



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2021 Fall 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	Government House Leader* 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 and Gender Equity 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

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

\*Government House Leader: Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee to November 4, 2021; Hon. John Streicker from November 5, 2021

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Wednesday, November 17, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Withdrawal of motions**

**Speaker:** The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper as the action requested has been taken: Motion No. 138, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I would like my colleagues in the Assembly to welcome the chair of the Yukon Lottery Commission, Mr. Frank Curlew, who is here with us today.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of Jessica Frotten and Stephanie Dixon**

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I rise today to pay tribute to two exceptional Yukoners: Jessica Frotten and Stephanie Dixon.

The Paralympics is the most celebrated competition for para athletes in the world. These games bring together para athletes from around the globe, giving them the opportunity to come together to celebrate sport, diversity, and achievement.

This year from August 24 to September 5, Canada wowed the world at the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games. I know that their success on the international stage owes a lot to the Yukon's own Stephanie Dixon. Stephanie was Team Canada's chef de mission, a vital leadership role for sport contingents during the major games. I don't think that it's a surprise to any of us that she was chosen for this important position. Stephanie is a true leader and has achieved so much over the years: five gold medals at the 2000 summer Paralympics; world records; induction into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame; and becoming a member of the Order of Canada. She is a true inspiration to so many, and I know that she played a vital role in leading Team Canada to a very successful games.

Jessica Frotten also inspired so many of us at the games. Jessica represented Canada in the para athletics, specifically in wheelchair racing in the T53 class, which includes people with different types of disabilities, including spinal cord injuries. Jessica is an athlete with an incredible record, including medals at the 2015 Parapan American Games and the 2018 Swiss

Grand Prix. The 2020 games marked Jessica's first time at the Paralympics and her performance made Yukoners so proud. She raced in four events — the 800-, the 1,500-, and the 400-metre individual events, plus the 4 x 100 metre universal relay. Under very tough conditions, she achieved a remarkable eighth-place finish in the 400-metre individual event. She also was a key member of Canada's 4 x 100 universal relay, working with her teammates to set a new Canadian record. Well done, Jessica.

In Tokyo, Frotten and Dixon showed the world what Yukoners are made of and what we can achieve. I am so proud to see these Yukoners represent our great territory and country on the international stage. I know that they will continue to achieve so much more in years to come. I understand that Stephanie is now in pursuit of her next great achievement, a master's degree in kinesiology at the University of Toronto. There she will be working in the field of safeguarding in sport, which looks at ways to deliver sports that are inclusive, safe, and accessible for anyone who wants to participate.

I understand that Jessica, after a busy season training with more major games just around the corner, is pondering her next move while continuing her work as a transition specialist in Saskatchewan.

Whatever the future holds, I am sure that Jessica and Stephanie will continue to inspire us with their determination and courage.

*Applause*

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Jessica Frotten and Stephanie Dixon, who represented the Yukon and Canada at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, which were held between August 24 and September 5 of this year.

First off, I would like to recognize and congratulate decorated Yukon wheelchair racer Jessica Frotten, who competed in her first Paralympic Games this year. We are so proud of Jessica's achievements over the years, and it is no surprise that her dedication to her sport has taken her as far as it has. Her strength, her determination, and her courage are an inspiration and the Yukon has been behind her 100 percent, following her long journey to the Olympics.

I would also like to offer our sincere congratulations to Stephanie Dixon, who accompanied Team Canada to Tokyo as chef de mission. Stephanie has had her share of experiences on the world stage of swimming and has medalled at three Paralympic Games between 2000 and 2008. She has been a strong presence in the parasport community around the world and has contributed greatly to the sport as a swim coach and mentor here in Whitehorse.

So, congratulations to both Jessica and Stephanie. Thank you for making Yukon proud.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the world-class achievement of two Yukoners. Jessica Frotten and Stephanie Dixon were both in Tokyo for the 2020 Paralympic Games — one competing, as we heard, in the para

athletics and the other as the chef de mission — both powerhouses in their fields and both proudly representing the Yukon. I could share a long list of the achievements of both of these women, but that still wouldn't do them justice because each is more than her athletic abilities. They are both advocates, cheerleaders, aunties, friends, coaches, and so much more.

I am incredibly lucky to have both of these people as friends, and I wish them continued success. These two are perfect examples — that you can take a kid out of the Yukon, but you can never take the Yukon out of the kid. The Yukon is so proud of your achievements and I am so proud of the people who they are.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter from the First Nation Chamber of Commerce in support of the proposed better building loan program.

I also have for tabling a letter from the Yukon Federation of Labour in support of the proposed better building loan program.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I have for tabling two legislative returns related to debate on November 4 on the Yukon Housing Corporation.

**Ms. White:** I have for tabling a letter from the Village of Teslin against the *Municipal Act* and the *Assessment and Taxation Act* changes.

I also have for tabling a letter from the Whitehorse Fire Fighters Association in support of adding wildland firefighters to presumptive cancer coverage.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I have for tabling the Yukon Lottery Commission annual report, and I again thank Mr. Curlew for his leadership on this file.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have for tabling a letter from the Public Service Commissioner to the Yukon Employees' Union and the Yukon Teachers' Association.

**Speaker:** Are there any reports of committees?  
Are there any petitions to be presented?

### PETITIONS

#### Petition No. 7

**Ms. White:** I have for presentation a petition that reads:  
To the Yukon Legislative Assembly:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT Mayo has experienced several substance use disorder-related deaths, with many being in this past year.

THAT a response developing both short-term and long-term resources with our community leaders and health services is needed.

THAT this response needs to be immediate and specifically address community healing, harm reduction, prevention, treatment, and enforcement.

THEREFORE the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Yukon Government to declare a state of emergency in Mayo in order to deploy an immediate response and develop (with the community leaders, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Justice, and any other applicable departments), trauma and culturally informed, resources in the community to address substance use.

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

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to recognize the growing number of families with school-aged children in Grizzly Valley north by adding a school bus stop at Ursa Way.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to formally share the contact information of independent investigator Amanda Rogers with past and current parents of students at Hidden Valley school.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reach out and offer assistance to the Government of British Columbia during their emergency situation.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase core funding for each women's organization funded by the women's equality fund to \$85,000 per year.

**Speaker:** Is there a statement by a minister?

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Yukon 511 services

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The safety of the traveling public is a top priority for our government. The Department of Highways and Public Works maintains close to 5,000 kilometres of Yukon roads, from Watson Lake all the way to Eagle Plains and the Northwest Territories border. But drivers could still run into anything from washouts to construction to snowy and icy conditions.

We know how important it is that Yukoners are aware of any road hazards on our highways before setting out on their journey. Our plan is, as always, to get Yukoners from point A to point B safely and efficiently. This is why I am excited to

stand in this Assembly and update Yukoners on the improvements that we have made to the Yukon 511 platform.

On October 25, a new version of Yukon 511 was launched featuring a brand new mobile app and an upgraded website. With our new mobile app, getting real-time road condition information in a safe, non-distracted way is now a reality. The app features GPS route planning, advanced monitoring of route conditions, and a hands-free drive mode that reads critical alerts to drivers. The new 511 website also offers a more user-friendly experience, including a Google Maps integrated interface and the ability to create a personal user profile.

With this new modern system, users are also able to view roadside cameras to see first-hand what the road conditions are like in many areas of the Yukon before heading to their destination.

Just a few short weeks ago, the roadside cameras caught evidence of an amazing aurora show. Yukoners will have seen that in social media.

With these exciting and important upgrades, it is our hope that checking Yukon 511 becomes top of mind before Yukoners head out on their journey. What is promising is that, since the launch of the new Yukon 511, we have already seen a lot of interest in the new platform.

I am immensely proud of the progress that has been made to improving road safety in the Yukon, as these upgrades have the potential to save lives and prevent accidents and inconveniences.

I could spend a lot more time going over the new and exciting features of Yukon 511, but I think the best way to experience it is first-hand.

I urge all Yukoners to download the Yukon 511 mobile app for free from iTunes or the Google Play store.

**Mr. Hassard:** Road and highway safety is top of mind for Yukoners at all times of the year, but road information is especially important during the winter months. It can be a matter of life and death for rural Yukoners who travel our roadways, and we certainly appreciate the efforts of those in the Department of Highways and Public Works to get this new 511 website up and running.

We have a number of questions about the state of our highways, though. Can the minister update us on how maintenance of our highways will be affected by the vaccine mandate coming into effect at the end of this month?

The minister has mentioned that perhaps up to 10 percent of employees could be impacted, so that could mean between one and two individuals per highway maintenance camp. What plan does the government have to ensure that our highways are safe and clear of snow if a number of employees are placed on leave without pay starting next month?

As pointed out in this House on many occasions, we have brought up concerns from our constituents about the lack of brushing on some of Yukon's most travelled routes. The former Minister of Highways and Public Works announced the roadway maintenance improvement program in April 2019. That is over two years ago, and the minister said at the time — and I quote: “Within six years, we will have the entire network

done.” The department officials at the time even confirmed that contracts would be out shortly, but here we are, late in 2021, and this Liberal government is behind on this important project, because our office keeps getting complaints about the lack of brushing along major highway routes and roads in the Yukon.

The minister sent correspondence indicating that brushing contracts would be tendered in the fall and awarded in November. So, can the minister update this House on what contracts have been awarded?

I also want to point out that the 511 website is frequently advertised on the former minister's monstrous road signs that overhang Whitehorse area highways, and I won't even get into how these \$1.9-million eyesores are ridiculed by Yukoners as a waste of money. But, when we are trying to discourage distracted driving, telling people who are currently driving to visit a website is rather comical. So, will the minister instruct his department to put up actual road and weather information instead of a link to a website asking Yukoners to use their cellphone while driving?

Likewise, the budget for highway maintenance hasn't increased in years. So, can the minister indicate when the last review of the highway maintenance budget took place and if there are any plans to do so? I look forward to hearing the answers to these questions.

**Ms. Tredger:** So, this morning, I checked out the new 511 website and app, and I have to say that they are utterly delightful. I am maybe behind the times to just be discovering it today, but I am so happy that I know about it now. You can look at traffic cameras from Swift River all the way to the Dempster Highway. In case you are wondering, it looks like there is a blizzard going on there. It even tells you the temperature in these locations. You can see road conditions across the Yukon. You can see where and when construction is taking place. The app even gives you updates while you are driving.

Yukoners, if you have a few minutes today and want a relaxing, enjoyable activity, take a few minutes to check out [511yukon.ca](http://511yukon.ca). It is not disappointing, and if you are set to travel, I hope that this resource will be useful to you. Thank you so much to the people at Highways and Public Works for all your work to make this project a success. I encourage the government to communicate about this useful tool to Yukoners in as many ways as possible.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the divergent responses from the members opposite.

These are promising updates, and we hope that we will see even more people in the territory using the 511 services that will help them get to where they are going safely.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to highlight some other additions to the 511 services that came with this upgrade. The new system seamlessly connects the new digital highway signs, mentioned with much approbation by the member opposite, that are located across the territory, allowing critical road condition information to be posted visibly to the public as soon as it happens.

Plus, roadside crews can now update the 511 system from right where they are working, meaning that alerts can be posted much faster. On the website and mobile app, there is information on ferry and border crossings, as well as weight restrictions for highways.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to make online services easier to access for Yukoners, and Yukon 511 is a great example of this. The easier it is to use and understand a new technology, the more likely it is for the technology to be adopted and widely used. This new 511 platform is just a jumping-off point and has the flexibility and potential to relay even more sources of information for incident reporting in the future. We will continue to look at ways that we can improve Yukon 511 and provide Yukoners with additional tools that they can use to travel safely in our territory.

Again, as I indicated, I urge all Yukoners to go to the Apple App Store or Google Play store to download the 511 Yukon app today. As winter is upon us and road conditions are subject to worsening over the following months, I want to remind Yukoners to follow speed limits, drive safely, and check road conditions before leaving. It is only through vigilance as drivers that we can ensure that we keep ourselves and those around us safe, even in the worst of conditions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly look forward to continuing my fruitful conversation with the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin in future Committee of the Whole discussions.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Education and the Deputy Premier held a meeting with parents at Hidden Valley Elementary School to discuss why the Liberal government did not notify parents about sexual abuse at the school. The problem is that the minister and Deputy Premier left many parents feeling worse than before the meeting started. According to CBC, one parent said that the meeting was "... set up to be very controlling of the information ... I think that set the tone of the meeting and then it went downhill from there."

Several other parents spoke to CBC about the insulting and defensive nature of the Deputy Premier's approach to parents and the fact that she still did not share with them basic information about why she did not ensure that parents were informed of these horrendous things that took place at the school when she learned about them.

Why does the Deputy Premier continue to insult parents by refusing to explain her lack of action?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Despite the insults that I think that I just heard from the member opposite — as I started out at the beginning of this legislative Sitting speaking to this very matter around such a sensitive topic of child sexual abuse that happened in our schools, I am going to continue talking with respect and with dignity toward the victims here.

There is nothing more important, Mr. Speaker, than the well-being, safety, and protection of students when they are in

our care in our schools. I have made significant commitments to the parents of Hidden Valley and to Yukoners overall to ensure that we find the answers to the questions that Yukoners have, particularly the families. We conducted, under very difficult circumstances, a planned parent meeting last week where we had to move to a virtual format. It was started out in a webinar Zoom format. We knew, at the onset, that this was not going to work, so we pivoted and changed the format to accommodate families, and I will continue building on this.

