold them at local craft fairs, markets, and local stores, but with the world of COVID, a new way to market was found — the online market — and she is now distributing around the world. As her company grew and she became better known, Joella has presented at many events as guest speaker and shared her stories of success and challenges.

Recently, the Indigenous Innovation Initiative had 238 eligible applications for various awards. The inaugural gender-equality initiative and Grand Challenges Canada awarded \$2.5 million to 10 projects. We are so proud of our Yukon winner, Joella Hogan and The Yukon Soaps Company, as a personal care brand leader, awarded \$250,000 for a project called "Learning Our People's Way". She will continue to involve youth and elders and keep land, people, and culture connected through her work. This is so exciting.

Joella, we wish you continued success, and I know that your passion for passing on culture and sharing this wisdom with others will always be with you. Congratulations.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Joella Hogan, The Yukon Soaps Company, the Indigenous Innovation Initiative, and the community of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. At the 2015 Indigenous Summit, the Hon. Murray Sinclair said these words: "Innovation isn't always about creating new things. Innovation sometimes involves looking back to our old ways and bringing them forward to this new situation."

These words ring true for the work happening in Northern Tutchone territory by The Yukon Soaps Company. Joella is an incredible storyteller with deep roots within the heritage department of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation and is a strong advocate for entrepreneurs. Joella has strong ties to her family, is grounded in her culture and heritage, and is a business leader in her community.

When Joella returned to live in her traditional territory of Mayo, she envisioned reconnecting with her community, elders, land, and language. The traditional knowledge of plants, language, and culture of the Northern Tutchone people can be found in every product that is made by The Yukon Soaps Company. It is by building on these successes that Joella applied for the Indigenous Innovation Initiative grant.

The Yukon Soaps Company will be creating a space for people to develop skills, share in revenue generation, and expand on their sacred connection to plants and relationships with one another through a regenerative economic development program. These local micro businesses will be based on plant knowledge and cultural teachings.

The investment in Joella's community goes deeper. Everyone knows that communities are facing housing shortages, but not everyone figures out a way to both expand their business and build housing at the same time. The Yukon Soaps Company will have a new factory, and Mayo will have three new housing units, one of which will be universally accessible.

Congratulations to Joella Hogan and The Yukon Soaps Company.

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 201 agreed to

Bill No. 200: *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 200, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2020-21*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 200 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to halt plans to implement rent control on May 15, 2021, as outlined in the Liberal Party's confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democratic Party, in order to:

(1) develop solutions to mitigate the harm that this announcement has caused to tenants and landlords; and

(2) properly consult with affected landlords and tenants on the details of any rent control proposal prior to implementation.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to immediately rebuild and repair the relationship with the Yukon Fish and Game Association by:

(1) restoring core funding to the Yukon Fish and Game Association; and

(2) ensuring that no future funding agreements contain gag orders as proposed by the previous Liberal government.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to strongly condemn the rocket attacks by Hamas against Israeli citizens and to be clear in all of its public statements that this attack by Hamas on innocent people is an act of terrorism.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce a regulatory framework for psychology in the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to take action to improve access to health care by developing a wait-time reduction strategy.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to invite the Office of the Auditor General of Canada to present the report on mental health services in rural communities to the Speaker of the House as soon as possible.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

MOTION OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY NO. 2

(Standing Order 28)

Implementation of rent control

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise to request the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity pursuant to Standing Order 28:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to halt plans to implement rent control on May 15, 2021, as outlined in the Liberal Party's confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democratic Party, in order to:

(1) develop solutions to mitigate the harm this announcement has caused to tenants and landlords; and

(2) properly consult with affected Yukon landlords and tenants on the details of any rent control proposal prior to implementation.

This is a matter of urgency. It is certainly urgent and pressing. It's even more urgent and pressing than yesterday. We are now less than 36 hours from the policy coming into force. This policy was announced by the Liberal-NDP coalition agreement several weeks ago, but there has been a complete absence of communication since then. It is clear that the government does not have a plan for this policy.

This lack of planning, lack of consultation, and lack of communication has caused immense hardship throughout the communities. Housing is an important issue throughout the Yukon, and the negative impacts that this policy has had on the housing market have made this even more pressing and urgent.

I urge my colleagues to grant unanimous consent today to bring this important issue forward and this motion forward for debate.

Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition, pursuant to Standing Order 28, is requesting unanimous consent to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has not been granted.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Rent control

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked a very simple question about the Liberals' plan to impose rent control in the Yukon. The minister was unable to answer. Outside of the Legislature, he told the media that he is still trying to figure it out himself. He said — and I quote: "... we're going to explore and we're still working with our partners in the New Democratic caucus on what that looks like." Earlier this week, the NDP leader pointed the finger and told the media that she is still waiting for the government to figure out how it is going to work.

So, I want to give the coalition another chance to explain their policy. Can anyone tell Yukoners what policy or regulation is going to be used to bring this policy into force?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin Question Period this afternoon by correcting the Leader of the Official Opposition. He again referred to us as a "coalition". The Yukon Party should know that we are not a coalition. The Yukon Party has intimate knowledge about coalitions. He knows this. It was a Yukon Party government in 1992 that formed a coalition when an independent member from Carcross actually joined the Cabinet as a health minister.

Here on this side of the bench, we have a Yukon minority government that has a confidence and supply agreement with the New Democrat opposition on the other side of the House. I just want to make sure that people understand that the Leader of the Official Opposition is incorrect. We have a confidence and supply agreement, not a coalition.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, that explanation will be cold comfort to those Yukoners who have been kicked out of their homes.

We are less than 36 hours from this policy coming into force. The government has done no consultation, they have no communication plan, and they have no implementation plan. This absence of leadership has done real harm to Yukon's housing market. Eviction notices have been issued; rental units are going up for sale; landlords are throwing up their hands and throwing in the towel. Yesterday, the minister told us that this was all intended to cool the housing market and increase the supply of rentals.

Unfortunately, the opposite has happened, Mr. Speaker. Will this government admit that they got this one wrong and halt this ill-conceived policy?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, had the Leader of the Official Opposition been listening to the radio this morning, he would have heard answers to many of his questions. There is a communications policy, Mr. Speaker.

The bottom line is that we have an agreement with our colleagues across the aisle in the New Democratic caucus. We have reached a confidence and supply agreement with our colleagues. That agreement was posted publicly about a month ago. It lays out the terms of the deal that we struck with our colleagues. The bottom line is that part of that deal includes a rent cap.

The member opposite, as I said yesterday, knows full well that, during the last election, the Liberal Party campaigned and will deliver on an increase in the supply of lots. We are going to build 5th and Rogers. We have a number of housing initiatives that we are championing. We have, in the aftermath of the election — Yukoners were very clear. They wanted us to work together. We reached out to the Yukon Party. We reached out to the NDP, and it was the NDP that said, "Yes, we are going to provide a stable government for Yukoners in the face of our recovery efforts out of COVID, in the face of the pandemic." We appreciate that offer of support. So, we struck the agreement. One of the things that the New Democratic caucus wanted us to fulfill was a rent cap. That was something that was very important to them, and we are going to live by the terms of the agreement. The agreement is on our website and is very clear to anybody who wants to read it.

Mr. Dixon: The question was very simple. It was: What policy or regulations are actually going to change to enact this policy? It is clear from the minister's explanation on the radio this morning and his performance here today that he simply doesn't know. That is very concerning, Mr. Speaker.

I hope that it goes without saying that the Yukon Party opposes this policy, but what is more concerning than the policy itself is the terrible way that it has been handled and communicated. This policy is coming into effect in less than 36 hours, and there has been no public communication about it. Even calls to the residential tenancies office have revealed that they are just as surprised and unaware as everyone else. The minister doesn't know how this is going to work. The Leader of the NDP doesn't know how this is going to work. It has already created chaos in the market and damaged the already fragile housing situation in this community.

Will the Premier step in, show some leadership, and put this policy on hold so that proper consultation can occur and an actual plan can be developed and Yukoners aren't faced with such terrible public policy?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The policy is very clear. It has been on our website for a month. As of May 15, rents will be capped at one percent. Now, if the member had read the legislation, it means that landlords would have had to put in an increase to rental properties three months in advance of this rent cap coming into effect. So, if you didn't get it in before February 15, you would not be able to have a rental increase. So, the rental increase goes in on May 15, it will be capped at one percent, and it will be in existence — it is geared to inflation. It will be reviewed on an annual basis, and it is in effect for 20 months. I mean, that is as clear as it gets, Mr. Speaker.

I have spoken to landlords. I understand their concerns. We have spoken with our colleagues across the aisle and have met with landlords on this issue. The policy is the policy, Mr. Speaker. It comes into effect on Saturday — one percent this year geared to inflation and in effect for 20 months.

Question re: Whistle Bend school

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals called a snap election, it had negative impacts on major construction projects. One major project that has been negatively impacted is the Whistle Bend school. This project was originally tendered in March. However, due to the unnecessary election, the contract has been delayed four times. Construction was originally supposed to be completed in September 2023.

Can the minister tell us what the new completion date for the school is as a result of all these delays?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. I have been briefed on this matter briefly in my seven or eight days on the job, and I certainly look forward to attending the Whistle Bend site to determine how progress is going with respect to that school. However, my understanding is that this project is not delayed. I can certainly return to the Member for Porter Creek Centre with additional information as required.

Building a new school for the community of Whistle Bend is a high priority for our government. We have worked with the Department of Education and the Whistle Bend project advisory committee throughout the project to ensure that a schematic design that incorporates important community elements has been adopted.

A tender for this design/build project was issued on March 9. Construction of the school was scheduled to begin in late 2021 — this year — with an occupancy of the school planned for 2023. The information that I have, early in my ministry with the Department of Highways and Public Works with respect to this project, is that it is still on time with respect to the planning and ultimately getting shovels in the ground.

Ms. Clarke: Throughout the election, one of the main concerns that I heard from residents of Whistle Bend was related to traffic. Traffic in the community of Whistle Bend and on Mountainview Drive is already very problematic in the mornings. The addition of a new school with a capacity of up to 425 students will add more strain to these roads. What will the government do to ensure that the addition of a new school will not make traffic and road safety worse in this community?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you to the Member for Porter Creek Centre for the follow-up question. The Member for Porter Creek Centre will well know that matters pertaining to traffic are generally under the control, review, and legislative authority of the City of Whitehorse. However, I would anticipate that there may be some work between my department, or perhaps other government departments, in order to determine and plan for additional possible accesses to Whistle Bend over the course of the next number of years.

As we know, Whistle Bend is a quickly growing and thriving community, the quickest growing community in the Yukon right now.

Is the Member for Porter Creek Centre suggesting that we abandon plans for the school? I think not. Her riding will ultimately have thousands of additional constituents with young families who will certainly want to have a local, modern school built to 2021 standards — so, more to come.

Ms. Clarke: Can the minister tell us how much is budgeted for the construction of Whistle Bend school?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Member for Porter Creek Centre will well know that the definite number of the budget — the cost estimate will only be revealed after the tender closes in order to ensure a competitive bidding process. However, with respect to the ongoing process of the design, the planning, and the ultimate implementation of the construction of the Whistle Bend school, the Member for Porter Creek Centre will see in this year's budget that \$10.5 million has been budgeted to begin the construction of the school.

As she correctly indicated, this school is designed to be a tier 2 school that can accommodate up to 425 students, which will make her, we hope — will make her constituents happy because their children can remain in this new thriving and exciting and dynamic community that is Whistle Bend.

Question re: Mine closure security

Ms. White: Yukoners are all too familiar with the stories of mining sites being abandoned. From the Faro mine to Mount Nansen and now the Wolverine mine, Canadians and Yukoners have had to pick up the tab for mine remediation all too often. We all agree that abandoned mine sites and costly remediation are bad both for Yukoners and for Canadians and for the mining industry, and yet, with all of this evidence, we find ourselves teetering on the edge of repeating history yet again.

We just learned that, in 2019, a financial security assessment for the Brewery Creek mine was calculated for \$12 million, but as of today, the Yukon government website reports that it collected only \$1 million as a security deposit.

Mr. Speaker, what occurred between 2019 and now for a mining corporation to get such a good deal from this government for their security deposit?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm happy to get back to the member opposite about Brewery Creek and to bring back specific information about the security that was collected against that mine. I will seek to get more information for the member opposite.

Ms. White: I look forward to that answer, but I would like to remind the minister that the last time this government changed their logo, it cost Yukon taxpayers half a million dollars, but somehow, they think that a \$1-million security deposit is enough to cover the cost of mine remediation.

History has shown that remediating or even maintaining an abandoned mine site is not cheap, and some of the sites that we have been burdened with are messes that Yukoners and Canadians will be paying for, for decades to come.

So, Mr. Speaker, can this government explain why it has requested just \$1 million as a security deposit instead of the initial \$12 million that was assessed?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I am not sure that I agree with the member opposite about what the assessment was by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Let me go back and get that information.

I understand, as well, that there is a court case, which is an HR matter, which I won't speak to here, of course.

What I will ask the department to do is to give me what the department assessed as an appropriate amount to have for this mine remediation — to hold as a deposit. I will report back to this House. If there was something where it was less than \$1 million, I will make sure to report that. If \$1 million was the amount, I will explain why that assessment came to that amount.

Ms. White: This question has nothing to do with the issue of human resources or lawsuits with the Yukon government. This does have to do with Yukoners and the cost of remediation.

In 2019, we asked this government about the Wolverine mine and its outstanding security payments. In defence of the poor maintenance and cost of that mine site, the then-Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources blamed the Yukon Party. The minister then reassured Yukoners that this government would — and I quote: "... take the necessary means to protect Yukoners and the Yukon environment..." — and find the right

ability to calculate security funds so that we don't see Yukoners on the hook.

But now, this government is rolling the dice with Yukoners and the environment by giving a licence for the Brewery Creek mine for an \$11-million discount on their security deposit.

Mr. Speaker, what calculation of security funds did this government use to bring a \$12-million price tag down to just \$1 million?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, as I just responded just a moment ago, I don't agree with the member opposite's assessment of where she is getting the number for \$11 million. That is not what I believe the department has said, so I will check with the department to find what they assessed as an appropriate amount to retain, and I will report it back here to the member opposite, or I will make a legislative return, but I will make it public so that everyone can see what the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources did to assess a fair amount to hold as remediation for this project.

Let me get that information rather than listen to speculation on what it might be or might not be. I would be happy to get the actual number for the members of this Legislature and to even ask the department to explain to me how it was calculated and why they came up with that number — and that it has been collected appropriately.

Question re: Dempster fibre project

Mr. Cathers: Yesterday, the telecommunications network of the Yukon was crippled due to the cutting of a fibre line, again. This shut down Internet, 911, and had impacts on our communities. To prevent these types of incidents from happening, the previous Yukon Party government brought forward a proposal to install a redundant fibre optic line along the Dempster Highway.

This project was ready to go in 2016, but when the Liberals came in, they delayed it and they mismanaged it, and five years later, there are still no shovels in the ground. If it wasn't for Liberal mismanagement, yesterday's telecommunications outage would have been mitigated.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us how many more years Yukoners will have to wait until the Dempster fibre optic line is actually completed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it's important that we set the record straight. The one thing that stood out in the question that was posed by the member opposite was that, in 2016, this was ready to go. First of all, there was not a proper budget put in place for it. There was an engineering report that was completed. That engineering report identified that the price of the actual project had almost quadrupled, compared to what it actually had to be put out at.

So, there were commitments made that the project would be built. Again, under this government, we went out and negotiated with the federal government in order to leverage the funds that were required. The Yukon has a small contribution from our financial framework into this project. The majority of the money has come from the federal government, and Highways and Public Works has taken a cautious approach to this because, in other jurisdictions such as the Northwest

Territories, a fibre line of the same magnitude of a project doubled, from \$100 million to \$200 million.

So, taking the time to ensure — yes, there were disruptions yesterday, and there have been in the past, but I know that this capital project is being shepherded in the appropriate way, and the proper stakeholders are at the table as this is about to be built.

Mr. Cathers: Unfortunately, this project under the Liberals has been mired in unnecessary delays. I know that the new Minister of Highways and Public Works has a lot of messes left by the previous minister that he needs to clean up. The Dempster fibre project has been mismanaged and delayed by the Liberals for years.

In 2016, the Liberal platform even promised to accelerate “... the completion of the fibre optic redundancy project.” In 2018, the Premier said — and I quote: “... you can be guaranteed that the route has been picked and the work will be done this summer.” That was in 2018.

Despite the promise by the Liberals to accelerate the project, and despite the guarantee by the Premier that the work would be done three years ago, the YESAB application was only submitted in August 2020 and says that construction won’t be completed until 2025 — seven years after the Premier said that it would be done.

