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HANSARD

Tuesday, March 15, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Spring Sitting

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

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Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier 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

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Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, March 15, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Would members please join me in welcoming the Speaker for the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories and Member for Mackenzie Delta, Frederick Blake Jr.

Speaker Blake was elected in 2011 and was re-elected in 2015 to the 18th Legislative Assembly. Speaker Blake is interested in seeing the differences and similarities between the NWT and Yukon assemblies. Welcome, Speaker Blake.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In commemoration of the Alaska Highway tribute, we have, from the Transportation Maintenance branch and the Transportation Engineering branch, Jonathon Rudolph, Amy Tyrrell, Angie Dickson, and Josée Perron. Thank you for joining us today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have a number of business leaders and those supporting business leaders here today for a tribute to a number of business anniversaries. Today with us from Air North, we have: Michael Bock, catering and cabin services manager; Rick Nielsen, chief operating officer; Ben Ryan, chief commercial officer.

From Pelly Construction, we have: Jennifer Byram and a well-known, famous hockey player from the Whitehorse hockey league and the Edgewater franchise, Brent Cooper.

From Yukon Soaps, we have Donna Hogan, who is Joella Hogan's — the owner — mom, as well as Louise Clethero, her aunt.

Thank you for coming today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Alaska Highway 80th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Today I rise to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Alaska Highway. This project forever changed the Yukon, and, of course, it was remarkable to look back and consider how fast it was done. In February of 1942, the United States Army approved a plan for the construction. It

was approved by the US Congress and then by President Roosevelt within five days.

Construction began within weeks, with hundreds of pieces of construction equipment arriving by train at Dawson Creek in mid-March. More than 11,000 soldiers in the US Army Corps of Engineers were involved. They lived in camps in Alaska, British Columbia, and the Yukon to build a highway from different directions with a plan to meet in the middle. They worked night and day.

The entire 2,400-kilometre project was completed in just eight months. In fact, given the extra light afforded them from the midnight sun, 643 kilometres of the highway were built in July alone. The project was built under the urgency and crisis of the Second World War. While it was mainly the US Army that built the highway, they were not alone. We should also remember the role played by indigenous guides. One of them was the late Liard Tom, who, among others, helped guide the US Army through the bush and along trails and traplines. Notably, Liard Tom's great-granddaughter Melissa Carlick currently works with the Department of Highways and Public Works.

The impact of the construction on Yukon First Nations cannot be understated. In the years during and following construction, irreversible changes occurred in the lives of First Nation people living along the route. Such changes occurred in two broad areas: first, in the relationship between First Nation people and their land and, second, in the long-standing and social institutions associated with kinship.

The construction changed the ethnic balance in the Yukon where First Nations quickly became a minority within the Yukon. We must remember that Yukon First Nation elders overwhelmingly maintain that the Alaska Highway brought alcohol abuse, epidemics, and an alarming amount of violence, grief, and further social disruption to their societies.

As well, it is also important to remember that about a third of the US soldiers who worked on the highway were African American. It is said that the efforts of the African American regiments were the driving force for desegregation of the US military, which occurred in 1948.

The Alaska Highway is a remarkable feat of engineering. The scale and speed of this endeavour is one that Canada may never see again. It is fitting that I am reading this tribute during National Engineering Month.

From the muskeg that swallowed road-building equipment whole to the thawing permafrost, engineers had to tackle the challenges that came with building on northern terrain, particularly in terms of intermittent permafrost, and we are still dealing with those challenges today.

Today, the Alaska Highway, of course, looks quite different. For example, it is no longer gravel and it is a lot wider than its original 12 to 18 feet. However, it is still a vital trade route and indispensable connection to our neighbours in British Columbia and Alaska.

Today, once again, it is important that we take time to mark the 80th anniversary of this significant and complex piece of the Yukon's history.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 80th anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway, also known as the “Alcan”; it’s often called that.

The Alaska Highway, roughly constructed in less than eight months in 1942, is to this day considered a remarkable feat of engineering. The highway was constructed as an emergency war measure in order to provide a military supply route to Alaska. American troops and civilian workers worked with thousands of pieces of equipment, steam shovels, blade graders, cable blade graders, tractors, bulldozers, cranes, snowplows, trucks, and much more.

Groups of engineers and crews worked along the highway starting at numerous points and were averaging about 13 kilometres a day. This pioneer road spanned from Dawson Creek to Big Delta, Alaska, over 2,300 kilometres. The highway underwent further work throughout the years beginning the next year, in 1943, when the road was upgraded to a gravel-covered highway and permanent bridges were constructed.

In April 1964, Canada took over portions of the highway from Dawson Creek to the US border. It was open to unrestricted travel in 1947.

Many changes impacted the corridor in a number of ways and have had a lasting effect on the entirety of Canada’s northwest. The highway affected settlement patterns in the region.

With a route to the north and the ability to move goods, communities began to spring up, and the population of northern BC and the Yukon began to grow. The sustainable access provided by the highway allowed for the integration of the region into the national economy. To this day, it is Yukon’s main trade link with other jurisdictions. The arrival of geologists and prospectors in turn supported mining production in the territory, which has flourished over the years. The construction of year-round roads to Mayo and to Dawson eliminated the need for the sternwheelers, ending the era of Yukon’s historical river transportation, and most went to road.

In 1953, Whitehorse became the capital of the Yukon, officially taking over the title from Dawson City. Since 1977, road improvements on the Shakwak portion of the highway system have been funded through the United States-Canada Shakwak agreement. Since the funding for the maintenance was exhausted, we have been actively lobbying the governments of the United States and Canada to ensure that secured funding is put in place for the road upgrades and continued maintenance.

The Official Opposition, and certainly my constituents in the riding of Kluane, are happy to see the United States government authorize funding for the reconstruction of Shakwak again. So, we look forward to seeing the Yukon government move forward with securing an agreement on this project and to the much-needed work to be done along the Alaska Highway.

I would also close by recognizing and thanking all of those individuals who have had a hand in building and maintaining

the Alaska Highway over these 80 years. It is a crucial part of Yukon’s highway network, connecting communities together and keeping us connected to the rest of Canada and Alaska.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: On behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party, I am pleased to pay tribute to the 80th anniversary of the construction and opening of the Alaska Highway. As we acknowledge the significance of the building of the highway, it is important that we reflect on the history through clear and not rose-coloured lenses. There were winners and there were losers. It was an amazing feat of engineering and labour. There were huge benefits, and there were also huge, often hidden, human costs.

Like any significant historic event, the richness of history is enhanced by our willingness to explore the good, the bad, and the ugly of our history. In the last decade, the public has become more aware of some of the lesser known stories of the Alaska Highway; some of those have been mentioned here. One that comes to mind for me is the 4,000 black American soldiers who were sent north to build this highway and contributed greatly to its successful construction. Their treatment and the conditions that they lived and worked under have only recently been acknowledged, and it is good to see in the last few years that their contributions have been honoured.

I would also like to acknowledge the impact on First Nation communities, for whom the highway brought drastic social and economic changes. Along with jobs for many, there were losses from diseases such as measles, dysentery, jaundice, whooping cough, mumps, tonsillitis, and meningitis. These introduced diseases resulted in the deaths of many First Nation children.

The Alaska Highway’s legacy is a complicated one. Today, we remember and celebrate this road, which has had a profound impact, both good and bad, on Yukoners past and present. It provides the route for many of the goods and services that we depend on from down south. It brings tourists to our communities. It provides Yukoners with business opportunities and jobs. While celebrating, I hope we remember, and also take lessons from, the building of the Alaska Highway and consider those lessons as we invest in the projects of today and tomorrow.

In recognition of local business anniversaries

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to a number of iconic Yukon businesses celebrating anniversaries. This includes Air North, Pelly Construction, Yukon Soaps, as well as Yukon Brewing.

Air North is celebrating 45 years of high-quality service as Yukon’s airline. From bridging communities through convenient travel options to transporting the supplies that remote Yukoners need, Air North is truly interwoven into every aspect of our territory. An airline unlike any other, Air North sets an example for what I truly believe should be the standard of quality air travel. We are all fortunate to have this local service providing all of the travel needs that bring Yukoners and friends and family together.

Congratulations, as well, to Pelly Construction, celebrating 35 years in the Yukon and beyond, from the early beginnings, building the Dawson City riverside dike, to the runway in Antarctica, to servicing the Yukon's mining industry. Pelly is a premier mining contractor and construction company that has consistently delivered excellent service throughout the entirety of its history.

I also want to acknowledge the success of Joella Hogan and the Yukon Soaps Company, which has been handcrafting soaps for Yukoners for 10 years. Operating out of the Village of Mayo, Yukon Soaps Company contributes to the economic diversification, both in the community and the Yukon as a whole. Through her work, she is also contributing to the social and cultural fabric of our territory by connecting people to culture and to the land.

Lastly, Yukon Brewing is celebrating 25 years of providing Yukoners with high-quality adult beverages. In 1997, co-founders Alan Hansen and Bob Baxter created a craft brewery in Whitehorse that would service the north with quality beer and spirits while contributing to our local economy. Yukon Brewing is a fantastic example of a simple idea being grown into a household name through hard work and commitment to quality and superior customer service. I look forward to seeing all the creative concepts that they have come up with in the years to come.

Congratulations to all four of these excellent northern businesses on their milestone anniversaries and for their contributions to our communities while providing the high-quality products and services that matter to Yukoners.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to congratulate several businesses that deserve to be recognized for their longevity, service, and success. Air North — 45 years our Yukon's airline. It's the best little airline that caters to people and their life situations. If a traveller has a special request, the crew and staff will do everything they can to accommodate. Situations beyond their control, like a worldwide pandemic, are handled with realistic solutions. Well done, Joe Sparling and your amazing family and team. Here's to many, many more years of flying northerners, visitors, and business clients to their destinations.

Pelly Construction — 35 years. Well-known throughout Yukon as a leading mining and construction company, they provide expertise in mine site development, mining, and reclamation. They are a family-run business that prides itself on quality, integrity, and results. Keith and Jennifer Byram embody this statement.

Yukon Brewing — 25 years. Originally known as Chilkoot Brewing Company, owners Bob Baxter and Alan Hansen have proven to be masters of their craft. By creating a number of award-winning beers and Two Brewers spirits, they have established a devoted customer base made up of Yukoners and visitors alike, and they are always experimenting with new products. I love the product names and designs.

Yukon Soap Company — 10 years — is a small, rural soap and essential oil company owned and operated by Joella Hogan.

We gave her a wonderful tribute in this House when she won the award for Indigenous Business of the Year. From her business in the heart of the Yukon — Mayo — Joella incorporates local herbs and berries into her products. They are truly her own creation. Kudos to Joella and her team.

Yukoners know the importance of supporting local, and we have stressed it more and more during the past several years. It is an honour to say that these companies are the absolute best when it comes to supporting local events and charities. Even when belts have to be tightened, they are always stepping up to give, share, and support.

No matter what year each company is celebrating as being in business, whether it's one to 50, congratulations and keep on keeping on. Small and medium businesses are the backbone of our territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. White: I'm pleased to pay tribute on behalf of the Yukon NDP to Yukon Brewing, Pelly Construction, Yukon Soaps, and Air North. Each of these businesses was started with an idea and a desire to actively invest in work in the Yukon. We have heard from my colleagues in the House about the history and successes of these businesses, and there is indeed much to celebrate.

I wish to acknowledge the countless ways they each contribute to making lives better for Yukoners. Each of these businesses hire Yukoners. They provide training and support so their employees are successful. Each of these businesses contribute to countless community organizations and events. They donate their time, energy, money, and products to so many causes that in turn support Yukoners. Each of these businesses are invested in the success and the health and well-being of our Yukon communities. For that, not only are we lucky, but we're also incredibly grateful.

So, whether you're flying, building, relaxing, or bathing, Yukoners, we are in good hands.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a document that shows the Yukon Party's support for new placer mining laws.

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling today a letter to the Minister of Highways and Public Works entitled "Ongoing extra security costs in the Main Administration Building".

Ms. Blake: I have for tabling a letter to the ministers of Health and Social Services and of Justice regarding the recent deaths at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

I also have for tabling a letter to the Yukon's Member of Parliament regarding the need for regulation for psychologists from the Psychological Society of Yukon.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates Dylan Loblaw, the new Chief of the Ross River Dena Council, as well as all those elected as councillors.

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

THAT this House urges the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Education to live up to their promise to provide Hidden Valley School parents with a copy of the video from the November 9, 2021 online meeting between those two ministers, department officials, RCMP, and parents.

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

THAT this House commends the private sector for major increases in the amount of money being spent on residential building construction, including a 79-percent increase when comparing January 2021 to January 2022 and an increase on an annual basis of \$66 million in 2021 compared to 2020.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I move:

THAT this House congratulates the United States Senate on voting unanimously to make daylight saving time permanent in November 2023.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: Unless the minister was actually moving that, I believe he meant to say that he rose “to give notice” of that motion. I would just ask for clarification on that.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I totally flubbed that, so, yes, “I give notice of the following motion”.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon aviation industry

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Our government is continuing to provide vital support for the Yukon’s aviation industry. Our aviation system is essential for connecting our communities, building our economy, and linking the Yukon with the rest of the world. Recognizing this, our government has made significant investments in aviation over the past few years, including upgrades to equipment and facilities.

We have prioritized building stronger relationships with our aviation stakeholders to help better support this critical

sector. We created the Yukon Aviation Advisory Committee, which has been instrumental in giving us feedback on how we can better work with stakeholders and support these businesses.

We have developed a 10-year strategy called “Flight Path”. This helps to guide our investments in the Yukon’s aviation infrastructure for the benefit of all Yukoners and the territory’s air carriers.