**Mr. Cathers:** Contrary to the minister's assertion, she is not showing respect for parents or victims, and the Deputy Premier certainly is not. In fact, they are insulting them.

According to the CBC, another parent added that the Deputy Premier's defensive approach only solidified their belief that she should resign. Another parent criticized the Liberals' approach to try to sweep this under the rug with reviews that ignore and do not investigate the Deputy Premier's actions.

To quote the parent from a CBC article: "Again, [they told us] 'Wait for the review, wait for the review.' I think that they're just kicking the can down the road — it's a tactic..."

The parent went on to say: "Why can't they tell parents, straight, what's going on? Why can't they just give the answer there and then? Why isn't it in the public's interest and the parents' interest to know what went on...?"

Since the Deputy Premier refused to provide answers to parents last week, can she answer this parent's direct question here in the Assembly today?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will continue to build on my answer around the meetings that have happened with families and the ongoing reviews or investigations. Mr. Speaker, there are four reviews, or investigations, ongoing into how the matter was handled, and we are going to get answers that families have asked for and what we all need in order to move forward in a good way.

The Yukon RCMP, last week, talked about the review that they are doing into their investigation, which is being conducted by the Major Crimes Unit from British Columbia.

The Yukon RCMP chief commanding officer shared some preliminary findings with the Department of Education on November 8, as well as parents on November 9 at the Hidden Valley parent meeting.

We are taking the time to respond to those questions, so there is a lot that we have taken action on. We have launched our own independent review of everything that has happened at Hidden Valley, including the new information around 2015-16, so there is more to come on that.

**Mr. Cathers:** This Liberal government continues to disrespect parents by refusing to answer questions and by reading their talking points that don't answer the question. The Deputy Premier needs to be accountable for her own role in this matter. The Minister of Education promised to provide parents with the minutes from the September 22 meeting with parents as well as the video recording of the November 9 meeting with parents that took place. As well, the government had committed to provide written answers to questions in that meeting.

Can the minister confirm if this information has been provided to parents now? If not, why is the government continuing to stonewall and prevent the release of information to parents and break their own commitments to them to provide them with this information?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will continue to talk about the actions that our government is taking. This is a very serious matter — one that I take seriously — and I continue to direct my comments to Yukoners and to family members, particularly the children who were impacted and continue to be impacted. I want to remind folks as well that there are ongoing matters before the courts now — very sensitive matters that are being looked at in various levels of court proceedings.

I have launched an independent review of the Government of Yukon's response to the situation in Hidden Valley Elementary School. This independent review will look into our internal and interdepartmental processes, and all of the questions that have been posed and that were posed at the meeting held with parents will be answered in these reviews. There are four reviews happening, and I want to address a motion that was put forward today by the Third Party around the contact information for Amanda Rogers. This information has been shared with current students and former students of Hidden Valley.

#### **Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school**

**Mr. Hassard:** So, the Minister of Education has been consistently called out by stakeholders this fall for sharing inaccurate information with Yukoners. Whether this is deliberate or just a case of the minister not being aware of what her department is doing, we will leave her to explain.

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

#### **Point of order**

**Speaker:** The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that, under Standing Order 19(h), it states that we should not stand in the Legislature and charge another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** My colleague just presented two possible options. He did not contravene Standing Order 19(h), as asserted by the Government House Leader.

#### **Speaker's ruling**

**Speaker:** I did not hear the member use the words as described, and I will review Hansard and get back to this House if required. Please continue, Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

**Mr. Hassard:** As I was saying, last month, when the minister made a clear statement that there were additional supports available at Hidden Valley school, as well as health and wellness resources, the Yukon Teachers' Association had to write the minister and tell her that she was wrong again.

So, after being publicly called out for providing inaccurate information, can the minister tell us if all of the promised supports are now in place at the Hidden Valley school?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Despite the insults and some of the accusations that I think I heard in the preamble to this question, I will again direct my attention to Yukoners and to families impacted by a very serious situation that happened in one of our schools.

Again, we are focused on the needed steps to rebuild trust and provide the best targeted supports to our school community.

There are four reviews ongoing. The RCMP are doing further investigation into their part in all of the matters that have happened at Hidden Valley. I want to thank — the dedicated and sincere work — of the Hidden Valley Elementary School administration and staff, who are going above and beyond their usual responsibilities to ensure that children feel well supported and safe. I attended the school and met with the administration and talked to them specifically about the questions that have been coming to me as minister in this House and from parents. I will continue to build on this answer as we move forward.

**Mr. Hassard:** I would like to remind the minister that this is about supports for Hidden Valley Elementary School, not about reviews.

Last month, the minister raised pretty serious expectations of additional supports for Hidden Valley school, but then, unfortunately for the minister, the YTA had to write her to correct the record. I will quote from that letter, Mr. Speaker: "It is my view that trying to make good on this promise, during a serious staffing shortage, will make the professional lives of schools Administrators and Educators untenable. The expectations of the public have been raised, but we see no plan to properly resource the solutions to meet those expectations."

Has the minister now ensured that the proper resources are in place to provide these additional supports to Hidden Valley school?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will continue on about my visit to the school. I was very pleased to visit the school and see first-hand how the staff and students are doing. It was great to see the students engaged in what they are to be doing — learning with caring educators. That is what I witnessed at the school.

To support the well-being of staff and students is a significant part of a crisis response when a serious incident has occurred at a school — is to work toward a sense of normalcy. Again, that is what I witnessed in the school. Staff at Hidden Valley school are working hard to provide students with engaging learning opportunities while still being vigilant and monitoring students who may require support and to connect them with appropriate supports.

There are many ways to ensure the safety of children, and one of them is through education. The most effective way to ensure student safety is to educate children about consent, right and wrong touch, boundaries, and who to tell when they are feeling unsafe. These are all things that are happening at Hidden Valley and at all of our schools.

I will continue to build on this answer.

**Mr. Hassard:** It's unfortunate that the minister won't actually talk about the question that is being asked, which is about resources for the school. Now, on one hand, we have the Minister of Education, who has found it difficult to share accurate information throughout the fall and has even admitted that she was unaware of what was happening in her own department for months. On the other hand, you have the Yukon Teachers' Association, which is very familiar with the realities on the ground for our teachers. In the letter to the minister, they highlighted that the territory's current staffing shortage will make it very difficult to ensure that the students, families, and staff at Hidden Valley school are provided the necessary supports.

Can the minister tell us if she has prioritized Hidden Valley Elementary School for teachers on call and other special educational supports?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, despite the insults that were part of that — what I heard as part of the preamble to that question — I will continue to speak to Yukoners and families. I know that the Yukon Party is working hard to spin a narrative here to Yukoners about our education system, and I want to assure that the school administration and our central facility staff are committed to working with the school community on improving safety and openness in a school setting — and also to ensure that they have the resources that they need.

I heard directly from the administration, on the day that I visited the school, about some of the pressures that they're feeling. Our assistant deputy minister, Ryan Sikkes, was at that meeting with me and has been working with the school since the beginning of the school year, and he continues to do just that.

One of the other questions that I know was part of the questions about Hidden Valley and some of the changes — and I would direct this to my colleagues in the Third Party around the installation of windows and other changes that were expected to be made, and they are done. They are complete.

#### **Question re: Faro community support services**

**Ms. White:** Earlier this week, the Minister of Health and Social Services was asked about the lack of mental health support in the community of Faro. Instead of sharing how residents of Faro can get help, she said — and I quote: "I urge members of this Legislative Assembly to provide accurate information to Yukoners..."

Mr. Speaker, the information was accurate. This morning on CBC, a Faro resident said that she sent that very same e-mail last week to the minister — the e-mail that was quoted. So, I am going to quote from that e-mail again, directly: "Faro has inadequate mental health and substance use services. The HUB worker is based in Carmacks and is required to cover the four communities of Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Faro, and Ross River. There is no way one person can provide enough support to four communities."

On top of this, the social worker who worked in Faro was recalled to Whitehorse. When will the minister start taking the mental health crisis in Faro seriously and provide adequate support to that community?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I thank the member opposite for the question. Our thoughts are with the people of Faro and especially the families of the victims. We are committed to providing the supports to the people of Faro that they need. I have now had an opportunity to review the e-mail that was sent on November 9. I think that it was the same day that the questions were asked. I have also reviewed an e-mail, or a letter, sent to the Premier on similar topics.

To review the background, we coordinated an inter-agency response to provide comprehensive supports to the people of Faro. Family and Children's Services have been working with the Department of Education staff to provide crisis response supports to students and families at Del Van Gorder School. Victim Services and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services are providing counselling and immediate assistance to the community.

But let's be clear: If those services are not sufficient at this time, we will redeploy those. I look forward to answering further questions.

**Ms. White:** It goes along the line that thoughts and prayers just aren't enough when we are looking for fundamental changes.

It is not just in Faro that mental health is at a crisis point. Mayo has lost many community members to tragic and preventable deaths. Today, we tabled a petition from Mayo residents. They are asking for resources to support community healing, harm reduction, prevention, treatment, and enforcement, and they are urging the government to declare a state of emergency in Mayo and to deploy an immediate response to the substance abuse and mental health crisis in their community. This is urgently needed.

Does the minister understand the urgency of the situation in Mayo, and what is being done to support this community right now?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you again for the question. The petition that was tabled today with respect to the issues in Mayo is something that has come previously to my attention. As a result of seeing that document and the information sent forward to the government, I have spoken to the Mayor of Mayo about this particular situation. I have spoken to the chief. I have spoken to community activists who have brought forward this petition already. I have made our commitment to support the town of Mayo and frankly, Mr. Speaker, all of the communities of the Yukon that are hurting now as a result of the opioid crisis as a result of this tragedy in Faro and as a result of the COVID-19 concerns for everyone's issues and mental health.

Absolutely I recognize the issues in Mayo. Absolutely it is a conversation that sparked a detailed and extensive conversation at the recent Yukon Forum. This is something that we are working on with community chiefs, community First Nations, governments, and community governments because it is something that we are all responsible for here in the territory, and solutions must be found to meet community needs.

**Ms. White:** Substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health crises, suicide, and a housing crisis — these are all realities from Old Crow to Watson Lake and Beaver Creek to



Ross River and every community in between. Yet positions at health centres remain unfilled, schools don't have teachers or full-time counsellors, and youth programs are often lacking. The government's solution has been to have communities, which are hundreds of kilometres away from each other, share the same mental health worker. Even worse, the minister said that any individual who is seeking support can call Victim Services, and then she gave us a phone number. Mr. Speaker, our communities are suffering now and a phone number isn't enough.

What concrete steps is the minister taking to immediately address the mental health and substance use crises that are plaguing all of Yukon's communities?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the question because it is what I have just been addressing — the crises in communities across the territory and the requirement of services. Our government can, and will, do better. We have set up community hubs, and certainly, while they are not responsive to every community's needs, they are progress. They are one step in the direction of better services for Yukon communities.

We have gone from two mental health workers for the entirety of rural Yukon to the five community hubs, including Whitehorse and including 21 community mental health workers. Is that enough, Mr. Speaker? No, it's not enough. We do need to address these issues in communities. We need to work with communities. We need to work with First Nation governments, with community governments, to determine what each and every community needs, and those needs are specific to that community. There is not a band-aid. There is not one solution that fits all.

We are committed to doing this work. We will absolutely work with communities going forward, and that's what we have committed to doing, not only here, but in individual conversations at the Yukon Forum. The necessity of addressing these very serious issues that have been brought forward by the member opposite is a priority for us going forward.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 vaccine and safety measures**

**Ms. Clarke:** I have a question about the government's proof of vaccination system. In a press release last week, the government announced that designated settings that require proof of vaccination include a range of businesses, but one that stood out to us was hair salons and barbershops. We noted that these types of businesses were not included in the proof of vaccination requirement systems in BC and other jurisdictions in western Canada.

Can the government explain why they are taking a different approach than British Columbia when it comes to hair salons?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First, I want to thank the Yukon chamber and the Whitehorse chamber for spending some time with us last night. Directly after we finished here in the Assembly, I had the opportunity to reach out to businesses that were most affected, really focused in on the hospitality industry — where there have been some major impacts — and folks who are also hosting events. That goes right down to caterers and to

the folks who are doing sound for the events and personal services.

We have taken our recommendations from the chief medical officer of health. This is something where, within this period of 21 days, we feel that a circuit breaker is required, and through those directions that have come through the Department of Health and Social Services — as well as other departments — it was identified that personal services —

The commitment that I made to the individuals who were on our call last night was that we would work through the Department of Economic Development and the chambers to see, first of all, if there are tools that we can give them, because it has been challenging. What we have heard is that individuals whom they have been asking for ID have not — it hasn't been the most pleasant of experiences, and their staff needs the support. That's the first thing. We have to be able to support them through the chambers. Secondly, in some cases, there has been — I'll leave it until the next question.

#### **Question re: Rural fire protection services**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Whether it was a tragedy in Keno late last year or the recent fire that struck a constituent of mine in Destruction Bay, there has been growing concern about the state of rural fire protection. Earlier this year, the former Minister of Community Services launched a review of fire services to study the current state of rural fire services in the Yukon.