Can the minister tell us why the Liberals have delayed the project by so many years?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I’m excited to speak about this project. We are building an 800-kilometre fibre optic line along the Dempster Highway from Dawson, Yukon to Inuvik, Northwest Territories. The Dempster fibre line will connect to the existing Mackenzie Valley fibre link in Inuvik. The project will benefit communities in Yukon and NWT by providing a backup telecommunications line in the event of a service disruption, such as the disruption that occurred yesterday. Construction of the fibre line will begin this year and, I am told, will be complete in 2024. The construction of the contract has been issued to ROHL Global Networks for \$67 million.

Initial clearing and brushing work along the highway was completed this winter by Takhini Valley Contracting, a Yukon business. Environmental and wildlife monitoring training for First Nation citizens was completed this winter, which I understand also involved First Nation citizens receiving accreditation in various areas of the Dempster fibre line project construction.

Regulatory requirements for the project have been approved by the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. We are incredibly excited about this project. Shovels will be in the ground within the next month or so.

Mr. Cathers: In 2016, the Liberals promised to accelerate the Dempster fibre project. In 2017, they hit the pause button and slowed the project down. In 2018, the Premier promised that the project would be done in summer of that year. Then, in the summer of 2018, the government released a fact sheet saying that construction would only start in 2019. Later that year, they said that the work would begin in fall 2019, but

in fall 2019, documents sent to the Mackenzie Valley review board changed the construction date yet again — this time to spring 2020 — and said that it would be completed in two years. Now, the YESAB application from the government says that construction will not be completed until 2025.

It is clear that the Liberals missed every single deadline that they committed to and are running seven years behind when the Premier promised Yukoners that the project would be done. As a result, the Yukon is still vulnerable to massive telecommunications outages.

Will the government take action to speed up the project, or are we going to experience four more years of communications outages?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would just like to reiterate the comments from my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, that there were issues in 2016 from the previous Yukon Party government, and obviously there were massive potential cost overruns and they did not get it done.

I’ve had some opportunity to speak to the Department of Highways and Public Works with respect to this very exciting project. Also, per the comments of the Minister of Economic Development, I was advised that the project from Inuvik to Fort Simpson was what is called a “brownfield project” — that the Northwest Territories government was running their line there through some of the most remote territory in the world, really. In consequence of that, the budget for that project, as stated, was almost double — was well in excess of \$200 million. So, the planning for our side, up the Dempster Highway, has been exhaustive, effective, and inclusive, involving engagement with three Yukon First Nations and five indigenous groups in the Northwest Territories.

We’re doing this properly, and this project will not have the budget issues —

Speaker: Order.

Question re: Individualized education plans

Mr. Kent: The NDP-Liberal agreement states that the changes to individualized education plans, or IEPs, will be reversed. The timeline for getting this done is 30 days from the signing of the agreement, which we all know happened late last month.

Can the minister confirm that she is on target to reverse the changes and tell us what the actual date is when that will be accomplished?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. As I stated yesterday, we provide all students with educational programs that meet their learning needs so that they can reach their maximum potential.

IEPs are, and will continue to be, legislated support for students in need of special education programs, Mr. Speaker. We’ve been clear that, in the fall of 2019, the school branch staff made presentations to school administrators and school staff that clarified the processes in place for determining which type of learning plan is appropriate for students requiring additional learning support.

In some cases, this meant that school staff worked with parents to shift a student from an IEP to a student learning plan

or behavioural support plan. Just getting to the question — we're working diligently to ensure that all students are placed on the appropriate learning plan that is best suited for them.

Mr. Kent: The NDP-Liberal agreement specifically referenced IEPs, but the minister just said that students will be placed on the appropriate learning plan suited to them. Yet, that agreement talks about those changes being reversed. Hopefully she gets to clarify that when she's on her feet again.

A *Yukon News* article from December 23, 2020, states — and I quote: “This year, the Yukon government moved 138 students off IEPs onto Student Learning Plans or Behavioural Learning Plans, according to the YTA.” Can the minister confirm if that number is correct? What is the total number of students who need to be moved back on to IEPs since these changes started in 2019?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In some cases, school staff worked with parents to shift a student from an individualized learning plan to a student learning plan — an SLP — or a behaviour support plan — which is a BSP in the abbreviation. We are now working to implement our recent commitment to provide any student who was shifted from an IEP, an SLP, or a BSP after the fall of 2019 with the option to shift back to an IEP. Yes, we are working with the New Democratic Party. This is absolutely part of our agreement with them. It was also in our platform commitment to continue working with students and staff to ensure that students have the right learning plan for them.

I'm eager to get working with the NDP, because I think that, as I stated yesterday in my reply to the Speech from the Throne, I am excited about this partnership that we have, and I'm eager to work with all of our partners around this very important matter, which is the education of our children.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, it's quite concerning that the minister doesn't know how many students need to be moved back on to the IEPs, who were moved off of those in the first place. There are only two weeks left away from the agreement or the deadline that's spelled out in the agreement between the New Democrats and the Liberals.

Perhaps I'll try to ask this question regarding resources: Can the minister tell us what impact moving these children back to IEPs would have on the budget for the Department of Education? How many additional educational assistants will need to be hired to support these students?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, we are working for the betterment of education for all of our children in Yukon. We are providing all of our students with educational programs that meet their learning needs so that they can reach their maximum potential. In terms of the budget, I do not believe that there would be an impact on the budget at this time. If that is indeed the case as we move forward, I will be sure to inform the House. I'm looking forward to budget debate later in this session. I'm sure that we'll be digging deeper into the financial matters pertaining to the entire Department of Education.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

CONSIDERATION OF SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 26(2), that continued consideration of a motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne will take place on Monday, May 17, 2021.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 201, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am pleased to present our new government's first budget, the main estimates for the 2021-22 fiscal year. It is an honour and a privilege to be here on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council to deliver a budget focused on improving the lives of Yukoners.

I will keep my remarks relatively brief, as the budget that I am tabling today is largely consistent with the one that I tabled in this Assembly during the previous session on March 4. This year's budget includes estimated spending of \$1.791 billion. Capital spending accounts for \$434 million — a record amount. This is 17 percent higher than last year. Operation and maintenance spending is expected to be \$1.36 billion.

We have included \$15 million as a COVID-19 contingency in recognition of the potential for changing circumstances as we navigate the pandemic. The 2021-22 main estimates show a deficit of \$6.6 million that is the result of economic and social supports, as well as health services for Yukoners in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Notable changes to the budget tabled on March 4 include a \$5.8-million increase in operation and maintenance spending, an \$11.9-million increase in operation and maintenance recoveries, and a \$6.1-million decrease in the deficit and also a \$5.8-million decrease in net financial debt.

Along with this budget, I am pleased to present a five-year capital plan outlining how our government will prioritize the interests and needs of Yukoners through the procurement, management, and delivery of capital projects.

I am also pleased to present a revised fiscal outlook in addition to the economic outlook that was presented in March. These outlooks show that our economy is poised to experience robust growth in the coming years. Responsible governance combined with swift and comprehensive relief measures allowed our territory to weather the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic better than most other jurisdictions.

Despite unprecedented challenges, the Yukon is one of the only jurisdictions in Canada to experience GDP growth in 2020, with growth projected to continue, averaging 4.7 percent per year out to 2025. This budget builds on the strong foundation developed during the previous mandate and continues us on the path toward a brighter future for the Yukon.

With the territory's finances now on a stable path, we are taking significant steps to build a healthier, more vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive territory for the benefit of our people.

We know that investing in Yukoners brings the greatest return. Their well-being is the foundation of Yukon's prosperity. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected Yukon families, businesses, governments, and organizations on a scale that has never been seen before.

In times of crises, it is essential that government provides strong leadership to protect the health and safety of citizens and help them maintain their livelihoods. Thanks to strong collaboration with our federal, provincial, and territorial partners, our territory is leading the country in vaccine uptake and beginning to lift public health restrictions.

Our government will prioritize economic support to protect Yukon businesses and mitigate the impacts on local employees, employers, and organizations. Yukon's COVID-19 support programs are recognized as the best and most generous in the country. As of March 2021, we have provided more than \$10.4 million to over 655 businesses across the territory through our paid sick leave and business relief programs. We have allocated more than \$11 million this year for these programs and will continue to provide supports for as long as they are needed.

Last year, government allocated more than \$107 million to manage the pandemic, support Yukoners, and provide relief to protect our economy. Our proactive and comprehensive response helped to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our territory while keeping Yukoners safe, healthy, and employed. We have allocated nearly \$50 million in this year's budget to continue supports for Yukoners.

We would not be on the path to emerging from the pandemic if it were not for the people who call our territory home. Yukoners have made immense sacrifices over the past 15 months to keep our communities safe. Yukoners have shown tremendous strength and resilience in the face of great adversity.

Our collective efforts as Yukoners have minimized the spread of COVID-19 in our territory, keeping our case count low, and allowed us to lead the country and much of the world in immunizations. The coronavirus has tested the mettle of all Yukoners, and they have responded with the characteristic compassion, resolve, community-minded spirit, and sheer determination that sets our territory apart and makes it such a wonderful place to live.

This year's budget will help Yukoners by making life more affordable while investing in a healthier, more vibrant and sustainable future for all Yukon communities.

With funding in this year's budget, we will continue to implement the *Putting People First* report's recommendations to enhance health and social service delivery throughout the

territory. These investments will support Yukon's dedicated team of health and social service providers to deliver enhanced services to Yukoners in a more sustainable way for years to come.

To support Yukon families and make their lives more affordable, we are investing more than \$25 million toward learning initiatives. This includes \$15 million to support a new, universal childcare program for the Yukon that is putting more disposable income into the hands of families and saving them, on average, \$700 per month, per child. This will support Yukon families and, in particular, will help women who have been hit hard by the pandemic. We will also expand to full-time early kindergarten programming in all rural Yukon communities.

We are making significant investments in education facilities to support the growing number of families raising children in our territory. More than \$10.5 million is budgeted this year to begin construction of a new elementary school in Whistle Bend. A total of \$8.7 million is budgeted for new learning spaces and modular classrooms, including \$4 million to add new learning spaces to the Robert Service School in Dawson City.

Nearly \$7 million is included in this year's budget to improve the way that we serve and communicate with the public in French. This is part of a \$28-million agreement with the Government of Canada to support French language services across government over the next five years. An additional \$1.5 million is included to begin work on a bilingual health centre in Whitehorse that will improve care delivery for Yukon's francophone population and provide another option for those seeking health care.

We are proud to continue our work to advance inclusion in our territory. This year, we are providing \$125,000 to Queer Yukon to continue the important work to ensure that Yukon is a strong, vibrant, and inclusive territory.

We have also worked with Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ community to develop an action plan to improve inclusivity throughout government, both as an employer and as a service provider.

The Yukon is the first jurisdiction in Canada to develop a strategy in response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. Changing the story to upholding dignity and justice, Yukon's MMIW2S+ strategy outlines a territory-wide approach to addressing violence against indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people.

To help build capacity in implementing this important strategy, we are providing \$300,000 to Yukon's indigenous women's organizations to continue to demonstrate leadership and advocacy while providing virtual support to survivors and to family members. An additional \$600,000 is allocated for the indigenous women's equity fund.

We are also budgeting \$60,000 to continue the sexualized assault support line — a 24-hour, confidential, toll-free, Yukon-wide support line for victims of sexualized assault.

We are continuing to invest in the wellness of all Yukoners. We have budgeted more than \$70 million for social supports, mental wellness, and substance use programs. We

have also included \$5.7 million for a new secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital. A further \$3 million will support the implementation of IHealth, a modern, integrated health information system that will enhance Yukoners' experience in the health care system and improve health outcomes across the territory.

We have also budgeted \$1 million to develop a supervised consumption site and to secure a safe supply of opioids to fight the opioid crisis that continues to impact our communities.

More than \$1.4 million will make medical travel easier and more affordable for Yukoners. This year the medical travel subsidy was doubled to \$150 per day for multi-day travel, and the eligible destinations were expanded to allow more flexibility for patients.

Nearly \$2 million is in this year's budget to improve front-line health care and health systems supports, including three additional community health nurses and two new nurse practitioners in Yukon communities.

We have included \$500,000 to begin developing a program to provide dental benefits to uninsured Yukoners.

This budget also includes nearly \$87 million for continuing care, home care, respite care, palliative care, and community day programs for seniors and elders across our territory.

Mr. Speaker, in 2019, we declared a climate emergency in the Yukon, a clear acknowledgement that climate change is real and that we all — governments, industry, businesses, communities, and individuals — need to take action against this crisis. Yukoners want action, and our government is listening.

This year's budget includes more than \$50 million for the implementation of *Our Clean Future* to address our changing climate in a comprehensive and sustainable way that supports our green economy; \$16 million will support community-based renewable energy projects across the territory; \$14.4 million will make government buildings more energy efficient and switch them toward renewable sources of heating, like biomass, which will also help grow our local biomass energy industry; \$1.2 million is dedicated to making First Nation housing more energy efficient; \$6.1 million for energy rebates will help Yukon families and businesses adapt renewable sources of heating and make their homes and buildings more energy efficient. These rebates will also support local contractors and tradespeople in Yukon's green economy. More than \$100,000 will support Yukon's first-ever youth panel on climate change. This panel provides space for Yukon youth from across the territory to share their perspectives and to give advice on Yukon's climate change actions. *Our Clean Future* is truly theirs, and it is important that they play a role in shaping it.

This year's budget includes substantial investments toward renewable energy projects identified in Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable electricity plan. There is more than \$4.5 million for a grid-scale battery that will be the largest battery project in the north and one of the largest in Canada; \$2.3 million is included to complete the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line upgrade; a further \$10 million is included to advance the Atlin hydro expansion project, in partnership with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation.

These are the largest investments in renewable energy in more than a decade. They set the course for a responsible and sustainable future for all Yukoners, and they are just the start. Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable electricity plan positions the Yukon to be a Canadian leader in sustainable electricity by 2030 in collaboration with First Nations and development corporations.

At the same time as we invest in a clean, renewable future, we continue to strengthen and diversify our economy for the benefit of all Yukoners. This budget includes more than \$835,000 for the innovation and entrepreneurial program delivered in partnership with Yukon University. More than \$20 million is budgeted for construction of the Dempster fibre line that will connect more than 70 communities across the north and provide more reliable Internet access. This project will stimulate further growth of Yukon's knowledge sector and digital economy while also contributing to community resiliency.

The newly formed economic development fund will provide nearly \$2 million to advance strategic industries and support regional economic development. There is \$3 million for community development program projects that provide economic benefits and opportunities in Yukon communities. Guided by the Cultivating Our Future agriculture policy, we will also increase Yukon's local food security and support a thriving and prosperous agricultural sector.

As part of our enduring commitment to reconciliation, we are pleased to be working in partnership with Kluane First Nation to build a new Kluane Lake school in Burwash Landing. \$500,000 is included in this year's budget to support planning and design for a new school. The Kluane First Nation asked for this school to be built in Burwash Landing more than 100 years ago, and we are very proud to be working in partnership to support Kluane First Nation citizens to learn and thrive in their community.

We are also working closely with the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education to establish a Yukon First Nation school board, which will ensure that Yukon First Nations can meaningfully shape their children's education.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that stable, affordable housing is foundational to the health and well-being of all Yukoners. This year's budget once again includes significant investments to make housing available for all Yukoners. \$8.5 million is budgeted for the completion of the new 47-unit community housing project in Whitehorse that will provide safe and affordable housing that meets the needs of families and individuals, including vulnerable populations.

An additional \$2 million will help the Challenge Disability Resource Group complete their 53-unit Cornerstone project in Whitehorse. This project will provide additional support and affordable housing for those most in need in Whitehorse. We recognize that vulnerable populations need increased access to housing in our rural communities. Building on the success of the Yukon's first-ever Housing First residence in Whitehorse, we are including \$1.5 million toward a new Housing First project in Watson Lake.

We have also budgeted more than \$6.1 million for a 10-unit, mixed-use housing project in Old Crow — a first for the community.

More than \$1.4 million is allocated in rent supplements. This includes the new Canada-Yukon housing benefit, which provides Yukon households with up to \$800 per month to help them afford to rent a home that meets their needs. We recently secured another \$40 million as the “northern carve-out” under the National Housing Co-Investment fund. This will support community housing projects across the territory to meet the needs of Yukoners.

We have also budgeted another \$3.6 million for the housing initiative fund. We introduced this program in 2018 to increase the availability of affordable housing in our territory, and it has supported over 350 new homes across the housing continuum. Another \$2 million for the municipal matching rental construction grant will further support the development of rental housing.