However, we know that there is more work to be done to help grow and develop Yukon’s aviation system and the sectors that rely upon it. As the major airport in Yukon, the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport is a conduit for many important operations within the territory. It provides critical support for crucial medical and community services, serves as a vital connection for the tourism and resource sector, helps keep northern mining operational, and much more. With these considerations in mind, I am excited to announce that the Yukon government will be making a number of improvements at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. This year, we are upgrading the parallel runway, reconstructing the apron 1 panels, realigning taxiway golf, as well as adding in water and sewer at Chipmunk Place and finishing the resurfacing work on taxiway echo and the apron taxi lane.

This may not sound glamorous, Mr. Speaker, but it is, of course, important work that is needed for an effective and modern airport that will last for years to come.

We are also planning for the reconstruction of the main runway and the replacement of the airport maintenance facility, as well as other upgrades that will support the recovery of the aviation industry in the Yukon as well, as we continue to learn with COVID-19.

All of these critical upgrades will not only keep the Whitehorse airport safe and operational, but they will also help to build capacity to support future jet service. The aviation community has demonstrated tremendous tenacity and unparalleled dedication to continue their operations throughout the last two years. As we begin to emerge out of this pandemic, the government is committed to help this sector thrive in the growing demands of travel and tourism.

I would like to take a moment to recognize all of the air carriers, airport operations, pilots, medevac companies, and everyone involved in our highly capable aviation community. They have all gone above and beyond to keep our territory connected and safe. Their efforts have not gone unnoticed. Thank you for all that you do.

I look forward to sharing the progress of all of these exciting projects at the Whitehorse airport and continuing to make improvements to our airports and aerodromes across the territory.

Mr. Hassard: It is an honour to rise to today in response to this ministerial statement. For those of us who live north of 60, we know that the airport is the lifeline for all Yukon communities. It doesn’t matter where you live.

For communities such as Old Crow, it is the only way to receive supplies year-round. For communities such as Mayo, Faro, and Dawson, it drives the mining industry in their area. For communities such as Watson Lake and Haines Junction, it

provides a point for tourism. For Carmacks, Carcross, and pretty much every other Yukon community with an airport, it hosts many small aircraft and provides a pickup point for rural Yukoners needing critical air ambulance service.

For Whitehorse, it's the central hub for the entire territory. The Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport provides an outlet for some important services that Yukoners cannot do without. From cargo shipping and air ambulance service, to welcoming employees and goods for the mining sector, to training new pilots, and to, of course, passenger traffic — and a way for all Yukoners to access the south in just over two hours.

As the name implies, it also welcomes international traffic with the Condor flight from Europe that brings tourists to the territory. It also serves as an important backup landing spot for any major passenger or cargo aircraft that needs to be rerouted on one of North America's most important access routes to and from Asia and the Far East. That is why it is so important that the Whitehorse airport be maintained to the point where it not only meets but exceeds the standards of the day.

To quote the minister, the work may not sound glamorous, but this is important work that is needed for an effective and modern airport that will last for many years to come. We certainly agree.

But, as I just pointed out, the airport is so critical that it needs to be in tip-top shape, or better, at all times, so can the minister confirm the budget and timelines for this project? With uncertainty surrounding supply chains, can the minister also tell us if there's a backup plan in place to make sure the work is done in a timely manner to minimize disruption to air traffic and keep the project under budget?

I would also like to ask the minister for an update on the Yukon's Flight Path multi-year investment strategy. The final report from Stantec was issued in January 15, 2021, but since that time, we have not heard from the government as to what they are doing with this report.

The strategy makes several recommendations for investing in Yukon aviation, with an estimated expenditure of between \$217 million and \$356 million for capital investments. It also recommends \$15 million per year for increased O&M costs over 10 years.

Now, the report was issued over a year ago, so has the government provided a final response to the report yet? If so, where can we see it? Has it informed this work at the airport this summer?

I hope the minister can address these questions in his response.

Ms. Tredger: I'll start by echoing the importance of a welcoming, safe, and well-designed airport for our aviation and tourism industries. Where would our beloved local airline be without a modern airport to support its operations? I want to give a big thanks to all those airport and airline workers who have worked so hard on the front lines these past two years and beyond to keep us connected to the — capital O — Outside.

Regarding the projects described today, I understand that the need to do some of this work is due to the effects of melting permafrost.

My first question to the minister is: Have climate risk assessments been done for the new projects? What steps are being taken to mitigate the effects of climate change on these projects so that they can last for years to come?

I also understand that the new maintenance facility is being designed right now. I hope that climate change adaptation and mitigation will be considered in the planning process.

While we're talking about the airport, I would like to highlight the maintenance of the airport trail that passes around the perimeter of the airport. It's an important piece of infrastructure for active commuters from Hillcrest, Granger, Copper Ridge, McIntyre, and other neighbourhoods west of the highway. The minister and I have corresponded quite a bit about this. This trail is important, both as an active transportation route that helps to reduce our emissions, but also from an accessibility lens.

I am aware that the path itself is a city responsibility, but there are a number of decisions made by Highways and Public Works that impact the maintenance of the bike path. I have written the minister about the problem of snowplows on the highway dumping snow back onto the freshly cleared path. He has promised that he is working with the city on this. Could he give an update on that work?

There is so much opportunity for creative thinking here. Another problem on the airport trail is that, despite the city's best efforts to keep it clear, the steady winds blowing across the field of the airport cause large snowdrifts to be deposited onto the cleared path. It has been pointed out that the airport plow crews are already piling snow on the northwest corner of the airport and that this section doesn't get drifted in. Why not distribute these piles along the entire north end to act as a snow fence, saving the city time and money on clearing and keeping the trail open to commuters more often?

I guess what I'm really asking is that the maintenance of an active transportation route be prioritized and that we collectively take responsibility to make sure they are usable by everyone who needs them. Our expectation is that the Yukon government will continue to work with its partner governments to follow through on its commitment to our climate and ensure that active transportation is a priority.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Perhaps, just as a preliminary comment in responding to the Member for Whitehorse Centre, I can assure the member that I am certainly a strong proponent of active transportation — not really the topic of today. However, I do have regular meetings with the mayor of the City of Whitehorse and we are in conversation to coordinate plowing schedules and trying to ensure that the path that has been identified is open as much as absolutely possible, but thank you for your comments.

Mr. Speaker, all Yukon communities deserve access to infrastructure that works and meets their needs. This is why our government has made the biggest capital project investment in an airport in the history of our territory. We care about resilient

infrastructure and the generations to come and that we need to continue to support. Maintenance in our aviation industry is an everyday necessity. These types of upgrades may not always be easy to see. They are, as I said before, not often glittering makeovers to behold, but they go a long way to ensuring that safety and operational efficiency is top notch at our airports. Without these forward-looking investments today, tomorrow's ability to advance aviation services will be lost. These include accommodating direct flights to and from Frankfurt via Condor, which are slated to return this summer.

It is easy to fall behind if one ignores maintenance. Our government has long believed in being proactive in this regard. Mr. Speaker, the investments we continue to make to improve the Whitehorse International Airport will significantly extend the life of the parallel runway, the apron 1 panels, taxiway golf, and much more. As we noted in our five-year capital plan, the major reconstruction and upgrading work will take place from 2022-23 through fiscal year 2025-26.

Through the implementation of the Yukon First Nation procurement policy on these projects, Yukon First Nations will see tangible benefits to their citizens and businesses. As well, importantly, the secondary runway will be upgraded to handle 737 traffic to ensure continuous operations at the airport.

With more than \$51 million in the budget to support airline access to the territory for Yukoners, visitors, and businesses, our government continues to make historic investments in the Yukon's airports and aerodromes to support our aviation industry and tourism and increase economic opportunities throughout the territory. A further \$69 million will support a wide variety of community infrastructure projects in and around Yukon communities.

This will include an expansion to the Mayo aerodrome. As members will well know, the Mayo airport has truly been transforming over the past few years. In 2019, we worked with community partners in Mayo to rehabilitate the runway and purchase new maintenance equipment to help ensure that it received certification as an airport by Transport Canada. Since receiving that certification, modern, energy-efficient airfield lighting has been installed, leading to an expansion of services and capacity. Yukoners in Mayo are more connected than ever, as such, including through Air North flights until the pandemic reduced the demand for that service.

Meanwhile, in Dawson City, the runway has been paved. A new second apron and a new maintenance facility were built, as well as several other upgrades, such as the helicopter parking area, visual aids for pilots, and additional operational areas to support air carrier operations.

Burwash Landing is another community slated to see aerodrome site improvement, as you will have noticed highlighted in our budget. This is all part of building resilient communities that will improve the quality of life for all. I look forward to continuing this important work.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Moose management

Mr. Istchenko: In February, the Minister of Environment announced that the Liberal government would be imposing permit hunt authorizations in the Sifton-Miners Range and the South Canol moose management units. This is a proposal that was pushed by the Yukon government in the 2019 wildlife regulation proposal process. In response to the idea of the PHA for the South Canol moose management unit, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board recommended setting aside this proposal, allowing for more survey work and further public consultation.

Why did the minister not accept this recommendation from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Moose, as we know, is the most harvested species by Yukon hunters and is an important species culturally. In some areas, the combined licensed and subsistence harvesting of moose is at or above sustainable levels, particularly in areas that are easy to access.

As the member opposite indicated, starting in the 2022 hunting season, moose hunting will change in three moose management units. This will include establishing a threshold hunt for the Mayo moose management unit. This hunt will open on September 1, and the threshold will be set at 11 moose. In addition, the South Canol and Sifton-Miners moose management units will be put on permit. Yukoners can apply for a hunting opportunity for these areas through the permit hunt authorization lottery, starting April 22, 2022. Limiting harvest in those moose management units is essential to ensure that moose populations stay healthy and that licensed harvest opportunities remain available over the long term.

We have combined information gathered from harvesters, First Nations, and community partners with results from our targeted scientific surveys so that management decisions are informed with the best and most currently available data.

Mr. Istchenko: The question I asked was why the minister didn't follow the recommendation of the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, set aside the proposal, and allow for the survey work and further public consultation to work with those affected.

In their letter to the minister about this proposal, the Fish and Wildlife Management Board made it clear that there was strong opposition to this measure from the public. They also noted that imposing a PHA in the South Canol area would create issues in other parts of the Yukon. To quote from the advice to the minister, they said: "Many First Nations and Renewable Resources Councils have expressed serious concerns over the continued 'whack-a-mole' approach and urge the Government to look at moose management from a broader perspective."

Why did the minister not follow the advice of the Fish and Wildlife Management Board?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Specifically with respect to the South Canol moose management unit, the Ross River Dena Council has asked for licensed harvest restrictions in this area for many years, and we received a letter from the Chief of the Teslin Tlingit Council indicating that establishing permit areas for

licensed hunters would help address their concerns in this area. We, of course, acknowledge that this was not the recommendation of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

However, the decision to vary the board's recommendation and go forward with a regulation change was approved, as our evidence shows that immediate regulation of harvest is necessary to ensure sustainable moose populations in this area. A survey conducted in 2013 indicated that, to have a sustainable harvest, a total of 15 bulls for both licensed and First Nation hunters could be harvested in any one season. From 2017 to 2021, licensed harvests alone averaged 15 bulls, not including First Nation harvest.

So, while licensed harvest has been relatively consistent for many years, the estimated total harvest numbers indicate that it is at a level that is far above what is sustainable for this moose population, and licensed hunters are taking a disproportionate amount of the sustainable harvest. To put it another way, we need to see the moose population — my scientists say — roughly double in size from the 2013 survey for the current harvest numbers to be considered sustainable.

Mr. Istchenko: The advice of the Fish and Wildlife Management Board was for the government to look at moose management from a broader perspective. Like the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, we are concerned that the Liberal government is not fully considering the broader impacts of their decisions on wildlife management. Limiting access in one area creates pressure in another. In their letter to the minister about the particular proposal, the Fish and Wildlife Management Board said: "The lack of timely and concrete data in the proposal has eroded public confidence in the merit of the proposal and the need for a regulatory change."

So, if the board thought that pushing through this proposal in 2020 was eroding public confidence, what impact does the minister expect that pushing through this proposal two and a half years after the public consultation will have?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I suppose I will start at the outset by saying that, as you will know, in the budget — from last year's budget — approximately \$700,000 to \$750,000 was set aside for aerial moose surveys, including in the Sifton-Miners Range, so that we will be guided by the best data possible. I am also advised by my department that funds have been set aside to do an aerial survey of the South Canol in the upcoming season. We will be guided by that information as well.

These are adaptive measures that can be adapted as necessary, but we have received information and the best data available from my scientists and the discussions we had with the Ross River Dena Council that this area is under stress and restrictions are required.

I will be guided by science on this, and I said that we are committed to doing the surveys, which are expensive, but they will provide the data to all stakeholders, as it becomes available.

Question re: Whistle Bend school

Ms. Clarke: The Whistle Bend school is significantly overbudget. The spring budget of 2019 allocated approximately

\$25 million for the project. By November 2019, it had already gone overbudget to \$32 million. Then, by July 2021, the budget had ballooned to \$42.8 million. That is almost \$18 million overbudget from the original estimate in the 2019 budget documents.

Can the minister tell us if he expects the cost overruns related to this project to go even higher?

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

Building a new school in the community of Whistle Bend is a high priority for the Yukon government. Highways and Public Works has worked with the Department of Education and the project advisory committee throughout the project to ensure the school design incorporates important community elements.

As the member opposite will know, Ketz Construction Corporation was awarded the design/build contract last summer, and the detail design work is near completion. Some sitework started last fall, and we are expecting to be in construction of the foundation when the ground thaws this spring.

Construction completion of the school is planned for the winter of 2023-24.

I take issue with the member opposite's characterization of the cost inflation, but I will address that in a subsequent question with respect to how that has come to be. The design/build contract was awarded to Ketz Construction for ultimately \$42.8 million.

Ms. Clarke: When the school was first announced in 2019, the Liberals committed that the project would be completed by 2023. An August 2019 briefing note confirms that completion was targeted for June 2023.

Will the school be completed by 2023? Or will this be a broken promise by the Liberals?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: There is every intention of completing this project in 2023. I don't really believe that the member opposite is pointing to much of a delay, but when you have these very big projects — this one is approximately \$43 million — there are a lot of moving parts and contingencies. We also know that we are in the middle of a very tightened supply chain issue, so there could be issues.