The tender document for the RFP indicated that the final report and recommendations would be provided to the Yukon government on September 1, but on Monday, the minister said that the Outside contractor had still not completed the report. Can the minister tell us why this report has been delayed so significantly and when we can expect to see it?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can say that the delivery of fire services in Yukon's unincorporated communities is challenging, given our remote and small population base. It is a challenge to recruit and retain volunteers and to maintain the necessary levels of training and certification to ensure the health and safety of our volunteers. That has certainly been the experience of our government over the last several years, and I know it has been a long-standing problem within the territory.

The independent review is in the final stages of review — examining the current model. It will examine the current model for the provision of rural fire services across the territory, and I look forward to the improvement-focused recommendations that will come from this review. I spoke to the community of Keno, and I was up in Destruction Bay. I have been to other communities — Pelly — and they were very excited and have engaged, through the review process, and are looking forward to the recommendations. I am more than happy to share that document publicly as soon as its recommendations have been presented formally and are ready to go out.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Can the minister confirm that this review will involve all Yukon communities? That would definitely include meetings with residents of Destruction Bay and the north Alaska Highway.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The expert contractor whom we have hired — who is very well regarded and has had conversations throughout the territory already — has drawn upon the expertise of territorial fire chiefs, fire service members, community members, and community leaders, and we thank everyone who took the time to participate.

He was up here in September and October. I know that he had a gruelling schedule. You have heard the range of people he saw in that very short period of time. He has turned his report around extremely quickly. I expect to be able to present to the Yukon public in a very short period of time.

Firefighting is a dangerous profession. Occupational health and safety requirements are set out by the act and regulations, and it is simply not lawful to place individuals in a fire situation with equipment that they are not trained or certified to operate. This creates real challenges in places like Keno or in Destruction Bay where we have no volunteers currently, so we have to make sure that the people who are in the region know how to operate the gear that we provide.

Through this review, we are going to find alternatives so that people in the territory can actually fight fires, perhaps with lesser training. I will continue later.

#### **Question re: School zone safety**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** On June 2 of this year, the Yukon government, City of Whitehorse, and Government of Canada announced \$820,000 of infrastructure funding for several safety improvements in school zones throughout Whitehorse. I would like to ask for updates on several of the projects that were announced.

First of all, the news release said that changes were coming to the Holy Family Elementary School drop-off area. The release said that the mini roundabout at Wann Road and Basswood Street would be built to calm traffic and encourage student drop-off on the north side.

Can the minister tell us the status of that project?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** If I can't provide the information with respect to some of the specific inquiries today, I will certainly get back to the member opposite. Of the three projects that I am aware of, my most recent briefing on the Holy Family project was that those improvements to the parking, entrance, and exit areas are complete. I will certainly provide additional detail if there are some deficiencies or if additional work is required.

I also received fantastic reports from Christ the King Elementary School in Riverdale, which now has improved parking and access for teachers and drop-off and pick-up improvements for parents and students. I certainly heard about that at Christ the King Elementary over the course of three or four years. That project is finished now, with good reports back. I will certainly meet with Christ the King Elementary School Council in the near future to get an update.

The other one that I am aware of is Golden Horn school where there were also significant improvements to the entrance, exit, and the parking areas there.

If I missed one, I will certainly get back to the member opposite.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Another project that was committed to this summer was the crosswalk at Takhini school, which included enhanced zebra marks on the pavement of Range Road, as well as curb extensions at the crosswalk to calm traffic, reduce crossing distance, and improve sightlines. I know that Range Road is becoming more and more busy with development going on in that area.

What is the status of that project, and when should we expect to see the work begin?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite.

Of course, the problem with Range Road is that it is a bit of a thoroughfare. I know that we have provided, whether through my department, the City of Whitehorse, or the RCMP — there have been initiatives there to provide indicators as to the speed at which Whitehorse or Yukon motorists are travelling along Range Road. So, it certainly is an area of concern. The safety of our students and of all Whitehorse and Yukon residents is paramount.

With respect to the specific question on the Takhini crosswalk improvements and work that was contracted for the curbside improvements, I will return to the member opposite with an update on that project.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I would also like to ask about the project at Elijah Smith school. The news release said that the enhanced zebra markings would be painted on the pavement at the east-west pedestrian crossing at the Hamilton Boulevard and McIntyre Drive roundabout, in front of Elijah Smith school.

Can the minister please provide more information about the status of that project? Has the work been started or is it underway, and when can we expect it to be complete?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I will certainly return to the member opposite with an update on that. I have an inkling that this might be a City of Whitehorse project, but if it is not, I will certainly return to the member opposite with an update.

Briefly, with respect to Elijah Smith school, the Yukon government is excited to be moving forward with key actions for renewable energy at that school, including the installation of a new biomass heating system. At the Elijah Smith Elementary School, the biomass system will offset the building's propane use, reducing emissions by an estimated 130 tonnes each year.

There is exciting work being done at Elijah Smith school. If the improvements that the Member for Porter Creek North is asking about — with respect to the Hamilton Boulevard roundabout area in front of Elijah Smith — are a Highways and Public Works project, I will report back to the member and to the House. As I said, I believe that it might be a City of Whitehorse project, but thank you.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

#### Motion No. 217

**Clerk:** Motion No. 217, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

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

THAT this House supports the recommendations made by the acting chief medical officer of health that include vaccine mandates and proof of vaccination to access non-essential services.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm going to begin today by talking about Dr. Catherine Elliott. I met Dr. Elliott last year in early March. At that time, I had the role of being responsible for the Arctic Winter Games. I was the Minister of Community Services, and Dr. Elliott came to speak to me and to the Minister of Health and Social Services at that time, and she let us know that she was recommending that we cancel the Arctic Winter Games.

I want to give a bit of an explanation about what happened over the next few days and also try to take us back to the context of that decision because I think that it's relevant for the motion that we have in front of us right now.

At that time when Dr. Elliott came to speak to me, I have to say that I was quite skeptical. I thought to myself: No, this can't be right; we can't be cancelling the games because of the risk of COVID. Then when she presented to us, she said that she didn't actually believe that COVID would necessarily hit.

The challenge, as she described it to us, was that, if there was an athlete who had a cough, we would have to — because of COVID in Canada and the world — isolate that whole team and any trainers or chaperones who were with that team. We would have to isolate the whole team. Each one of those team members would need separate washrooms. Then, if a second team got a cough, you would have to isolate that team.

One of the things that we were talking about is pertussis — I more commonly refer to it as whooping cough — but even a flu. Say there was an athlete who had a cough. I think that is probably at every games that I can think of. The challenge was that it would become overwhelming but, through an abundance of precaution and safety, we would have to do this isolation.

From there, we alerted the city. We alerted the Arctic Winter Games president. Very quickly, there was a decision taken on behalf of the hosts. It wasn't an order from the acting chief medical officer of health; it was from the games organizers to say that we were cancelling the games. We went out and talked to the public about that. It was a press conference here. I think it was on March 7 when we cancelled the games. The outcry from the athletes, the teams, the parents, the families, and everybody was pretty strong that it was the wrong decision. That we were being overly cautious is what I heard.

I think that we announced that on the Saturday and, on the Sunday, I asked Dr. Elliott to please come and talk to the organizers of the games — to the board, to the society, and to the people who were part of the organization of the event. I was

impressed. I wondered how she was going to explain this. She's a very matter-of-fact person, and she shared that it wasn't what she wanted. She shared that this isn't where she hoped that things would go, but rather that it was the necessary thing in order to protect the safety of the public.

Just today in this Legislature, I heard us talk about safety around school crossings, around 511, around Hidden Valley school, around Faro, and around Mayo.

I have heard us talk about it in a variety of contexts, and it is amazing to me how much we need to focus on the issue of safety — how important it is for all leaders and all governments to make sure that people are safe. I was impressed with Dr. Elliott's ability to talk to the public. In this case, it was the Arctic Winter Games folks, but she explained in a very matter-of-fact way what was going on and why this was the case. Thankfully, we all got behind that decision.

A lot of people thought it was the wrong decision for about one week. Then one week later, we saw all the national sports leagues cancelling, and other big sporting events cancelling, and COVID started to move through. By the time we got to when the games would have been held, there were people writing to us saying that they had bought tickets and were going to come, but they now had COVID. They would have been here. It was before they had been identified as having COVID, but then they would have been travelling with COVID. It would have been — well, we talk about these super-spreader types of events. Who knows whether it would or would not have been, but I think, in that moment, everyone thought that it was the right choice. I heard a lot of people get on board and say, "Of course."

That is the challenge. The challenge is that you have to make the decision in the moment with the information that you have in front of you without the ability to go forward in time and look backward and see whether or not it was the right decision. But you have to take it, because there is just a moment of time in which to take those decisions. We are there again, right now, in these last several weeks. That is why I have put this motion in front of us. It is to ask us, as leaders in this Legislature — I know that the government has the responsibility to take this decision, but I also understand, from all the conversations that I've had in this Legislature, that it is good to hear from all leaders to see where they stand on this type of issue.

What is in front of us is a choice — a very, very hard choice, and I'm going to talk about it a little bit — which is: Do we choose on the side of safety to protect public health, or do we protect the rights of individuals to make their own personal health choices? That is a hard decision. I defy anyone to take this role and to think that these are easy decisions. They are super hard decisions, and I'm going to talk about the challenges that these decisions mean for individuals and how tough it is for them. I am going to try to acknowledge that it is not easy to take the decision and that there are heartfelt thoughts on all sides of this debate and that ultimately where we have landed is to try to protect public health, because that is the advice we got.

Again, it turns out that it is from Dr. Catherine Elliott. It was she who came to us and said, hey, the problem right now is that we are in a wave of the Delta variant. We have seen it hit in Alaska; we have seen it hit in NWT — or, seeing it hit — and seeing it hit in British Columbia. That is on all three sides of us. She expressed her concern to us that the signs were that it was starting to build, and so, she gave us a recommendation to say that we should bring in place both a requirement for vaccines for the public service and to require, for Yukoners to take part in non-essential activities, that they show proof of vaccination — two very big steps.

What we chose to do — we got together very quickly, as a government, and we said, okay, do we support these recommendations? We said yes, and we asked Dr. Elliott to stand up in front of the public the next morning to say this and to explain that we were going to get there, but that we still had to work through a few issues, or many issues, because there is a lot of detail there to sort through, but we alerted the public to where we wanted to head, where we had decided to head, and we said, okay, over the next little while, we are going to work to make this happen, and there are some things to sort through.

Now, I want to say that, when we made that choice, that decision, that we were going to support the recommendations that came from Dr. Elliott, and that we also, of course, supported her telling the public what those recommendations were directly, we did not know, at that moment, that we were about to get hit with a wave. We understood that cases were creeping up, but we didn't understand that it was basically there, because what Dr. Elliott has said to me over the past year and a half is that, when you see the cases in the public, often they have been spreading in the week, or weeks, before.

So, it turns out that, as we were taking that decision, we were starting to head toward our first instance of community spread here in the territory, but we took the decision, because we were advised that the public health was at risk.

When I say “the public health”, what I am talking about is not just people having COVID. I am talking about our health care system and its ability to withstand the cases that are coming. The ICU beds, the emergency department, the hospital, our nursing stations across the territory — all of it together, including our mental wellness hubs. All of that health care system, we were told, could be threatened if a lot of cases rose suddenly, and what we needed to do was to try to stop that, and these were the two recommendations.

We talked right away with the unions to let them know, and we heard back from the Yukon Employees' Union. They said to us, within that first week, “Look, we support the vaccine mandate” — for which I want to say thank you to them and to the Yukon Teachers' Association. Both of them have stated throughout that they support the vaccine mandate, but they asked whether we could have testing as an alternative for vaccinations — testing and personal protective equipment instead of vaccinations for those people who did not wish to get vaccinated.

So, what we did is that we turned back, because that's a medical question. I'm not a medical professional — and certainly not in this role should I be making any medical

judgments. I want to hear from the experts, and our experts are the chief medical officer of health.

I want to explain to Yukoners, just for a moment, that it's not a single person — of course, Dr. Elliott is the face of that, and today it was Dr. Corriveau, whom I have not had the opportunity to meet, but I'm sure I will. There is an office with several physicians who are part of it and several support staff, and they work together. I also know that this chief medical officer of health office works in connection with the other chief medical officer of health offices across the provinces and territories and also works with the Canadian office and the Public Health Agency of Canada. There is a network of expertise which we draw from, and we are given this advice.

Today, I tabled a letter to the unions from yesterday. When we first met with the Yukon Employees' Union, they said: “How about we use testing and personal protective equipment instead of vaccinations for those people who are concerned about getting vaccinated?”

We turned to get that medical advice from Dr. Elliott and her office, and she let us know. I tabled part of that letter. She wrote to us a couple of weeks ago. I am going to quote from that today just a bit. I will quote from two sections. “Testing is insufficient to support the policy goals. It will not increase vaccine rates. On the contrary, it is likely to decrease vaccine rates. It has limited ability to protect those at risk from transmission. It shifts the burden from the individual to the public health system.”

Now I am quoting from just a little further down in the document that I tabled today: “... vaccination is the better option from a public health perspective. Vaccination reduces the risk of contracting and spreading the virus. Vaccination reduces the number of clusters, outbreaks and overall case counts; it also reduces the severity of disease overall; this in turn reduces the burden on both the public and acute care health systems. This allows the health system to provide care for patients whose care has been deferred or affected by the pandemic.”