Making land available for development is another important way of meeting the growing needs for housing throughout the Yukon. We have included more than \$30 million in this year’s budget for land development projects across the Yukon, from Watson Lake to Dawson City. In addition to more than 150 residential lots, we are looking forward to releasing more than 25 commercial lots in Whistle Bend this year. Work on Champagne and Aishihik First Nations’ Marshall Creek expansion project is underway and will provide for more than 30 new lots for Champagne and Aishihik First Nations citizens. Lots will be made available in Mayo later this spring, and planning is underway on residential projects in Teslin, Dawson City, Carmacks, and Watson Lake. Working with our partners across the Yukon to develop lots will increase housing options while providing additional economic and employment opportunities in our rural communities.

The 2021-22 budget builds on the strong foundation of our previous mandate and continues us on the path forward for a brighter future for the Yukon. We continue to move the Yukon toward a more people-centred approach to wellness, improving access to mental health supports throughout the territory and implementing the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report, which help Yukoners thrive. These bold changes will move Yukon toward a more holistic and person-centred approach and system and position Yukon as a national leader in the delivery of health and social care.

We continue to make investments to build healthier, more vibrant and sustainable communities for Yukon families to live in. Expanding home care and implementing the aging-in-place strategy will help seniors and elders live safe, independent, and comfortable lives surrounded by strong and supportive communities.

The new universal affordable childcare program will support Yukon families while putting more money back in their pockets. Increased investments in land development and housing projects will expand housing options across the territory. Continuing to invest in community and recreational

infrastructure in all communities will support healthy active living.

Under our leadership, the Yukon has earned a reputation across the country as a leader in reconciliation, and it has benefited all Yukoners. Our government will continue to foster strong government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations on the basis of respect, cooperation, and partnership.

We will continue to create good jobs in a diverse, growing, and sustainable economy. Our territory has had the lowest unemployment rate in Canada in addition to continuous GDP growth for the past five years.

We have developed an ambitious 10-year strategy in partnership with municipal and First Nation governments to tackle climate change while building a resilient economy powered by renewable energy.

We have made historic investments to modernize infrastructure and transportation networks to stimulate economic growth throughout the territory while reducing the tax burden on businesses to help Yukon companies and entrepreneurs thrive as our economy continues to grow.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have brought into clear focus what is important and what is at stake as we look toward the future.

By listening to Yukoners and delivering on our commitments that we made to them, our government will continue on the path toward a stronger future for all Yukoners. This budget and its investments position the territory to move confidently and steadily toward an even brighter future together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci, mahsi’ cho, günilshish.

Mr. Cathers: I’m pleased to lead off the responses for our side as the Official Opposition Finance critic.

First of all, today I would like to begin by thanking my constituents in Lake Laberge for re-electing me again as their MLA. I’m honoured and pleased to have the opportunity to continue to work with them and for them in that role after winning my fifth election. I’m especially thankful for the large increase in support since the 2016 election and for them electing me with the most votes of any candidate in the Yukon.

I would like to, as well, once again give a very big thank you to everyone who helped with my re-election campaign, especially people who helped me for many days throughout that campaign.

I look forward to working with all my constituents, as well as other Yukoners, to try to represent their needs, interests, and priorities well — both in this Legislative Assembly and outside of it. I am pleased, here today, to have the opportunity to continue serving as the Official Opposition critic for Finance — now in my fifth year in that role. I am also happy to be the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, Agriculture, and Justice, as well as the Deputy House Leader, and I would like to thank the Leader of the Yukon Party for that opportunity. I would like to, as well, thank all of our caucus and all of our staff for the work that they do, day in and day out.

During the 2021 election, we were grateful to have widespread support across the territory, which elected eight of us as Yukon Party MLAs. We were also pleased to have won the popular vote in this election, even though it left us tied for seats with the Liberals.

I want to thank all of the volunteers who helped us to make that happen — campaign contributors and the candidates. Those of us who are candidates do not do it alone. It depends on the work of many people, and I want to acknowledge and thank all of them for their help to me and my fellow candidates across the territory.

Due to the Liberal-NDP coalition — which in our view is a coalition in all but name — we are, of course, continuing the role of the Official Opposition. But with that role continues an important duty to the Yukoners who voted for us, and indeed to all Yukoners, to do our part to hold the government to account, to do our part to bring forward our ideas and our solutions and the issues and priorities that we hear from our constituents and from other Yukoners. I will do my very best to fulfill that role and to provide Yukoners with the very best work that I can provide here, both in this Legislative Assembly and outside of it.

As the Leader of the Official Opposition acknowledged, both in and outside this House, we recognize that the deal between the Liberals and the NDP is legitimate, but in our view, it is a coalition in all but name. It also brings with it a number of concerns, including the fact that it has been uncostered, and most notably, the rent cap commitment that neither leader of the coalition can provide any clear details on is coming into effect in less than 36 hours and has already caused chaos for both tenants and landlords, including causing people to be given notice of rent increases and people who have received eviction notices as a result of this deal between the NDP and the Liberals.

In looking through the budget as well, we see that there are allocations in the budget for the safe supply of drugs and for dental, but we understand that those allocations are not in fact based on a budget. They are allocations, not an estimate.

We also see nowhere in this new, modified budget introduced by the Premier — we do not see the costs for a number of the things committed to in the deal with the NDP. The costs for a new secretariat to support it, as committed to in the agreement, are not identified in the budget. The costs of other commitments are not costed, and the additional staff that they are providing to the NDP caucus is also not outlined or costed anywhere in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, we are also concerned that the two parties have cut a side deal for a short Sitting. I would point out that the eleven days that have been announced would be one of the shortest Spring Sittings in Yukon history. Democracy depends on public transparency and proper scrutiny by the Legislative Assembly. There is no good reason for government to hide from this oversight. The Spring Sitting deals with the budget for the territory, and it's notable that — if you look back over the last number of decades since responsible government began here in this territory — the three shortest Sittings in the spring all appear to have been under Liberal governments. In 2000, the

Legislative Assembly sat for eight days under an NDP government, which called an election and lost. The Liberals took office and sat for 23 days. Though 23 days is a short Sitting for the spring, it is more than double the 11-day Sitting that the Liberals, with their NDP allies, have announced for this year. So, the two parties have effectively agreed to slash debate in the Legislative Assembly and Question Periods by two-thirds from what is a normal minimum for a Spring Sitting. Spring Sittings are typically 30 to 40 days, but unfortunately, under their backroom deal, they have reached an agreement to silence the Official Opposition, the party that actually won the popular vote in the territorial election, and deprive us of the ability to ask questions on behalf of Yukoners who voted for us and on behalf of other Yukoners throughout the territory. There is just no good reason for that.

The three shortest Spring Sittings that we found through our research in Yukon history all appear to be Liberal governments' — the nine-day Sitting by this Liberal government last spring, 11 days this year that they have announced, and 23 days under the previous Liberal government in 2000. But if you look at the current Liberal government, under the current Premier, they have the two shortest Sittings, and the two combined are still less time than the third shortest Sitting of 23 days in the spring.

I know that the members have tried to compare this to Fall Sittings after an election, but as they are aware, the budget is typically the longest Sitting here in the Yukon, and for good reason. In fall, those short Sittings after an election — it's really comparing apples and oranges.

We have also seen a situation where the government has casually used special warrants to bypass this Legislative Assembly. There is a better way. Both the two months of spending that they approved by way of special warrants in March and the special warrant covering the month of June — in both cases, those appropriations could have been debated in this Legislative Assembly and democratically voted on by all members. That is the way it should have been done.

The Premier, prior to taking office, used some of the strongest language that anyone here in the territory has ever used, criticizing the use of special warrants — in the case of one special warrant, one much smaller than the ones that have been issued this year — and he referred to the use of a special warrant as showing disrespect for the Legislative Assembly and democracy itself. Yet the Premier has twice broken the record for using a special warrant — in terms of record size, I should say.

This year, with the special warrant spending in March and the recent special warrant, this Liberal government has spent over half a billion dollars without first seeking approval in the Legislative Assembly, and that is a dramatic departure from what they told Yukoners they would do.

We will hold the government to account on that. We will also bring forward constructive solutions and advocate for the issues that we've heard from Yukoners.

As members will recall, one of the things that we centred on in our election platform in the area of health care was to take action to support the needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

We have, in many Sittings — in fact, every year since spring 2017 — criticized the government for their record for chronic underfunding of the Hospital Corporation. We will continue to advocate for priorities including enhancing supports for our Yukon hospitals, taking action to reduce wait times for essential health procedures, and implementing a wait-time reduction strategy. As noted by the Leader of the Official Opposition in the election campaign, quality health care is timely health care, and we will push the government to take action to reduce wait times and ensure that Yukoners get the care they need, when they need it.

We will also push the government to do as we had committed to doing — providing the Yukon Hospital Corporation with stable and predictable funding that it needs to deliver quality care, including an annual increase to the funding. We will also push them to begin the construction of a secure medical unit at Whitehorse General Hospital and improve the surgical services area at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Since we are short of time, I will not talk for as long as I typically would in speaking to the budget. I do want to briefly touch on some things from my critic areas as well as issues that are important to my constituents in Lake Laberge.

First of all, I'm going to begin with an issue that came up multiple times on the doorstep — that being the fact that the government, by changing the rules for medical travel in the territory, actually cut the in-territory medical travel support for Yukoners travelling to Whitehorse. That is something I heard, especially from seniors living in the Braeburn area who were upset at the fact that they have to travel into Whitehorse multiple times for specialist and other appointments because of the inability of the system to allow them to book all those appointments on one day.

For some of them, it means travelling in multiple times in the week between visiting the lab for testing and seeing a specialist, and all of those costs for a senior on a fixed income are coming out of pocket. So, the Liberal government cut that support last year. I will be pushing them to reinstate that support for my constituents and other Yukoners who have been affected by that. I would remind the government that, for all their commitments to aging in place, part of aging in place includes — for Yukoners who are living in rural Yukon outside of communities, if they lose access to financial support to allow them to get the health care services they need, it doesn't help them age in place and it increases the chance that they end up in the hospital or in our continuing care facilities at an earlier date.

Another area that the government has taken action to cut is, of course, rural garbage dumps. That, for people in the Braeburn area, as well as within the ridings of some of my colleagues and in the Mayo-Tatchun area and Keno — for seniors who are depending on being able to age in place in their communities — to suddenly lose access to garbage service can be a very serious problem for them and can be in a situation where government is not only undermining businesses that are trying to operate in those areas but making it difficult for citizens who are on a fixed income, including and especially

our senior citizens. I will be pushing government to reconsider that.

As we're in the pandemic and have seen an excellent job done across the territory in terms of the vaccine rollout, I want to take a moment to thank everyone who has made it happen and note that, although the politicians may try to claim the credit, the heavy lifting of this is being done by ordinary Yukoners, health care professionals, managers, administrative professionals, people in the IT area, and other public servants. For any I have missed, I thank you, as well, for the work that you have done. We recognize, as well, that there are some Yukoners who had retired and who chose to re-enter public service to help with the vaccine rollout. The Yukon has done very well, especially in comparison to most of the country, in terms of the vaccine rollout — the number of people who have been vaccinated. I want to, on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, thank everyone involved for their commitment to our territory and to the people of the Yukon.

I want to move on to a couple of other areas within my critic roles as well as those important to my constituents. The Premier mentioned in the budget speech their commitments to agriculture. I would remind the government that there are many Yukoners who are upset by the new rules that the government has imposed on agricultural land. It has negatively affected the current value of some people's property and left people who were counting on the ability to retire and subdivide their property to be in a situation where, suddenly, the government has changed the rules dramatically and requires them to jump over a higher bar to be able to do what they thought they would be allowed to do. It's similar to what the government has done in the area of the rental cap that they announced, without recognizing the fact that an investment in your home or your land or in a rental building may be an important part of someone's retirement plan and very likely their largest investments that they counted on, through consultation often with their financial planners, to be able to depend on income from that in the future.

This Liberal government has callously, and without consultation in both cases, just changed the rules. It is affecting the lives of Yukoners negatively and is profoundly unfair to the people who have been negatively affected by it.

In the area of the agriculture rules, I would note — in particular, I'm referring to rules they brought in, effective April 1 of this year. It's something that I heard repeatedly from constituents about on the doorstep, and I know that my colleagues, including the Member for Copperbelt South and the Member for Kluane, have heard about that from their constituents who are also concerned about it.

In the area of the agriculture policy itself, I heard on the doorstep from Yukoners who were concerned about the details of it that, while there is some good stuff within it, the government did not see fit to do public consultation on the details of the policy. There was very early stage consultation on concepts, and then the government sat on that and did work behind the scenes for years and then came out with the policy, not only a year later than they promised, but skipping consultation with people who were affected by it. That was not

the right way to handle it. The solution, of course, is to take the policy back out and actually consult with people on it.

I have also heard from Yukoners who are farming on rural residential land, large rural residential lots, and are concerned that government has completely skipped over in the policy any recognition of them.

We have heard, as well, from farmers and market gardeners who are not operating on a large scale. They feel that the policy is more geared to larger scale operations, which are very important, I would add, but it has not acknowledged their issues.

There are also things that I have heard from a number of the larger operations within my own riding — people who are concerned that there are regulatory, legislative problems that are causing them difficulty and need action quickly. That deals with matters including addressing the needs of egg farmers and dairy farmers as well as addressing the issues that are causing problems for meat processing. I would urge the government to make taking action on those a priority. I would be happy to work with them — if indeed they see fit to do so — to help them, along with the Yukoners affected by this, and to find solutions to these problems.

As the new Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is likely aware, there are issues that, under his predecessor's watch, were very upsetting to people in my riding, including the government's approach to Shallow Bay zoning, which, through their actions, including the proposal that actually would impose a riparian buffer on titled property, was very concerning to people whose homes are affected by those proposals. In the case of the proposal that they went out to consultation on, it would impose just under a 200-foot — 60-metre — no-development buffer after the fact on titled property. It would, as proposed, affect people's homes. It would also prevent them from rebuilding those homes if they burned down. For any one of us, or for any constituent of anyone in this Assembly, if you were looking at zoning, if passed in the form that government presented it, that would prevent you from replacing your house if it burned down, you would be profoundly upset. That proposal should never have been made. It is an unacceptable proposal, and as government has wrapped up their consultation on this, I would strongly urge them to do a rewrite on this and ensure that they are not doing anything that takes away any significant rights from my constituents in the Shallow Bay area. I would remind them, in fact, that the past practice — for decades in this territory — is that, when zoning processes occur, if some people are being given the ability to subdivide, no one has lost any rights of any significance. That should be a guiding principle for zoning processes — not to take away from ordinary Yukoners affected by the proposal.

As well, as the minister will be aware, the government's plans to develop Stevens Quarry did not go over very well. I am pleased that they did reverse those plans on April 1 and made a commitment to Yukoners that they would not develop Stevens Quarry in the next four years. We had committed that we would not develop Stevens Quarry. Members will recall that in 2013, when I was Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources,

the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources listened to the concerns of farmers, other business operators, and surrounding residents about the negative impact that this project would have on farmers, business operators, and residents and rejected the YESAB application to develop Stevens Quarry. I am pleased that the Liberal government retreated on their plans to develop it. We do have a copy of the letter that they sent out to Yukoners making that commitment, and the minister can be assured that we will hold their feet to the fire — I will hold their feet to the fire — if they try to backtrack on their commitment made in April.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, as well, just briefly touch on the fact that we are concerned, as I noted in speaking to the budget on March 8, 2021, about the growth in spending. I noted the fact then and I want to reiterate here today that, when the Liberals took office, they had money in the bank left to them by the previous government, had net financial assets, and had taken it from the point on where — on the point of taking office, they had around \$100 million in net financial assets and, in four and a half years, took the territory from a positive net financial asset position to an anticipated net debt this year that, as of March, was estimated to be \$81.5 million and \$330.5 million in net debt projected for 2023-24.

It's important to note that, during the time that the Liberal government has been in office, the territory's revenues have actually grown at a healthy rate every year due largely to annual increases in the territorial funding formula and other funding transfers, yet despite that, they have spent money even faster than it was coming in every single year.

Now, we acknowledge that during a pandemic, some additional spending is necessary, but it's important to note that this problem didn't start in 2020.

During the Liberals' time in office, revenues grew significantly every year, but almost every single year they have been in office, they spent money faster than it was coming in. The annual increases to spending are unsustainable and explain why, despite inheriting the best financial situation of any new government in Yukon history, the Liberals have taken our territory's finances from in the black to a lot of red ink.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also note that, in the revised budget that we were provided with today, those numbers have remained largely unchanged from the spring and show a situation where revenue this year is growing by a little over five percent, but spending is growing at an even higher rate, at over eight percent this year. That is problematic.