Of course, we have been assured by the contractor that they will make best efforts to complete this project on budget and on time. I would also say that, given these supply chain issues and the global conflict that has arisen by virtue of this completely unjustified and illegal land war in the Ukraine, construction and material costs are unlikely to be getting any cheaper in the near future.

So, ultimately, we stand by the value-driven procurement that was made. Value procurement looks beyond the price to make sure that projects bring as much value as possible to the community and the territory. In this case, the winning bidder earned points for their schedule, training plans, subcontracting plans, northern experience, and First Nation participation.

Ms. Clarke: So, the project is overbudget and late, and the minister can't confirm if it will go even further overbudget or how late it will be.

Last spring, I asked the Highways and Public Works minister about traffic concerns in Whistle Bend and the new school. At first, he pointed the finger at the city. Eventually, he admitted that this is a Yukon government project and he bears some responsibility.

The February 2021 *Whistle Bend Elementary School Traffic Impact Assessment* in YESAB makes it clear that the school will increase traffic in and out of Whistle Bend.

What has the minister done to address the traffic concerns created by this project?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Overbudget, overtime — let's take one trip down memory lane. F.H. Collins — on one site, for some period of time, some design where the former —

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor and is speaking. I cannot hear him do his speech.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Where the former Yukon Party government wanted to build essentially on top of students while they were studying — there was obviously a large hue and cry, a big push still to have that school done, ultimately having to get a cookie-cutter middle school design from Alberta at the last moment — and the school started at full capacity, instantly, where that school probably will require expansion in the near future.

So, sure, I can take lessons from the Yukon Party on how you've managed school construction. We also note that there had not been an elementary school constructed in the Yukon in 25 years. This is going to be a leading-edge, energy-efficient, sustainable, very valuable education hub in the fastest growing community in the Yukon.

Question re: Mental health counselling services for children

Ms. White: Being young is tough. There's so much going on, and it can be hard to make sense of it all. So, now imagine that you lose your best friend to suicide or your mentor to an overdose. You need help; you need someone to talk to, but where do you turn?

Children and youth spend a lot of time in school. They form trusting relationships with their teachers, EAs, principals, and guidance counsellors, but people in these positions may not be trained clinical counsellors and have the tools to deal with these traumas. Early intervention is critical when it comes to mental health, but we know that accessing help right when you need it is easier said than done.

Will the minister tell us how many full-time clinical counsellors are currently working in Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Staffing levels in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services in the community hubs here in the Yukon Territory are based on several factors. Recruitment efforts are as follows — I will only be able to get to some of the communities, as time permits. Recruitment has recently been finalized in Watson Lake for one mental wellness and substance use counsellor to join the Watson Lake hub team.

Recruitment for one youth-focused support worker to work closely with the child and youth clinical counsellor who is already in that region is currently underway. One mental health nurse has also recently started to work in the Watson Lake hub area.

With respect to the Haines Junction and Carcross hub — and the Haines Junction hub that serves Haines Junction, Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay, and Carcross — recruitment is underway for one child and youth counsellor in Haines Junction and one to support the work in Carcross and Tagish. Recruitment is also underway for one child and youth counsellor in the Dawson City hub in addition to the community counsellor. One community counsellor will soon be starting there.

I have much more information. I will get on my feet again.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate hearing from the Minister of Health and Social Services, my question was clearly for the Minister of Education when I asked how many full-time clinical counsellors were working in Yukon schools.

In the City of Whitehorse alone, there are 19 public schools. There are another 14 schools for the rest of the Yukon, and on any given day, we have just under 6,000 students in Yukon schools. That is 6,000 young people who could benefit from support. Child and youth counsellors being shared by communities may be a start, but it just doesn't cut it. Having a clinical counsellor in every Yukon school will drastically improve the chances of getting kids help sooner rather than later.

We have lost too many lives in recent years — siblings, relatives, and friends. How can we expect our youth to recover from these traumas when they can barely, if at all, access the support they need?

My question is for the Minister of Education: Will the minister commit to opening up full-time clinical counsellor positions in all Yukon schools?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Part of the services that are provided through the mental wellness hubs include child, youth, and family treatment team child and youth counsellors who operate in schools here in the territory. Out of the Watson Lake hub, there is one resident child and youth and family treatment counsellor in that community. There are also bi-weekly visits to the school in Teslin. Out of Haines Junction and the Carcross hub, there is one resident child, youth, and family treatment counsellor in Carcross. The position is currently out for recruitment. In the meantime, there are bi-weekly visits from other counsellors.

Out of the Dawson City hub, there are two counsellors connected to child, youth, and family clients, plus one additional child, youth, and family treatment counsellor position. That one is out for recruitment, but in Mayo, there is one child, youth, and family treatment counsellor making bi-weekly visits, along with a resident clinical counsellor who is able to support complex child and youth needs.

Out of Carmacks — I have more information — there is one counsellor who provides monthly visits in both Pelly Crossing and Faro-Ross River to connect with child, youth, and

family clients; two counsellors are connected with the Carmacks school with weekly visits.

Ms. White: Again, having the Minister of Health and Social Services rise only goes to highlight the real struggles that people are experiencing in Yukon schools. Each person in a school or community with knowledge and training in clinical counselling is an asset. It puts every student in that school — every person in that community — one degree closer to the support that they often desperately need.

Well, we're in luck. A teacher can obtain a degree in clinical counselling through a two-year master's program. There are teachers here in the Yukon who have already pursued, and teachers who are currently pursuing, these qualifications. Unfortunately, with no financial supports in place and special leave not being given, we're missing a fantastic opportunity to invest in our territory's mental health.

Will the Minister of Education commit to supporting Yukon teachers in pursuing degrees in clinical counselling?

Hon. Ms. McLean: First of all, I would like to acknowledge the health, safety, and well-being of staff and students as one of our first priorities, absolutely. Supporting employees' well-being, as well as students' well-being, is a crucial part of our work at the Department of Education along with our other departments that we work with, such as Health and Social Services.

This is the third year impacted by COVID-19. I fully acknowledge that our schools and staff are experiencing pandemic fatigue, including increased anxiety and stress in schools. The recent wave that we have just gone through with Omicron has also increased fatigue and anxiety due to staff shortages and having to pivot to remote learning at a moment's notice.

We have worked with our school communities. We have requested an increase in this budget of \$400,000 for mental health supports in schools for the 2022-23 budget for both staff and students in recognition of mental health and wellness needs. We'll continue to work with our school councils. I have met with almost every single school council in the territory. I am meeting right now on a tour of working with First Nation governments to determine how we best coordinate all of our services. I would be happy to continue to have this conversation with members opposite.

Question re: Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement

Mr. Hassard: The RFP for the replacement of the Nisutlin Bay bridge closed in early February. At that time, there were two prospective companies shortlisted to submit prices. Since that time, there has been no public communication about the project. There has been considerable speculation that this project is substantially overbudget.

Can the minister confirm that the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement is overbudget?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As we know, the Nisutlin Bay bridge is a critical link along the Alaska Highway and an important landmark for Teslin.

In the spring of 2019, the Yukon government and the Teslin Tlingit Council signed a historic project charter to

replace the Nisutlin Bay bridge. Through that agreement, we have been working together to plan for a reliable structure — one that supports active transportation by including shoulders and a walkway so that pedestrians and cyclists can safely use the bridge, LED lighting along the walkway, and a trail that will provide safe, all-season access underneath the bridge.

Through the procurement process for the Nisutlin Bay bridge, we have been working closely with the Teslin Tlingit Council. Community engagement has been a key component to the success of this project so far. Mr. Speaker, I can advise that there have been many meetings in the community, both with the community and with the Teslin Tlingit Council.

In an effort to ensure all potential contractors truly understood what it was like to live and work in Teslin, we first conducted an RFQ — a request for qualifications — process.

We were fortunate to have selected two qualified contractors who, over the past several months, have come out and met the community, learned from both the mayor and chief, and discussed potential local opportunities. As indicated on February 3, 2022, the tender for the Nisutlin Bay bridge project closed.

I will continue in a subsequent answer.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the history lesson, but the question was actually about whether the project was overbudget.

Since the RFP closed in February, several local companies in the area have been trying to prepare for a busy construction season. In order to prepare, they need to know if and when the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement is going ahead.

Can the minister tell us when the government will make a decision about this project, when the contract will be awarded, and when construction is anticipated to actually begin, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We are currently in the process of evaluating both of the submitted proposals. I can advise that prices have come in higher than anticipated due to current global circumstances and the high premium on steel and other materials.

The higher prices are linked to a lot of factors related to the flooding events in BC's Fraser Valley region, which, of course, have led to many opportunities and demands for the repair of railway trestles, the Coquihalla, and others.

President Biden's administration's massive infrastructure project bill has certainly had inflationary pressures as well.

Of course, awarding this contract is a high priority for us. However, we must also do our due diligence to evaluate whether we are making the right decision on behalf of Yukon taxpayers before we proceed with this award.

Question re: Macaulay Lodge site development

Ms. Van Bibber: In November 2021, the government announced that they are planning to demolish Macaulay Lodge. Can the minister confirm what the plans and timelines are for the land that Macaulay Lodge currently occupies?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: It is great to get up again to respond to these important questions.

Highways and Public Works completed a building condition assessment and feasibility study report on Macaulay Lodge in 2020. The report compared repurposing Macaulay as housing, mixed-use space, or demolishing and building a new facility. As the Member for Porter Creek North has indicated in her question, based on the report, repurposing Macaulay Lodge was not economical. The building is over 50 years old and will require extensive renovations and energy and building code upgrades.

We are moving forward with the demolition of Macaulay Lodge due to concerns around public health and safety, the ongoing costs of maintaining the building, and the value of the land for potential housing development. A contract for the demolition of the building has been awarded to the Yukon First Nation business United North Construction Group. Work is expected to be completed by the end of this summer. This is a great example of a Yukon First Nation business using the tools in the First Nation procurement policy. The successful candidate included bid value reductions for being a Yukon First Nation business and hiring Yukon First Nations.

Importantly, Mr. Speaker, we have begun work with the Yukon Housing Corporation to plan for future housing development on this site.

Question re: *Motor Vehicles Act* amendments

Mr. Hassard: So, in 2018, the former Minister of Highways and Public Works announced that the government was rewriting the *Motor Vehicles Act*. On October 3, 2019 during the Speech from the Throne, the Liberal government announced that, before the end of their mandate, they would introduce legislation to overhaul the *Motor Vehicles Act*. That mandate ended with a snap election call in the spring of 2021 and, with it, a broken promise as this legislation was never tabled. Here we are in 2022 and the *Motor Vehicles Act* rewrites are now at least one year late.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us when Yukoners will finally see this legislation?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The short answer to the member opposite's question is that we are aiming to bring both the full bill and regulations to the House in the spring of 2024. I have certainly instructed my department to expedite it as much as possible. In speaking to my officials and to the former Minister of Highways and Public Works, I have been advised that some of these rewrites — I believe, in the Maritimes, in any event — have taken a long, or longish, time. By a “long time”, I mean approaching 10 years, so we are certainly still very focused.

What I can advise is that we are rewriting the *Motor Vehicles Act* because the existing act was written in the late 1970s. A new act is necessary to improve safety for all road users on Yukon highways. The new modernized act will address long-standing safety and administrative issues and fill gaps that have arisen in the time since the existing act was proclaimed.

There are many outstanding issues with the existing act and regulations. Updates are required to improve road-user safety and vehicle safety, accommodate advances in technology, adopt best practices, and ensure consistency with other

jurisdictions across Canada. We will get this right and we will have the most up-to-date legislation in the country.

Mr. Hassard: It has become clear that the previous Minister of Highways and Public Works was really good at saying that he was going to do things, just not actually so good at delivering on them. It seems that he just couldn't get 'er done.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us why this legislation, which was promised to be tabled in 2021, is so late?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the member opposite. As I indicated in my first response, working on both the new legislation and its accompanying regulations is ongoing. We are aiming to table the full new bill and regulations in the spring of 2024. There may have been a time in the prior Assembly when there may have been consideration for introducing the legislation without the regulations. That was ultimately deemed to be not advisable.

As indicated, I have directed the department to do everything that they can to expedite the timeline, and we want to ensure that we get it right and that the new legislation meets the current and future needs of Yukon.

But, as all members opposite and the driving public will appreciate, there are a lot of different areas in the *Motor Vehicles Act* that require attention. Given the fact that this has not been dealt with since the 1970s, things like cell phones, perhaps even fully automated cars, and other incredible safety enhancements were but a glint in the automakers' eyes at the time.

So, adaptations have to be made in order to rewrite this act.

Mr. Hassard: It's hard to believe that the previous minister may have tried to bring forward legislation that wasn't right. So, we'll walk through the timeline one more time for the new minister.

The government announced this new legislation in 2018. In 2019, they promised that the legislation would be introduced by 2021. 2021 comes and goes with no new legislation. Now the government is saying that the legislation won't be here until 2024 — four years late.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that by this time, the consultation conducted in 2019 will be five years old and out of date. What is the government going to do about that, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question once again.

The Yukon *Motor Vehicles Act* has not been significantly updated since it was first written in the late 1970s. Rewriting the act is necessary to improve safety for all road users on Yukon highways.

This large, complex piece of legislation touches on a wide range of issues important to Yukoners. We are working with stakeholders, municipalities, and First Nations to ensure that their interests are taken into consideration. As the member opposite did indicate, public engagement took place in 2019. At that point, we received more than 2,800 responses.

To answer his question, Highways and Public Works continues to engage with targeted stakeholders on specific

issues to ensure that the new act will meet the needs of Yukoners.