That was the advice we got. The advice was very clear. Later on, in just one more very short quote: “The a/CMOH does NOT recommend testing as substitute for vaccination.”

We, of course, alerted the unions that we had gotten that advice and now we have shared across the written version of it, and here we are.

We state that we are following the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health. Sometimes I understand that we say that a lot. I think, though, that it is fair to say that we say it a lot because we have done it consistently. Back when we started and we got a recommendation to cancel the Arctic Winter Games, reluctantly, sadly, we cancelled the games. Of course, later on, everyone said that, yes, of course, that was the right thing to do. But at the time, that was not the situation. Here we are again. We are being given advice, as a government, and we are asked to make the decision as a government.

We have let the public know that this is what we are going to do. After the unions asked us whether we could use testing as an alternative, we asked for that medical advice again, and we were told pretty clearly that, no, it is not a good idea. We

turned around and let the unions know that, so, we've said that no, we are not going to use testing.

Of course, there is still testing in the territory. We heard yesterday, when we were talking about Whitehorse Elementary School, that the chief medical officer of health and her team did testing for the school. That is okay — terrific — but I'm talking about testing instead of vaccinations.

One of the things that seems to come up here that I've heard over the last several days is: What is going to happen? Because we bring in this policy or regulation and say that it is a requirement that you have to be vaccinated with your first dose by November 30 and your second dose by January 30 — if members of the public service choose not to be vaccinated or not to share their personal health information, we will then put them on leave without pay?

Some of the media and the members opposite have asked: What are you going to do if you lose some staff members? What will happen to the services that you need to provide? The question that I never hear is: What would we do if we didn't do this? What would we do if we didn't decide to address the wave that is coming and COVID washed through? I will talk about that a bit more, but say it did shut down our hospital. What would we do?

It isn't just what would we do if we lose some of our employees — we anticipate that some will choose to go on leave without pay. We anticipate that, but if you're saying that we shouldn't do this, which is what this whole motion is about today, then you need to say what you would do about the wave.

By the way, when we first brought this in and first asked the chief medical officer of health for her advice around testing as an alternative for leave without pay and we heard that back, it was virtually the next weekend that what we saw was not three cases a day, but it was 30 cases a day. Suddenly, the wave hit.

That introduces a large amount of stress for everyone — for parents of kids at school, for our plow drivers, and for the people at the front of this building here, who greet people who come in. When that wave hits, we all get worried, and this is our second wave. When the first wave hit, we were just — vaccines were coming up in the Yukon, and that is what helped us through that wave. Now, we have a new variant, the Delta variant, and we have a wave. Even though the vaccine rates for the Yukon are extremely high — as the Minister of Highways and Public Works said the day before last — I think that he said that the current vaccination rate for adults over 18 and above, for their first vaccine, is at 90 percent, but we know that there are more people coming in every day to get vaccinated. That is high for Canada, and yet, we can see that it is not high enough to stop a wave.

I heard Dr. Elliott on the radio last week. She was on the morning show, just after all of that wave had hit, and we decided to, again, declare a state of emergency so that we could very quickly try to put a circuit breaker in place to address this wave — recalling that the decisions about mandatory vaccines that we took before that wave hit — and then, when it hit we were like, oh, thank goodness we took that advice, that we didn't decide to say at that point, no, we don't want to take that

advice, because imagine if we hadn't — the system could overwhelm.

I listened to Dr. Elliott talk on the radio. There are a couple of things that I just want to point out that she said, because I think that the host — I think it was Elyn Jones that morning who asked her, well, you know, there are people who are vaccinated who are getting COVID. To which, Dr. Elliott said, yes, there are, but, of course, there are way more people who are vaccinated — nine times more adults have had their first shot than one out of 10 that have not. There are many more people who are vaccinated, so, to say that some of the vaccinated people have been getting COVID is correct, but she pointed out that the serious health outcomes for those people who are unvaccinated were 50 times worse than for those people who are vaccinated. This is why, I believe, she is giving us this advice, to say, no, you need to protect the public health in this instance.

Just for a second, what I want to say is that we're not the first jurisdiction to get here. We're the twelfth — or thirteenth, if you want to count Canada; it's just Nunavut that isn't here. Everybody else has gotten here. This is a critical issue; it's a very tough question. We got here, even though we have great vaccination rates — but we are being told that we need higher in order for public health to be protected.

The next morning — I think on the Tuesday morning after Dr. Elliott was on after the state of emergency was declared, I heard Dr. Warshawski, who is the president of the Yukon Medical Association, get on the radio and talk to Yukoners as well. I listened intently to his radio interview and basically he talked about the pressure that was mounting on our acute health care system right now. He said that one of the things that is happening is, because we have a lot of COVID coming through our hospital, that exposure, over time — enough exposure — the staff are getting COVID. So, we're losing the staff — some of the staff — to COVID. Then I think he said that three of the four intensive care unit beds were taken up with COVID patients and basically, when you get three out of the four, it's now a COVID unit or ward — basically, anyone who is in there is going to be exposed.

His request to us as Yukoners was to please get vaccinated. He was very supportive. He said, from the hospital's perspective, that this was a necessary thing. I thank him for that.

Here's one of the things that I have often wondered. I have heard the members of the Official Opposition stand often and talk — even yesterday — and say how important it is to listen to doctors and how important it is to support the doctors here in the territory. I'm looking forward to hearing their debate today because I'm telling them — and I have tabled today the advice from our chief medical officer of health, Dr. Elliott. She is giving us very clear advice. Her recommendation is that we introduce vaccine requirements for the public service, that we do not use testing as an alternative, and that we require proof of vaccination for non-essential services across the public. We are working toward that. I am asking myself whether the Official Opposition will support these doctors. They often talk about the importance of supporting doctors and I wait to hear where they are going to land with that.

I want to talk for a minute about how challenging this decision is. I spent the weekend talking with people who have chosen not to be vaccinated and I want to talk now for a moment to those Yukoners who have chosen to get vaccinated and if they are talking with or about those people who are not vaccinated. I hope that we do that with respect and kindness. These are hard, hard decisions for people. They are very heartfelt choices for folks. If they are choosing to not be vaccinated and if they are willing to take leave without pay instead of that, you know that it's a big deal for them and their families. I think that we need to please do our best to be respectful around folks for those decisions. They have told me that they have felt a lot of not just criticism, but even shaming. I just want to say that we need to treat each other with kindness in the territory.

On the other side of it, I have also known — and we have heard about this — my wife is a nurse and she teaches at the university. She is there with some of the people who work in the vaccine clinic here. Those nurses who are doing the vaccine clinic have said that there are members of the public who have been really harsh toward those people who are providing that service. So, I am asking those who are on the side of not being supportive of being vaccinated to please be kind and respectful toward our public service as well — the folks who are there trying to help them.

This is where the choice and decision about these things comes to government. Clearly, we have taken the decision that we believe that we have to show leadership on this issue. When I think back to the past year and a half and how we are doing as a territory, I think that the decisions we have taken so far have been very, very good decisions. I understand that we are in the middle of a wave right now, but when I look to see how the Yukon has fared compared to other jurisdictions — even around issues like mental health and stuff like that — I feel we have done better. I'm not trying to just give a pat on the back to the government; I'm talking about us a territory, working together through a very hard situation.

I am saying that our choice as a government is to maintain our focus on protecting the health and safety of Yukoners, so that when we get that advice from the chief medical officer of health or the acting chief medical officer of health — she is telling us that it is important that we avoid the spread of COVID-19, that we as a government take on those decisions and that we as an employer lead by example and that we do that despite the fact that we cannot have certainty about these choices. We have to take a decision by weighing risks.

Let me just finish by coming back to Dr. Elliott. I know that this is a hard decision, because I understand how much is in the balance for Yukoners. We took that decision with a lot of care and consideration — but it was clear for us, ultimately. It was clear because the advice given to us was clear, which was that our public health was at risk and we needed to protect it.

We have taken that decision. We want to ascertain today whether all members of this Legislature believe that or if they have a different perspective — if they think that it should be different. I have heard suggestions a couple times that “other jurisdictions are doing this,” and I think, great — those

jurisdictions have their own context and their own chief medical officers of health and their own epidemiology that's at work.

So, we have asked for the advice here from our professionals, who — I just want to say — have done an amazing job during the pandemic. It has been a hard go, from day one to whatever day we are today. I'm sure it's over 500 days. They have done their utmost at all times to provide us the best advice they can based on the situation that is here in the Yukon. We have decided to follow that and we're asking whether our colleagues here in the Legislature support that.

**Mr. Dixon:** It is surprising to us that the government has brought this motion forward today. Since the announcement of the implementation of a vaccine mandate and vaccine passport system for the Yukon back on October 15, it has become apparent to just about every individual, every business, every NGO, the biggest public sector unions, and every other level of government in this territory that the Liberal government simply does not have a plan for this.

To quote my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, last week in debating the ministerial statement about this very topic, she said — and I quote: “Yukoners are looking for leadership, and right now, it's hard to find.” Quite frankly, I agree very much. It has been a stunning failure of leadership on the part of the Premier, the Deputy Premier, and their Cabinet.

They made this announcement and have since struggled to provide even the most basic details and implementation plan. They have disregarded the pleas of many Yukoners for some modicum of consultation, and quite frankly, this announcement has been handled extremely poorly by the Liberal government. So, it is bizarre that they would bring forward a government motion on it — even more so because they must know how it's going to end. All three political parties have made their positions very clear already. We have said that we disagree with the approach the Liberals are taking. We have expressed our position repeatedly in the Legislature, in the media, and in direct communication with Yukoners. We know where the government stands, we know our position, and we know the NDP's position.

So, it's clear to us that this motion was brought about for no other reason but to delay getting to debate on other pressing matters, such as the departments of Education and Health and Social Services as well as the several pieces of legislation on the floor.

### **Motion to adjourn debate**

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I move that debate on this motion be now adjourned.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition that debate be now adjourned.

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:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Disagree.

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**Ms. Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yeas, seven nays.

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

*Motion to adjourn debate on Motion No. 217 agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**Chair (Ms. Blake):** Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Chair:** Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

**Bill No. 202: Second Appropriation Act 2021-22 — continued**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

**Women and Gender Equity Directorate**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I would like to start by welcoming our officials to the Legislative Assembly today to assist in the budget debate on the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. I would like to start with our Deputy Minister, Nicole Morgan, and our director of Women and Gender Equity Directorate, Hillary Aitken. Thank you so much for being here and for assisting us today to help bring forward full and complete answers to questions that members may have.

Today, I am very pleased to present the Women and Gender Equity Directorate supplementary budget for 2021-22. This budget is reflective of the work of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate — what we undertake with our partners in order to advance gender equity throughout the Yukon. This department is small but mighty in the work that they do. We have recently updated the name and formal mandate of the directorate to better reflect the important work done to advocate for women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals.

The directorate remains committed to supporting and advocating for women and girls, working toward the elimination of gender-based violence, and supporting the government's efforts to integrate a gender and diversity lens on all decision making. We have now expanded the formal mandate to intentionally include sexual orientation. The new name and formal mandate also align with the understanding that gender is on a spectrum. There was a very small cost to changing the directorate's name, which was covered within the existing budget.

Our government is committed to furthering the equality of all citizens and ensuring that we all have the opportunity to lead healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives. The budget line items that I will discuss ensure that key projects in the community can be carried out.

I would like to begin by highlighting some of those key projects and recent successes. It was very exciting to announce the LGBTQ2S+ inclusion action plan this past summer. This action plan paves a path forward to end discrimination and improve inclusivity, both within Government of Yukon services and also for the Yukon government as an employer. It includes over 100 action items representing programs and services in several key departments across government.

I would like to highlight one action item in particular: work with the LGBTQ2S+ community organizations toward the Pride Centre. A physical space was one of the top priorities that the LGBTQ2S+ community shared with us during our public engagement. It was an important action for Yukon government to support. We were told that having a physical space that can be used as a gathering place for education, programming, resources, and a place for community and connection should be a priority. That is why we are providing \$375,000 in operational funding for Queer Yukon Society to support the establishment of the Pride Centre — the first ever in Yukon.

The opening of the Yukon's very first Pride Centre is a historic milestone that the LGBTQ2S+ community can be very proud of. We are pleased to work in partnership with all LGBTQ2S+ organizations in Yukon to help make the centre a

reality. Queer Yukon is in the new space, and renovations are underway. They are now navigating when to open their doors more publicly and begin programming while maintaining COVID precautions.

I am proud that our government is committed to inclusiveness, equity, and respect for diversity of all Yukoners. This is a major step on the journey toward a more inclusive society.

We know that we are still seeing the effects of the shadow, or echo, pandemic happening across Canada, even here in the Yukon. The long-term mental health impacts of COVID-19 on people are not yet fully understood.

The pandemic has had an even greater impact on the safety and security of populations who may be marginalized or face barriers to equality, including women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people. While public health measures are necessary to keep us safe, they can sometimes have unintended consequences. Unfortunately, home is not always a safe place for everyone. Many people are struggling to connect with important services, sometimes to even meet their basic needs like shelter or food.

As Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, I am so grateful for the grassroots work of local Yukon organizations that create and run programs such as Sally and Sisters. That is why I am pleased that, this year, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate will be providing an increase in funding of \$65,000 to the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council to continue the Sally and Sisters program. This funding will support the expansion of services from twice a week to four times a week. We are working in partnership with the Government of Canada on this project to support this important work. This funding for 2021-22 is recoverable from the Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada. Sally and Sisters is a critical service for so many women and children in our community. It has been in operation in Whitehorse for nearly 10 years, providing a safe environment to meet emergency needs for food security. Just as important, it provides a safe and sober environment for women and children to access peer support, referrals to services, and navigation of services. These are fundamental needs. These are not luxuries.

As Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, I am so grateful for the grassroots work of the local organizations that create and run programs such as Sally and Sisters. We will continue to work with local equality-seeking organizations to increase accessibility to other sources of funding and to build opportunities for further collaboration.

At this point, I will end my opening comments and look to my colleagues from the Official Opposition and Third Party to pose questions. I know that we haven't had a lot of time — or not a lot of questions have come throughout this Sitting so far around women and gender equity, so I am very pleased to speak about these matters today that are so vital to the well-being of our Yukon Territory.

**Ms. Clarke:** I would like to thank officials for their work within the directorate and for being here today. I have a few questions for the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. I understand that the minister may not have the answers to these questions at this moment, so I am

going to ask them all together and would appreciate a legislative return with the answers if she is not able to provide them here today.

I have heard concerns from women's groups that the expansion from the Women's Directorate to the Women and Gender Equity Directorate may somehow dilute the focus on women's issues within the directorate. I have been asked to have the minister confirm that women's issues will remain a priority for the directorate and that funding levels will not be negatively impacted for women's groups.

I am hoping that the minister responsible can provide an update to the House on the Monday review for the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, as well as the status of appointing sufficient members to the board.

For my final question, I understand that the Yukon Status of Women Council is the lowest funded NGO of all those supported by the directorate. Does the directorate have any plans to ensure that they receive funding equivalent to other organizations?

Thank you again to the minister and to the officials.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am happy to stand and speak about the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. First, I will start by just speaking about the name and formal mandate change in order to reflect the important work of advocating and supporting women and people of all genders and sexual orientation.

The Women's Directorate will now, of course, be known and is now known as the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. This change better reflects the current scope of work of the directorate and the community that it works with. It also reflects our understanding of gender beyond binary definitions of "male" and "female". The directorate remains so committed to supporting and advocating for women and girls, supporting women's organizations, and working toward the elimination of gender-based violence. I recognize that this is potentially what I'm taking from the member opposite as the primary concern that she is presenting here today.

I have certainly met with equality-seeking groups, including women's groups, to talk about the mandate change and to assure them that there is still much work to be done in order to seek further equality for women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people in our Yukon Territory. This is work that has been happening for decades and decades, and we still have a long journey ahead of us. It is one that we are very committed to.

I just want to say to the member opposite and to Yukoners that this mandate change is actually very much a reflection of the work that the previous Women's Directorate had been doing for a number of years — approximately 10 years. It certainly has been part of the mandate that I received when I became the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate back in 2016. We have made huge advancements. I talked about that in my opening comments. We have done work that has never been done in our territory. First of all, we did the very first consultation with the LGBTQ2S+ community in the history of the Yukon. We created and took that work and worked with the community to create an action plan that, again, had never existed.



Just reflecting on the questions at hand, I think that there is some indication — and maybe some tone — in the question asked around the funding. We have also now provided funding to Queer Yukon for the formation of the Pride Centre, and I can assure you that those are new dollars; that is why we are here. It is part of the supplementary budget to allocate those dollars to Queer Yukon for the establishment of the Pride Centre and for the important programming that they will be doing. This funding certainly is not taking away from any of the existing equality-seeking groups.

I will come back to the budget question — because the member posed all her questions at once, I will skip around a little bit — but I am going to go back to the YACWI — the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues. I want to start by saying how much we value the recommendations that the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues has provided to the Government of Yukon since its inception in 1992. Again, however, so much has changed in the last 30 years, including the scope and capacity of the directorate — as I have just spoken about — the emergence of equality-seeking community organizations and other understandings of gender. I mean, back 30 years ago — when you think back, we did not have equality-seeking groups like we have today. We have several that have different mandates and some that kind of overlap with each other as well. So, in recognition of this, we have updated — of course, we have talked about that today — the name and mandate. The plan is also to update the mandate of the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, which would require legislative change. I have worked with the council members to review the function and focus of the advisory council in the current Yukon context and we gathered input from women's organizations, the LGBTQ2S+ organizations, and current and past advisory council members, and this is informing our next steps.

The member also mentioned in their questioning the current makeup of that council, and we have continued to advertise and recruit to bring expertise and good representation to the council that is reflective of the current makeup of the council, which includes rural members as well as diversity. These have been some of the challenges. I have a number of applications now and have made some decisions just recently. I will be seeking out the acceptance of those positions in the days to come. We will ensure that folks are aware of that.

I am excited about the new members who are coming on board and what they will bring to this advisory committee as we transition into this next stage and the exciting work that we're going to do to update the mandate of this advisory council so that they can be better prepared to provide the good guidance and recommendations to me today as the minister but also to future ministers as we transition. So, I am really proud to be part of that move to this next era within Yukon, to provide the tools for future ministers to work with our equality-seeking groups, and to once again hold up this advisory council and make it relevant to today's current state within the Yukon.

I just want to say again how much I appreciate the work that they've done over the years and some of the changes they have made. I look forward to continuing to work with them. I

am excited to get that committee back up and running with the appointment of a new chair and other community members.

I am not sure how much time I have left on this particular question because there were many questions posed at once, so if I run out of time, I will sit and stand again to finish answering. I think that they are important questions to be answered.

There was a question around funding for equality-seeking groups, particularly women's groups. I will go to the — again, my gratitude of course for the work that all equality-seeking organizations do in the Yukon to reduce gender-based violence and to build safer communities. This past year has shown us more than ever the critical importance of these services.

So, getting to the amount of funding that we provide from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, this fiscal year, equality-seeking organizations are receiving a total of \$2,122,000 from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate in operational and project funding. We have done a couple of graphs that kind of break this down a little bit in terms of our overall budget within the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, which is \$3,017,000. So, out of that \$3,017,000, we have \$2,916,000 that goes directly toward program delivery — so 81 percent of our budget goes to that. The public education is \$256,000, which is seven percent of the budget, and then policy and research makes up the remainder, which is \$436,000, which is 12 percent of our budget.

Now, with the supplementary budget — which is what we are here to talk about today — it changes the numbers slightly. The transfer payments are \$2,097,000, which makes up 61 percent of the budget — personnel make up 29 percent of the budget and then 10 percent of the budget is for other.

I just wanted to talk about that a little bit — and maybe we will get into other questions; it seems like folks are a bit rushed to get through this because I think there are other things that potentially members from the opposition may want to talk about today — but I think that the work that the Women and Gender Equity Directorate does is very vital.

I know that, as we continue to respond and recover from the pandemic, we need to continue to work together to develop community- and culturally appropriate responses to address gender equality. Our government continues to work with our partners within Government of Canada and we have been successful. We have really leveraged a lot of money that we have allocated from Government of Yukon to create new programs. I mean, I think about women — the indigenous women's equality fund. That was a new fund that we put together and then leveraged that money to Canada to ensure that all of our indigenous women's organizations — which were chronically underfunded when I came into the position in 2016 — now are getting to a place of — we have catch-up. We have a lot of catch-up to do there in terms of catching our indigenous women's groups up to where other equality-seeking groups have been. What that means is that we have the indigenous women's equality fund providing \$600,000 in operational capacity development funding to the three indigenous women's groups — those are Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, and the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council.

Again, this is money that we allocated — some of that is from Yukon and the rest came from Canada. These were funds that were not available. I know that the member is asking specifically about one organization, but I think that, in terms of the funding that is allocated from the Women's Directorate — I have already gone over that kind of broad picture of the amount of money that we provide to equality-seeking groups, but I want to also point to the other funding that is received from Government of Yukon to these equality-seeking groups that do this really important, vital work. I am just not sure that folks are always aware that there are other funding sources that are coming to these organizations, and a lot of times it is using the money — the small amounts of money — that we do have in Government of Yukon to leverage other funds and to work with other partners like Canada and of course other departments within Government of Yukon.

I met with all of the groups that have been posed today — or at least one of them, but there are three others that are seeking a higher rate of funding: Les EssentiElles, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Yukon Status of Women Council, and Yukon Women in Trades and Technology. We have met with them and what we committed to was continuing to have this conversation and to work with them to identify what the need is. One of the things that we talked about at that meeting was how we can work together. What we did see with the LGBTQ2S+ organizations that were seeking first-time funding — they had never had funding before — was that they had built a coalition and sort of an umbrella group that then received the funding on behalf of all of the groups. So, that is how we did that with the LGBTQ2S+ community. We started a little bit of that conversation.

I am not saying that this is where we are going to get to with other women's equality-seeking groups, but I am committed to continuing to have the conversation. I know that they do vital work on behalf of Yukoners. My commitment and support are there, 100 percent. I know the levels of violence against women in Canada in the north are three times higher than the rest of Canada. If you are an indigenous woman or a woman of colour, it is three times higher yet. So, I am very aware of the challenges that we have in our territory when it comes to gender-based violence, which is why I have really focused a lot of attention at the national level as well to ensure that I am a known voice at the table. That has yielded some good responses to Yukon women's organizations and other equality-seeking organizations in the Yukon. Those relationships really do matter.

I was very sad that Minister Monsef didn't get re-elected in the federal election. She has been instrumental in her commitment to ending gender violence against all women in Canada. I am looking forward to working with the new minister. I am sure that she will be as passionate as the former minister. I am continuing. My point there is that we must continue to have that strong relationship with Canada. Recovery from the global pandemic, in terms of the impact on women, is dependent upon it.

One of the things I heard on the CBC news this morning — I heard it this morning where they were talking about

100,000 jobs — women leaving 100,000 jobs in Canada over the global pandemic — and these are highly skilled, highly educated individuals — and also those who haven't come back — they haven't come back to their positions. This is our challenge, I think, in the Yukon and in Canada: to ensure that we help women get back to their jobs, which is one of the reasons why we acted quickly on universal childcare. That is a very key component to recovery from the global pandemic and helping women get back into the workforce.

I'll end my comments there. I know I went on for a bit, but I'm happy to continue to have this discussion. I think that it's a good one to have.

**Ms. Tredger:** I would like to follow up on some of the remarks the minister made. Specifically, I do want to talk about the funding for those four women's organizations under the women's equality fund which are asking for an increase in core funding. I know the minister said that there is access to different pots of money they can apply to, and I understand that's what she said to them in her letter on August 30.

The problem is that this is a really time-consuming thing for an organization to do. Having worked at NGOs, it is an immense amount of time to seek out these opportunities, put together applications, and then report on them to many different funders. It's really a huge amount of time, and I don't know if that's a good use of the time of the people who are leading these organizations — those who are some of our strongest leaders in our communities, who have to spend their time on reporting requirements rather than guiding their organizations.

If the Yukon government is providing this money through many different pots, my question to the minister is: Why not gather this together and give them a single core funding stream that they can count on, that they can plan with, and that is less onerous than applying to many different pots of money?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. I will continue on. We have met with these specific groups. We didn't have the amount of attention that I think we have had over the last five years previously. We had organizations that were chronically underfunded or not funded at all. They just didn't have any funding, and that includes some of our LGBTQ2S+ organizations. Now it has shifted, and we have shifted the indigenous women's groups into a different way of funding. I am well aware of the challenges. I am not suggesting that women's organizations spend all their time working on proposals. I know that world; I worked in that world. I had, at one point, 16 budgets that I had to manage, and I still managed to get that service out to folks so that it would be effective for them and then meet all the reporting requirements.

I know what that world looks like and I know the challenges, so that has been a big part of the conversation that we have had with these women's organizations — let's keep talking. I want to find a way forward with them — and can we find other ways, if we are funding from Government of Yukon? Possibly — I mean, that's part of the discussion and one of the things that we will be talking about.

I will just point out a few examples of that. The Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre receives a lot of funding from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate from different pots of

funding. I will just go through this one. They received: \$30,000 from Economic Development for a specific project; from Women and Gender Equity, \$50,000 from the women equality-seeking fund, and that's the one we are talking specifically of today; another \$100,000 for a women's advocate position; \$95,000 for a program called "A Safe Place"; also, there was a further \$25,000 for A Safe Place that comes from the prevention of violence against aboriginal women. So, in total from Government of Yukon, it is \$303,000 for that organization. I'm not saying that this is enough, because I know that they do a lot of work that we, as government, sometimes can't deliver to communities and that is better left being delivered by grassroots organizations. So, that is one example of where funding comes from.

Because this is my department as well — Yukon Women in Trades and Technology — the Department of Education funds \$262,691 to that organization, and then the Women and Gender Equity Directorate provides \$45,000. Again, when you start putting these funding pots together and start looking at where there are crossovers in mandates, that is the discussion that I'm wanting to have with these particular four women's organizations and maybe broader. I did start that conversation early in my first mandate and want to continue to have that discussion. When you look at the dollars that we are allocating to all of these organizations that do really important work on our behalf, we can certainly find ways to work together and find where we have crossovers in mandates and governance structures. There are four governance structures for four organizations, four executive directors, and four sets of staff. I think about efficiencies and ways that we can really hold each other up. That is exactly what the LGBTQ2S+ community did when we first funded — so that was the approach that was taken there.