I would also like to briefly touch on a few other issues — I mentioned hospital funding earlier, but I do want to reiterate the point that I mentioned in the spring, that the chronic neglect of funding for the Hospital Corporation throughout the Liberal government's mandate included the fact that the fiscal year that ended in March 2020 left the Hospital Corporation, according to their own year-end report, with a \$3.9-million hole in their funding that fiscal year.

It wasn't until we were literally in a pandemic that the Liberal government started providing our hospitals with adequate funding. They can be confident that we will continue

to bring pressure to bear if they do not provide proper funding for the hospitals going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to — if I can find my notes here again — note that a few other issues I would like to just briefly touch on for my riding, before wrapping up, in the interest of time — there are a number of areas in agriculture that require action. I will be outlining some of them in greater detail later, but I just want to emphasize the point that, according to the Premier and the budget speech, one would think that everything is rosy in the area of agriculture. In fact, from people who work in the agriculture sector and own farms, they remind the Liberals that they lost votes in this election. People were profoundly unhappy with the lack of action by government in a number of areas and the actual negative action toward farmland owners, through the agriculture rules, as well as the government's proposed wetlands policy, which would apply on titled agriculture property and, as I mentioned earlier, the Shallow Bay proposal, which would impact on titled land.

I want to, as I noted yesterday in the House — I would urge the government again to recognize the need to invest in a major upgrade to Takhini River Road. That is an ongoing problem that is not just an inconvenience to my constituents but is potentially a serious safety issue, if a fire truck or ambulance needs to travel down this road after one of the many times where it deteriorates in the spring or after rain.

I would also like to mention the issue of the intersection of the Mayo Road and the Alaska Highway, or for those who prefer to use the term “north Klondike Highway” — commonly known in my riding as “the Mayo Road”. I do appreciate the work that was done last year and most of my constituents do. There are a number of issues that have been raised with me frequently, both during the election and since, and those include the fact that the lines that were painted didn't last very long. They would like government to move quickly to paint the lines to clearly delineate those turning lanes, because a number of people have reported to me close calls and concerning situations involving traffic coming in from the Alaska Highway as traffic comes off the Mayo Road and people not knowing what lane to be in. They would like the lines to be repainted and signage that better informs people of the turning lanes to help, particularly in the winter when those lanes may be covered with snow. People would like the temporary stop sign in the middle of the Mayo Road to be removed and a larger stop sign to be added on the right-hand side.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the ongoing issue of the lack of cell service continues to be a priority for people in my riding in the Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, and Fox Lake areas, as well as Ibex Valley, where they have actually seen a deterioration in their cell service since it was originally installed. I know that is an area at issue, as well, for a number of my colleagues, and we have, as the Liberal government will recall, on multiple occasions, brought forward proposals urging the government to work with the private sector to expand cellphone service to areas where it isn't served.

In the area of agriculture, as well, I also want to specifically note the ongoing elk problem which is in need of action. I know that the minister and the Premier will have heard that directly

as well from the Yukon Agricultural Association, and I would urge them to take that concern seriously.

I also want to note another issue that I have heard from many constituents during the election campaign that relates to garbage service and recycling. As the new Minister of Community Services will recall, yesterday I again urged the government to recognize that, after the windstorm in October of 2020, there are a number of Yukoners in my riding who have brush, and in some cases buildings, that they need to dispose of that were damaged during the windstorm. The government's tipping fees remain a problem. People would like to see the government waive them — actually, most people would like to see the tipping fees gone at the Deep Creek dump, but at the very least, see government waive them for the brush, trees, and other waste created by that windstorm.

I should just point out to government that if they choose not to do that, people are likely going to choose the cheaper option available to them of burning that debris in their own yards, or elsewhere, and there will be an increased fire risk as a result of that. So, it doesn't make sense to nickel and dime Yukoners over tipping fees and create an increased risk of a wildfire this spring or summer. That is exactly what would happen if government doesn't waive those tipping fees.

The ongoing issue caused last summer, where commercial garbage service ended within the Hot Springs Road and Mayo Road area, and within Ibex Valley, continues to be a problem, especially for businesses, especially for those in the farming sector and those who have renters. That is again something where the action that government took did not go far enough. I would again urge them to take the additional step of working with the city to create predictability around tipping fees.

Last but not least, in the area of garbage, I heard from a number of constituents about lack of availability of options for recycling.

I think I will bring up the other issues that I was going to at a later date here during debate, since time is quite short, and with that, I will wrap up my remarks and look forward to hearing continued debate on the budget.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise today to speak to this budget. It also gives us elected members of the Legislative Assembly the privilege to use this time for appreciation.

First, thank you to my amazing family for always supporting my actions and helping me, not only during this last campaign but throughout the years. I could not have done this without their care and love.

To all who have helped me through the election process — my campaign manager, my official agent, my sign crew who went over and above due to the snow mounds and constantly having to move signs to avoid the snowplows, to all who walked with me door-knocking and kept notes on the issues — thank you. To all who kept us organized and up to date with data and to the main campaign office crew with all the separate ridings to watch over and to ensure that they all had adequate assistance, thanks to them.

I extend a special thanks to the returning officers of Porter Creek North who helped all candidates with questions and directions as we worked the mine field of an election that was fair and democratic. Well done.

Most important, to my constituents of Porter Creek North who voted for me, who welcomed me, who gave me food for thought, and for taking signs and supporting me. Many thanked me for helping them with various issues during the past session. I'm honoured to be re-elected and here for them again.

Throughout the election period, many issues were brought forward that affect them and other Yukoners. To hear about a recent loss of someone and then coping with the legalese in the aftermath — the issue: red tape. To hear about the cost of maintaining a home when a partner is lost and they are unable to live on one pension for daily expenses, let alone upkeep of the property — the issue: aging in place and elders. To hear of government employees who feel marginalized by the system that is in place that they are not really heard, and if they are heard, fear of retribution — the issue: workplace problems. To hear of taxes and charges climbing without an end in sight, how to manage what we have, let alone add every wish list item for every interest group. Who will eventually pay? The issue: finances.

These are a few of the things that were asked, and we need to ask them here. More importantly, we need answers. The word “collaboration” rolls off the tongue easily, but it is a little more difficult when action is needed. Now that the summer season is upon us, and it looks like another slow summer for many tourism-minded areas and businesses, I commend those operators who are thinking outside of the box, and kudos for the innovative ways to encourage uptake and getting Yukoners to explore our own territory.

I also want to remember to thank our office staff who every day continue to support and help us as we go through our machinations of government. I reiterate, as we have been given very limited time, that I'm going to wrap up my comments and let others speak. I hope my critic departments are called so I will be able to ask questions about the budget during that time.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to rise in the Yukon Legislative Assembly to respond to the 2021-22 revised territorial budget. It is a privilege to not only serve as the MLA for Porter Creek Centre but to be elected as the first Filipina MLA in Yukon's history.

[Member spoke in Tagalog. Text unavailable]

I certainly hope I am not the last. I want to begin by thanking my family for their support. I don't think I would have been here if not for them. My husband, Peter Morawsky, you are my rock and my solid, consistent supporter; I thank you for your love.

My daughter, Sabrina Clarke, was my campaign manager. She was doing this job while taking her final exams at McGill University in Montréal. She's taking bioresource engineering, and besides the chaos of running an election campaign for her mom, she still managed to pull a 4.0 GPA — so proud and grateful for her help.

My daughter, Rachel, based in Lethbridge, worked as my volunteer coordinator while working and attending school. Thank you so much for your help. They grounded me. Peter, Rachel, Sabrina and Shawn, you are the wind beneath my wings.

To all my constituents in the Porter Creek Centre riding, it is my privilege and honour to be your MLA. Thank you for believing in me and placing your trust in me. It was an absolute pleasure to meet so many of you during my campaign and I want to keep the conversations going. I am fully committed to working my hardest to represent roughly 2,600 of you, regardless of which party you voted for.

On day one, I began the process of ensuring that the concerns you expressed during my months of canvassing are addressed. Please remember that my door is always open. My phone is just a dial away. I will carefully read any e-mails you have taken the time to write and send my way.

Thank you to Paolo Gallina and Shonagh McCrindle for being upstanding candidates to run alongside. Their passion and commitment are inspiring. And getting a call from Paolo after the election results were announced reinforced my feelings of what a beautiful community we live in. Congratulations to both for such strong campaigns.

I would like to thank my team of dedicated volunteers. They worked so hard on the ground, putting up and taking down campaign signs, helping me door-knock every day for over a month. They oh so helped to keep my spirits up. Romy Gayangos and his family members, Allan Hernaiz, Blake Buckle, Cindy Densmore, Joy Allen, Marivic and Jun de Guzman, Myrna Cuenza, Michelle and Ryan Kolla, Kim Dolhan, George Privett, Carolyn Thompson, Madison Blusson, Candace Lane, Dagmar and Ramesh Ferris, Danny Gaje, David Mindanao, Diore Ulgasan, Evelyn Davey, Grace Estrella, Helen O'Connor, Jocelyn Siosan, Junel Martos, Joanna Martos, Leandro Cuenza, Madelyn Bertos, Marita Ordon, Mark Davey, Mayla Gaje, Nesty, Rory Wadham, Sophie Elasoff, and Jason Wilneff. If I missed anyone, I apologize. However, if you worked on my campaign, you already know how deeply grateful I am for your help.

Like many of you, during the election campaign, I tried to visit as many constituents as possible. I navigated the snow and ice to gather the concerns of Whistle Bend and Porter Creek residents. While the weather wasn't ideal, I thoroughly enjoyed connecting with people to hear their concerns. To those people I connected with and listened to, I thank you for choosing me to be your MLA. It is something I do not take lightly. While I have many previous volunteer experiences in a great community, this is now my focus — being the MLA for Porter Creek Centre.

While I am a first-time MLA, I feel a deep obligation to bring those concerns of Porter Creek Centre to the floor of the Legislative Assembly and that is what I plan on doing. I heard many issues about a community that is growing at a pace rarely seen in Yukon. You may call them growing pains, but to me it is more than that. It is about setting up one of the fastest growing areas of the territory to not only survive but thrive into the future.

The community of Whistle Bend is located just east of Porter Creek. In the absence of amenities in the neighbourhood, many of the roughly 2,000 residents commute to other areas of Whitehorse for work and school, to attend medical appointments, get groceries, or take part in their favourite recreational activity. They do this either by vehicle or even bicycle. There are two main routes for this to happen: the Alaska Highway and Mountainview Drive. If you regularly drive either route in the morning, you will find a heavy amount of traffic, especially on Mountainview Drive, as traffic can get backed up from the Superstore intersection on Quartz Road all the way down Copper Road, where it extends to the Range Road intersection. This is a distance of a few kilometres.

Traffic is one of many issues I heard at the door during the campaign. I'm disappointed that no solutions to this issue were included in this budget. I understand there was a proposal to widen the Alaska Highway in the Porter Creek and Crestview area. However, I have been told that, thanks to a lack of consultation from the previous Liberal government, this much-needed project has been delayed.

Speaking of traffic, parking is another I heard at the door. I know this is an issue that needs to be addressed as we move forward with the continued growth of Whistle Bend.

I mentioned earlier about the lack of amenities in Whistle Bend. This was another issue that I heard from constituents during the campaign. I want to tell my constituents right now from the floor of the Legislative Assembly that I will work with the city and proper stakeholders to make even the most basic of amenities — such as a coffee shop, small grocery store, or even a commercial-type business — a reality. I will continue to update you on that progress. As we all know, small businesses are what make a community thrive.

Another thing I will be watching closely is the development of the Whistle Bend school. I have heard from many residents about the lack of detail when it comes to a safe area to pick up and drop off students. I have already heard about the speed of vehicles on the two streets that the new school will border. I'm hoping these issues will be addressed because this school will be so important to the many young families who call Whistle Bend home. We need to do this project right, not only for those families but also for the community as a whole.

While I have talked about Whistle Bend, I have met so many great people in Porter Creek — residents on streets such as Tamarack Drive, Wann Road, and Cedar Crescent. You shared many of the same concerns as those in Whistle Bend, including concerns with early learning in childcare and the fact that the plan just put in place on April 1 isn't truly universal. I have said throughout the campaign, my focus is to bring the concerns of the residents of Porter Creek Centre to the floor of the Legislative Assembly, and I am deeply humbled to have that opportunity.

Mr. Kent: I will take this opportunity to welcome you to the Legislative Assembly and to your new role as the Speaker of the Assembly.

I'm going to be brief. Prior to the election call, we did have the opportunity to respond to this budget, and I spoke at length

about issues in Education and EMR and other concerns, so I won't go back into those this time, recognizing the shortness of this special Sitting that we're now engaged in and that we have a substantial amount of budget to get through.

Like many others in the Legislature today, I also want to thank the constituents of my riding of Copperbelt South for returning me here for a second term as their representative and for a fourth term overall elected to the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Also, like others, I would like to thank so many people who had a hand in getting me back here, starting with my family — my wife, Amanda, and my young son, Eli. Amanda also served as my campaign manager, as she has in the past couple of elections. Her work and her organization are the biggest reasons that I'm able to be back here and to serve Yukoners again in this capacity.

I would like to thank all my family, friends, and volunteers — my mom and my brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews, friends, and folks I went to high school with here in the Yukon back in the 80s, as well as some younger volunteers who just came on board this year. Everybody really chipped in and helped out — a tremendous effort by all. Of course, Linda Benoit, who acted as my official agent in this election, did a great job in tracking all the things that the official agent needs to do.

As I worked my way through the riding during this campaign, a number of issues emerged that were riding-specific, and I will certainly be dealing with many of them as we conclude this short session but also as we move into the fall and subsequent sessions. Highway safety is something that continues to be a concern for many people in the riding of Copperbelt South, so we look forward to asking questions of the new Minister of Highways and Public Works around plans for the Whitehorse corridor, specifically of the Alaska Highway when it comes to those riding issues. The need for a multi-use trail was also identified by many residents — young families pushing strollers around the neighbourhoods, wanting to move between subdivisions, to people who cycle or e-bike into work on a daily basis. Everyone is looking for ways to make that safer for them. As I mentioned, the establishment of a multi-use trail came up at a number of doors.

Housing, of course, is an issue in almost every riding throughout the territory and in mine as well. The lack of affordable housing, especially for young Yukoners — established families, but their children who are either returning from university and looking to buy their first home or are looking to enter the housing market at some point are having difficulty.

Education and childcare are two issues that came up. I'm happy to be the Education critic again for the start of this mandate, and I look forward to working with the new minister and asking questions of her as we get into Committee of the Whole in that department.

Procurement — there are many contractors who live in my riding, and there continue to be a lot of concerns around procurement issues. Having responsibility as critic for

Highways and Public Works, I look forward to digging into that more with the minister responsible when we get a chance.

Then issues with the pandemic and the recovery from that on the economic side and protecting people's health and well-being — issues that came up at many doors throughout the campaign, so I look forward to working with colleagues in the Legislature on recovery efforts for the tourism industry and other businesses as we emerge from the pandemic and work together to make sure that the Yukon is well-positioned as we emerge from it.

Many of the questions that I will have, once we get into Committee debate, for the departments that I am responsible for — some will revolve around the new NDP-Liberal agreement that has been signed. Obviously, the IEP issue is extremely important. It is one that came up before the election was called and during the campaign — at many doors in the territory it came up — and then, of course, we have talked about it here in Question Period during the first couple of days of this new Sitting. We will look to dig in a little bit deeper with the Minister of Education on that when the time comes.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I gave a fairly lengthy speech earlier in March before the election was called, and I am pleased to be back here as the MLA for Copperbelt South so that we can continue that work as legislators.

Just before I close my remarks, I would like to congratulate all of the new members who have come to the Legislature this time around and thank those who ran but weren't successful coming out of the last one. It was a pleasure to work with those individuals, and I look forward to working with all members of the House as we move forward to make a better Yukon. I look forward to serving in the roles that have been given to me by the Leader of the Official Opposition, the critic roles that he has given to me and, of course, working on behalf of all constituents of Copperbelt South.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the second reading of Bill No. 201. Like the Member for Copperbelt South, I will be relatively brief on this Budget Address, as the budget that has been tabled is very similar to the budget that was tabled in early March 2020. There were fulsome and comprehensive speeches and debate presented — by my recollection — by all members in the 34th Assembly. In any event, I have some comments.