So, yes, there is a high degree of complexity. I have received many different packages — discrete packages — on different issues — all manner of things and all manner of different issues and technological advancements. Making sure that the act is consistent with *Criminal Code* provisions, vehicle-dimension issues, lift kits — you name it. There are a lot of issues.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Government House Leader's report on length of Sitting

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 75(4), to inform the House that the House Leaders have met for the purpose of achieving agreement on the maximum number of sitting days for the current Sitting. I am informing the House that the results are that there shall be a maximum of 32 sitting days, with the 32nd sitting day being Thursday, April 28, 2022.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare the current Sitting shall be a maximum of 32 sitting days, with the 32nd sitting day being Thursday, April 28, 2022.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Bill No. 14: *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)* — Third Reading

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

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 14, entitled *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to the members of the Assembly who have contributed to Bill No. 14 coming to this stage in the process. In order to support the Law Society of Yukon's policy and, most importantly, to protect the public interest, the amendment before us today is necessary.

The proposed amendment will ensure that the Law Society of Yukon is able to fulfill the responsibilities laid out in the act in a responsible and efficient manner and will reduce the red tape affecting out-of-territory corporations that wish to be licensed to provide legal services here in the territory to Yukoners.

The Department of Justice has worked to ensure that the amendment is compatible with concerns that have been raised by the Law Society of Yukon.

Passing this amendment supports the healthy operation of necessary law society processes and promotes Yukoners' access to legal services, justice, and legal remedies.

With respect to implementation, we are proposing to bring the amendment into force upon assent. This will allow the Law Society of Yukon to implement its processes, as intended, as soon as possible, should this Legislative Assembly pass Bill No. 14.

In conclusion, I would like to recommend to the members of this Legislative Assembly to support the passing of Bill No. 14, *Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022)*.

I appreciate the input they have had.

Mr. Cathers: As we have noted before, this is an area where the Minister of Justice and this Liberal government didn't get it right the first time they amended the act and recognized that this was identified as an error by the law society, and the government is now taking steps to correct the error they made in this legislation. We don't have any concerns with the correction suggested.

Ms. White: I agree with my colleagues. It is about making things work better, and we look forward to passing this legislation.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the comments, and I understand that to be the support from the members opposite. I will just clarify that I am assuming that the Member for Lake Laberge is not criticizing the staff and the people who work at the Department of Justice or the law society. In fact, I don't have any trouble bringing forward a matter to correct something to make it work better on behalf of Yukoners and to make sure that there is clarity in our legislation.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: 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 17 yea, nil nay.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 14 agreed to

Speaker: The yeas have it.

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

Bill No. 15: *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 15, standing in the name of the Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move that Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 15, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, as I have stated previously, ensuring that our legislation is accurate and without mistake makes up part of the mandate for the Minister of Justice. From time to time, as minister, I have undertaken to bring miscellaneous statute law amendment acts to this Legislative Assembly to correct minor errors and provide clarity and accuracy for Yukoners.

This latest version of this kind of legislation amends 25 acts in total, making it rather small, compared to some previous versions.

Such amendments include: fixing numbering errors, language errors or inconsistencies, such as where one word is used interchangeably with another in an act and needs correction for consistency; it includes amending incorrect references to other acts; to fixing consequential legislative change omissions; or other such technical changes, such as name changes of organizations.

I have heard from members that they support this kind of bill to be brought before the House from time to time. I will assure this House that the government will certainly look at bringing more of these bills, should they be required.

I would like to thank all the departments across Government of Yukon for working together to identify items for this bill to be brought forward. I would also like to thank the staff at the Department of Justice for supporting this work, for their attention to detail, and for their patience and perseverance.

Mr. Cathers: That was a long introductory speech by the minister for something that — these bills are quite common. They are housekeeping in nature. They are correcting minor issues in legislation that have been identified by staff. That was a much longer speech than this warranted.

Ms. White: I actually think that this is an example of why we did a tribute to legislative drafters in the fall of 2021. Correcting mistakes in 25 pieces of legislation, including

spelling errors that many of us would have just glanced over, when we started — I thank the folks for the work in identifying those problems, and I'm looking forward to having these 25 pieces of legislation corrected.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm sorry that eight sentences was too long for the member opposite, but I think this deserves to be spoken about here in this Legislative Assembly, regardless of how mundane some members might think it is. I'm pretty sure that the RCMP are happy to not be called the Royal Canadian Mountain Police any longer. That is what one of these errors corrects, to properly name them as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

I thank all the members for their consideration of this bill. I look forward to it passing.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

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 16 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 15 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 15 has passed this House.

Bill No. 205: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 205, standing in the name of the Hon. Sandy Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 205, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As I indicated during second reading, if passed, this bill will provide spending authority for April and May of this fiscal year. The interim supply bill, which has a total value of approximately \$410.7 million, will ensure that government services continue and that employees, Yukon businesses, and government contractors continue to get paid until the main estimates become law.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that this Chamber support Bill No. 205 so that the government can continue to provide the services that Yukoners expect and rely upon.

Mr. Cathers: I would note that we do recognize the need to have interim spending authority in place before the beginning of the new fiscal year, but since this is a budget bill and a confidence matter, we will, of course, be voting against the budget bill and voting against the Liberal government.

Ms. White: Unsurprising to many in this House, in different cases, the NDP have supported interim supply bills for both Liberal governments in the past and Yukon Party governments in the past, because we believe that the work we do here should not hold up the business that public servants do in supporting Yukoners.

Unlike my colleague, the NDP will be voting in support of the interim supply bill.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: With that, I will take my seat, and we will move on.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 205 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 205 has passed this House.

Bill No. 12: *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 12, standing in the name of the Hon. Sandy Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 12, entitled *Income Tax Amendments Act, (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As I indicated in second reading, and also in Committee of the Whole, Bill No. 12 is primarily a housekeeping item — a riveting one but housekeeping no less. For this reason, my remarks will be brief, as I am prepared to close debate on this bill.

This bill was prompted by federal changes and the need to maintain harmony between our territorial tax act and its namesake at the federal level. The changes are mainly about administrative provisions and have no fiscal impacts and no new taxes or changed tax rates for Yukoners therein or businesses or First Nation governments, for that matter. That does not diminish the importance of this bill. The bill is fundamentally about fulfilling obligations. We have the obligation to Canada, by virtue of our tax collection agreement. We have obligations to Yukon self-governing First Nations through various tax-sharing agreements, as well, and finally, we have an obligation to ensure that every Yukon tax filer has a fair and efficient tax system. With the passing of this bill, we will fulfill these obligations.

The bill also supports businesses by deferring the coming-into-force dates under the business investment tax credit, and we remain committed with this bill to expand participation in this program for the benefit of Yukoners and Yukon businesses.

I would once again like to thank all members for the previous discussion and debate on this bill and I look forward to its assent.

Mr. Cathers: This bill is largely housekeeping in nature, and I don't have additional comments to add beyond what was said earlier.

Ms. White: Just in ending the debate today, I again want to thank the Department of Finance and the folks who focused on the tax amendments here that we are seeing for the really thorough briefing and especially for the side-by-side of the legislative changes. This is just a pitch to other departments: When we're making changes to legislation, being able to see it in front of you — the old legislation to what the new will say — is really helpful. Thank you to Minister Clarke and his team for making that available.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I look forward to the vote on this particular legislation.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: 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 17 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 12 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 12 has passed this House.

Bill No. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second Reading, Bill No. 203, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to begin debate on the *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*. Bill No. 203 is the second supplementary estimate and the third appropriation for the fiscal year.

The supplementary estimates are an opportunity to take stock of the fiscal year and to see how our commitments are benefitting Yukoners. They allow us to check in to see if the funding allocated for the year is meeting the needs of Yukoners in our various industries or to make adjustments if there are areas that require further attention.

More importantly, however, the supplementary estimates allow the opportunity to account for unexpected circumstances. While traditionally this has taken the form of flooding events, wildfires, or other natural weather events, more recently, these adjustments have been needed to make sure that Yukoners and our economy remain healthy through the pandemic.

I think that we can all agree that the last two years have been nothing but uncertain, to say the least. While this continues to be the case with the emergence of new variants and improving vaccination rates, this government has done significant forecasting work to ensure that we plan for these unexpected scenarios as early in the fiscal year as possible.

In the 2021-22 budget, this government introduced a COVID-19 contingency fund for the first time. This fiscal shock absorber created a flexible fund that has allowed us to respond to unexpected circumstances caused by the pandemic with no impact to our fiscal framework and without affecting the surplus/deficit position. While this tool gives us significant flexibility to respond to emerging challenges related to the pandemic, it also ensures that budgeting remains entirely accountable and transparent, as these funds still need to be introduced, debated, and voted on in the Legislature before the spending is authorized.

In the fall, we made use of this fund in order to absorb \$4.5 million in costs to support the Yukon's tourism sector to ensure that Yukoners could continue to access the COVID-19 call centre and, lastly, to make sure that Yukon government buildings are effectively cleaned and sanitized for the safety of those who visit them and also work inside them.

Today, we are once again drawing on this fund to respond to new challenges and to reduce the fiscal impact of COVID-19 on the territory. This new budgeting initiative has allowed us greater flexibility in managing the pandemic while also keeping our finances healthy. It is thanks to the innovative ideas like this that, two years into the pandemic, we are in a position where we can better plan for these expenses at the start of the

year, even though they may not occur later or may occur. This is why this supplementary estimate reflects fewer new costs than previous years.

In addition to further supporting the territory as it navigates the latest wave of the pandemic, this year, the second supplementary estimates also help to deliver on commitments relating to early learning and childcare, ensuring continued community safety and wellness, and also reflecting adjustments to the Yukon's tax revenue.

Mr. Speaker, this year, the *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* forecasts an increase of \$30.3 million in new operation and maintenance and capital spending. This is made up of \$24.7 million in new O&M and just \$5.6 million in new capital. This increase in new expenditures is offset by a decrease of \$16.5 million in capital and an additional \$58.1 million in additional revenues.

The bulk of those revenues are the result of additional taxes and general revenues, as well as recent grants from Canada. These changes are forecasted to result in a revised surplus of \$25.5 million, which reflects a significant improvement in the government's fiscal picture from the first supplementary estimates, as folks will recall.

The year-end debt is forecast to be \$96.6 million, which reflects a reduction of \$86.6 million from the first supplementary estimates. This is primarily the result of adjustments following the tabling of the Public Accounts in October as well as the change in the surplus/deficit position.

Overall, these changes show a territory that is on the path — well on the path — to recovering from the effects of COVID-19 while supporting a number of commitments that will improve the lives of Yukoners.

With respect to O&M, in addition to the \$24.7 million in new expenditures, the government will also see an increase of \$3.1 million in new recoveries. While this spending does reflect the \$11.4 million in COVID-related funding, the majority of these appropriations, or \$13.3 million, help move the needle on other Government of Yukon priorities and services in Yukon for Yukoners.

Initiatives like expanding universal childcare will ensure that more families have access to high-quality, affordable health care. As I mentioned in the fall, we believe that all families should have access to high-quality, affordable childcare.

Expanding this program in the Yukon provides children an opportunity for learning and development in those early years of life. It also provides a continuum of a child's education while putting more disposable income into the hands of families, allowing parents and guardians to have more choices if they want to work outside of the home.

The universal childcare model is possible due to a collaboration between Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations, childcare operators, the Government of Canada, and partners across the Yukon.

We are also further supporting the film location incentive fund with this bill. The film location incentive encourages production companies from outside of the territory to film in the Yukon and to hire and train Yukoners. Using this fund,

companies can receive: a rebate of up to 25 percent of their expenses on Yukon goods, services, and labour; 25 percent of wages paid to mentors who train Yukoners; and 50 percent of travel costs to Yukon. To receive support, companies must meet strict requirements for hiring or training Yukoners, which helps to support film development opportunities here in the territory.

This supplementary estimate also supports continued community safety and investigation work in the territory by meeting Yukon First Nation community policing, the collective agreement requirements for RCMP, and other RCMP funding requests.

It is also important that we continue to keep our roads safe and accessible. Money in this appropriation bill will ensure that emergency washouts and flood damage can be repaired on all roads in the Yukon in a timely fashion.

In addition to our roads, the Yukon must also ensure that the territory's aviation sector remains healthy. Phase 3 of the federal government's support in the aviation industry will maintain continued services to and from the territory and its remote communities. Aviation is critical to the north, and our government continues to work with our federal partners to support Yukon's aviation industry to keep the communities connected.

Throughout the pandemic, Yukon's air carriers have transported essential goods, medical supplies, and health care workers to and from the territory. Phase 3 funding is fully recoverable from Canada and ensures that the aviation sector continues to provide these services that Yukoners can rely upon.

This government also remains committed to reconciliation on all fronts. This is why this supplementary estimate includes funding for the demolition of the Lower Post residential school and ongoing work to identify and locate unmarked graves. While the facility, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is located in BC, a significant number of students were taken from Yukon First Nation communities.

Many survivors and their family members live in the Yukon, and the devastating impacts of residential schools continue to be felt throughout the territory.

Our transfer to the Daylu Dena Council was a Yukon Forum commitment and supports the efforts, as an important step forward on the path of reconciliation. We must continue to move forward, learning from the past and acknowledging present realities, as well, but building a strong, healthier future together.

As I mentioned before, there is also some additional funding to continue seeing the territory through the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes targeted relief for businesses impacted by the state of emergency and rebates to supplement the cost of purchasing the technology required to scan the QR codes for proof of vaccination for Yukon businesses and non-governmental organizations.

The Yukon emergency relief program supports Yukon businesses and non-governmental organizations that are financially impacted by public health measures that were introduced under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. The

program focuses on funding eligible fixed costs for businesses and non-recoverable financial commitments, or expenses, incurred by non-governmental organizations for events cancelled or significantly altered due to the new public health measures. The vaccine verification rebate provides a 50-percent rebate toward the purchase of equipment required for the efficient and accurate tracking of vaccine status, up to a maximum rebate of \$500.

This government recognizes our local businesses and organizations for their commitment to adhering to new public health measures introduced to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to protect the health and safety of all Yukoners. We are very grateful to these folks in the local businesses and organizations. These programs help to ease the burden faced by businesses and provides a sense of stability during these uncertain times.