I am not suggesting that we will get there for sure, but we want to have the conversation, so that is the commitment that we have made to the organizations. We will continue to have that.

I do not want to see our organizations spend most of their time doing funding proposals. We can help with that. That is where we really helped with Women and Gender Equality Canada when we developed the new indigenous women's equity fund. That was work that we helped to facilitate to happen. We helped to support the organizations to get the required documents, workplans, and everything else put together so that it made it easier for them to access that funding. Are we prepared to take those extra steps? Yes, we are. We will continue to support at whatever level we can and look forward to continuing that conversation with the governance body for the organizations, but also their executive directors who are the ones on the ground doing the hard work every day on behalf of Yukoners.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you to the minister for that answer. I appreciate her commitment to this issue.

I do want to point out a couple of comments on her reply. When I hear about "overlap" and "efficiencies", I get very nervous. I am all for collaboration, I am all for working together, and I am for not replicating things unnecessarily, but

I do want to highlight that redundancy is not always — having multiple points of access is not always a bad thing, and having multiple options for people to provide the same services is not always a bad thing. So, I would add that caution as that work goes forward.

I would like to talk a little bit about transportation, particularly from rural Yukon. As the minister highlighted, we are in a really difficult time for women who are most likely to experience intimate partner violence and other types of violence. We asked in the House recently — I believe that it was yesterday — about what transportation options are available for women who need to travel out of a community to access a women's shelter, for example. We were told that Victim Services can provide that.

Can the minister confirm that? If a woman in a remote community in the Yukon called Victim Services, would they be able to help her find transportation out of her community or to a place where she would be safe?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I worked on the front line for a long time and so I know that to be true. If you need to have access to emergency services, you can get emergency funds through Victim Services. Is it always enough or are you prepared go to those services, like Victim Services? That is the crux of it. That is the question. That is the issue because, a lot of times, women who are fleeing violence do not want to have other agencies involved. So, what I know is that shelters do not always have the funds to provide — I know that I went to 100 Women Who Care about a year ago, and they had Kaushee's Place come to do a fundraiser. They were one of the organizations, and I gave my money on that particular day because what they were doing was creating a slush fund so that they could anonymously provide assistance to women who were fleeing violence from communities to get to a safe place.

Is that the best answer? I think that there is a lot more that we can do.

I know that the Minister of Health and Social Services and of Justice and I, as Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity, want to continue having those discussions. We want women to be safe. I worked on the front line for a long time in communities, and this was a particular issue and it has been for a long time.

I want to also point out — and I know this is pivoting a little bit but not really because it is going to get to something big for the Yukon.

We worked with all of our partners on *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy*. In the strategy, under community safety and justice, one of the areas that came up in every single community was transportation and communication. Our intent in 2.8 is to create an action plan that will focus on creating safe and affordable transportation and communication options for women and Yukon communities. All women — and I know this is focused on indigenous women, but when we have those structures in place and when we start building these action plans, it is good for all women, girls, and two-spirit-plus people; that is for sure.

When we developed this, we knew that, in taking on all of these actions, this is what the result would be. This is, again, every single level of government committing to implementing this strategy. We are now at the stage of building the implementation plan. We are close. We think that we will be, in early December to mid-December, ready to release so that we can disseminate this out to all of the partners to come together in our first accountability forum, which is scheduled for February 14 and 15. Hopefully, by then, we will be able to come together in person and not have it all remote and virtual, because this is the first time that we will come together and be accountable to each other. This is an important action plan within this strategy.

We have definitely put some thought into this. Are there some more immediate things we can do? I think there are. I am so committed to that and I have spent my entire working career on seeking not only justice but safety, equality, and wellness — particularly working in our rural communities.

It is what brought me back to run in the election again — these things that we need to implement, these important strategies. This is one of the reasons that got me back here in this House.

**Ms. Tredger:** It is very exciting to hear about the progress on that action plan. I am really excited to hear that more comprehensive strategy for communication and transportation is coming.

I have a couple follow-up questions about that. One is, in the meantime, would this government consider providing short-term funding to the organizations that people are more familiar with to help with transportation? I think the minister said it really accurately — not everyone is comfortable reaching out to Victim Services. So, would they consider, rather than Kaushee's having to do a fundraiser for this money, just providing that money so that people could access those transportation services through whatever organization is most comfortable for them?

I also want to ask about the communication piece because, last year, there was the cellphone program that was very well received, I think, by many vulnerable Yukon women and it was really a lifeline during the pandemic in lots of ways. Then it was suspended — as is my understanding — and then there was a commitment to reinstate the program without data but with calling and texting. I am wondering what the update is on that.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for that follow-up question. Yes, during the initial stages of the pandemic, we initiated a cellphone program and disseminated all those devices. Then it transitioned to Yukon Status of Women's Council, who then received federal funding to continue that program. It's unfortunate that the funding — that program was not further funded.

Again, that was a short-term kind of measure because we knew that there was less access to reliable communication, particularly for women who are fleeing violent situations — because home is not always safe for everyone, that's for sure. We know that.

I think that, in the longer term, these are things that need to be addressed in our transportation and communication action

plan. I know that this is not an immediate answer, but certainly we want to continue to build on that and find ways. I know that it was complicated. It was a complicated program for some of these smaller organizations to continue to deliver, so I know that this is probably one of — and we did do a review on that. So, I think that there are some findings there that we can bring back to the House as well.

There was another aspect of your question around if we will follow up from the previous one around finding ways to fund grassroots organizations to provide additional resources for women who require transportation needs or costs — to do it in a more anonymous way that doesn't involve other organizations. I am certainly committed — I will say that today — to having further discussions with my colleagues around that and the organizations that are providing those services, and I will come back.

You had also asked that I be cautious about when we are talking about efficiencies and overlap of mandates. I am very cautious. I know that there needs to be a lot of windows and ways for folks to access services that they need. I think it's more about finding ways that we can work in that — as you say — collaborative way to ensure that we are making the best use of the resources that we have and then looking at where the gaps are. I think that is an important part of it.

So, I will bring back some of the findings from the review of the cellphone program. Again, it will inform what we bring forward in the action plan that I have spoken about from our strategy on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you for that answer. I'm going to shift gears a bit — although I might come back to this eventually — but I would like to talk a little bit about the Pride Centre and some of the funding there. I should start by saying that I am so thrilled that the Pride Centre is becoming a reality, and I'm so proud of the work those organizations have done. It was an absolute joy to tour the facility, and I just can't wait until its doors are opened. I'm really excited and proud of that work.

I wanted to ask a question about their funding. My understanding is that there has been an agreement signed for three years of funding that decreases over the three years, and please correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding is that the hope is that they would then seek outside sources of funding to supplement that. Again, I want to raise the concern about expecting organizations to spend so much of their time — I think that the minister and I both know how time-intensive it is to deal with multiple funding sources and to fill out proposals. I just want to highlight my concern about that approach and I wonder if the minister could comment on why that choice was made.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** We were very pleased to be able to move forward with the funding allocation for Queer Yukon Society to establish the first-ever Pride Centre in the Yukon. The total for three years is \$1,330,000 — that's \$515,000 for this year, \$440,000 for next year, and the next year is \$375,000. Yes, there is definitely a move to be able to seek other funds, as we move forward. But the other part of that is that we have committed to review this at year two to see where we're at.

I want to see success. We want success with the Pride Centre, and we want to be able to ensure that the supports are in place for folks in the LGBTQ2S+ community. I know that's the ultimate goal — to have a good, safe space with a number of different types of programming happening. That's the other part of it, though — that we have agreed to do a review at year two to see how things are going and look at where we need to go or if there are further needs that are identified.

I am really pleased with the working relationship that we have been able to establish with Queer Yukon. I see them as a vital partner in the equality-seeking movement and in Yukon. I am so looking forward to seeing the success of the centre and seeing the results of it. So, that is where things are at this point.

**Ms. Tredger:** I thank the minister for that update.

I do have a couple of questions about the *Inclusion Action Plan*. Again, I am so excited that this plan exists. I am really proud of all the work — really, the work of so many community activists and student activists. People have worked really hard to get us here and I just want to acknowledge them because it is tremendous work.

I do have a few questions about the action plan — which are also related to education — so I am hoping that will be something that the minister can speak to. It talks about, over the next five years, working across government to develop comprehensive sexual education for all Yukon schools that is inclusive of LGBTQ2S+ needs. I am wondering why that is a five-year project. That seems like something that should be happening quickly.

I am also a little bit concerned about some of the language and I am hoping the minister can clarify. For example, it talks about “encouraging GSAs”. I am wondering why that is not just “require GSAs”. It talks about “supporting the use of self-identified names”. Again, I am not sure why that is not just “require people to use people's names”.

I was also concerned — it describes a timeline for responding to requests for gender-neutral washrooms. Again, I don't know why we are waiting for requests. I wonder why that couldn't just be “provide gender-neutral washroom spaces in schools”. So, perhaps the minister can comment on those parts of the plan.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question; I think it's really an important one and one that came out very clearly in our consultation as we were gathering information and this whole focus around the education piece. We want to, of course, ensure that everyone feels safe and welcome in school. This is such an important aspect of it.

To support the students who identify as LGBTQ2S+, the Yukon government implemented a system-wide sexual orientation and gender identity policy in 2012. We're committed to reviewing that. We're working to ensure that, of course, all Yukon schools follow this policy and that all students are treated with the respect that they deserve. This is a commitment of course — lots of folks — especially in this House — have heard me talk about it a lot. It is one that is really important. So, I am really pleased to have both portfolios, to work toward realizing the sexual orientation and gender identity policy and continuing that work. We do see it as a big

part of the inclusive and special education review. Last Friday, we had the education summit to talk about inclusive and special education and the implementation of those recommendations and we had some really great discussions with presenter Shelley Moore. If you don't know about Shelley Moore, look her up on YouTube and listen to some of the work that she has done — and also Dr. Nikki Yee, who presented. We continually came back to folks who identify within the LGBTQ2S+ community and ways we will work toward full inclusion in our schools and so I am very excited to be in both these portfolios to work with the Department of Education around really moving this forward with Women and Gender Equity.

In terms of the language, I will go back and look at that language on just having GSAs in schools. That is part of what we can identify in inclusive and special education. That's definitely something we will look at.

Gender-neutral washrooms — I think that this is an area we agree on, absolutely. It does come into the capital planning. Some projects will be on a much larger scale. So, I am very committed to seeing this happen. In all of our new builds, this will be the move going forward. That is definitely there, and I am really happy to see, as renovations come up in other government buildings — Tourism and Culture was one of the first ones — that is now a gender-neutral washroom. It will work into the plan as we go forward and it will work into the capital planning. Some of those are bigger projects — like we are building Whistle Bend school and we will be building a school in Burwash Landing. As we move through these, those will be considerations in the design. Then there are the smaller capital projects. As we move through and look at safety within schools, these are definite considerations that we are looking at from the Department of Education lens. Some will take longer than others, but the commitment is there.

Again, work should have happened decades ago, but it didn't. So, we are now here in this space, committed to an action plan that will bring us to a different place. One of the things about the action plan is that it is evergreen, and we said we would review it. We said we would keep renewing and, as things change and items come off of the action plan and are completed, then we will look at what is next and keep moving that work along.

Once I really became familiar in a real way about the issues that LGBTQ2S+ people face just in terms of accessing a washroom — it's ridiculous. We should have been doing this work a long time ago. So, our commitment is to get the work done in a timely manner. If we can move projects up, we will. That is definitely my commitment and I will always be advocating for that from my role.

**Ms. Tredger:** I do appreciate the comments on that and the minister's commitment to go back and look at some of that language, as well as the work happening around things like gender-neutral bathrooms.

This isn't new information, but it is really tough to ask kids to advocate for their needs about something like this, so the more we can make it easy for them, the more we can make it so that they don't have to advocate for their own needs to the schools. I think that the more we can do that, the better.

I would like to change gears and go back to *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy*. I have a couple of follow-up questions that I would like to ask. One of the commitments was, I believe, commitment 2.2: "Evaluate Sharing Common Ground — Yukon's Police Force Review (2010)". I am wondering if there is an update on that and if that evaluation has happened.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** All of the actions were important, but I worked on *Sharing Common Ground* back in 2010. I was an advisor and I worked on it for a number of years — along with a lot of partners and folks — and then I worked on the implementation as well.

Policing in the territory came up over and over during the consultation. It was certainly one of the pathways that we could see and know in the national inquiry — *Reclaiming Power and Place*. The pathway they identified was "maintaining the status quo and institutional lack of will". We had the four corresponding responses. The response to that — our pathway was community safety and justice. So, it was very important to all Yukon First Nation communities that we revisit *Sharing Common Ground*. A lot of folks felt that there were pieces left undone and that there were pieces that were not implemented back in 2010 and beyond that date.

This particular action plan is being developed right now between the Department of Justice and the Yukon Council of First Nations. This action plan is well underway. The entire implementation plan for this strategy is being developed right now with a technical working group that has a number of technical writers and advisors and this is the approach that the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls — of which I am one of the co-chairs — Chief Doris Bill is another and Ann Maje Raider is another from the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society — and then we have organizations and representatives from families, other women's organizations, indigenous women's organizations, and other partners and ex officio members. When we decided how we would do this implementation plan, we built a technical working group that has representation from each of the women's groups and from Government of Yukon, and that it is facilitated and it has the expertise it needs to really build a full implementation plan. The intent is — like I have said a lot of times — to build out a full action plan on each of these items. There are 31 in the strategy. This one is well underway, and it's important.