The capital budget for Bill No. 201 is \$434 million. This is a 17-percent increase over the capital budget last year and a 48-percent increase over the last Yukon Party capital budget in 2016. Needless to say, this is great news for all of our economy, particularly contractors involved in construction, roadwork, engineering, architecture, and, of course, many other Yukoners. Much of this allocated work would not have been possible without the positive and respectful government-to-government relationships that this Liberal government has built with First Nations since coming to power in 2016.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on this because it is really a significant accomplishment that makes possible a large portion of the investments in this tabled budget. I'm confident that this capital budget will go a long way in

addressing an infrastructure deficit that we are still catching up to.

Transportation infrastructure, in particular, is not something that should be left in a state of disrepair. This is particularly true for our remote communities that depend on transportation infrastructure for their lifelines to Whitehorse and beyond. Among others, a good example from this capital budget is a significant investment in the Carmacks bypass road thanks to agreements that were signed with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation.

As well, the Resource Gateway projects are well underway. I look forward to touring these projects and others with my colleagues this summer. Thanks to our productive and fruitful relationships with First Nation governments, we have been able to unlock over \$430 million worth of work through this project with the Government of Canada which otherwise would not have happened. In Teslin this year, we will keep moving ahead with our plan to replace the Nisutlin Bay bridge, which is a critical piece of infrastructure, not only for the community of Teslin but for the entire Yukon. Further, our \$157-million north Klondike Highway project is continuing this year after the work last summer that saw 13.5 kilometres of road reconstructed between Pelly Crossing and Dawson. Thanks to the Government of Canada for providing approximately \$118 million of funding for that purpose.

Construction tenders for this season's work will be released soon, and I'm sure that our local road construction companies will be on the lookout for those tenders. We have also invested and are moving forward with the Old Crow health and wellness centre and housing tenplex in this budget, with almost \$20 million that has been dedicated to this project. \$2.5 million will be dedicated to the construction of the Old Crow winter road for the upcoming winter of 2021-22 in order to facilitate this project, and when these winter roads are built, they facilitate the transportation of additional goods into the community and also goods that come from the community on roughly a five-year cycle. I'm sure the community of Old Crow looks forward to that winter road being constructed going forward. This long-overdue investment will drastically increase the services provided to the community of Old Crow.

In aviation capital spending, we have allocated \$16.5 million this year. This continues the trend of an increased budget for aviation led by this government. This year, we have invested \$2.7 million in the Mayo airport, which was recently upgraded from an aerodrome thanks to work over the past few years. This current investment is for a lighting upgrade which will allow for scheduled and non-scheduled aircraft operations at night.

This is something that the community of Mayo, Air North, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and mining companies in the area have been asking for and something that we will now deliver.

For the Whitehorse airport — the Erik Nielsen International Airport — we have throughout our mandate invested in many areas, including a new airport bridge for passengers to transfer from the building to an aircraft and vice versa. New airport runway maintenance vehicles — which

were badly needed — have been budgeted for, as I'm advised the current vehicles were constantly breaking down. I'm advised by my predecessor that this brought employees no end of anxiety and grief at the time.

We are also currently in the final stages of replacing the baggage system, which is long overdue. Next up at the Whitehorse airport is the replacement of the maintenance facility, which is over 60 years old and is also located within the Alaska Highway right-of-way, which we are currently working to upgrade. We have design work budgeted for this year, and a review of the project schedule and timing is currently underway. That overall project has a budget of \$10.5 million and a projected completion date of 2023.

We are also looking at a major runway project at the Whitehorse airport, which I hope to have further news on in the near future.

I have already spoken today about the Dempster fibre line project, which I am very proud of, and the dedicated team, whom I have had the opportunity to speak to already on this project. This project will kick into high gear this year, with \$20 million budgeted for that purpose in this fiscal year, providing a redundant Internet fibre loop for the north. It is, of course, very valuable for our business competitiveness and also for the ongoing safety of all Yukoners and all residents north of 60.

Staying on the topic of technology and IT, we budgeted a little over \$1 million per year to change the Yukon government phone system to voice-over IP, or VoIP for short. Commencing this year, the project is expected to be completed by 2023 and will start saving the government an estimated \$1 million per year, Mr. Speaker.

Moving on to Education, I want to highlight the work that will begin this year on a new elementary school in Whistle Bend. We have budgeted \$35.5 million for the project; however, the true cost will be confirmed after the tender closes. The construction is scheduled to begin later this year and occupancy is planned for the winter of 2023.

Following construction of the new French school, Le Centre scolaire secondaire communautaire Paul-Émile Mercier, I have every confidence in the department and the private sector to deliver another fantastic school to the vibrant, dynamic, and rapidly growing community of Whistle Bend and the surrounding areas.

As indicated in the budget speech, we also have a new school site identified in Burwash Landing and funding has been allocated to support the planning and construction in this budget.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, we have made and continue to make education a top priority for this Yukon Liberal government.

On the regulatory and legislative front, our *Public Airports Act* regulations will come into force and effect soon and we have continued to allocate resources in this budget for the ongoing rewrite of the *Motor Vehicles Act*, which has been a long time coming and is a substantial project.

The second portfolio I hold is the Department of Environment. I am proud of the work achieved by my

predecessor, Pauline Frost, on land protection and the environment — Yukon's ecosystems and watersheds that carve the landscape of this beautiful territory, our home to unique biodiversity and iconic species. The Department of Environment budget before you allows us to develop and manage our natural resources responsibly and sustainably through our agreements and initiatives.

Through this budget, we continue to invest in implementing our parks strategy and improving infrastructure at Yukon government campgrounds to make our wilderness more accessible to the public. We know that — for many reasons — our Yukon parks and campgrounds were extremely popular last year and, of course, we anticipate that they will be once again this year.

This year's budget includes more than \$50 million to implement the *Our Clean Future* strategy and the 131 actions that guide us on a path to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, meet increasing energy demands, help us adapt to the impacts of climate change, and build a green economy in Yukon.

Of course, none of the ongoing work for future projects would have been possible without the significant and valuable efforts of our public servants who continue to see this agenda through. So, on behalf of my caucus colleagues and myself, I would provide a heartfelt thank you.

We see you and appreciate all that you do, day in and day out. As public servants, you should stand proud of these notable achievements. This budget demonstrates our ongoing and substantial commitments to improve the lives of Yukoners through increased programs and services but also through major capital investments — achievements and investments that benefit and belong to all Yukoners.

Yukoners have sent a clear message that we need to work together for the benefit of the territory. That is what we are committed to doing. We need steady leadership to get us on the path to recovery. This year's budget sets us on a path to recovery and makes life more affordable for Yukoners.

Mr. Hassard: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this budget. I too would like to start by welcoming you, as well as the other new members, to the Legislature — the members for Vuntut Gwitchin, Whitehorse Centre, and, of course, Copperbelt North. I would like to just wish you all the best in your new roles and hope that you find as much satisfaction working on behalf of your constituents as I have found over the years.

Of course, I would like to thank my family, volunteers, and supporters as well. As you've probably learned in the past few weeks, an election is not an easy thing on our families, and we really do owe them a ton.

As for volunteers and constituents, I truly do appreciate their support. It's such a great feeling to see that continued support. The fact that I received more support in all three of my communities than ever before really is a wonderful thing to experience, and I certainly can't thank everyone enough.

Mr. Speaker, with this new coalition-type government that we're seeing today and the decision that they've made to cut this current Sitting to just 11 days without consulting the Yukon

Party on the length of the Sitting, we obviously are very limited in our time to debate a record budget, and that certainly is concerning. There is very limited time to bring questions forward to the government on many issues that have been brought forward to me and my co-workers by constituents from across the Yukon.

I have numerous questions regarding things such as the Nisutlin Bay bridge, the biomass heat agreement for TTC in regard to the Teslin school — those are just a couple of examples for Teslin. I have questions for the citizens of Ross River and Faro about things such as the Ross River school, the deplorable road conditions between Faro and Ross River, the condition of some of the streets in Faro where upgrades to the water and sewer have been done, and there is currently no contract in place to finish those street repairs.

But, Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that we have very limited time, I encourage others to take the opportunity to speak to this budget, but I hope that everyone is cognizant of the time and that we are able to move through this quite quickly and get down to the work of actually debating the budget.

With that, Mr. Speaker, again, congratulations on your new role, and it's a pleasure to have the opportunity to stand, as always.

Ms. McLeod: I want to first thank all the people in my riding of Watson Lake for their continued faith and support for me to represent them in this Legislative Assembly. My sincere thanks go to my family and to all of the volunteers who offered their time during the election campaign.

This budget, and particularly this budget document, is the most secretive document to date. It's nearly impossible to know how and where the money is going to be spent. My constituents and I are extremely disappointed that questions that they want answered will not be afforded the proper amount of time in this Sitting to see that these questions are asked and hopefully answered. I find that the level of secrecy is astonishing. Budgets affect all Yukoners and their daily lives.

My comments today are going to be somewhat brief as I said in the first Spring Sitting of this year that I would keep my comments short in an effort to get to the questions that are of importance to Yukoners. Unfortunately, that lasted for five days.

I know that again we're going to be afforded very little time to ask any of these questions — questions like how this budget will improve the lives of seniors who want to stay in their homes. I have asked this question repeatedly over the past few budgets and have yet to get any answers.

We know money has been granted to the Yukon from Canada expressly for home care, and yet no improvements to the lives of those seniors. Our community was promised lots — building lots for sale this spring. No confirmation has come to say that it will happen at all this year. What we have just seen is some talking points from the Premier.

As everywhere in the Yukon, housing was a common concern in my riding. There has been no consultation on the housing needs for the communities of Watson Lake and Upper

Liard, and I have yet to find one person who was consulted on a Housing First project.

There were numerous concerns expressed to me during the campaign around substance abuse and treatment, and so far, no information around treatment for rural Yukoners has come forward, but we have heard some talking points around land-based treatment — no details on what that is. Again, I'm pretty concerned that we're not even being able to ask any questions.

There were a great number of concerns expressed around K4 in our schools. There was no consultation with schools, parents, the daycare centre, or the creative play group. No one knows how this was supposed to work or even if it should be put into place in our community.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm also cognizant of the time factor, and I'm hopeful that we can wrap up debate on this second reading speech on the budget. I'm going to leave my comments there. I sincerely hope that we do get some time and that some of our major departments are given an opportunity for debate, but what we have seen in the past is that, for instance, the Health and Social Services budget, which is clearly the largest piece of the budget document, has been afforded a matter of a couple hours' worth of debate. I hope that we can see better.

Ms. White: It's a pleasure to be here again, as I have been definitely lucky to be here in the recent past.

The 2021 election showed us that Yukon wants politics to be done in a different way. Yukoners showed us this when no one party was elected with a majority government. In three separate election campaigns, I heard from every party how we would work together, but that wasn't the case for the 33rd or the 34th Legislative Assembly. We saw motions and legislation pushed through by both the Yukon Party and the Liberal government. We saw committee work rubberstamped by either party that was in power as they overrode group decision-making processes — but no more.

Committees will no longer have any one party with a majority of members, so here is our opportunity to work together for the betterment of all Yukoners. No longer will this House be used to waste time and to push through motions that are tabled by government to highlight what is already included in budgets, what is already being done, or what has been done, and no longer will good ideas from opposition benches be extinguished on this floor with amendments changing their original intent or just being voted down.

Yukon was experiencing a housing crisis when I ran in the 2011 general election, and again Yukon was experiencing a housing crisis in 2016, and the Yukon is still in a housing crisis in 2021. Thousands of Yukoners are renters, and with the housing market overheating for the last number of years, we have heard from so many tenants facing rent increases of \$200, \$300, or even \$400 at a time. Shockingly, this was allowed, because it's allowed under our current legislation, and there is nothing that we could do for these folks who reached out for help.

So, had the Yukon Party been open to actually fixing this problem when the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* was

first being created and then came forward in this House in 2012 — which they weren't — we wouldn't be in this current mess.

Limiting rent increases to inflation is a common-sense approach. This follows the lead of other jurisdictions across the country that are facing similar situations that we are facing in the Yukon. British Columbia and Ontario actually have a freeze in place for 2021.

In Yukon, rents will still go up, but it will be limited to inflation for the next two years. Manitoba, Québec, Nova Scotia, and PEI also all have similar protections in place. As a matter of fact, most Canadians live in jurisdictions with a rent cap in place if we look at the jurisdictions with the biggest populations, like Québec, Ontario, and British Columbia. This cap through inflation is not going to solve all of our housing issues. It was never meant to. It is an immediate measure to prevent the hundreds of dollars in increases that we have seen over the last year.

In the next 20 months, the government must reach out and improve the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* to provide better protection for tenants and flexibility for landlords. Most importantly, this government will not solve our affordable housing crisis without building more affordable rental units. We still have over 350 folks on the Yukon Housing Corporation wait-list. So, we need to build and we need to build now, because this will take time and tenants who are facing these exorbitant increases don't have the luxury of time. So, at least for the next two years, they are protected as rent increases will be limited to inflation.

I have spoken at length in this Assembly about the importance of having a fair minimum wage. We know that the cost of living continues to increase at a much faster rate than our minimum wage increases of the past. No one who works a full-time job should need to access aspects of our social safety net, like the food bank or emergency funding through social assistance. Increasing the minimum wage to \$15.20 is in step with the original recommendations of the Employment Standard Boards in 2018.

I think that we can all agree on one basic fact: Your mouth is part of your body, so why does our supposedly universal health care system exclude our teeth from that equation? It is a question that the Yukon NDP and Yukoners from across the territory have been asking the Yukon government for decades. It is also something that experts have spoken about, and in the groundbreaking review *Putting People First*, the experts agreed that dental care is just as important as other forms of health care. Taking care of our mouths can prevent serious injury down the road and I can tell you that every election for the last decade, I have met people on their doors or in our office who cannot afford dental care and are suffering for it. Yukoners should not have to remain in pain because of a lack of extended insurance benefits.

Finally, implementing the dental recommendations from the *Putting People First* report, Yukoners will find relief in knowing that they won't have to delay getting treated for pain because of a lack of extended health benefits. This is an incredible step to preventing dental emergencies of the future. So, in Yukon, we are one step closer to equitable access to

health care for all Yukoners. I hope that Yukoners are proud to know that we will be the first jurisdiction in the country to implement a public dental plan.

The number of lives lost and Yukoners suffering in the grips of opioid addiction is truly staggering. This year alone, seven people have died in opioid-related deaths. The Yukon is in crisis and these numbers are telling us to act and to act now. So, we know and experts have been telling us for years that harm reduction works. By bringing in a safe pharmaceutical supply for folks who struggle with addictions, lives will be saved. So, gone is the conversation about whether it is helpful, and here is the conversation about putting it in place. For that, Yukoners should be proud.

With the Yukon NDP and the Liberal agreement, this agreement amends the greenhouse gas emissions target to a more ambitious target of a 45-percent reduction by 2030 compared to the 2010 emissions. But this can't be done in isolation, so there will be a creation of a Yukon climate leadership council with representatives from Yukon First Nations, environmental organizations, and the renewable energy sector, industry, labour, municipal governments, youth, and Yukon University. As I mentioned yesterday, the Yukon Chamber of Mines would like to be involved as industry representation, so I look forward to further conversations with them and others as we move forward, because this is an opportunity.

When I think about the difference in this 2021 revised budget and where we are here in this 35th Legislative Assembly, all I see is opportunity. All I see is the ability for us to work together, so here is an opportunity for all members to now bring forward ideas to discuss and debate on the floor of this Legislative Assembly, where now we have to work together in order to get things done. By doing that, it will be for the betterment of all of Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that this is our chance to truly work together, and for that, I am truly hopeful.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, before I start, I do want to welcome all the new MLAs and the old, returning MLAs. Mr. Speaker, I believe we were fellow Rangers together and I want to thank you for your service to our country.

I want to thank my family. I want to thank my constituents, the seniors, elders, and the diverse people in my riding for the support and the guidance during the campaign and during my last two terms and this term moving forward, whether it is during the good times or the bad times.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to take up a bunch of time, but my constituency work is, bar none, the most important thing to me, and it's very important to me. We have a rather large riding. Mr. Speaker, I haven't really had a chance to review the budget as we just received it today, but I do understand that there is not much change from the budget that we saw a few months ago.

I want to highlight a few things that are issues. They may not seem like major issues to some members in here, but they sure are to the riding. They need addressing right away, and I hope to get them addressed, either during departmental debate,

which will be short, or putting motions on the floor to highlight it. This shortened session doesn't give us much time.

There are a few things that I will highlight. For example, we have the wild, or feral, horses and elk between pretty much Champagne and Whitehorse, and the brushing needs to get done. I brought it up in the House before. In the beautiful community of Haines Junction, I've been waiting, and we have been waiting, for the business signs and the crosswalk to go to Da Kų. The north Alaska Highway — we haven't seen any money, and I haven't had a chance to really get into the budget to see if they're actually going to put some capital money into the north Alaska Highway. It's falling apart; we haven't seen a dollar spent on it for the residents north of Destruction Bay up to Beaver Creek.