The Government of Yukon will continue to monitor the economic impact of COVID-19 and provide support where it's needed. This is why we are also including new financial and employment supports for Yukon businesses in these supplementary estimates. Under the new stream, the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement — TNASS for short — all bars and restaurants throughout the territory are eligible to receive up to \$20,000 per month, up to \$60,000, to break even. This funding is available to cover both fixed and variable costs, including payroll. All bars and restaurants are also eligible to receive a one-time sector supplement of \$10,000.

Now, eligibility under this new stream will be retroactive to November 8, 2021, when the Government of Yukon declared the state of emergency in response to COVID-19. To help protect business costs, the Yukon Liquor Corporation will provide bars and restaurants with a rebate on their liquor licence fee for the 2022-23 licence year.

Finally, we continue to fund the COVID-19 response through efforts in the Department of Health and Social Services. Funds included as part of this appropriation bill will support ongoing costs related to testing, vaccine rollout, rapid test implementation, and self-isolation costs. It will also go toward supporting additional needs within the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

All of these requirements under the Department of Health and Social Services are being funded using the COVID-19 contingency fund. This means that the \$5 million in funding required for these initiatives can be financed, while having no impact on the government's fiscal framework. \$4 million in funding from the Department of Economic Development's COVID-19 supports is also being funded using this contingency fund. This drawdown of \$9 million total also means that the fund still has \$1.5 million in remaining capacity.

Mr. Speaker, while this supplementary estimate includes new funding for several initiatives, the changes in O&M also include several new recoveries. The Government of Yukon will see \$3.1 million in new O&M recoveries reflected in this appropriation bill.

As I mentioned earlier, there are also some changes to capital spending included in the supplementary estimates. Overall, new capital spending consists of \$5.6 million, none of

which is COVID-related. While there is some new capital spending, decreases in other areas result in a net decrease of \$10.8 million in capital.

Now, the single largest capital expenditure included in the supplementary estimate is for the Safe at Home Society. This funding will go toward renovating and refreshing the former High Country Inn, adding a total of 55 supportive housing units to the community. These housing units will support Yukoners who are in uncertain housing situations, experiencing — or at risk of — homelessness, or living in temporary shelters because of the pandemic.

The Government of Yukon recognizes the significant opportunity this funding represents to support women, youth, and indigenous members of our community in need of supportive housing. The partnership displayed across all levels of government helps to address the unique housing pressures that we see in the territory and advance Yukon's fight to reduce homelessness during the pandemic.

This supplementary estimate also supports access and justice for Yukon victims of crime by improving interview spaces and providing testimonial aids to be more consistent with national best practices for child and youth victims and witnesses.

As far as decreases, the largest reductions are seen in the Yukon Development Corporation. This is largely the result of projects being deferred to the 2022-23 fiscal year. As a result, members will see a decrease of \$12.2 million for the corporation, as work on the Atlin hydro project, Beaver Creek solar project, Haeckel Hill wind project, and Kluane wind project shift to next fiscal year. These decreases are partially offset by increased work, seen as part of the Mayo-to-McQuesten transmission line and the grid-scale battery project.

Other notable decreases to capital spending can be seen in the Selkirk parking lot reduction, the Burwash school, and the Dempster fibre project. The latter is the result of an earlier than expected seasonal change and issues with supply availability as a result of supply chain issues, which have affected several construction projects. As a result of these decreases, the supplementary estimates also show a reduction in associated recoveries totalling \$13.1 million.

We remain committed to all of these projects, and we will continue to deliver on our capital plan in the coming fiscal year.

I also look forward to providing further details and breakdowns on the funding and recovery adjustments during Committee of the Whole. Before I conclude my remarks here today in second reading, I would like to speak to the changes in revenue as part of the bill.

As I mentioned earlier, the supplementary estimates include a significant increase in revenues. This \$58.1-million increase is the result of a large increase in tax revenue to the tune of \$33 million, slight increases to the cannabis transfer and investment revenue, and \$25 million in federal funding from Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

With respect to tax revenue, this is primarily the result of an improved outlook for a total and average personal income in the territory and reflects the strength of growing salaries for those working in the Yukon. Previous forecasts were

conservative and assumed that the COVID-19 pandemic would negatively impact personal income both in terms of total income from all taxpayers as well as the average income of taxpayers. This increase is partly due to temporary emergency federal income supports, but a large proportion of the increase is expected to continue into future years as well, which is good.

The \$25 million in revenue that reflects a grant from CIRNAC late in the fiscal year will correspond with an equivalent amount of spending on future initiatives as part of our commitments under *Our Clean Future*.

Overall, these supplementary estimates show a Yukon government that continues to support Yukoners while improving upon its forecasting and budgeting earlier in the year by building tools like the COVID-19 contingency fund into this year's budget. This government has reduced the in-year fiscal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our finances. This type of innovative approach to budgeting continues to demonstrate this government's sophisticated approach to its finances and ensures that we are well positioned to navigate unexpected situations as they emerge. With this flexibility in hand, we will continue to support Yukoners not just through COVID, but through any challenges that we face as a territory.

I would like to once again thank every Yukoner and every public servant contributing to the efforts over the last few years on COVID — that is for sure.

I invite members to treat Committee of the Whole as an opportunity to increase further detail on any of the areas that are included in the supplementary estimates. With that, I will thank you, Mr. Speaker, for my time here in the Legislature today.

Mr. Cathers: I'm going to be quite brief today at the second reading and look forward to asking questions later on in Committee of the Whole.

We have learned from past experience that if we ask the Premier questions at second reading, he is either unwilling or unable to provide those answers until officials are present. So, I look forward to moving on to the Committee of the Whole stage later on.

Ms. White: Today, in speaking to the supplementary budget, the one thing that I want to highlight is that this is drastically different from when I was first elected in 2011. Today we see that there are nine departments up, and one is because of a reduction. Again, earlier I acknowledged the work of the Department of Finance, but I think that is another note to make because there were changes between the government of 2011 and 2016 that happened and that started to change the way that budgeting was done in the Yukon. I think, now that we have been in it for a while, there is a testament. Instead of debating every single department within the budget, we're down to nine.

So, like my colleague from Lake Laberge, we look forward to questions in the departmental debates.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take an opportunity to talk about the two departments that I have that are coming in the supplementary budget.

I will start with the Public Service Commission. The Public Service Commission is a central agency department and it is responsible for our public service. It delivers a range of government-wide human resource programs and services, and it has consistently risen to the challenges brought forward by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to just start off by thanking all public servants for their hard work over the past couple of years. Our public servants have ensured that Yukoners are continually able to access the services that they need, all while managing our own response to the pandemic as an organization.

Over the past year, the commission has worked effectively to respond to the organization's evolving human resource management needs. These needs were exacerbated this past summer when the territory experienced its first substantial wave of COVID-19, as well as significant floods across the territory.

The Public Service Commission leads the human resource management team, which has played a key role in mobilizing the talent, skills, and abilities from within the public service to support the COVID-19 surge response, the vaccine rollout, and the flood response.

Effectively, what they did was that they set it up so that if there was a department trying to put in extra work, they put a call across the whole of our public service. They very quickly moved people around to try to make sure that the work we were doing for Yukoners was there at all times.

The commission also supported efforts to increase the vaccination rates in the territory and to keep Yukoners safe as we implemented our temporary mandatory vaccine requirement for public servants based on the recommendations from our acting chief medical officer of health. In addition to supporting the pandemic response efforts, the commission also has a duty to support the organization's employee experience. In 2021-22, we were in the second year of the *People Plan*. This is a government-wide approach to the way we work together. It is intended to guide the way we recruit, retain, and sustain the public service. A crucial part of our work toward creating and engaging an inclusive workplace experience is supporting employee well-being, health, and safety.

The commission has provided and will continue to provide support and information to departments and employees regarding stress and mental health. While some of the initiatives under the *People Plan* were paused due to the pandemic, the Public Service Commission and the human resources community have continued to be guided by the vision and goals of the *People Plan* as we have responded to the pandemic.

In addition, a new metrics and analytics branch in the Public Service Commission began work to develop a human resource metrics framework for use within government. By developing this framework, the commission is able to provide managers and decision-makers with consistent, timely, and

meaningful data to inform our path to recovery and the direction of the service.

I am happy to share that, in this upcoming year, several *People Plan* initiatives will be underway, including an external review of psychological health and safety within the organization, streamlining our human resource practices, digitizing where possible, and building the capacity of managers and supervisors to lead effectively in these difficult times. The commission will focus efforts on modernizing recruitment practices, including researching and identifying any potential barriers to recruitment for indigenous candidates and other under-represented groups and exploring creative ways to recruit and retain employees to fill critical positions in rural communities. Overall, we are positioned to adapt as needs arise, and the Public Service Commission remains fiscally responsible.

There are two changes in the Public Service Commission's supplementary budget resulting in a total increase of just under \$2 million. Most of this is an increase of \$1.3 million to the employee future benefits fund. This amount is an estimate based on regular actuarial review and varies each year, depending on factors such as accumulated service, wage rates, and demographic factors such as the rate of retirement.

The second change to the supplementary budget is an increase of just over \$600,000 for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board's payments fund. The primary driver of the increased premium rates for the government rate group is rising claim costs relating to identification of psychological injuries.

Again, my sincere thanks to all of our public servants for all of the work they have been doing — I guess I'm saying since the fall budget, but in particular over the past two years.

Turning briefly to the supplementary budget for the Yukon Development Corporation, I thank the Premier for his comments. The corporation has reduced its capital budget by \$12,243,000 for the 2021-22 fiscal year. These funds are part of two multi-year federal funding programs under the Arctic energy fund and the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan. This is the green infrastructure stream that ends on March 31, 2028.

The funds from these programs can and will be accessed in coming years. Delays due to COVID-19 and supply chain issues have had an impact on project timelines for everyone, and the reduction in spending for this year for the Arctic energy fund is also a reflection of that reality. We have two approved multi-year projects that are underway. These are the Haeckel Hill wind project in Whitehorse and the Kluane N'tsi wind project.

I am also pleased to say that the Dome Road solar project in Dawson has recently been completed, making this project the third one to sell energy to the Yukon's electrical grid under the independent power producer policy.

In addition, Yukon government's funding for the Atlin hydro expansion project is being brought forward and will be included in the 2022-23 main estimates. These decreases are offset slightly by changes in the funding timing for two Yukon Energy projects funded under the Investing in Canada

infrastructure plan — again, under the green infrastructure stream. There is no change to the total amounts being provided to Yukon Energy for the two projects.

The Mayo-McQuesten transmission line project is complete and in service, while construction of the grid-scale battery storage system is moving ahead with an estimated in-service date of March 2023.

All of these projects are a clear demonstration of how our government is supporting sustainable development in the territory and continuing to enhance our electrical network to facilitate the integration of renewable electricity generation with the existing facilities. The refurbishment of the Mayo-McQuesten transmission line not only improves grid stability and provides more reliable service to Keno, but also significantly reduces the carbon footprint of Victoria Gold's Eagle Gold operation, and it is an excellent example of how we are promoting more sustainable development across the territory.

Meanwhile, the grid-scale battery storage project will help reduce the amount of fossil fuel consumed to generate electricity in our grid-connected Yukon communities. Basically, the batteries will provide energy during the daytime, when we have our peaks, and then we don't have to turn on the diesels or the LNG plant. And then in the evenings, when the demand is low on the system, we will recharge those batteries, and that is the way in which they reduce our greenhouse gas emissions — our fossil fuel use and our greenhouse gas emissions. It can also enhance the value of renewable electricity generation facilities by storing electricity until it is most needed, which is what we were talking about with some of those other projects.

Finally, I would just like to reiterate that we are pleased to report that all of these projects are advancing, in spite of the challenging circumstances brought on by COVID-19. I applaud all of the community-based projects which are working to bring us renewables and also applaud the work of the Energy Corporation and all of the proponents for their dedication in this regard.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to take the opportunity at the beginning of my remarks today to thank the department staff, who have all been instrumental in ensuring that we have a budget that supports all Yukoners, particularly, in my case, thanking the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice. But as we know, the Department of Finance works extremely hard to make sure that we bring forward accurate and timely reports on budgets and explanations in those budgets as to what is happening here in the territory and the priorities that we are responding to, on behalf of Yukoners.

As we can all appreciate, living in the pandemic for the past two years has been a very challenging time for all Yukoners and all Canadians. Yukoners have made sacrifices and have done our part to keep our most vulnerable population safe and our health care system from being overwhelmed. The arrival of the Delta variant in the past fall and, most recently, the Omicron wave of COVID have hit the Yukon hard. We've

had more cases during these last two waves than in the 18 months prior and unfortunately more deaths as well.

Mr. Speaker, again, I offer my sincere condolences to the families and to the loved ones of those lost to COVID. One death is too many, and 22 deaths here in the Yukon Territory is heartbreaking. It has been a long and challenging fight against this pandemic and COVID-19, and it is not going away yet, but thanks to the effort of all Yukoners, we have avoided the most severe health and economic impacts of the pandemic. It has been another challenging year for everyone who works in Health and Social Services.

As elected officials, we need to thank everyone in the department and others in the front lines for their dedication and their hard work to keep us safe.

Increases in this supplemental budget to support Yukon's response to COVID-19 specifically are there to manage the additional pressures related to the surge in COVID-19 due to the Delta and Omicron variants and to support the COVID-19 vaccine process. We fully expect that COVID-19-related costs will decrease in 2022-23; let's hope, Mr. Speaker, that we are correct.

The *Forging Ahead* document aligns with the expenditures in this supplementary budget. The *Forging Ahead* goals are designed to protect vulnerable populations and to enhance the well-being of Yukoners. Our response, as outlined in *Forging Ahead*, is supported by six pillars. These pillars are: supporting First Nation and community partnerships; vaccinations; testing and surveillance; surge capacity; social supports and vulnerable people; and public health measures.