Just in the last Yukon Forum, we heard Yukon First Nations talking about some of the issues that they have around policing and safety. So, this work that we will do to revisit that and go back to the 2010 report, *Sharing Common Ground*, is really vitally important going forward. I think that is the way that we will chart our path forward. The RCMP also have been ex officio on the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the commanding officer Scott Shepperd is the designate for that committee — so very tuned in and committed. Scott Shepperd also did the declaration at the ceremony that we had last year on December 10 when we launched the strategy.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you for that answer. I am very much looking forward to reading the implementation plan and I want to thank everyone who has been working on that. That is something that I think we are all looking forward to.

This is my final question and I realize that I neglected to thank the members from the department for coming. I really appreciate your time here today and your help in answering these questions as well as the work you and your departments do all year long.

My final question is about providing supportive community housing to justice-involved women. That commitment is in the minister's mandate letter. We know that, right now, there are pretty significant gaps for women. The current model of the transition facility under — not John Howard but connected — there have been a lot of concerns about where that is housed — particularly about where that is housed.

I am wondering what actions have been taken to provide supportive community housing to justice-involved women.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** That is a really important question. It is one of the items that I was presented with in my mandate letter — to work with Justice as the lead on this particular area. So, the Government of Yukon is considering options to provide supervised community housing for justice-involved women. Program models that are under consideration include gender-responsive, culturally appropriate, and trauma-informed services and supports for women who do not require high-security custodial care but need supportive, safe, and supervised community housing. Any program development will recognize the unique needs of women involved with the criminal justice system and will aim to support them as they transition from custody to community, provide for an alternative to custody, or support their participation when accessing services through the Yukon's treatment courts.

Discussions with our partners, local stakeholders, and subject matter experts increase our understanding of how we can support the unique needs of justice-involved women in the Yukon. I come from that background of working directly within the justice system and have worked with many women who are justice-involved, in a lot of different ways. I know that there is absolutely a need for this type of support and one that we're very committed to. Both the Minister of Justice and I will work together. It is part of both of our mandate letters, which we received on July 5, to establish a program to provide supported community housing to justice-involved women.

I know that my department officials are working with Justice now. It is not something that we want to take our time with, because I think that it's something that is needed in our community and has been a gap. When we talk about gaps, this is certainly one of them, and it has been for a very long time.

I'm very pleased to be part of the discussions around this and the planning for it.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you for the answers, and that concludes my questions for this department.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I just wanted to thank the officials for being here today and for the questions. I really enjoyed talking about this important area of our work within Yukon. I

appreciate the thoughtful questions that have been put forward to me. Any time that any members from the opposition and Third Party want to discuss any matters directly with me involving anything to do with women and gender equity, or anything related to that, I would be more than willing to have those discussions and want to have those discussions. So, I thank members again for the questions today.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

**Ms. Tredger:** Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$440,000 agreed to***

***On Capital Expenditures***

***Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to***

***Total Expenditures in the amount of \$440,000 agreed to Women and Gender Equity Directorate agreed to***

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

*Recess*

**Chair:** Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Department of Highways and Public Works — continued**

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I will take this opportunity to introduce my officials again — Sherri Young to my left and Deputy Minister Paul McConnell to my right.

I have some comments on various topics, but for now, perhaps I'll leave it to the member opposite for his first questions.

**Mr. Hassard:** I thank the officials for coming back again today. I know that they enjoy it here.

The previous Minister of Highways and Public Works claimed that closing Central Stores and reducing services at Queen's Printer would save the government money. I'm curious if the minister could tell us if that is, in fact, the case. Has it saved money? How much money has it saved the Yukon government?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I can provide a more detailed analysis of the Central Stores issue at a future date, but I do have some notes from my officials with respect to the closure of Central Stores. It is indicated that savings at Highways and Public Works as a result of the closure of the Queen's Printer and Central Stores warehouse amounted to approximately \$620,000 per year every year since the closure took effect, which I am advised was in April 2020.

Highways and Public Works has put into place standing offer agreements for office supplies for all of Yukon government, and it's working on new innovative procurement for office supplies that does not require a warehouse, that supports local vendors, that creates opportunities for better pricing, and that will allow us to analyze spending and savings across Yukon government.

**Mr. Hassard:** I guess the only follow-up question I would have in that regard would be how the government is quantifying how much time and money is spent — extra time and money is spent — by individual departments having to do their own shopping.

I had a few more questions around the First Nation procurement policy. One of the concepts behind the First Nation procurement policy — or one of the ideas — was to create smaller contracts for smaller contractors. Yet, last week, there was a tender closed for brushing and clearing of gravel pits on the Campbell Highway — there were five pits between kilometre 414 and 529. Rather than doing those five pits separately or maybe bundling ones that were close together, the government chose to put out all five of those pits, which covered 115 kilometres approximately, all as one tender.

I am curious as to if the minister has an explanation as to why the government would do that when in fact they had said that they would start to do smaller contracts and break contracts out rather than bundling them together.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** What I can advise is that, over the territory in a given year, a variety of size contracts are provided for brushing, which provide different opportunities for different potential bidders. I'm not in a position today to comment on the strategy or why the specific contract the member opposite is asking about — on the Campbell Highway — was bundled. The

information I have for the member opposite is that it was bundled, but I'm also being advised — in a general sense — for the totality of brushing contracts that are provided in a given brushing season, that various opportunities and various sizes of contracts are provided.

**Mr. Hassard:** It's unfortunate that the minister doesn't have an answer to that, but I guess we'll keep plugging away here, seeing the time.

I'm curious as to if the minister can tell us how many First Nation businesses are currently listed on the registry with the First Nation Chamber of Commerce. Does he have any idea — I don't believe that they knew how many First Nation businesses there were before this policy came into place, but does he have any idea how many more First Nation businesses there are now than there were before the First Nation procurement policy came into place?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I think that in previous comments I made during Committee of the Whole debate with respect to Highways and Public Works, I indicated that, as of approximately a month ago, there were 35 businesses on the registry that may submit their verification documents and others that may want to join. As I pointed out also a few days ago, this is currently the eight-week verification period and, in early December, the report will come back as to which First Nation businesses are verified.

The answer is 35 — from about a month ago. To avoid only registering one business at a time and uploading them to the registry individually, we are trying to make the process fair by completing all verifications during the eight-week period and uploading them at the same time.

That report from the First Nation Chamber of Commerce, I think, will come back in early December.

**Mr. Hassard:** The second half of that question was if the minister could tell us if that was an increase or what percentage of an increase that was over previous to the policy coming into effect.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Also as I indicated, I believe, two days ago — because now there is a definition, pursuant to the working group that got together to define what a "Yukon First Nation business" was — I set out the criteria — which I could put on the record now, but I won't, in the interest of time — but there are five different components. I take the member opposite's point that it was a little unclear as to what the definition of a "Yukon First Nation business" was previously, but through the work of the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce and the working group, we have definitions, so it is difficult, in that respect, to compare apples to apples and to say with any degree of accuracy that I understand what the number of verified First Nation businesses were prior to the implementation of the First Nation procurement policy because there was no agreed-upon criteria.

**Mr. Hassard:** I can appreciate that. I am curious if the minister can tell us how the government plans on dealing with shell companies. I will just leave it at that — to see what they are going to do about someone just creating a shell company to take advantage of the BVR.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you to the member opposite for his question. I can certainly say that, in the meetings that I have had on the Yukon First Nation procurement policy with respect to the Contractors Association and the First Nation Chamber of Commerce, this has been an area of concern. All parties are alive to the fact that this policy will not be a success if so-called shell companies are not detected or not disqualified by virtue of the verification process. The working group over the course of this summer — since February of this year — this is an overarching concern that exists.

What I would say is that the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce will now be managing the business registry and the verification process. It is essential that all businesses on the registry be verified to ensure that the benefits of the policy are going to the right people. For Yukon First Nation businesses to be added to the registry and earn bid value reductions, they will need to be verified. For the Yukon First Nation business to be verified, they will need to submit the appropriate documentation to verify that they meet the definition of a "Yukon First Nation business" under the policy.

As far as logistics, the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce already works to support and represent Yukon First Nation-owned businesses. It made sense for those businesses to go through the verification process with an entity that they already had a relationship with.

It is essential that all businesses on the registry meet the definition of a "Yukon First Nation business" under the policy. By having only verified businesses on the registry, everyone can feel confident that all businesses meet the requirements of the policy when accessing the registry.

As I think I have indicated before, depending on the complexity of the ownership structure, it will take up to 15 business days, recognizing that, in the initial months, there may be a large volume of applicants, which could impact the verification timelines.

As I indicated to the member opposite on a prior day, a Yukon First Nation business meets one of the following criteria — which, if necessary, I will go through, but I won't do that right now.

Then, of course, we also have the Monitor and Review Committee that has been set up, and I could go into greater detail about that.

It's the desire of all of the stakeholders that this policy succeed and meet the objectives of raising the economic prospects of First Nation persons in the spirit of reconciliation in chapter 22 and also so that First Nation governments and their beneficiaries can benefit, generally speaking, from the growth in the general Yukon economy.

I have more here on the Monitor and Review Committee and what success looks like, which I can go into if the member opposite is interested.

But I certainly agree with the member opposite that, for this First Nation procurement policy to be successful, we do not want to see shell companies. We want to see, ideally, Yukon-based companies that are employing a significant number of indigenous skilled labour and that the number of First Nation-defined businesses and the dollar value of the government-led



contracts goes from approximately seven to eight percent to approximately 15 percent, with monitoring and reviewing occurring on a monthly basis. Contractors are very keen to stay on top of this. Contractors are very keen to ensure that this policy is operating as intended.

**Mr. Hassard:** I guess, kind of along those lines as well — the government has said that essentially the company will receive a report card showing whether or not they lived up to their promises. In the tender, if you said that you were going to have X number of First Nation employees and if in fact you don't, how is a poor mark on your report card going to reflect in bidding on future contracts?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite. This is where you have the interplay or the overlap of the Yukon First Nation procurement policy with the recently announced program of vendor performance review. I will go into this briefly and then see if the member opposite has any follow-up questions about this.

The vendor performance review program came into effect in October. This new program will evaluate and score vendors on their performance throughout a government contract. Through this new program, we will incentivize good performance from vendors, encourage project managers and vendors to work together, and provide feedback to vendors on how to improve. Once suppliers have had time to build their scores, high performers will receive more points during tender valuations, which will increase their chances to secure government contracts. Through this program, we are aiming to incentivize good performance from vendors, encourage vendors and Yukon government project managers to work closely together and communicate throughout the contract, and provide feedback to vendors on ways in which they can improve their performance.

When a vendor receives their score, they can either accept, reject, or not respond. If a vendor accepts the score, it is applied to the vendor's overall ranking. If there is no response within 15 calendar days, the score automatically applies. If a vendor rejects their score, the project manager will mediate with the vendor to come to an agreement. If no agreement can be reached after 15 calendar days, there is an appeal process.

To one of the specific questions from the member opposite, another connection to this program is the Yukon First Nation procurement policy. One of the criteria that a vendor can be scored on is the fulfillment of their tendering commitments to Yukon First Nation participation.

The Yukon government will phase the program implementation to ensure that project managers and vendors are familiar with the program before it affects the actual building processes. Briefly, in phase 1, which just launched in October 2021, the Yukon government soft-launched the new program for vendors by capturing scores but removing them from the vendor's record after the first year of collection. During that time, there will be communication with the vendors and contractors.

In phase 2, to be launched in October 2022, the Yukon government will capture scores for one year. These scores will

lead to the vendor's overall score, but there will be no impacts to vendors on the procurement process during this phase.

Then, finally, the rubber hits the road in phase 3 in October 2023. The Yukon government will take the average of the vendor's scores from the last year and consider them. During the procurement process, vendors will continue to receive scores, which will adjust their average score on an ongoing basis.

Then, finally, Madam Chair, based on the tender type, there are up to seven key performance indicators that are assessed for each contract, which creates an average performance score. The key performance indicators are cost control, health and safety, quality assurance, schedule and time controls, staff and administration, Yukon First Nation participation, and functionality and training for goods contracts.

As I said before, this vendor performance review program has been a long time in the making and it will take a while to fully implement. But, with respect to the value proposition for government contracts — but also so that there is transparency. As the member opposite has indicated in his question, it will start to be now — but there certainly will be increasing consequences for not doing what you said that you would do, as the contracting party.

The member opposite will well know that one of the main disincentives — or one of the main levers that the government or any contractor has — is holdbacks. I anticipate, with respect to contracts even now that are not subject to the vendor performance review program, that the manner in which the contracts are administered by Highways and Public Works — they are currently subject to holdback provisions. It seems to me that the vendor performance review program will be more objective.

Nothing is perfect, as far as objectivity, but there do appear to be objective parameters and objective guidelines for a report card of sorts.

**Mr. Hassard:** A couple of other questions that I had for the minister — can he inform the House if the reverse trade show that Highways and Public Works traditionally has will be going forward this year, or will there be any changes due to COVID?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Yes, I think that the original plan was that it was going to be in person. However, with intervening COVID-related events, I am advised now that it will be a one-day virtual event and is currently scheduled for November 24.

**Mr. Hassard:** I thank the minister for that.

The other day, my colleague asked the minister about the ten \$1-million contracts, and the minister talked about four of those contracts. I am wondering if he could provide any more information now, after he has had a few days to get details on it, on what the other six contracts coming forward might be.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I think that I have a slightly updated list. Five contracts have been awarded during this fiscal year so far. The access road bridge replacement no. 4 at the Ketza River mine was awarded to Boreal Engineering Ltd. The HVAC system and paint booth ventilation system replacement at the

Parks building in Whitehorse was awarded to Hvactech Systems. Surface works and underground utilities for the Logan residential lots in Whitehorse were awarded to Castle Rock Enterprises Ltd. The fuel tank replacement and boilers at the field operations building in Haines Junction was awarded to Budget Plumbing & Heating. The Tanana road construction in Burwash Landing was awarded to Upland Mining. Those two that I just mentioned in Haines Junction and Burwash are described as “recent” awards. One tender has closed, but the contract has not been awarded, and that is for the Hidden Valley school prefabricated modular building placement and connections in Whitehorse. That leaves us with five potential projects remaining to be tendered in fiscal year 2021-22.

Highways and Public Works is currently reviewing additional projects against the selection criteria. I can certainly endeavour to get more information for the member opposite, but it looks like four have absolutely been confirmed, and one tender has been closed.

**Mr. Hassard:** I guess that my final question to the minister would be to ask if he could provide us with information on what those contracts are as they come out.

With that, I would just thank the officials for being here. I certainly hope that they enjoyed their time as much as I did.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I think, in answer to one of his colleagues over the last few days, it may be on the record as to which site it is on — but, yes, we will provide that information to the member opposite. I am sure my officials have noted that down and will keep the member opposite apprised of those additional contracts.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my officials for being here. I guess we should see if there is any further debate — sorry.

**Mr. Kent:** I know that a number of my colleagues also have additional questions that are riding-specific, and we’ll provide those either as written questions or in letters to the minister, but I believe we’re prepared to move into line-by-line debate and clear HPW relatively quickly.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

**Mr. Kent:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried, as required.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** The Member for Copperbelt South has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

*On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures*

*Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$8,776,000 agreed to*

*On Capital Expenditures*

*Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to*

*Total Expenditures in the amount of \$8,776,000 agreed to*

*Department of Highways and Public Works agreed to*

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will recess for five minutes.

*Recess*

**Chair:** Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

### **Department of Education**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Madam Chair, I would like to ask my colleagues to help me welcome to the Legislative Assembly today our officials, Deputy Minister Nicole Morgan and Andrea McIntyre, director of finance. Thank you so much for coming and being part of our deliberations today on the 2021-22 supplementary budget.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to present the Department of Education’s first supplementary budget for 2021-22. Across the learning continuum, from early learning to adult learning, we are all continuing to adjust to living with COVID-19. Our education recovery efforts are underway, and we are making investments in universal childcare, modern learning environments, and training and employment supports for adult learners. We are taking the initial steps needed to sustain our longer term education recovery efforts, and our supplementary budget reflects just that.

As a department, we work to be fiscally responsible for the benefit of Yukoners. This supplementary budget reflects how the department is working to achieve its priorities for education as we move through the pandemic, which includes: ensuring the health and safety of learners and staff; ensuring that learning continues for all learners; supports for learners with diverse learning needs and those in need of additional supports; and support for learners, teachers, and support staff for flexible learning, including access to technology, tools, and training.

We are making investments in capital infrastructure, which are required to address our aging infrastructure, meet growing enrolment, and create modern learning environments in community spaces.

In the supplementary budget request, we are asking for an increase of \$13.216 million in O&M, all of which is recoverable from Canada. There is a slight decrease in general revenues of \$5,000 related to the extension program fees, and we are also asking for a net increase of \$119,000 in capital.

Thank you for the opportunity to go over the changes to capital and maintenance funding in more detail and to explain how the department is effectively and responsibly allocating funds and resources to support learners of all ages.

COVID-19 has made it clear that, without access to childcare, too many parents — especially women — cannot fully participate in the workforce. Our government is committed to building on the universal childcare program that we launched last April. This past summer, the Department of Education announced the signing of a Canada-wide early learning and childcare agreement with Canada. This agreement is worth nearly \$42 million over five years and will be used to build on Yukon's efforts to date and to ensure that families have access to an average of \$10 per day out-of-pocket parent fees for full-time, licensed early learning and childcare spaces for children under the age of six.

This agreement results in an approximate increase in O&M of \$5 million, all of which is 100-percent recoverable. Through this agreement, the department will be focusing on parent fee reductions, funding for First Nations, minority language and non-profit centres, and quality and inclusive programming. We also signed a Canada-Yukon early learning and childcare agreement with Canada that will provide \$10.1 million in funding over four years and a one-time investment of nearly \$2.5 million to support the development of Yukon's local early childhood educator workforce through recruitment and retention efforts. This will increase O&M by approximately \$4.9 million — again, 100-percent recoverable.

Through this bilateral agreement, the department will be focusing on enhancements to supportive and inclusive programming. The workforce annex to the bilateral agreement will allow the department to focus on flexible career pathways, indigenous and rural education, professional development, and support.

Through both of these agreements, the funds have been allocated to further improve access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and childcare programs and services. We are also supporting the credentialing of early childcare educators, along with the retention of early childcare educators in the workplace. These are important steps in building a strong local workforce of high-quality educators. Over time, this will increase the number of early learning and childcare spaces for parents and children across the Yukon.

Moving on to the post-secondary labour market, our workforce is facing new challenges. Along with the federal government, we are working to ensure access to training and employment supports to help Yukoners develop new skills and find jobs. We are focused on supporting those in hard-hit sectors and groups disadvantaged as a result of the pandemic. In the Department of Education's O&M request, we have \$3.1 million in the post-secondary and labour market unit for the

labour market development agreement and workforce development agreements.

Canada approved, for all provinces and territories, to carry forward the 2020-21 unspent funds into the 2021-22 budget year. We have carried forward \$3 million. These funds have already been recovered from Canada.

I will move on to capital, but before I do, I just want to make a note that we are very proud of the work that our department did. I know that I have moved on from early learning and childcare quickly, but I want to just point out that Yukon was the first territory in Canada to sign on to one of the early learning childcare agreements. I am very proud of that work and the work that the department did on behalf of Yukoners to achieve such a significant agreement.

Moving on to capital, we are making important investments in our capital infrastructure. These investments will address our aging infrastructure, meet growing enrolment, and create modern learning environments and community spaces. With respect to capital, we are asking for a net increase of \$119,000 from the main estimates. The drivers of the change in the capital budget are related to several projects.

First, there is an increase of \$2.4 million in the costs for the Robert Service modular project, which is 100-percent recoverable under the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. The total estimated expenditure for the modular addition in 2021-22 is \$6.4 million.

We continue to ensure that the Ross River School is safe for students and staff, and we are investing in remediation and stabilization work as well as completing ongoing maintenance and upgrades to the school. There continue to be delays attributed to COVID-19. As a result, the Ross River School remediation project is delayed. This delay has resulted in a decrease of \$1.6 million. We expect to spend \$900,000 on the project in 2021-22. The decrease of the \$1.6 million will see \$1 million remaining in the five-year plan for the Ross River School remediation, but the timing of the cash flow has been adjusted to future years.

I was very happy to participate in the land blessing ceremony for the Whistle Bend elementary school a couple of weeks ago. It is the first new elementary school in Whitehorse in more than 25 years. It will ensure that we have a modern learning space that will allow families in this growing neighbourhood and surrounding area to thrive for years to come. This school will help accommodate student enrolment growth in the north end of Whitehorse.

Based on the tendering process, the cashflow of expenditures has been adjusted to reflect the awarded proponent's project schedule, resulting in a decrease of approximately \$1.5 million. We have budgeted \$9 million for this project in 2021-22.

Other notable capital projects are connected to early learning and childcare, including \$515,000 for software development, which is 100-percent recoverable, and \$329,000 for building renovations needed at the Education central administration building to facilitate the transfer of the unit from Health and Social Services to Education.

I would like to acknowledge and thank educators and operators across the full learning continuum for their dedication and tireless efforts to keep learning spaces open and available for learners of all ages and for their resiliency and adaptability and Yukon First Nations and partners in Education and colleagues from across the Yukon for their ongoing collaboration and solidarity in our efforts to support all learners.

Of course, I want to thank our chief medical officer of health and the staff for their dedication and unwavering commitment to keep Yukoners safe, particularly, most recently, Dr. Kancir, who has been appointed from the chief medical officer of health's office to work with us on keeping our schools safe. He has been fabulous in meeting the needs and going the extra mile and ensuring that good assessments are done on a daily basis. I really want to express my appreciation to that office. It has been a long 20 months, and our school system has been greatly impacted. As I've said, the resiliency and adaptability of our schools is really outstanding.

I want to again thank the officials here and all of those folks who are behind the scenes and working to ensure that we keep moving forward. I think that a really excellent example of that was on Friday, when we had an incredible experience together with the education summit, which brought some 600 participants to the summit in a virtual format. We were able to hear from Dr. Nikki Yee, who wrote the report on the *Review of Inclusive and Special Education in the Yukon*, and we had a presentation from Shelley Moore, who was incredible. I encourage everyone to look her up. It will help you to think outside the box in terms of where we are going with our education system and how exciting it is.

I want to thank Harold and Phil Gatensby for starting us in such a great way, in ceremony and holding a sacred fire, to hold that sacred space for us while we did this work together, starting the implementation of the work plan that we have worked really hard on with our partners for the last few months to get to a place where we have an agreed-upon work plan that will chart our path forward as we move into revising our education system in the Yukon. I thank Phil and Harold for becoming available to us as knowledge-keepers and guides in that way of knowing — the traditional knowledge and the knowing, being, and doing. That is what we did together on Friday. We were putting reconciliation in action. It was exciting to be part of it, and it was so real. I encourage folks — if they want to see any other recordings or anything from the summit, I would be more than happy to make that available to folks to be able to hear some of the presentations and also see the interactions that we had among our educators and all of our partners.

What we know for sure is that everyone has to be “in” in order to create the change that is needed in the Yukon. I definitely felt that, and I know that, even in the midst of a global pandemic and what we have been through for the last 20 months, people are excited and felt motivated and inspired after that day together. There is so much more to come.

We have launched our working groups, and they are now populating with folks who will work on certain topic areas. I'm sure that we'll have a lot more time over the next days in general debate to talk about all of these things, but I wanted to

just take that opportunity to say these things that I think our educators — and folks who are on the front line doing this work each and every day — are not hearing all the time. They are only hearing the negative; they're only hearing the things that aren't going well, so I want to hold them up and thank them very much. To all of our partners, exciting things are happening.

So, I'm looking forward to the debate on Education. I'm looking forward to answering the questions that we have for the Education supplementary budget for 2021-22.

I thank you very much, and I will stop talking now.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for her opening remarks and welcome her officials. I also thank her officials for the briefing that they provided to the opposition with respect to the supplementary estimates.

As I said when I started my other critic role of Energy, Mines and Resources, it has been a number of years since we have been able to have a fulsome debate on the main estimates, so many of the questions that I have with respect to Education will be policy questions related to the main estimates. I'm sure that the minister won't be surprised to hear that after listening to other departments get debated here over the past number of weeks and as we head into the final couple of weeks of this current Fall Sitting.

There are a number of issues that I'm going to be touching on with the minister. I want to go through her mandate letter with her and look at some of the action items that the Premier has tasked her with. There are a number of capital projects that I'm hoping we can get a chance to talk about. I want to talk about programming around French immersion and the staff shortage. The First Nation school board is something that is top of mind for those school communities, especially for those school communities that have agreed, by way of school council motion, to go to the referendum or the school communities that are just working right now through the petition process. We'll look to engage on that with the minister as well.

Student transportation is always a concern for many families, and I have some questions around scheduling and service that have been raised by Yukoners and constituents of mine.

Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

**Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt South that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

**Chair's report**

**Ms. Blake:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 202, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*

**The following legislative returns were tabled November 17, 2021:**

35-1-12

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Clarke related to general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — 4th and Jeckell housing project (Pillai)

35-1-13

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Tredger related to general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 202, *Second Appropriation Act 2021-22* — demolitions and transition units (Pillai)

**The following documents were filed November 17, 2021:**

35-1-21

Energy efficiency retrofit financing program, letter re (dated October 18, 2021) from Albert Drapeau, Executive Director, Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn)

35-1-22

Better Buildings Program, letter re (dated October 29, 2021) from Ron Rousseau, President, Yukon Federation of Labour, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn)

35-1-23

Proposed changes to the Municipal Act and Taxation and Assessment Act, letter re (dated November 12, 2021) from Gord Curran, Mayor, Village of Teslin, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White)

35-1-24

Wildland firefighters, letter re (dated November 12, 2021) from Nicholas O'Carroll, IAFF Local 2217 Whitehorse Firefighters Association, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White)

35-1-25

*Yukon Lottery Commission Annual Report 2020-21* (Pillai)

35-1-26

Response to request for analysis re testing as a substitute to vaccination, letter re (dated November 16, 2021) from Paul Moore, Public Service Commissioner, to Yukon Employees' Union and Yukon Teachers' Association (Streicker)