The Kluane Lake School — I keep hearing about it. I've been hearing about it for five years, and now I hear about it today, and I'm so happy that it's being built. That's something that I wanted done, and I worked with the chief of the day to make sure that this could get done. I look forward to it getting done. I just hope that they go and engage with other community members and chat about what's going to happen to the old school and how it can be repurposed to something that's needed in the community.

We don't have a doctor. We had a doctor, Mr. Speaker, but we don't have a doctor. The government knew about it before last Christmas, and I sure hope that it's a priority for the Health and Social Services minister — to get a doctor back in place like we had before.

I guess one of the most disappointing things for me in the riding is our seniors facility. Shortly after the pandemic came, the actual seniors group was asked to leave the seniors facility, and they weren't allowed to meet there anymore. I had assurance that they would be back November 30, but they're still not in there. I sure hope that this is a priority for our housing minister and Health and Social Services minister. It's so hard for seniors to meet in these times, and I think that other members have talked about the effects of the pandemic when it comes to mental health and our seniors just dying of loneliness because no one can meet with them or come to see them.

We are now, I believe, three years behind on contracting services on major water and sewer upgrades within the municipality of Haines Junction. Again, it looks like the tender was waylaid too long and we're not going to see a whole bunch of work again this year, when our hotels are empty, restaurants don't have a lot of business — just locals — and gas stations. It would sure be nice to have business. It would have been nice to have it last year, too.

I heard lots from constituents during the campaign, and all the time, about — we need to get the government back to work so that the government services can be there for us. I know that we're working on it, and I hope that this is a priority, too.

I'll be tabling a petition next week about dumps. It's so important — dumps may not seem like much to a lot of people in here, but the closure at a dump and looking at fees at other dumps without consulting or talking to anyone — it's just not fair; it's not fair to the residents.

I think that probably, if you want to look at it, the biggest thing in the riding right now is our major time to make an honest dollar for the business community — it is with the tourism sector in the summer, and it's devastated due to the pandemic. I sure hope that there's more that can be done to help make us bigger and better when it opens up. Our neighbours to the south of us in Haines and Skagway — I think a conversation needs to be had with the United States and Canada on what we can do to help them so we can maybe go there and they can come here — looking at how the vaccines and everything is rolled out.

I sure hope that we don't keep moving backwards, Mr. Speaker, in my riding with the things that need to be done. I'm hopeful, listening to the Leader of the Third Party, where we can all bring things forward and things will get done.

In closing, I do want to thank Luke Campbell and Dave Weir, who I ran against, and I thank them for that. I want to thank, as always, our support staff and all my fellow colleagues in the House here today — on the great team that we have with the Yukon Party under the leadership of our new leader. I look forward to listening to a few others, but I sure do hope that they are short so we can get into departments and start debating.

Mr. Dixon: It's a pleasure to rise in response to this budget and to say a few words on behalf of myself, my constituents, and my caucus. I believe that I'm the final speaker from this side of the House, so I look forward to getting into these departments as we carry forth.

Before we do, I did want to take the opportunity to say a few words of appreciation from me for the privilege and honour of being here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. This is my second time being in this Legislature. I was a member of the 33rd Legislature as well. I'm very much looking forward to my new role as the Leader of the Official Opposition and Member of the Legislative Assembly for Copperbelt North.

A number of my colleagues have mentioned how important the support of our families is to all of us being here. I want to say a few words about that. I want to thank my wife, Brittany, and our children, London and Dawson, for their support throughout the election and our continued efforts since the election in allowing me to fulfill this exciting opportunity to be an elected representative and Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Of course, I want to also thank my parents, Linda and Donnie Dixon, for their support. Of course, my mom, Linda, was very much involved in my campaign. She is a seasoned campaigner and has been involved in politics for a very long time. I very much appreciate her support, wisdom, and love as I undertook this most recent endeavour. My sister, Bonnie Dixon, who managed my campaign in the last election — I want to thank her and her kids, Harlyn Dixon and Drey Currie Dixon, for lending me their mom for the duration of the campaign and having her help me through that. I would also like to thank my sister, Lindsey Anderson, and her husband, Kyle, and their two children, Aliya and Ivy, for their ongoing support and love.

Of course, beyond the specific campaign in Copperbelt North, I was part of a larger campaign as the leader of the party.

Of course, that involves a lot of important volunteers and supporters. First of all, of course, I would like to thank Ted Laking, who is our chief of staff but also was our campaign manager in the most recent election. I think that all of my colleagues would agree that we simply couldn't do what we were doing without Ted's support, and I very much want to thank him and Colleen, Henry, and James for lending Ted to us for not just the campaign but for so much of his time.

I want to thank Amanda Leslie, who was the director of communications for the campaign, Tim Kucharuk, Robin Boss, Danny Macdonald — all of whom work in our offices here but also played important roles in the campaign as well.

I would like to thank a few key volunteers — Linda Benoit, Jonas Smith, Carolyne Thompson, and Pat McElroy all played a huge role in the success of our campaign. I would like to note those folks for their support and engagement during the election.

I want to give a special thank you to our party president, Mel Brais. Mel obviously plays a very important role as the president of our party but played an incredibly outsized role in the campaign, running our campaign office. She and her husband, Paul, put an inordinate number of hours into our collective effort, and I know that, without her support and without her engagement, I know we wouldn't have had the success that we did in the 2021 election.

In addition to that, I want to thank the members of our party's executive. I won't name them all because we have a lot, but we have an incredibly engaged executive, and they have been putting a lot of wonderful hours into the work that they have been tasked with over the past year or so, since I became the leader of the party. I very much appreciate each and every one of them.

I do want to thank all of the candidates who ran in the last election — whether they were successful or not — for all parties, but I do want to say a special thank you and a few words of appreciation to Ted Adel and Saba Javed, who were the Liberal and New Democrat candidates for the riding of Copperbelt North, respectively, in the last election. I thought both ran exceptional campaigns, and I appreciate very much the honourable and respectful approach that was taken by both Ted and Saba in our neighbourhood. Saba lives just down the street from me and Ted lives not too far away either, so I know that both will remain engaged in the community, and I look forward to working with them both over the course of the next few years in my role as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Copperbelt North.

Both of my colleagues, the other leaders of the two parties, have noted how unique the role of running a campaign as the leader is, and this was my first time doing so. I had the real privilege of spending a lot of time outside of my riding, throughout the Yukon in a number of different ridings, connecting with constituents and voters around the territory. I don't think I got to every single riding in the duration of the campaign, but I got to as many as I could and spent a lot of time connecting with as many different communities as I could.

Of course, over the past year since I became the leader of the party, I have had the privilege and pleasure of travelling

around the territory and connecting with as many communities as I could, despite the fact that much of that engagement and outreach was occurring during a period in the Yukon when travel was very difficult and meetings were challenging. I want to thank all of the chiefs, mayors, community leaders, and community representatives whom I have had the pleasure of dealing with over the past year or so.

As we turn now to the business at hand, which of course is this budget — I know that many of my colleagues who were re-elected already have had the chance to speak to this budget or its predecessor, which was very similar. Many of them have already had the opportunity to say a number of words about the budget. I know that time probably won't permit me to dig in as much as I would like, but at first glance, one of the more concerning things I look at when I see this budget is the net financial assets of the territory. I know that in 2016, when I was last in these Chambers, the territory's public finances were in much better shape. We had net financial resources and were on track to continue so. Unfortunately, over the last years, we have seen that decline considerably, and the result is before us today in this budget, where we see a net debt of just about \$170 million, which is remarkable given the size of our territory's public finances.

What's even more concerning, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the trajectory that we are on as well. I know that in the budget document tabled a few months ago, we noted that we were on pace to see that net financial asset position decline even further to a startling \$300-million net debt.

Those are obviously concerning numbers to me and something that I think isn't being adequately addressed by the current government. What's even more worrisome about this is that I fear that the new way of doing business here — the coalition agreement structure that we see in place now — is going to exacerbate our spending and continue us on a dangerous path toward unsustainable spending. That's a concern I have more generally. As we move forward into the details of this, I'll have the opportunity to engage either in Committee on the Department of Finance or more generally across the span of different departments as we begin debate on these areas.

As well as being the Leader of the Official Opposition, I have taken on a few additional roles as well as critic for a number of departments. In some cases, these departments are very well known to me — either because I have formerly been the minister of these departments or because I have a particular interest in some of the work that they do. But some of them I'm less familiar with; I note that the Executive Council Office I've never been responsible for and haven't had the ability or the opportunity to direct before, but obviously as a former Cabinet minister, I dealt with the department a fair amount.

One of the areas in the Executive Council Office that I look forward to engaging with the Premier on relates to intergovernmental affairs, how the Premier views his role in the federation, what opportunities lie ahead of us, and how he'll be directing the department and the Intergovernmental Relations branch to engage with our colleagues around the country. Over the course of my time as a legislator previously, I made a

concerted effort to build relationships with colleagues across the country and I've learned, in my experience, that those relationships are so important — especially when difficult matters need to be dealt with at the national level and provinces and territories need to come together and either make a case to Ottawa or work with Ottawa to engage on important files.

I'm also the critic for the Public Service Commission and I was honoured and pleased to be the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission in my last time in office. I'm very familiar with a number of the files that the Public Service Commission deals with. I look forward to digging into those on this side of the House and doing my best to raise questions and concerns about some of the ongoing issues in that department.

I will also take on the role of critic for the Department of Environment. This is yet another example of a department that I was previously the minister of. I have spent a lot of time with the Department of Environment. I was previously one of the longer serving ministers of Environment and really appreciated my time in that department. I know that a lot has changed since I was there last, but I do suspect that many of the same issues still persist. I think that I will be well-grounded in those issues and able to engage with the new minister on those files.

Of particular interest to me, not only as the critic for the department but as a Yukoner who has been engaged in the hunting community for some time, I look forward to engaging with the minister on the strained relationship between this government and the hunting community. I know that, over the past few years, the former minister didn't quite have the strongest relationship with the hunting community, and that was evidenced by the cut to the funding of the Yukon Fish and Game Association that occurred in the previous budget.

In addition to cutting the funding for the Yukon Fish and Game Association, the government has had a fairly negative approach to dealing with concerns raised by the Fish and Game Association with regard to regulatory changes and the overall system of wildlife management, and I hope that the new minister can right some of those missed opportunities that the previous minister engaged in. It's my hope that, with some positive engagement from the new minister, things can be improved upon and a bit of a new direction can be taken from the previous adversarial approach that the former minister had with the hunting community.

An additional area that I'll be speaking about is the various corporations — the Yukon Liquor Corporation, the cannabis corporation, and the Lottery Commission. I had taken these on not because I have familiarity with the departments as a former minister but because I have an extreme interest in the field and in this sector of the economy, which I think contributes very importantly to our communities. In the past year, I have had the opportunity to connect with a number of businesses in the hospitality sector to discuss the impacts of COVID on their businesses but also to understand some of the ongoing challenges that began well before COVID.

There is a lot of detail to these and there is some nuance, but I think that one of the issues that sort of summarizes the breadth of the issues is red tape. I think that the Yukon Liquor Corporation, in particular, imposes a lot of red tape on

businesses, either through its pricing model or some of the rules that are in place for the operation of hospitality businesses, but I think that many of them could be addressed with some political leadership.

I know that the new minister for the Yukon Liquor Corporation has a lot of experience in that field and I am sure will appreciate some of the concerns that have been raised by the hospitality industry. I look forward to working with him to do our best to reduce red tape and reduce the burden on some of these businesses that have not only been affected by the COVID pandemic but have been impacted by red tape that has persisted for some time. I say that because I don't think that it started in 2016. The red tape that has burdened the business sector, and particularly the hospitality sector, has been going on for a number of years. That's something that I know probably wasn't dealt with as much as we would have liked in the previous Yukon Party governments, so I hope to see a change now going forward.

Additionally, I have several views on prospective changes to our regime when it comes to cannabis. I believe that the legalization of cannabis was a tremendous opportunity not just for our territory but for the country. I do think that the model that was chosen unfortunately squandered some of that opportunity, and I think that there is a real opportunity to adjust the model that we have in place now to allow for a greater opportunity for the business sector to take a leadership role in displacing the black market. That was one of the guiding principles of the legalization of cannabis here in the Yukon, and I think that the current model we have in place doesn't do enough to support the private sector in combatting the black market or even just creating business opportunities for a thriving new sector. Obviously, in the last election, the Yukon Party proposed the privatization of the cannabis corporation and the removal of Yukon government from the sector inasmuch as it participates today.

So, you know, that is something that is informed not only by my review of the legislation and my review of the regulatory framework within which that sector operates but extensive conversations with business owners and folks in the private sector who felt incredibly let down by the approach taken by the previous Liberal government and are looking for new opportunities and perhaps changes with the new minister that could improve opportunities for those businesses.

The final piece, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I wanted to touch on was a bit unique. After discussions with our critic for the Department of Education, he allowed me to keep hold of a very important issue to me, and that is early learning and childcare. I have, over the past year, spent a lot of time engaging with the childcare community and the early learning community to better understand the issues that face this sector and this community. Again, I have a number of thoughts about what the current direction is of this government with regard to early learning and childcare and some of the changes that we have seen recently.

As I mentioned yesterday in my response to the throne speech, I don't think that we need to rehash the dates in the election, but it is pretty clear that there is a difference of

approach between the three different parties on how this program should be delivered and what some of the shortcomings are of the current program.

When it was announced just a few days before the election was called, it was pretty clear to many in the childcare community that politics and electoral advantage was one of the driving forces behind the decision. I think that unfortunately took away from some of the sentiment behind it because I think that, really, while we have a unique opportunity in the country today to change the face of early learning and childcare in this country — and I think that the Yukon has an opportunity to be a leader in that front, and while they have been one of the first to engage in a new program in partnership with the federal government, which is providing a significant amount of the funding — I think that the model chosen for this support to families was the wrong one.

I look forward to bringing forward my thoughts on what some opportunities could be to improve that, and I look forward to discussing that with the new minister. I am sure that she is in the process of getting briefed and up to speed on the new program.

One thing I should note is that, despite the differences of opinion on the delivery of the benefits side, I certainly am very supportive of the additional supports and increases in the supports to childcare operators and, in particular, early childhood educators. I think that some of the changes that have been made so far are certainly in the right direction. I do have additional thoughts on some additional changes that can be made or at least considered and I hope that they are — that I'm able to bring those forward in a collaborative way and have the two other parties consider those.

I think that's actually possible. I know that during the election, I had the opportunity to participate in the early learning and childcare forum that was hosted by the community of practice, and both the current Health minister and the now-MLA for Whitehorse Centre joined me on that. I think despite the differences that we have on a few of the aspects of the program, there is a lot of overlap and a lot of agreement on some aspects. Either way, I'm excited to see this issue take such prominence in the election and take some prominence in the budget. I think that is one area where, while there is room for improvement, I think it's a positive step forward for that sector.

I'll leave it there. I think I've covered some of the brief areas that I wanted to cover today. I do look forward to getting into general debate and into departmental debate and I of course look forward to the briefings on the various departments. Unfortunately, because of the incredibly truncated Sitting that we are in right now as a result of the decision by the other two parties to limit it, we're going to have to cram in a considerable number of budget briefings into a very short time. I believe on Friday, we're scheduled for something like six or seven consecutively. That will be a challenge, but that's a result of the decision to limit this Sitting to only 11 days.

With this budget now being tabled today, we have nine days to review a \$1.8-billion budget — which, as I've expressed publicly before, I think it is inadequate and unfortunate that the other two parties decided to make that

decision without us. Obviously, we disagree with it, but I know that we'll have the opportunity to voice that disagreement at a later date when the motion comes forward to truncate this Sitting from its normal length to an unusually short one.

With that, I'll conclude. I look forward to engaging on this, and I thank my colleagues for the opportunity to speak at second reading to respond to this budget and to say a few words not only about my riding but my family and some of those who have supported me in getting here to become an MLA once again. I look forward to doing my best to represent my constituents, fulfill my role as Leader of the Official Opposition, and lead an effective opposition over the next few years.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It's my honour to speak about our Yukon government's 2021-22 budget today. As others have said, I will not take too much time, but it is an important opportunity to speak to the people of the Yukon about our priorities.

Our Liberal government and our team have always been clear that, every day, we are working for the people of the Yukon. We are dedicated to doing our work collaboratively with integrity, initiative, and fairness. That has always been our approach, and I'm looking forward to continuing that work here with the members opposite and our team, who have basically all indicated that they intend to be collaborative in our approaches going forward.

In addition to all of the regular work of government in the past year — all of the usual, regular, everyday work of government — we have spent the past 14 months working daily to keep Yukoners safe and to respond to a world pandemic. It is truly unprecedented work done by all the members of this House, and no government in the history of the Yukon has had to rise to such a challenge with respect to such concerns on behalf of Yukoners and keeping them safe.

I share the comments of many here that we have a special and unique opportunity to work on behalf of Yukoners in a new way. As we work together on this budget, I am hopeful. At the best of times, a budget creates conditions that allow individuals to thrive as the economy grows. I have said before that, in times of uncertainty, a well-crafted budget can provide the stability needed to steer through turbulence while charting a course toward calmer times.

I believe, and I know, that Yukoners will receive this budget as outlining a road map forward and providing some certainty in these still very uncertain times.

Governments must understand their responsibility to the people of this territory, Madam Deputy Speaker, and this one does. I daresay that all members of this Legislative Assembly come here mindful of the folks who sent them here to represent them and the responsibilities that rest on their shoulders.

This budget reflects an attitude and approach that ensures that the priorities that exist in every corner of this great territory are addressed. It ensures that every issue that we all heard about on Yukoners' doorsteps will move forward and will see progress.

One of our key priorities has always been that all communities matter, and I am so proud that our government has lived by that commitment and worked extensively in each and every community to meet them, to listen to their priorities, and to respond to their needs as they explain them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Yukoners have sent us all back to work here for them. I know that part of their trust in us resulted from our commitment to work collaboratively with Yukon First Nations governments and communities, and we commit to continue that work as we go forward.

As I noted yesterday in my reply to the Speech from the Throne — it was an honour to address this House — I am so proud of the work that the Department of Justice has done, and it is truly an honour to be its minister and the Auditor General for this territory.

We have set priorities at the Department of Justice through much hard work over the last mandate. We worked with the dedicated public servants as well as feedback from the community to set out principles. They include reconciliation with Yukon First Nations, working as a team, identifying and meeting our clients' needs, innovation and initiative, and communications. Our work will continue to be guided by these principles as we go forward in this mandate.

I am also incredibly proud to have been given the mandate of Health and Social Services. I am truly honoured to take on these responsibilities, and I will work extensively on behalf of Yukoners to continue the dedicated work of Minister Frost and her work to improve health care services, mental wellness services, and home care services for all Yukoners, no matter where they live in this great territory.

We will focus on our COVID response and the absolutely excellent vaccine program, including the opportunity for youth to be vaccinated in the coming weeks.

Mr. Speaker, it is an exciting opportunity with the *Putting People First* report to truly innovate and lead progress and serve the people of the Yukon into the future, with them at the centre of service delivery for health care services.

In closing — I mentioned my family briefly yesterday — my family and friends — and I just wanted to note again today my thanks to them and the recognition — perhaps on behalf of us all — that being a member of the government and a member of this House takes a toll on those relationships. It is wrong, but this job's demands on your time mean that often family and friends regularly take a back seat and they don't have you in some of the everyday moments of their lives. So, they truly are committed to this job as well, and I wanted to recognize that on behalf of all of our friends and families. When we decide to go down this road, they come with us.

Lastly, I would like to thank Yukoners for keeping us all safe by taking care of one another, by taking care of your family and your friends and your neighbours and your communities, by following the "safe six plus one", and by being vaccinated. Thank you to everyone. Keep up the great work. We will continue to lead. The Yukon has been an amazing leader in the response to COVID-19, and as we all work together, we will continue to do so.

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is my pleasure to rise today to respond to the 2021-22 main budget estimates in Bill No. 201, *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*. I would also like to acknowledge all of those folks who are new to the Legislative Assembly. It was really great to hear you speak in the Legislature yesterday. I take a lot of pride in seeing our new Speaker — our young new Speaker — of Northern Tutchone descent come into this Legislature and take your rightful place. Thank you so much and welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

I would like to also start off by once again thanking my family — particularly my husband, Rick McLean, and my sons, Jedrik and Colin Dendys — for their love and support. Thank you to my extended family and of course my friends for their endless love and support of me. Thank you to the many mentors in my life who keep me grounded, focused, and well — particularly the elders in my life who are not afraid to tell me when I'm off course or need to be set straight. So, thank you to all of those people — and you know who you are.

It is an honour and a privilege of course to serve Yukoners in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. As I said yesterday, thank you to Mountainview for putting your faith in me over the past four and a half years and for continuing to put your trust in me in this second term. I will work hard for you, make you proud, and be the best MLA that I can be by representing your priorities, concerns, and interests and by responding to the needs that you have.

I would like to once again thank the incredible team who supported me through the 2021 election, from financial support to emotional support and everything you can imagine in between. I had what I referred to many times as the "dream team" working on my campaign — led, of course, by the fierce Gina Nagano, who led my campaign in 2016 as well and, of course, my husband, Rick McLean, who ran six campaigns of his own in First Nation politics. He was really extraordinary during the election in helping to advise, be calm, and keep me calm. That was his main job. Also, of course, my very best friend, Karee Vallevand, and our comms team: Melanie Pang, Bing Giroux, Ally Meers, and Edwine Veniat — of course, my official agent, Victoria Fred, Conal Slobodin, Jackie Shorty, Cheyenne Bradley, Brandy Vallevand, Shirley Dawson, Jessie Stephen, Teresa Waugh, Lisa Anderson, and my son Colin Dendys.

There were many others who supported me throughout, but I wanted to actually say their names today because I think that I would certainly not be here without them. They believed in me and I'm very grateful to each and every one of them. The days were long and extremely tiring, but we had so much fun on the campaign trail too. Again, I'm truly proud of the campaign we ran and how we kept it positive and focused on our leadership and what we would bring to leadership in the Yukon, if given an opportunity to continue.

I spoke in March on the budget that's very similar. But I wanted to also just say thank you again to the public service for all of your hard work and for your dedication. The work that you do on behalf of Yukoners is tremendous. Valerie Royle — who is my Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture and who I'll continue with and with the Women's Directorate — we

built a really strong friendship, and that is how I worked with public service and Yukon government — to build that trust and friendship and to truly understand what they do.

I also want to mention Kurt Dieckmann from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board. It has been an honour, and we did some tremendous work together — legacy work which I think is going to add a lot of value to Yukon and keep our workplaces safe and modernized. I'm very happy to have worked with Kurt and of course Mark Pike, chair of the board, and all of the board members.

Again, I was able to speak to the budget in March, so I'm not going to go into too much detail, but this budget is really about people and putting people at the centre of our decisions. We are working to make people's lives better.

I will go into a little bit more detail on Education and not so much on the Women's Directorate. As I've already stated in this House, I'm so honoured to take on this file of Education. Our kids are at the foundation of everything we do and it is our duty to make sure that we are setting them up for success. My vision is that our education system can meet every single child where they are and help them to grow and be successful in whatever way they define success. I'm very lucky to be inheriting this file from such a strong former Minister of Education. She made huge strides over the past four years in modernizing this system.

I have inherited a really great department and a very strong team. The Department of Education has one focus and one focus only: What is in the best interest of our students?

Over the past year, we have faced an unprecedented set of challenges due to COVID-19. As we look forward toward recovery, the department will work to ensure that the education system at all levels provides positive outcomes for students and advances Yukon's social, economic, and community goals.

This budget represents our commitments to the next generation of Yukoners. We are building Whistle Bend elementary school. The budget has \$10.5 million, as the Highways and Public Works minister discussed today, to begin construction of the first elementary school in Whitehorse in over 25 years. We are building on our relationship with the Kluane First Nation and responding to their request — made now for more than a generation — to build a school with them in their community. \$500,000 has been allocated in this budget to support planning and design for the project, with more allocated in the five-year capital plan as the project progresses.

We have \$8.7 million in the budget for new learning spaces and modular classrooms, including \$4 million to add new learning spaces to the Robert Service School in Dawson. There is more than \$2.6 million to improve online digital learning technologies that will support modernized learning and teaching in all of our schools, and a further \$1.9 million for supports to ensure that our students are successful in their learning during and after the pandemic.

Something that I'm very passionate about is our early learning childcare program. Yukon is just the second jurisdiction in the country to do so. I believe, and our government believes, that all children should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early learning

opportunities, and I'm so excited to champion this file as a minister. We are investing more than \$25 million toward early learning initiatives in this budget. It includes \$15 million to support the new universal childcare program, which already supports families, saving up to \$700 per month per child. Those are our investments. We are excited about the recent announcement at the federal level for universal childcare. We know that this is going to be a huge impact to Canadians across Canada. However, we have made that investment already, and we will work with our federal partners to ensure that the investment comes to Yukon as well in terms of their recent announcement.

This will support Yukon families and, in particular, will help women who have been hit hard by the pandemic. This program is going to change lives. One of my young friends said that it's going to allow her to dream again, because she's a young mom with a number of children, and I believe that to be true.

We are also working with rural Yukon communities to expand full-time kindergarten programming, individually with each community, to support these initiatives and ensure stronger coordination and collaboration across our early learning services. We are working with Yukon First Nations, school councils, and their communities to ensure that this program meets their specific needs. We will move forward together when they are ready.

In terms of the Women's Directorate, I am so pleased, as I have said, to have the opportunity to continue on as the minister responsible for the Women's Directorate. I am very proud of the work that we have achieved over the last four and a half years. There were many incredibly hard, emotional days, but we made some huge strides toward so many advancements for Yukoners. I spoke in March in detail about these, so I will just mention some of the areas that I have focused on and will continue to focus on. It is reflected in the budget as well. Of course, there is the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus strategy and the LGBTQ2S+ action plan. We will continue to work on gender inclusivity and diversity analysis. We will continue to work on establishing SART, the sexualized assault response team, to enhance it in Whitehorse and extend it to our communities. We will continue, of course, under the LGBTQ2S+ file, to work with Queer Yukon around the reality of a pride centre.

As I said in the beginning of these remarks, this budget is about people. It is about our young ones — the next generation — and ensuring that they have the best opportunities and a system that supports them to succeed. It is about people of all genders and sexual orientation having the supports that they deserve.

Over the next days, I look forward to the opportunity to really do a deep dive into the budgets of my portfolios. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues, and I have heard some of that today. Thank you so much for your remarks. It is good to know where you want to go with the discussion. I really look forward to discussing all of these really important matters.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm happy to rise again today to talk on the budget. There are a few things that I want to say. I'm going to try to keep my remarks fairly brief. I appreciate getting the opportunity to hear all the remarks so far, and I look forward to hearing from the members of the Third Party still.

First of all, what I would like to do is just talk about my wife, Susan Walton. She is a really lovely person. She's a nurse, and this is National Nursing Week, so I would like to acknowledge her. There was a comment that the Minister of Health and Social Services just made talking about how, when any of us put our name forward, we kind of bring our family with us. I have heard comments from other members of the Legislature talking about their families and how much they appreciate them.

Last night, I did a community meeting, so I did manage to get to see Susan somewhere after 10:00 p.m., and tonight I'm going to another community meeting, and I'm going to manage to see her, I hope, somewhere around 10:00 p.m., so it's nice, because some days I don't get to see her because we work, all of us — every one in this Legislature devotes themselves to trying to make the Yukon a better place. Of course, Susan helped out, but one of the things that I wanted to mention is that Susan stepped back from decades of work at the hospital, as a nurse at the hospital, and she shifted to teaching at the university, teaching health care assistants so they can contribute to our territory, but she also just recently put her name forward for giving the vaccines.

When I went to get my second vaccine, I nearly got her to vaccinate me. I thought they would probably say, no, that's a conflict, but the guy that I did get it from, the nurse I got it from, he knew that Susan was there, and he understood the relationship, and he was joking about: Did I want to go there and get the shot from my wife, Susan?

One of the reasons that I want to talk about this is because I just want to come back for a second to COVID-19. I feel so lucky to be a Yukoner.

First of all, I will just give a shout-out to all of those people who are helping out with the vaccinations — they are doing an amazing job. I went and volunteered when the clinic came to Carcross — I guess it was two times over four days — and it was just so smooth. It was great to talk to the people who were working at the clinics and to talk to the citizens who were coming to get their vaccine and how thankful we all felt to be getting vaccinated so quickly and it has helped to keep us all safe. I just really appreciate that work. Through conversations with my wife, Susan, I understand that more people are now coming out for their first vaccination, so that's great. She just lets me know that, yes, there are more folks coming. I watch the numbers each day and I get to see them. Every Yukoner can look at the numbers. That is really wonderful because it makes such a difference for us as a territory.

I want to talk, just for a minute, about a few comments from a couple of the colleagues from across the way. First of all, the Member for Lake Laberge said some things about how this Sitting is short — well, yes, it's short. Of course, no one is yet acknowledging that we had another five days earlier where we talked about the budget. Sorry, the Member for Riverdale

North mentioned it — and after he mentioned it, I looked back through Hansard and I saw that, in fact, everybody in the Legislature spoke at second reading. So, that was great; there was an opportunity to hear from people and their thoughts around the budget the first time. I thank the Member for Kluane who mentioned that this budget is not that much different from the budget that was tabled previously. In fact, we can note that, rather than shooting for a \$12.5-million deficit, we are now heading toward a \$6.5-million deficit. So, that is great. It is still red ink, yes — but it is not that red. When I look across the country — my goodness, this is a close-to-balanced budget during a pandemic. It is quite something.

Everyone got to speak on the length of the Sitting, and somehow the Member for Lake Laberge mentioned how, normally, the spring sessions are longer. So, I looked it up. I thought, okay, let's take a look. So, I went and checked out — since 2000, I came forward — and I thought, well, let's not put in the post-election periods because those are always a little bit different. So, I took those out because otherwise they would make this even more pointed. So, I ran an average for Spring and Fall sessions, and here we go: The spring and fall sessions are 30 and a half days average, in this century, for the spring session and 29 days average for the fall session — so, it is not that different.

Then I thought, well, even — let's not count last year, because last year was a pandemic, and we had — remember, we were here in the Spring Sitting, and we all agreed, unanimously, to end the session, because we thought it was not safe, and then we came back and had a 45-day session, which is not the longest ever, but was pretty long, and everybody here will agree it was long.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I got that wrong. I'm just going to back up for a second. The numbers, counting last year, for spring sessions, are 29 and a half days and 30 days for fall. If I take out last year, then I end up with 30 and a half days for spring and 29 days for fall. It's not that different. So, I looked at election years. What happens in election years? I looked again, starting from this century, and I saw basically two different times. So, here we go: In 2002, after the fall election, there was no session — so zero days — but they came back in the spring and had a 35-day session. In 2006, after the fall election — that was the re-election of Premier Fentie — the Sitting was 12 days. Okay. In 2011, when Premier Pasloski was elected — which, by the way, included many of the members opposite, including the current Leader of the Official Opposition — we had a Sitting of nine days. Then, after the 2016 fall election, when we were elected — when the Liberals were elected — we had no Fall Sitting, and then in the spring, we had a 30-day session. Now we have tabled a motion for an 11-day Sitting to focus on the budget, and we also had a five-day session — so it's an 11-day session. Fair enough. So, we've had a nine-day session, a 12-day session, an 11-day session, and somehow that seems like an anomaly to members opposite.

That's what I looked back and saw — and I'll take a look to see if I've missed something — that's great. In those times, we have an opportunity to talk about the budget. What else have we seen here, right now? An interest to try to move the debate

forward. I think we have introduced one very short bill to make sure that the budget can be executed and then the two budget bills.

I think that is actually an opportunity to speak. When I look back, and I tabled this during the last session — in that long fall session — and often general debate took — one time, it took nine days; one time, it took 13 days — it has gone long. If we get through general debate and get to those departments that the members opposite have asked for, I am looking forward to that.

Another comment that came up was to talk about the red ink and the net financial debt. You know where that is created? That's created by investing in our infrastructure. We are investing heavily in our infrastructure. I think that it's a good news story for a few reasons. First of all, as I talk to communities, to First Nations, and to municipalities, they all said they had projects that they wanted us to invest in. I believe that we were in an infrastructure deficit, so I think it's good to make those investments. We're getting really good dollars from the federal government at this time to go, so that makes it strong. As well, right now, as you come out of a pandemic, it's really good news to make sure that this investment is happening. It just helps the economy to keep moving. We worked hard to keep that happening during the pandemic, for that matter. I think that's really important.

So, if we're talking about this and the members opposite are saying that they're concerned that we're investing, I would like them to tell me which projects they want to drop — because that's where you would change that net financial debt or asset. That's the difference. So, right now, I think what we're doing is — yes, we're creating some net financial debt, but we're doing it by reducing the infrastructure deficit that this territory has seen.

I'm not sure which project — I've heard discussions today about the Burwash school. Is that the one that we would drop? I heard about the road between Ross River and Faro and investments in that road. I heard the Minister of Highways and Public Works talk about the Teslin bridge. I heard the Member for Watson Lake talk about the Housing First project. I just want to know which ones the members opposite are not interested in, because I would like to talk about that and say, okay, let's remove those ones or have that discussion.

Now, I personally think that it is good to have this investment. I know that it is significant and I know that it creates net financial debt for the long term. But, really, I don't want to conflate that net financial debt or asset with our surplus or deficit. We worked very hard over the last term to turn the budget around. We had a Financial Advisory Panel come in. We had them come in here and act as witnesses so that everybody within the Legislature could ask questions, probe, prod, and think for themselves about what they would do if they were making decisions based on the advice that came from that panel.

We worked hard to get the budget back into a surplus, which we did, and then the pandemic hit. But what I will say to you is that, today, we are doing the second reading on a budget that has a \$6.6-million deficit, but it has built into it more than \$10-million in contingency around COVID-19.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: \$15 million — thank you — a \$15-million contingency around COVID-19. What I want to say is that between when we first drafted that budget and tabled it here in the Legislature a couple of months ago until now, we have just been getting better with COVID-19. The vaccine has been rolling out super well. We just got the terrific news about the Pfizer vaccine coming for our youth and that opportunity to protect our young folks. Especially as we watch the Northwest Territories right now, I think it is so crucial. I think those are really good news stories.

One thing that I just want to touch base on for a second is that one of the files I am going to have is working with the Department of Environment and on the issue of climate change, because one of my files is energy, and it's talking about how we get to that 45-percent target, and it's the climate change leadership council. I, too, am looking forward to it.

I also want to acknowledge that I spoke with the Chamber of Mines, and they made the same offer to me that they would like to be involved. A lot of people have been reaching out, whether it has been other governments, whether it has been other not-for-profits — individuals who are engaged. People are keen to try to help us get there as a territory. What I would like to say — because I heard offers from the Official Opposition saying that they would like to be engaged — is that I think here is an opportunity where they could be at the table. I would like to acknowledge that when I first met the Leader of the Official Opposition, he was the Minister of Environment. I was working up at the then-college, now university, doing some work on climate change. I gave a presentation to the college and he was there. I thought that his questions were really astute, very thoughtful, and I appreciated the work that he was doing at that time. I think that here's an opportunity. So, when the Leader of the Third Party stood up today and talked about this council, she talked about the opportunity that we have to try to find ways to bring ideas from across political spectrums and be able to share those ideas not just from political parties, of course, but from different walks of life, different communities, and different ways of thinking so that we can work together to try to achieve something more. I think that it is a real opportunity.

Just to sum up, Mr. Speaker, I think that this year's budget sets us on a path to recovery and is working to make life more affordable for Yukoners, and I think that we are leading the country in the fight against COVID-19. It's so important that we all work together for the benefit of the territory, and that's what we're committed to doing.

I'm looking forward to hearing from the other members of the opposition. Just one small comment: When the Leader of the Official Opposition said that he was the last to speak from the opposition, I think he meant from his party, because I still have a couple more whom I'm hoping to hear from, if they wish to rise.

I'm looking forward to that and looking forward to general debate and then really looking forward to getting into the departments when we can start getting into the meat of the budget.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: My good colleague from Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes is always such a tough act to follow. I'm going to be relatively brief here this afternoon as I respond to the budget.

This is an important budget for Yukoners. It marks the territory's first confident steps toward recovery from our pandemic. It marks our first as a minority Liberal government, supported through the confidence and supply agreements that we signed with the New Democratic caucus. Like my colleagues, I'm excited to be working with the Third Party.

The budget is important because it provides stability for Yukoners in uncertain times, and it was heartening to see our colleagues in the New Democratic caucus recognize how important it is in these times to work together for the benefit of all Yukoners.

This budget shows leadership and strong economic stewardship, as we have seen the deficit drop by \$6.1 million, a remarkable accomplishment coming from the pandemic, especially given that we have been providing nation-leading supports to our citizens and business community. This budget will continue to support Yukoners through COVID-19, mitigating the impacts on local employees, employers, and organizations.

We will spend more than \$11 million for programs to support Yukoners as we begin our recovery from this pandemic. It is important to note that our sick leave policy has recently been recognized in the national media as the best in the country, especially given the stumbles that we've seen in the provinces.

Here in the territory, citizens have rallied behind our Liberal government's people-first approach, and their sacrifices, thoughtfulness, and innovation in the face of this global disease have allowed us to live a life that is not quite normal but a far sight more free than life in most of the rest of the country. That's a hard-won benefit that Yukon citizens have achieved. It's something that they should take pride in and celebrate.

This budget's capital budget will build roads, bridges, improve airports, and drive innovation in the tech sector. This budget is investing in new schools. It supports universal childcare and early childhood education. It's good to hear the Leader of the Official Opposition's qualified support for this legacy program.

We will spend more than \$70 million for social supports and mental wellness and substance use programs. We are investing in renewable energy projects throughout the Yukon, and we have identified and will fund more hydro projects in the Yukon and northern BC to further improve our grid and make it a lot more environmentally sensitive. We are making our businesses more efficient and starting to tap our forests for biomass heat, even while we reduce the wildfire risk around our communities. I was recently out in Mary Lake discussing the wildfire plan, and I'm excited to dig into Community Services as we execute on our government's plans.

Our Liberal government is going to build housing lots. We're committed to getting about 1,000 new lots developed to

supply the demand that our strong economy and low unemployment rate is creating for new housing. We are also proceeding with a housing development at 5th Avenue and Rogers. We're going to contribute \$1.4 million for rent supplements, including the new Canada-Yukon housing benefit, which provides Yukon households with up to \$800 per month to help them afford to rent a home.

We secured \$40 million for the territory under the national co-investment fund. In Watson Lake, we're investing \$1.5 million for a new Housing First project in Watson Lake, following in the footsteps of Pauline Frost, who just did a magnificent job in the portfolio during the last mandate.

In Community Services, we're going to spend money on the Whitehorse southwest fuel-break project. We're going to replace some ambulances. We're going to improve medical communications equipment and make sure that the staff have all of the equipment they need to do their jobs.

Throughout the Yukon, we have public works and water treatment facility upgrades and fire halls and community wells to build. There is an awful lot of improvement going on in our infrastructure. The goal, of course, is to, by working together, make our society stronger, fairer, healthier, more efficient, and more resilient and improve the lives of all Yukoners.

Many of us this afternoon have talked about time being short and I think that it is probably important that we get on with the discussion of the budget in earnest. So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to sit down and hear from the rest of my colleagues in this House.

Ms. Blake: I am still learning the process that happens in the Legislature and it has been really interesting to hear the responses to the budget.

I would like to take this opportunity to just bring forward some of the concerns that I have heard in my community during campaigning. During door-knocking in my community, I have heard from citizens in regard to express needs and hopes that they have for the community. One of the priorities of my home community is to really look at the mental health supports of our people in the community.

Our community has a history with residential schools and the impacts continue to be evident in our community. We have a need for more specialized family supports in the community for our family members who are raising our children. There is a need for a home for our children — to keep our homes in the community when they are involved with systems.

There are concerns that have been raised by our people who provide support for water and sewage delivery and the need for training to be brought into the community for citizens. There have been concerns raised about supports and recreational services for youth in the community and the need to establish an outdoor recreational site that our children could have access to in the winter months and the need for education and training opportunities within the community — because, right now, when our people want to access training programs or further education, they have to leave the community and that is not possible for all people due to the challenges that exist outside the community.

I have listened to concerns from members regarding the care of our elders and the need to implement training in the community so that our people could take on roles to provide care in the community to our elders and to keep our elders in the community and the need for training regarding palliative care so that our people could be kept in the community for end of life, instead of having to leave the community.

Citizens have raised concerns about the need to have resources in place to allow us as a community to establish our own land-based programming in the community, because, right now, our people have to leave the community to access supports in the territory or outside and that's not always possible when we have families with children.

I think one of the biggest priorities right now is mental wellness, as we experience a lot of suicides in the community. It's an urgent need for our people to have mental health supports in place in the community that will help our people have hope and see beyond the struggle that they face.

Being in Old Crow — it's a unique community. We live in isolation where we don't have a lot of the support services that we see Outside. I believe in the opportunity to bring those resources to the community so that they're more accessible to our people.

Another concern was the need for access in the community to dental and optometry services. Those are some of the concerns that I just wanted to bring forward.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'll be very brief in my closing. It will be nice to get to a vote here today, so thank you very much, everybody, for their comments today from all the different MLAs. It is great to hear from everybody, especially as they recount the door-knocking in the writ period and all of the concerns that we've heard from Yukoners.

I will do some updates on the budget — some of the numbers — and then I'll sit.

The revised 2021-22 budget shows that government continues to invest in the health and well-being of Yukoners in response to COVID. The budget also demonstrates the government's commitment to making strategic investments in infrastructure. The 2021-22 revised main estimates forecast, as we've heard, a deficit of \$6.6 million, largely driven by our government's continued economic and public health response to support Yukoners through the pandemic.

The 2021-22 main estimates also forecast net debt of \$169.6 million. This is driven by our continued investment in key infrastructure and by recent spending in response to COVID-19 as well. The budget shows our government leveraging every dollar to deliver on the key commitments made throughout our mandate, investing in the territory's future, and supporting Yukoners in order to quickly rebound once the global pandemic ends.

Over the past four budgets, we have laid a strong financial and economic foundation, allowing us to mitigate some of the

effects of COVID-19 in our territory and also set ourselves up to continued economic and social success moving forward.

The change in the fiscal situation from the 2021-22 main estimates tabled in March of this year resulted from additional federal funding recently identified and additional Health and Social Services commitments for Yukoners.

The revised 2021-22 fiscal position is also related to an additional \$330,000 for the territorial election and pension plan expansion added to the revision of the 2020-21 Supplementary Estimates No. 2. Forecasted O&M expenditures total \$1.36 billion, with recoveries offsetting this amount by \$112.3 million.

The O&M spending includes \$25.2 million for early learning and childcare, including our investment in early childcare programs. There is \$18.3 million for initiatives to support the *Our Clean Future* strategy and \$4.3 million for initiatives in response to the *Putting People First* report on health and social services in the Yukon.

O&M spending is also driven by \$48.9 million for public health and economic response to COVID-19, also including \$15 million, as mentioned, set aside to account for changing circumstances amid the ongoing pandemic — a contingency fund that hopefully we will not have to spend, Mr. Speaker.

Capital expenditures represent a record \$434.3 million, with recoveries offsetting this amount by \$159.4 million. In this capital budget, we are increasing our investment in the areas of health, education, transportation, renewable energy, and green infrastructure. The government has increased capital expenditures to take advantage of federal recoveries in an effort to provide necessary infrastructure for Yukoners. This includes the Burwash Landing school, Whitehorse hospital secure medical unit, and electric vehicle charging stations as well.

Revenues, excluding the recoveries of expenditures, total \$13 billion. \$1.8 billion are transfers from Canada, which have increased by six percent over the 2020-21 main estimates. Territorial revenues related to taxes and other general revenues total approximately \$191 million.

Mr. Speaker, this is clear that we are on the right financial pathway forward. I want to thank everybody for their comments today. I hope to get support from all Members of the Legislative Assembly today. I think, from some of the remarks that we heard from the Yukon Party, that they will not be supporting this budget today, which is disappointing, especially given the hard work from the public service that has gone into preparing the budget and allocating the funds to Yukoners to make sure that their lives are better.

I do appreciate the support from the New Democratic Party, and I'm very encouraged by our collaboration in this House on important matters. It bodes well for the next few years here in Yukon.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: 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.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yeas, eight nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading of Bill No. 201 agreed to

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 8 — Appointments to Members' Services Board

Clerk: Motion No. 8, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It is moved by the Hon. Ms. McPhee, Government House Leader:

THAT the Hon. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 45(2), be appointed Chair of the Members' Services Board;

THAT the Hon. Nils Clarke, Currie Dixon, Brad Cathers, and Kate White be appointed to the Members' Services Board;

THAT the board have the power to call for persons, papers, and records and to sit during intersessional periods;

THAT the board consider:

(1) budget submissions for the following votes:

(a) Vote 1 — Yukon Legislative Assembly, including the Conflict of Interest Commission;

(b) Vote 23 — Office of the Ombudsman, including the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner;

(c) Vote 24 — Elections Office; and

(d) Vote 26 — Child and Youth Advocate Office; and

(2) policy questions concerning matters such as:

(a) space allocation;

(b) staffing;

(c) caucus funding;

(d) media gallery House rules; and

(e) Hansard;

THAT the board fulfill its statutory responsibilities, including those in the *Legislative Assembly Act*, the *Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, 2007*, the *Elections Act*, the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*, the

Ombudsman Act, the *Cabinet and Caucus Employees Act*, and the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the board.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am pleased to have presented this government motion with the cooperation of the other parties, the opposition parties here in the House. Both the Yukon Party and the Yukon NDP have provided names for the membership of the Members' Services Board and you have just enumerated all the very important responsibilities of that board. As a result, I ask that there be support in its entirety unanimously in this House for the membership of this important board and its functions.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, we appreciate this motion coming forward and do support it as worded.

Ms. Tredger: I am rising to support this motion as well. We think that this is an exciting opportunity to have a really collaborative structure on these committees. It is unusual. It is the first time in a long time that no single party has a majority on this committee and we look forward to the opportunities for collaboration that this will give us.

Motion No. 8 agreed to

Motion No. 9 — Appointments to Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges

Clerk: Motion No. 9, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the Hon. Richard Mostyn, the Hon. John Streicker, Patti McLeod, Brad Cathers, and Annie Blake be appointed to the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges established pursuant to Standing Order 45(1);

THAT the committee have the power to call for persons, papers, and records and to sit during intersessional periods;

THAT the committee review, as necessary, such standing orders as it may decide upon;

THAT the committee, following the conduct of any such review, report any recommendations for amendment to the Assembly; and

THAT the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be responsible for providing the necessary support services to the committee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government motion, brought forward by procedure to name those named here in the body of the motion to serve on the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, I urge us all to support so this important committee can do its work.

Mr. Cathers: Unfortunately, with this committee, we find ourselves in the situation where the Liberal government and their NDP coalition partners have chosen to depart from the

long-standing practice of discussing committee structure through an all-party process, which is typically at House Leaders' meetings, and instead, in the agreement that they announced in late April, they cut a side deal — or a backroom deal, if you prefer — on what the structure of those committees would be and completely excluded the Yukon Party, which was tied at eight seats with the Liberals for the most seats in the Assembly, and also, I have to remind the members, is the party that actually won the popular vote in the territorial election.

So, completely excluding us from the conversation about committee structure has left us with some concerns on the structure of the committees that the two other parties agreed to while cutting us out of that conversation. Unfortunately, due to their lack of willingness to discuss this in a collaborative way, we're left with our only opportunity being through proposing changes here in the Legislative Assembly.

We had a problem repeatedly during the last term, when the Liberal government had a majority on SCREP, whereby they simply decided not to call meetings to deal with some of the issues that we wanted to see addressed. So, we do have a concern with the proposal of having a government member have all the control of whether this committee actually meets and discusses issues. We think that we would be supportive of allowing the Third Party member that the Third Party has identified for sitting on this committee to be the convenor of that committee and providing, in the motion itself, the requirement that the chair of the committee be a private member instead of giving a minister control over calling this committee.

It would certainly be unusual. To the best of my knowledge — I think it is unprecedented, at least in recent history, to have a minister be the chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. It's typically a private member.

Therefore, I am pleased to propose an amendment today.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Cathers: I move:

THAT Motion No. 9 be amended by:

(1) deleting the phrase “Hon. Richard Mostyn, the Hon. John Streicker, Patti McLeod, Brad Cathers, and Annie Blake” and inserting in its place the phrase “Annie Blake, the Hon. Richard Mostyn, the Hon. John Streicker, Patti McLeod, and Brad Cathers”; and

(2) inserting the phrase “THAT the Chair of the committee be a private member,” before the phrase “THAT the committee have the power”.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT Motion No. 9 be amended by:

(1) deleting the phrase “Hon. Richard Mostyn, the Hon. John Streicker, Patti McLeod, Brad Cathers, and Annie Blake” and inserting in its place the phrase “Annie Blake, the Hon. Richard Mostyn, the Hon. John Streicker, Patti McLeod, and Brad Cathers”; and

(2) inserting the phrase “THAT the Chair of the committee be a private member,” before the phrase “THAT the committee have the power”.

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

Debate on Motion No. 9, and the amendment, accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.