In total, there have been 159.2 temporary FTEs included in the 2021-22 COVID budget to address the Yukon's ongoing pandemic management. These temporary FTEs have been needed because ultimately COVID is responded to by people — front-line people. They are screeners, nurses, greeters, social workers, testers, immunizers, rapid response teams, and public health experts across the territory who have, and are, keeping us safe. Without the necessary Health and Social Services professionals, we could not have met the needs of Yukoners; however, in this second supplementary budget, it is noted — please — that there are no additional FTEs for 2021-22.

Vaccinations continue to be our best defense during this pandemic. Vaccinations are safe and effective. While the demand for vaccines is now slowing, our territory-wide vaccination efforts do continue. We continue providing booster vaccinations to those Yukoners who received their second doses six months ago or longer, and we continue providing first and second dose vaccines to all Yukoners aged five and up. I continue to urge all eligible Yukoners to get vaccinated. We do not know what the next variant of concern will be — whether it will be milder or more severe — but we do know that getting vaccinated is our best defense.

Our comprehensive testing strategy continues to be another foundation of the COVID-19 response and a pillar of the *Forging Ahead* document. The Yukon's testing approach includes the use of a number of different types of tests, which group into three categories. They are: lab-based testing; point-of-care testing; and at-home self-tests. All types of testing that

have been used will continue to be used, as we manage this pandemic. Our testing strategy will continue to evolve, based on evidence and the guidance of the office of the chief medical officer of health. For example, with the arrival of new rapid-testing resources and an increase in cases related to Omicron since January, our lab-based PCR testing resources have been focused on populations with the highest risk of negative impacts from COVID-19.

At-home self-tests are recommended to be used for lower-risk individuals and when a person is showing symptoms. These self-tests have now been distributed widely throughout Yukon. They are available at schools, childcare centres, and to the general public throughout the Yukon. Pickup locations are listed on yukon.ca. Here in Whitehorse, they are available right next door to this building at the tourism building, as of early March this year.

We have distributed more than 100,000 rapid antigen self-tests. Members and Yukoners who are listening might remember that those tests come in large batches. We have to have Yukoners work very hard to repackage them so that they can be distributed in smaller packages. It is an enormous amount of work and dedication.

Of course, funds have been, and continue to be, used to support the acting chief medical officer of health in monitoring the environment, including assessing epidemiological models and providing recommendations to Yukoners — all vital to combat this virus.

Supports for vulnerable populations are another key pillar of our response. Vulnerable populations include Yukoners living in our continuing care homes, people living with disabilities, those on social assistance, and those who are precariously housed or even homeless. Due to the size of this population and the number of 24/7 facilities that the Department of Health and Social Services manages, some of our additional funding continues to be spent on cleaning and screening to ensure that we comply with best practices and the recommended guidelines of the office of the chief medical officer of health. Continuing Care alone, Mr. Speaker, has approximately 300 long-term care beds and more than 700 home care clients.

The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and its guests also continue to be greatly affected by the pandemic. We are mitigating the risk of transmission among this vulnerable population through enhanced services and supports, including cleaning and infection control measures and the implementation of social distancing measures. As I noted — I think that it was only yesterday, but maybe it was last week — I am pleased to say that the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter is returning very soon to its regular services and will be able to serve more individuals.

One example of continued measures is that the department continues contracting with local hotels to house clients who are unable to be accommodated at the shelter due to the physical distancing requirements, which I have noted will soon be returning to normal operations. Further to these efforts, we continue to support the Yukon Hospital Corporation with COVID-19-related financial needs. Within the total COVID-19

allocation of \$29,973,000, the hospital is allocated \$5,862,750 for logistics, policy work, infection control, screeners, emergency department services, lab supports, and other efforts.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that, while this global pandemic is not going away yet, our vision of healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities is strong and continues. While COVID-19 is testing our resiliency, we have accomplished a great deal and will continue to make progress.

Everything that we do in the Department of Health and Social Services is done to maintain and improve the well-being of Yukoners. I don't think we can emphasize that too much, Mr. Speaker.

Despite the fact that the opposition will likely vote against this supplementary budget, I would like to thank members here for your support of Yukoners during what has been a very difficult time. Supporting this supplementary budget is evidence of that support.

I thank you for this opportunity.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the second reading of Bill No. 203, *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — speaking directly to the items that I have within this budget, under Vote 3.

Mr. Speaker, I'll start by saying that we continued to face, in 2021, unexpected challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are fortunate to live in such a resilient and diverse community. I'm proud, always, of the work that Yukoners do to support one another and to keep each other safe and to work in this way.

Despite these ongoing challenges, much important work has been completed over this last year. This supplementary budget reflects how the department is working to achieve many of its priorities, including continuing to support learners through the COVID-19 pandemic, expanding universal childcare, and responding to the review of inclusive and special education. These three areas remain at the forefront of the Department of Education, and it is work that we are working on with all of our partners to enhance the learning environments for all of our children, from early learning right through to university.

The budget also notes our continued work to support reconciliation and signifies our commitment to investment and capital infrastructure. These investments are needed to address our aging infrastructure, meet growing student enrolment needs, and create modern learning environments and community spaces.

In this supplementary budget request, the Department of Education is requesting an increase of \$3.063 million in operation and maintenance expenditures and a decrease of \$301,000 in capital expenditures. I would like to take this opportunity to go over a few of the changes to the capital and operation and maintenance funding. I know that we will get into more detail on this in Committee of the Whole, but I thought that I would take the opportunity to speak at the second reading.

In terms of capital, a total budget decrease of \$301,000 is noted under the capital expenditures, reflecting revised capital project timelines resulting from COVID-19 and additional time

required for key project planning activities. With respect to these capital projects, I will go over them in a bit more detail — again, I know that we will get into more detail when we get into Committee of the Whole and I'm looking forward to that.

The Government of Yukon and Kluane First Nation are taking another step toward reconciliation by working together to build a new school in Burwash Landing. Moving the current Kluane Lake School from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing has been a long-standing request of the Kluane First Nation. Due to some delays related to COVID-19, there is a budget surplus this period of \$85,000. As part of our commitment to reconciliation and long-term capital planning for Yukon schools, we are so pleased to be working in partnership with the Kluane First Nation to relocate this school from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing. Moving the current Kluane Lake School from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing has been, as I said, a long-standing request of the Kluane First Nation. This project has been a true partnership, as we have been negotiating a Yukon asset construction agreement right now related to the *Kluane First Nation Self-Government Agreement* along with a community development agreement as part of the First Nation procurement policy.

A community consultation was scheduled for January 26 and 27. It was intended to solicit feedback and preferences from the community on the four concept designs. We currently have the owner-advisor Taylor Architecture Group in place for this project.

Again, a new school in Burwash Landing has been a long dream. I have enjoyed my recent meetings with the chief to advance this project. In June of 2020, our government signed a memorandum of understanding outlining a commitment to plan and construct this new school in Burwash Landing. A total of \$500,000 was originally allocated in 2021-22 to support planning and design for the project. Due to, as I've said, a few delays in relation to COVID-19, it has now been reduced to \$416,000. Looking forward, of course, to 2022-23, we have requested \$1.275 million. We are looking forward to continuing this work with all of our partners, including Highways and Public Works. I am looking forward to getting out to that community to have more direct discussions in person.

On other capital projects, there is a budget decrease of \$920,000. That was originally allocated for the Selkirk parking lot project. This decrease is due to delays in the project. The surplus has been transferred internally to support other capital projects, including \$504,000 for a modular classroom project at Hidden Valley and Selkirk Elementary schools and \$200,000 for work on the Lewes Boulevard bus stop at the CSSC Mercier School. This essentially brings the net impact of these internal transfers in the overall budget to zero.

There is a total increase of \$3.063 million in operation and maintenance. The primary driver of the increase in O&M is collective agreement increases. On January 26, members of the Yukon Association of Education Professionals voted to ratify a new three-year collective agreement with the Government of Yukon. Among other items, the agreement brings forward meaningful changes, which include yearly salary increases

totalling 5.35 percent over three years for teachers and a 7.5-percent increase in pay for teachers on call, effective now, and additional levels of pay based on qualifications for Yukon First Nation language teachers and educational assistants.

Teachers and all school staff play an absolutely key role in supporting students to be successful at school. They have done an incredible job adapting and being flexible during the pandemic. We thank each and every one of them for all of their hard work. The collective agreement increases in the budget cover July 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

The Yukon Association of Education Professionals is an important partner in education. This has been a positive and respectful round of bargaining. I thank them. Together we've had the view to supporting Yukon educators and students.

These increases amount to \$1.506 million for Schools and Student Services and \$44,000 for First Nation Initiatives. We are glad that we have finalized this agreement to continue to support school staff in the essential work that they are doing to continue learning and to keep school environments open and available for students and families through the pandemic.

Other increases in Schools and Student Services include an increase of \$213,000 in funding for CSFY due to increased enrolment and school operational costs.

Another major driver of the O&M budget increase that we are asking for is under the universal childcare program. This, as everyone is aware, has been a major priority for our government. We continue to work with Yukon First Nations and other partners to enhance early learning and childcare programming in Yukon as we move toward a vision in which all children have access to affordable, high-quality early learning and childcare opportunities.

The new universal program focuses on key areas of affordability, accessibility, and quality. The new universal childcare program reduced parents' fees to less than \$10 per day on average. We heard in engagements that, in addition to affordability and accessibility for families, we needed to address quality end wages to educators, which we are doing and have done. We're really proud of these investments.

The Yukon universal early learning childcare program is designed to provide rich early learning experiences and environments and to view children as capable, competent learners who are full of potential. This program ensures that licensed early learning and childcare programs can be accessible to all Yukoners as costs to families have been significantly reduced.

Due to higher than expected program uptake and program costs, we are seeking an increase of \$1.3 million. We believe that investing in early childcare relationships, environments, and experiences supports the development of Yukon children and the future of a happier and healthier society. This program has been a tremendous success over the last year. We are coming close to the one-year anniversary. In terms of further information about this, the Yukon early learning and childcare funding program focuses on quality, inclusivity, affordability, and accessibility. The program consists of two parts: funding for licensed childcare, which reduces parents' fees, reduces operational and administration expenses, and supports program

needs; and childcare operational funding — formerly the direct operating grant — which supports high quality learning environments, increases wages of early learning childhood educators, and supports operational costs.

Starting on April 1, 2021, Yukon families automatically began saving \$700 per month per child registered full time in participating licensed childcare programs. These savings are also provided for children attending programs part time, so on a pro-rated basis. The Yukon early learning and childcare funding program helps to support, as I have said, the reduction of parents' fees to remain, on average, less than \$10 a day.

As of January 1, 2022, 100 percent of licensed early learning and childcare programs in the Yukon had transferred to the universal childcare program, providing a total of 1,979 spaces for children in the Yukon.

This investment in high quality early learning and childcare is paying off. This increase in the budget is due to more parents choosing to access this program, so that is great news for families and for young Yukoners who have access to quality learning environments for their critical early learning years.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the Department of Education and all of our partners, who have been working incredibly hard.

There are a number of key partnerships and strategies that we are working toward developing. Some are in the implementation stage. I am very grateful for all of their hard work and for working in a collaborative way. I would also like to acknowledge my appreciation for the work and dedication of other partners. I express a tremendous gratitude to the acting chief medical officer of health and her staff for their tireless efforts to help keep Yukon learning environments safe for staff and students. I think that they have done a tremendous job. There has been a lot of pressure and I feel like we are now in a place of really looking toward that light at the end of the tunnel and seeing us move into this next stage of the pandemic. I think our school settings have done a tremendous job. We have learned so much throughout this pandemic, and having children learn in person has been one of our key priorities.

I thank every single educator, parent, child — all who have been involved in this tremendous effort. I thank you for all of the work that you've done. As the world continues to be in flux, each and every one of you is helping to provide stability, security, and optimism for Yukon learners of all ages.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the supplementary budget that pertains to my department, which will be Vote 3. I look forward to seeing this pass through the House at this stage and moving into Committee of the Whole and look forward to that general debate when we have our officials here.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have some brief comments on behalf of the Department of Highways and Public Works. I am pleased to speak to you about the Highways and Public Works supplementary budget for the 2021-22 fiscal year.

This is a large and diverse department. We have a variety of divisions, branches, and agencies that provide central

functions to government, as well as direct services to the public. With all of these things that we manage, we must make difficult choices with our spending so that we can provide the best possible service to Yukoners. Despite a high level of care that goes into planning our budget, it is impossible to predict every cost. The supplementary budget allows us to address those unexpected costs and continue to provide top-quality services.

Highways and Public Works is expecting an increase of \$3.556 million to our 2021-22 operation and maintenance costs. I would like to provide some details on this ask. As you all know, this year, we experienced unusual weather events. Some of them were even record-breaking. Not only did it impact us in the winter with an increased snowfall, but also in the spring, when the melt caused major road washouts. We needed to increase the department's budget by an additional \$407,000 to maintain our roads and repair the damage from the washouts. This is just one example of how unanticipated weather events can significantly impact the department's budget.

Another impact to our budget this year was the rise in fuel costs and electrical costs, which increased the cost of heating our buildings. Unforeseen costs can come from a number of things, but perhaps the most significant was the pandemic.

Our aviation industry was hit hard when the pandemic began, and they continue to need our support. Through the essential air service program, we have provided an additional \$2.4 million to continue supporting the Yukon aviation industry, which is 100-percent recoverable from Canada.

While we saw an increase in the operation and maintenance budget, we correspondingly saw a decrease in the capital budget. This was due, among other things, to a decrease in the spending on the Dempster fibre project. Due to weather and material availability, certain aspects of the project could not be completed last year; however, the project is still on track.

As I wrap up today, I would like to reiterate that our department performs a significant range of services, and the work that we do impacts all Yukoners. The work that we do is important, and we take pride in doing this work well.

Thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to questions in Committee of the Whole.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thanks to my colleagues for their comments here today. We got a lot done today. It's really good to see, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Leader of the NDP for her comments. I'll spend a little bit of time on the Member for Lake Laberge, as he laughs off-mic. I will just say that I disagree with the Member for Lake Laberge's comments as to being let off the hook, I guess, because my officials aren't here. I do agree that my officials are brilliant, and I want to thank Scott Thompson and his team for preparation of the variance reports that we go through, through the years, the attention to detail when it comes to the Public Accounts, the information-sharing, the

advancement of — I mean, I'm sure the members opposite wouldn't even recognize the organizational status of the Yukon government anymore, now, as we have gone from being a budgetary office in the financial world to having this large complement of professionals, including those in Highways and Public Works, including those in Community Services, including those throughout the government, and how we develop budgets now. It's truly impressive.

So, I can understand why the member opposite would be beside himself with glowing praise for the intelligence of these public servants, and I would agree with him on that.

But it really doesn't fit the MO of the Yukon Party to let somebody off the hook over in government. We saw, just from the Question Period, their tactic, or approach, where they will focus in on one minister, trying their best to get them maybe off topic, not asking three questions and only asking two — those types of things —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: Not only is the Premier probably in contravention of Standing Order 19(i) regarding insulting language that is likely to cause discord, he is, pursuant to Standing Order 19(b) — he's speaking to matters other than the question under discussion. He seems to be trying to have a re-hash of Question Period and is forgetting that we are actually here to talk about the third appropriation act of this fiscal year.

Speaker: The Hon. Premier, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised by this point of order. The member opposite said one thing in his response to my second reading speech, and I'm responding to that one thing, and he just can't handle it.

I don't think this is a point of order. I think this is a dispute among members.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The discussion is a dispute among members, but I just want to remind the member who has the floor: Please stick to the topic. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree and thank you. I will continue, and I will be brief.

Again, it is just not in the MO of the Yukon Party to give us a break over here. That is why they have no questions today in second reading. Maybe —

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: The member has the floor, and I am having a hard time hearing him speak.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think they are having a hard time swallowing what I'm about to say.

Maybe, again, they are not prepared for today. It is often the time when the member opposite maybe hasn't received his marching orders from the new leader yet. Oftentimes, as we're

in debate and having conversations here, he is on that phone so many times that he will pause halfway through a sentence just to consult the oracle to see if he's on track or not.

Maybe they are just not prepared for today.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Watson Lake, on a point of order.

Ms. McLeod: I don't have the Standing Orders memorized like my colleague here, but clearly the Premier is just going out of his way to be rude today. If he could just stick to his comments on the budget, we would appreciate that.

Speaker: The Hon. Premier, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I am not really sure which point of order we are on here, because no point of order has been stated.

Also, I am merely responding to the one question — the one statement that was given by the Yukon Party. I think I deserve my time to give an alternative to what the Yukon Party is saying as a narrative as to why I am not being asked questions in second reading.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: It is a dispute between members, but I just want to remind the member who has the floor: Please stick to the bill. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Absolutely. Again, when I'm being portrayed in a certain way by members opposite, I have been taught very well by my parents that you need to stick up for yourself, and that's what I'm doing here today. I am providing an alternative to the member opposite's narrative.

I think that it is pretty telling. I don't think that it is necessarily the MO of the Yukon Party to give us a break here when it comes to asking questions. I think that it is more likely that the member opposite just hasn't been given his marching orders yet as far as what questions he is to ask, but I am here. We met at House Leaders this morning. The members opposite knew exactly what was ahead of them as far as scheduling. I am here to answer questions from the members opposite, but let it be known that the members opposite have no questions. We haven't seen a lot of questions so far. We haven't seen a lot of questions in the briefings from the members opposite either when it comes to finance or the briefings that the Finance department has given.

I will leave it at that for now, but I am looking forward to not only debating the substantive pieces of this bill, but also the expertise of my colleagues as they get into Committee of the Whole for their specific departments.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of the Bill No. 203 agreed to

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

Speaker: It has been moved by the 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. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 3: *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the opportunity to return to this. I do have a number of other questions, both about the program itself, but also the interaction between the Yukon government, the AYC, and the municipalities in this respect.

When we left off yesterday, the minister had agreed to go to AYC and ask if the recommendations provided by the working group could be shared. I would note that the minister did share a motion from AYC that indicated that AYC endorsed the recommendations, and then I should note that the minister committed to accept all of the recommendations and implement them, but we haven't yet seen those recommendations, and so it is difficult for us to judge whether or not, and how, that will be achieved, without actually seeing the recommendations themselves.

So, I will start off by asking the minister if he was able to reach out to AYC and if he is in a position to table those recommendations.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are working with AYC still. I have reached out to them; I haven't heard back yet. As soon as I do, for the documents we were talking about yesterday, I will certainly table them in the House.

Mr. Dixon: Obviously, as I noted, it is difficult for us to review this program and understand what recommendations were made when the recommendations aren't shared publicly. Can I just ask again if the minister can clarify: Has a response been sent from him to the AYC that clearly articulates the Yukon government's support and plan to implement all of the recommendations provided by the working group?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said yesterday, we received the notification from the AYC — the letter from AYC — late last week, I believe on March 8. It is now just about a week later. I am drafting a letter of response to the Association of Yukon Communities — a formal letter. Again, I expect to get that to them very soon, but I have reached out and spoken to the president and expressed our support of the recommendations. He has it verbally, and we are preparing our letter to AYC, and I expect to get that to him as soon as it is properly vetted and sent off.

Mr. Dixon: Will the minister commit to tabling that letter, as well?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am nothing if not open with providing all of the correspondence and documents that I can to the public and to the opposition.

Mr. Dixon: Okay, I'll proceed with some questions, then.

I'll start with some questions about the commercial stream, as it is planned to look — sorry, as the program is planned to look, at least. I have some questions about how it is planned to look.

The commercial stream, as indicated by the minister, would have a cap of \$100,000. Can he provide any other differences between the residential and the commercial stream, as they are in the process of developing the program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, the member opposite is talking about the commercial stream. Yes, he is correct, it is up to a \$100,000 loan for the commercial stream, as I said yesterday; not much has changed in the last 24 hours. It includes retrofits

for existing buildings that improve overall efficient energy and performance in the following categories: thermal enclosure, insulation, windows, fuel switching to biomass, and/or HVAC, and/or recommissioning.

So, that is basically where it will go. There will be an intake of client agreement construction and project closeout.

I want to just light for a moment on the program itself. It's not built yet. This program, based around local improvement charges, has not yet been built. We have a sketch-out.

We don't have any experts here in the room today, but the Energy Solutions Centre is the one that runs the retrofit programs. They have great experience doing retrofits. They know what they are doing, but in terms of the actual details of the program we are talking about today, it's just very, very high level. It's a program that is delivered across North America. It has been very successful, but it hasn't been delivered here and certainly not in this way, with LICs and municipalities, with the government providing so much support.

There is some work left to be done on the program itself. As I said, I don't have the advantage of having the experts from Energy, Mines and Resources in the room. What we are really discussing today is Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*. That's really what is on the floor for debate today. The program itself will be enabled by this legislation. As I have said several times in the House, until the actual legislation that is before us gets through the House, there is really no point in discussing what the program is going to look like.

I know the Leader of the Official Opposition was actually opposed to the program last fall. I am delighted to see his apparent interest and possible support of the bill now. Until this bill passes this Legislative Assembly, the actual program itself is in very broad terms.

We are going to see how it actually materializes once we get into negotiations with municipalities that want to adopt the program and what their needs are and what their tax base is and what the assessed value of their homes are. There are a lot of things to work out yet with municipalities.

I am happy to continue talking about this, for sure. I appreciate the questions and the interest I'm getting from the member opposite. I hope that answers, in broad terms, how it will work. It includes retrofits for existing buildings that improve overall energy performance in the following categories, which include: thermal enclosure, fuel switching to biomass, and/or HVAC, and/or recommissioning. In broad terms, that is what will be available for people to apply on. That should include insulation and windows, entryways, that type of thing.

There will be an intake, a client agreement, and a construction closeout, including an assessment of the actual property.

Mr. Dixon: I need to remind the minister that this is a program that he announced, even before the bill had passed the fall.

There were Facebook posts, and there was media done. The government did quite the job selling this program that had not yet been created prior to this legislation passing the House.

Obviously, that was the subject of a point of personal privilege that was discussed last fall, but since then, we have realized that the work that the government had done on this bill was incomplete and that it wasn't good enough. That is why this bill had to be set aside for the winter while the minister went back to the drawing board and actually did some of the consultation that was required to do this work.

He has said that it is not worth it for his department to start working on developing the program until the legislation passes the House, which I find odd because he has in his hands a signed letter from the Third Party saying that, if they satisfy their requirements of the AYC and municipalities, they will happily support the bill, so it's certain to pass. Why the government has refused to begin working on the development of the program is beyond me. It's simply, I think, a decision by this minister to hold off on developing the program until after this legislation clears, even though he knows full well that he has a signed letter with assurances from the Leader of the Third Party that this bill will indeed pass this spring.

The minister also indicated that he thought that I did not support the program. I would remind him that the program does not exist yet — that's his whole point. All he said today is that the program doesn't exist yet, so how can they answer questions about it? I would remind him that this is why we are asking the questions that we have been asking. We want to understand this program. We want to understand its implications for municipalities, and we want to understand its implications for residents and businesses that could be prospective applicants to it. I don't think that it is an unreasonable thing for opposition parties to ask questions about what this program will look like. I think that the questions that I have asked are fairly reasonable. I appreciate that the minister can't answer in full every detail, but I would appreciate it if he could at least provide the facts without the sort of narrative that he wants to add in around our support or opposition to this.

We have said all along that we support the idea of this program. We have said all along that we want it to work. We would like to see this type of program come forward, but we know that there have been significant concerns raised by municipalities and the AYC over the course of the last several months. We have seen multiple letters tabled from municipalities expressing that concern as well.

So, while we do intend to support the creation of this program, I think that it's only fair for the opposition to ask questions about the program that this legislation is intended to create. I'll start there and note that in response to some of the minister's comments.

I will then turn to some of the more substantive issues that I would like to ask about, as it is important for us to understand if these issues have been dealt with in order to judge whether or not the concerns raised by municipalities and the AYC have indeed been addressed.

One of the concerns that we heard is related to the possibility of default. If a client defaults on these loans, who will be responsible for collecting that money? How will that liability be handled? What provisions have been made for the

sharing of that burden or the distribution of that burden if that does indeed occur?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Before I begin, I want to let my good colleague across the way know that we have been having a very cordial exchange, and I appreciate that. The questions coming from the other side are thoughtful and well-intentioned, and I have no problem answering the questions coming from the member opposite.

I am gladdened to hear his statement of endorsement, I guess, of the project on the floor of the House today, so that is good to hear.

I just want to make it clear, though, to the member opposite that there are still things to work out, and I have been quite clear about that going forward. Frankly, we had formal recognition from the Association of Yukon Communities, I believe, on March 8 — it wasn't that long ago.

When I got that letter from the president, it was a great day because it actually said that the work that we did with municipalities to give them the comfort that they were asking for at the end of the last Sitting was granted. Until that happened, I didn't have formal notification. I heard that this or that had happened, but I actually got that formal notification just last week — late last week. It really just verified that all the work that the working group did on behalf of the Government of Yukon the AYC and municipalities paid off and was successful. That was a good moment for me — to have that acknowledgement. You know, I had said all along that I was willing to work with municipalities and put their fears to rest, much like my colleague, the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, had before me.

We want to make sure that municipalities are whole. We understood their trepidation with this new program. They hadn't seen it work. The rural well and electrification program had some gaps. That was a Yukon Party initiative. They had some lingering worries based on that program. We have worked through those problems with the municipalities and, I think, developed a closer working relationship, and I'm really happy to have done that and gone through that. We learned a lot working so closely together. That was a useful enterprise.

The purpose of the working group, just to go back — and I will provide these documents once I have formal notification for the actual recommendation document and the letter from the AYC president.

The purpose of the working group is to develop recommendations and an opt-in agreement between the Yukon government and each participating municipal government that adequately addresses the administrative workload and removes barriers to municipal participation in better buildings using the local improvement tax mechanism. That's the key part. That's what the legislation today enables: the ability to use that local improvement tax model mechanism to actually collect and manage the loans that we're handing out. That allows us to actually get some of the best interest rates available to Yukoners. That's really the difference here; having that loan tied to a local improvement charge to a property actually allows us to deliver really good interest rates to Yukoners.

The working group examined what is proposed and what could be adjusted while adhering to the general objectives of the better building program and the themes and scope prescribed by the oversight committee, namely, to determine resource requirements from municipal participation and determine program administrative details related to municipal delivery elements.

That is what they were tasked to do. In the end, one of the things I think that the member opposite was asking about was: What about the default that was an issue? Municipalities — in my community tours and in conversations with municipal mayors — had identified it with the rural well and electrification program. They felt that when there was a default — and there aren't many of them. But when there was a default, they felt that they were left holding the bag. So, we have worked with them to come up with a new approach. In case of default where an administrative fee is not fully recovered by the administrative charge allowable under the *Act to Amend the Taxation and Assessment Act and the Municipal Act (2021)* — this legislation before us today — or, in cases of lien where the administrative cost is not recouped by the sale of the property, municipalities can request that the Yukon government pay 50 percent of the costs incurred on a case-by-case basis where a better buildings local improvement charge is owed with municipal taxes owing, and the Yukon government pays all the costs where only the better buildings local improvement is owing.

So, costs for default include administrative workload, advertising, notarizing, serving notice via registered mail and sheriff, land titles, forms, fees, legal advice and services. It is difficult to estimate the cost as each case is different, but we did hear that. I heard this, certainly, from the CAO of the Town of Watson Lake, who has had to go through this lien process several times. He outlined to me some of the costs that would be incurred by municipalities that would be difficult to recoup, but they were felt to be left high and dry. So, we are now saying that, yes, we understand that you have incurred these fees in the past and we will look at this into the future.

Default and lien are anticipated to be similar to the default rates in the current Yukon government local improvement programs of approximately three percent. So, that is really what we are looking at, and it could vary from municipality to municipality, and that is where some of the negotiations come in.

We also want to minimize the likelihood of default. This is actually a very good point. It is different from the previous local improvement charges that were paid by municipalities. We saw them in Whitehorse where there would be a referendum or a vote taken, and then the entire community involved would be assessed a local improvement charge against their property. This is a little bit different. It is certainly a different approach in that applicants are informed of the cost and new tax payments before entering into any agreements. So, they are going in with eyes wide open and they are going in willingly. This is a process that they will enter into of their own volition.

It's not going to be forced on them in any way, shape, or form. Before they sign any documents, they will know what

they are getting into. The application process will ensure that there are no unpaid taxes on the property and that funded projects have energy savings that offset the new expenses.

They will actually see the costs of the program. They will be able to assess what the benefits should be through the program. That will help, I think, alleviate some of the pressure that municipalities saw on some of these other programs that they have administered in the past. So, it is a different approach.

I think that is a key point in recommending this program, which, as I said, has been offered across the country. We have Nova Scotia — in Bridgewater — Lunenburg, Digby, Barrington, Yarmouth, Amherst, Cumberland, New Glasgow, and Victoria — all have a program similar to this one — and the Town of Berwick in Nova Scotia, Wolfville, Charlottetown, Stratford, and Halifax. PEI has a program like this. Toronto is running a program very similar to this one as well — Guelph and Newmarket, Ontario. Saanich, BC is looking at it, as is Canmore, Rocky Mountain House, the Town of Devon, and the City of Edmonton, Alberta. Ottawa, Ontario has one. Burlington, Ontario has one — Vancouver, BC, Halifax again, and Ontario.

I guess the point is that this is a Yukon iteration of these programs that are running in many cities across the land. They are run by municipalities. Municipalities in most of these jurisdictions run them all themselves. The difference here in the territory is that here the Yukon government will be doing a lot of the heavy lifting and assessing the homes and taking people through the application process and the rest of it through the Energy Solutions Centre. In most other jurisdictions, it is done solely by the municipality. We understand that the burden here would be too great on municipalities. We are going to take on some of that load and do it through the good folk at Energy, Mines and Resources and at Community Services to help offset. The administrative burden is really what we have been dealing with through discussions with the municipalities over the last little while to give them a level of comfort that they didn't have previously. The time that we took to do this, as the Leader of the Third Party mentioned, was time well spent, and I do appreciate the agreement that we have managed to reach with the Association of Yukon Communities.

Mr. Dixon: I had a specific question about default, and I do believe that there was an answer in there, so I appreciate that.

I noted that the minister offered some congratulations to himself for the moment that he received that motion from the AYC endorsing the recommendations of the working group. They were talking about how the groups were able to come together and do the hard work necessary to come up with a solution. I couldn't help but think that this would have been better done before this bill was tabled in the fall. I think this is something that we can reflect on: If that work had been done before the bill was tabled, the government wouldn't have faced the delay of a number of months while this work occurred in between the Fall and Spring Sittings.

I just wanted to confirm one thing very quickly. It is a very specific question: Can the minister confirm then that no one

from AYC has communicated to Yukon government that they support or will allow the tabling of those recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can confirm that I have just been shown that — at the officials level — we got an e-mail while I was in the House this afternoon that my deputy has just shown me. So, the AYC did get back to officials within CS and said that they were fine with it at the officials level. I have not yet heard from the president personally. I have reached out, but I haven't heard back yet, so I'm waiting for that, but I do have confirmation at the officials level that the documents are fine to be released. That happened while I have been in the House. I haven't been out to talk to the deputy since then.

Mr. Dixon: I am very pleased to hear that the AYC has agreed to release the recommendations. I am sure that the minister has them with him. Will he please table them?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I don't have a clean copy on my desk, but if we take a brief recess of five minutes, I can go up and have one printed for the member opposite.

Deputy Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Deputy Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Dixon: Thank you very much. Just to allow our pages a moment to distribute those, I'll just fill in with a question that could be answered by the document, but I'll give it to the minister anyway.

I had a question about the commercial stream and whether or not, if a business owned condos or rental units, if those would be considered under the residential stream or the commercial stream.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, I'm going to say that this really is one of the details that will have to be fleshed out as we build the program going forward. It really will depend on the class of property tax paid by the entity. We will have to look at what the tax rules say to determine whether or not it's captured by the program. These are some of the details that we will have to work out, as we go forward.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the answer from the minister. I will turn to the interaction between the Yukon government and a municipality. I will start with the opt-in agreement. Can the minister explain what the opt-in agreement would look like, what provisions would actually be in that agreement, in terms of detail, and whether or not there is already a template in place for such an opt-in agreement — or does that have yet to be developed?

Deputy Chair: I will just add a request that all members speak up. I think that the acoustics are particularly difficult in that corner of the room. Thank you to everyone for helping with that.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I will try to angle my mic. I do find it hard back here myself, actually. With a hearing impairment, it can be difficult. I hope that helps a little bit.

So, there is a draft template. It is modelled on the one that we use for the domestic well and rural electrification program, and I have been informed that a draft had been shared with municipalities through the working group.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answer there.

With regard to the fee — or the administrative fee — I suppose there are two fees. There is one that is paid by the client — the homeowner, the customer — and one that is paid by the Yukon government to the municipality. Both are set at \$500, but I believe that the customer fee is an upfront cost of \$500, and the fee that is paid by the government to the municipality as an administrative fee is \$500 per year of the agreement, which is up to 15 years.

Maybe I will just ask the minister to confirm that I have that correct. And is that indeed the process?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite has it mostly right. The initial fee is paid by the participant in the program. It is an initial sign-up fee of \$500 that is paid by the person receiving the loan — the individual receiving the loan — and it's tacked onto the LIC itself.

The subsequent years, it is an amount negotiated with municipalities of up to \$500. It's not a flat \$500 fee. It's up to \$500, based on discussions with the various municipalities. That's based on \$100 an hour of work, for up to five hours of work, to maintain the file over the course of the year. That fee is scheduled to be reviewed within the first two years of the program. The reason being is that this is the best guess from municipalities on the cost of administering the program, as it was done under the rural well and electrification program and as it was done under other local improvement charge programs that they've had in municipalities.

As I said this afternoon, we have asserted that this is a different beast. This is something that people will take on themselves and go in willingly and with eyes wide open. I don't think that the administrative burden is there. Nevertheless, municipalities wanted us to capture it. They did an awful lot of work to lay out all the different interactions that they would be having with individuals coming in for this loan program. This is the amount that they assessed: It would be up to between five and 10 hours' worth of work — up to 10 hours of work — and they agreed to take on half the charge themselves. That's up to five hours on behalf of the Yukon government.

As I said, we're going to do an audit of the program within the first two years, or in the second year, to make sure that we know how much it is actually costing municipalities, because another component of the arrangement we've made with municipalities is that this is not a profit-generating enterprise; it's basically just to recover costs for municipalities to administer the program.

Mr. Dixon: I just wanted to note for the minister that I have in front of me now the document that we've been discussing previously.

I have with me the letter from the AYC to the minister, dated March 7, as he has indicated — the terms of reference for the working group and an eight-page note, which is titled “Better Buildings Working Group and Oversight Committee: Administrative approach for municipal and territorial governments”.

For those perhaps reading this at a later date, I am sure one of us will table these documents, probably tomorrow. Listeners and readers will have the opportunity to refer to those documents.

With that in mind, I note that there are actually two categories of administrative fees identified in this document; one is for a larger municipality and one is for a smaller municipality. The minister has referenced that the fee is up to \$500 per project, which appears to be the larger municipality level. Can he just tell us quickly what the distinction between larger and smaller is? Is it just Whitehorse and everything else, or what is the criteria for smaller municipalities, and what was the logic behind the lower rate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is a good question. The answer is that there are some communities in which the Department of Community Services actually administers the tax rules on behalf of the municipalities, so they are not doing as much work. In municipalities like Whitehorse, Dawson, and Watson Lake, the tax function is actually handled by the municipality itself, so that is why they may be entitled to a higher fee.

In some of the smaller jurisdictions, CS actually does the tax administration for the municipalities, so it is actually another stage of work that they just do not have to engage in. That is why the fee is lower for those very smallest of municipalities.

Mr. Dixon: Just to circle back to the fee, is the amount paid to the municipality by Yukon government \$500 per project per month? Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: No. It is \$500 a year.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the clarification there.

The minister discussed the relative amount of that and its intent to not be a revenue generator. I would note that if the minister has the kind of uptake that is planned, that could grow considerably. If it is \$500 a month and all the projects are in Whitehorse and the minister is hoping to have 1,000 of these go out, the territorial budget will be looking at a line item of about \$500,000 once that occurs. That is not insubstantial, and I think it is something that will be monitored, I am sure, by governments at both the municipal and the territorial level.

There is a question about the timing of the remittance of the money collected by the municipality to the Yukon government. I know that the *Municipal Act* does state that municipalities must remit LIC principal and interest payments back to the Yukon government by July 15. I know that there is a recommendation about that here, so I would like to ask if the minister can clarify what the working group recommendation was around the length of time after the property tax payment deadline date and whether or not the recommendation from the working group to extend that was accepted and if it is reflected in the legislation.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I just want to make sure that the record is correct because I believe the member opposite — and he may have misspoken. He did say \$500 a month. That is not the case. It is \$500 a year.

The member opposite is correct, but we are not expecting to hit the full 1,000 properties, certainly, for many years. As I said before, we are actually going to review the program administrative burden in real time, checking it against the work of the committee, to make sure that we know what the actual workload is. So, that will be done, and it is with municipalities after two years in the program.

The other issue that the member opposite was talking about was to examine timelines, deadlines, and program agreements for any flexibility. They had asked that we amend the amendments to the *Assessment and Taxation Act* to allow 90 days for the remittance deadline for better buildings. As I said yesterday, I had spoken to mayors and to the committee. I said that I would endeavour to see what magic Justice and Community Services folks could do to get this forward. That is the amendment that we have proposed for this bill — to actually put that amendment in. It was something that they did flag.

The good folks in Justice and Community Services were actually able to get this together despite all of the work that they have been doing on the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and everything else that they have been doing in the last several months. It has just been an absolutely frenetic pace for those departments, but they did actually manage to get this amendment forward. I have it, so I will be able to make good on that commitment to the municipalities way faster than they ever expected, so that is good news.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for that. Now, having had the opportunity to review the document, I note some issues that have been raised in the report. I was very interested to see one particular issue highlighted that I had actually mentioned the last time we debated this, which they note as being a potential barrier for low assessed property values. The report notes that for property owners with lower assessed value or high existing LIT debt, there is less room to borrow within the 25 assessed property value cap, which may deter someone from retrofits if the financing will not cover the bulk of the deep retrofits that retrofit projects cost.

The report notes that, furthermore, the proposed program would apply the rebate to the loan, reducing debt, but not providing as much capital as applying rebates to expand the project’s budget. The requirement to work within a retrofit package for a 20 improvement in energy use will deter participants eligible for smaller improvements, such as \$17,500 for windows on a property assessed at \$75,000.

People who most need assistance may be excluded, and this may be seen as inequitable to communities with lower assessed value housing stock.

Changing or removing the energy target would not ensure that the buildings are improved to the level needed to reduce energy, meet climate change targets, and offer improved resiliency and comfort to homeowners.

The promotion of other territorial and federal programs and rebates for projects outside the scope of better buildings

will be addressed in a communications plan, which I understand is yet to be developed.

This is an issue that we raised yesterday just around the disparity of this program as it applies to, in particular, rural Yukon, although there are lower assessed property value homes in the Whitehorse area too. But I think that, in particular, homes in rural Yukon that are very much comparable to homes here in Whitehorse — or at least are ostensibly comparable — often have a lower assessed property value.

I'm wondering about the concerns raised here, and one that I raised previously, about access to the program for Yukoners in the rural parts of our territory and whether or not the government is willing to make changes or is interested in expanding the program to make it more equitable and more accessible to Yukoners with lower assessed property values.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This is one of the reasons why we have negotiations with municipalities on the terms of the deal. This issue has been raised by both Dawson and Watson Lake — their leadership and their mayors — as a concern. It is one of the things that we will deal with through the negotiations with each municipality to make sure — I mean, across the country, these programs are delivered by the municipalities themselves, so it is not really a problem. They will tailor the program to their own municipality. Here, because they don't have the capacity, we are working with them to do this. That is why it is an opt-in program. That is why we will have negotiations with each municipality on the terms of adoption.

That said, the Energy branch will work with owners to find additions to an LIC, such as grants or other potential revenue that they might be able to access to help bring the bar up so that they can actually make their properties much more energy efficient.

The goal is 1,000 properties across the territory in as many communities as we possibly can. That is the goal. It is a hard and fast goal. For some people applying, it just won't make sense. The aspirational goal is 20 percent in energy savings and 20 percent in greenhouse gas reduction and energy savings. We talked about that yesterday.

So, that is what we are working toward. We are trying to hit 1,000 properties, and some of them won't make sense, in which case we will have to find other options for those individuals.

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse West that the Chair report progress. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

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

Deputy 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. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: 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 5:27 p.m.

The following documents were filed March 15, 2022:

35-1-46

Ongoing extra security costs in the Main Administration Building, letter re (dated March 14, 2022) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge to Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Cathers)

35-1-47

Regulatory body for psychologists, letter re (dated March 14, 2022) from Reagan Gale, President, Psychological Society of Yukon to Brendan Hanley, Member of Parliament (Blake)

35-1-48

Better Buildings Program Oversight Committee and Working Group Terms of Reference (Mostyn)

35-1-49

Better Buildings Working Group and Oversight Committee: Administrative approach for municipal and territorial governments (Mostyn)

35-1-50

Better Build Program Committees, letter re (dated March 7, 2022) from Gord Curran, President, Association of Yukon Communities to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn)